

Uniqueness of Paul's Letter to the Galatians
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- Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia is one of the earliest of his letters to the churches – some argue that it is the earliest.
 - Galatians – either 49-50 or 55, there is actually a dispute among scholars about this.
 - 1 Thessalonians – 51
 - 2 Thessalonians - 51
 - 1 Corinthians – 56
 - 2 Corinthians – 57
 - Romans – 58
 - Ephesians – 61
 - Philippians – 61
 - Colossians – 61
- Because it is thought by many to be the earliest of Paul's letters and was certainly written before Romans, Galatians represents the first time that the gospel, and specifically the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone, was actually set down in writing.
- Unlike his letters to the other churches, Galatians was not written to a single church in a single city, but to a group of several churches in an entire region in Asia Minor in what is now modern day Turkey.
- Like Romans, Galatians is as much a theological treatise or tract as it is a letter. Indeed, the word 'justify' appears in Galatians 8 times. The word occurs 15 times in Romans (a much longer and more detailed exposition of the gospel,) and only two times in all of Paul's other letters (1 Cor 6:11, Titus 3:7.)¹ In other words, the term "justification", which is Paul's "primary metaphor for salvation"², occurs 8 times in Galatians and zero times in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and 2 Corinthians and only once in 1 Corinthians. That means those letters are not about salvation, whereas this one is.
- Observe Paul's tone in this letter, which is completely different from the tone in his other letters to the churches.
 - Instead of giving thanks to God for their steadfastness in the faith, he rebukes them. He does this not out of anger toward the Galatians – indeed his tone is almost parental toward them. His tone is one of disappointment and amazement.
 - Make no mistake, he *is* angry, but his anger is directed to the false teachers – the Judaizers – who moved in after he left, questioned his apostolic credentials, and corrupted the gospel he had preached to them.
 - Toward these interlopers he uses stern, even angry words that rarely appear in his other writings, saying they are "accursed" (1:8 and 1:9) and should be "emasculated" (5:12.)
 - He strongly defends his apostolic credentials and stresses that the gospel he has preached to them was a revelation directly from God, not from man.

¹ Fee and Stuart, *Reading the Bible for All It's Worth*, 59.

² *Ibid*, 58-59.