

INTRODUCTION

The book of Galatians contains 6 chapters, 149 verses, and 3,084 words. Yet, as is evident by the cover of this book, only chapters 1 and 2, with 45 verses and 1,026 words, are treated in this work. This calls for some explanation, as does this unusual introduction.

Galatians: Exposition, Commentary, Application, minus this introduction, was begun, to the best of my recollection, in late 2000 and finished sometime in 2001. That the bibliography does not contain anything published after the year 2000 seems to confirm at least the finish date. Although this work on Galatians actually started out as part of a commentary on the Pauline Epistles, I soon abandoned that idea, preferring instead to focus all of my attention on a more in-depth examination of not only one of the Apostle Paul's most important epistles, but one that was of special interest and study to me. I fully intended to complete the work, but a growing family, work responsibilities, and other writing projects that did not take such intense study meant that my work on Galatians had to be put aside. But nine years later, after several other books and scores of articles—and many more in the hopper—the prospect of ever finishing a commentary on Galatians was even worse. Therefore, since the completion of this work may never come to fruition, I thought it best to at least publish what I had accomplished thus far. Thus the title of *Galatians 1 & 2: Exposition, Commentary, Application*.

It should be noted, though, that it should not be seen as too irregular to publish something on just the first two chapters of Galatians. The Book of Galatians can be neatly divided into three sections of two chapters each. The first two chapters make up the

personal or biographical subdivision of the epistle. There have actually been articles,¹ book chapters,² and whole books³ published on just these two chapters.

My approach to the Book of Galatians is traditional; that is, I reject the so-called “new perspective” on Paul.⁴ I hold that the “churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2) are in South Galatia. I accept not only an early date for Galatians, but believe it to be Paul’s first epistle. But because this is an introduction to this book rather than an introduction to the Book of Galatians, it is suggested that the reader consult a New Testament survey or introduction to get an overview of not just Galatians, but of Paul and his epistles, before proceeding further into the book.

Because this work is so unequivocally based on the Bible, several features which heighten this relationship are worthy of note.

¹E.g., Paula Fredriksen, “Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2,” *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 42 (1991), 532-564; Beverly R. Gaventa, “Galatians 1 and 2: Autobiography as Paradigm,” *Novum Testamentum* 28 (1986), 309-326; Jack T. Sanders, “Paul’s ‘Autobiographical Statements’ in Galatians 1-2,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1966), 335-343; D. J. Versput, “Paul’s Gentile Mission and the Jewish Christian Community: A Study of the Narrative in Galatians 1 and 2,” *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993), 36-58; Johan S. Vos, “Paul’s Argumentation in Galatians 1-2,” *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994), 1-16; James D. G. Dunn, “The Relationship Between Paul and Jerusalem According to Galatians 1 and 2,” *New Testament Studies* 28 (1982), 461-478.

²James D. Hester, “Epidictic Rhetoric and Persona in Galatians 1 and 2,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, edited by Mark D. Nanos (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 181-196; Edward Adams, “Ideology and Point of View in Galatians 1-2: A Critical Linguistic Analysis,” in *Diglossia and Other Topics in New Testament Linguistics*, edited by Stanley E. Porter. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.

³E.g., Roy E. Ciampa, *The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998); Stephen A. Cummins, *Paul and the Crucified Christ in Antioch: Maccabean Martyrdom and Galatians 1 and 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); William R. Newell, *Paul Versus Peter or Remarks on Galatians I and II* (Grand Rapids: Bible Doctrines to Live by Publications, n.d. [1930]).

⁴See especially Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002); and Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The ‘Lutheran’ Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004).

All Scripture quotations appear in bold print so as to readily distinguish the words of Scripture from the rest of the text. The section of Scripture to be commented on is given in full before comments on each individual verse are made. The current verse (or verses) being commented on appears at the top of each page. All comments on a particular verse or portion of a verse of Scripture are contained in one paragraph to facilitate reference to the appropriate Scripture. Technical and textual matters appear only in the footnotes, thereby making the commentary unencumbered and profitable to the average preacher or layman with little or no training in Greek, textual criticism, or the nuances of theology. Because of its widespread popularity, the New International Version (and its textual base) is the modern version used in occasional comparisons with the Authorized Version (and its underlying Greek text).

As I read over this work before its publication, I see some places where I am tempted to revise the text or add some new material. Clearly, I have resisted this temptation or the book would never have been published. Not that I am unhappy with the book. I just know that once I started making changes there would be no end to it.

Do I agree now with everything I have previously written? I think so. Would I omit anything? Probably. Would I expand some areas? Certainly. Would I add some appendixes? Absolutely. Why does chapter 1 contain so fewer footnotes than chapter 2? I don't know. Aside from the commentary ending after chapter 2, the references in the text to the introduction to Galatians that doesn't exist should serve as a reminder that this book should be considered a fascicle of a work in progress.

As one can see from the bibliography, I have left no stone unturned when it comes to research in Galatians. With but a few exceptions, my sources are on my bookshelves and in my files, not just listed in the bibliography. Lord willing, and health, time, and life permitting, I intend, albeit in the distant future, to finish my research on Galatians, as well as provide a detailed introduction and revision of these first two chapters.