

Galatians and Philippians

Paul's Personal History

Interpreting the Text:

1. Professors Attridge and Bartlett compare Acts 15 and the letter to the Galatians as they cover the same general moment in history. They argue that Galatians is more accurate to the reality, while Acts, written later, may have details added to help build the church. What stands out to you when comparing the two?
2. The language in Paul's introduction to the Galatians turns critical more quickly than some of his other letters. How do you hear Paul's tone in these first two chapters? How do we think he feels about the Galatians from this introduction?
3. Martin Luther said that Galatians was his Katherine von Bora—his wife's name. That is, of all scripture, this was the one book he clung to with all his heart. That is because Galatians insists most strongly that our right relationship to God depends on faith. How do you think Paul understood faith? How do you understand it? Was Paul onto something? Was Luther?

Applying the Text:

1. Paul introduces himself and claims his authority as an apostle in this letter in a way that echoes Jeremiah's call in the Hebrew scriptures. How do you imagine you might receive someone today given an introduction like Paul's? What might your own introduction and claim to ministerial work look like?
2. Very few Christians today argue about the continuing validity of circumcision or even about dietary requirements based on the Pentateuch. Are there issues in your communities where Christians have claimed that there are marks or practices of the Christian that sets us apart from the world around us? How do you evaluate these arguments?