

## THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

### Introduction

The Epistle to the Galatians has well been named the "Charter of Christian Liberty." It was greatly used by Martin Luther during the 16th century Reformation to answer those who taught that salvation was obtained by faith, plus works. Luther saw the multitudes in bondage to man-made religious regulations. He preached Galatians from the housetops, telling men that Christ has freed us from the curse of the Law. The commentator Lenski says of Paul's letter:

"Galatians is the impregnable citadel, a very Gibraltar, against any attack on the heart of the Gospel. This epistle is the grand arsenal which is stocked with the weapons that assure victory in the ceaseless battle for the central truths of the Gospel."

Since there has never been a day when the truths of God's Word have been more vigorously attacked than in our day, a study of Galatians is an important undertaking.

### Occasion and Date of the Epistle

The churches of Galatia were being attacked by those who said that Paul was not a true apostle and that salvation must be obtained by the keeping of the Law as well as trusting in Christ. The young flock was upset by this subversive element. There is some evidence to show that they sent a delegation to Paul to inform him of the activities of the "judaizers." Paul answers the false teachers by defending his credentials as an apostle and clearly setting forth the fact that salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ.

It is difficult to determine exactly when the epistle was written. It well could be Paul's first epistle, written from Corinth or Athens to Galatia while Paul was on his second missionary journey. It could have been written as early as 53 A. D.

### Who Were the Galatians?

This problem is somewhat complicated by the fact that there were two areas designated Galatia in New Testament times.



This map of Asia Minor shows that the province of Galatia was located in the central portion of the area. The northern part of this area was the original Galatia. It was settled by barbaric tribes that invaded the area in about the third century B. C. When the Romans took over the area they added the southern area to Galatia and called the whole territory the province of Galatia. The people in the ~~north~~<sup>south</sup> were not Gauls but were people native to the area, plus several thousand Jews. The cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were in the southern portion of the province.

In New Testament times the designation Galatia sometimes applied only to the north, and sometimes to the whole province. Luke uses it in Acts to apply to the north. Paul uses it in reference to the whole province. Scholars have divided on the question of whether Paul was writing to churches in the north which was inhabited mostly by the Gauls or the churches in the south, in the cities mentioned above. Most probably Paul wrote to churches in the cities of the south. We know that he visited these cities on his first