

**Message #1****Various Texts**

Today we begin the study of a New Testament book in the Bible that is not only the most Pauline of all his epistles, but is a book that is known to cause major spiritual explosions. In fact, one scholar said this book is “spiritual dynamite.” It literally was used by God to blow open Church history. This book is so powerful that it has affected churches, denominations and lives. Dr. Warren Wiersbe said this book is so dynamic that he believed his study and exposition of it would cost him speaking opportunities.

This book contains the full power and punch of the Holy Spirit. It is a book that is cutting and convicting. It has been called the “Magna Carta” of Christian liberty, the “fighting epistle of Paul,” the “battle cry” of the Reformation, the “declaration of emancipation from legalism.” This is the book that God used to set me free from a denominational legalism that dominated my life.

This was Martin Luther’s favorite epistle of which he said, “This is my epistle. I am wedded to it.” He called this epistle his “Katie von Bora,” which was his wife’s name. Luther so loved this epistle that after he expounded it publicly in church, he turned right around and started all over and expounded it a second time. He said he did this so that Satan could not take away the doctrine of faith alone and substitute it with the doctrine of works and men’s traditions.

The book of course is Galatians and in the next weeks I would like to take you on one of the most exciting theological journeys of your life. This book has already affected you in ways you probably don’t even know, but you will know when we are done. To begin our journey, we want to ask and answer six questions:

**QUESTION #1 – Why study Galatians?**

We always begin with this question because it forces us to think very concretely and systematically about the book we are to study. We offer five reasons:

**Reason #1** - Because Galatians is one of only 66 rare inspired books of the Bible.

The most important collection of N.T. manuscripts is housed today at the Beatty Museum near Dublin. In that museum is the famous manuscript known as “p-46” (papyrus 46). It consists of 86 slightly mutilated leaves written on 11 by 6 ½ inch paper and **it includes the entire book of Galatians**. This manuscript is dated around A.D. 250.

In a monastery at Mt. Sinai, a German scholar by the name of Tischendorf discovered 43 leaves of paper that contained four O.T. books. In 1859, as he was about to return to Germany, he found a copy of the Scriptures which included over half of the O.T. and all of the N.T. on a total of 364 ½ pages of 13 ½ by 14 inch sheets of paper. This manuscript is known as the “Codex Sinaiticus” or “Aleph.” It was copied in A.D. 340 and **it contained the complete book of Galatians**.

The early church leaders said Galatians was an inspired book of the Bible: Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202); Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215); Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315-386); Eusebius (A.D. 325-340); Jerome (A.D. 340-420) and Augustine (A.D. 400).

Galatians is a book that was quoted as a book belonging in the Bible by Polycarp (A.D. 110-150); Diognetus (A.D. 150); Justin Martyr (A.D. 150-155); Tertullian (A.D. 150-220) and Origen (A.D. 185-254).

Galatians is a book that was classified as an inspired book in all the early canon listings of inspired books: Marcion (A.D. 140); Muratorian (A.D. 170); Apostolic (A.D. 300); Cheltenham (A.D. 360) and Athanasius (A.D. 367).

Galatians appears in the early translations as an inspired book: Old Latin (A.D. 200); Old Syriac (A.D. 400).

Galatians was deemed an inspired book by all the major church council meetings: Council of Nicea (A.D. 325-340); Council of Hippo (A.D. 393) and Council of Carthage (A.D. 397 & A.D. 419).

The evidence is overwhelming; Galatians is an inspired book of God. Even though it has been called “Luther’s book,” it is God’s book and this book will prove to be dynamite in our lives.

**Reason #2** - Because Galatians is a book that presents the glorious truth of how one can really be set free. **Gal. 5:1**

There are many things that enslave people—work, alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, sports, but **nothing is more theologically dangerous or enslaving as law and legalism**. People are gripped by it and cannot shake it. Even though Paul teaches in his theological counterpart to Galatians, which is Romans (10:4) that “Christ is the end of the law,” many have a hard time grasping this point.

No person will ever be free until they begin to grasp grace. Galatians is a book that stresses real freedom that leads to real happiness and real joy. Real freedom brings happiness and real freedom is not rigid legalism nor unbridled license. This book of Galatians will set you free and you will soar like an eagle.

**Reason #3** - Because Galatians is a book that stresses justification is by faith alone apart from any works. **Gal. 2:16; 3:11; 22-24**

Martin Luther said if we lose this doctrine we lose truth, life and salvation. Listen, the righteousness that makes us right with God is passive and not active. You do not work for this; you do not earn this; you do not get this by keeping the O.T. Law or man-made codes. You are given total and complete righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing less and nothing else. This book drives that point home.

I love a story that was told about Lewis Sperry Chafer on this point. Dr. Chafer said that when it came time for him to go to heaven, he could imagine himself standing at the entrance into heaven and an angel saying to him, "Lewis, in what are you trusting to get into heaven?" He said I would say, "Well I am trusting in Jesus Christ alone." If the angel were to say, "Now Lewis, wait a minute, weren't you a good Christian man?" Lewis would say, "I do not trust in anything but that which Jesus Christ has done for me." And then the angel would say, "But Lewis, weren't you a preacher and didn't you preach faithfully for many years? Weren't you the president of a theological seminary?" Dr. Chafer would say, "I trust only in what Jesus Christ has done for me." That is Paul's message in Galatians.

**Reason #4** - Because Galatians is a book that stresses sanctification is by faith alone apart from any works of the Law. **Gal. 5:1-6**

The grace of God is the way "to" life and it is also the way "of" life. H. A. Ironside said that much of the emphasis of the book of Romans is how one is justified by faith and the emphasis of Galatians is how to live when you are justified by faith.

We have been saved by faith, not by keeping the Law and that is how we are to grow by faith. We are not to put ourselves back under the Law because we will not grow if we do. In fact, we will be miserable. This book says we may produce the fruit of the Spirit with our lips and in our lives, but this will not come by a legalistic law focus; but by a focus on grace.

Years ago I used to hunt elk in the mountains of Idaho and Wyoming. There are two ways to get up those mountains. The first way is that you physically work your way up the mountain. You struggle and huff and puff and try to work your way up a mountain. The other way is to let a horse take you up and you go along for the ride. That is the way spirituality works.

One way is to try and huff and puff and struggle your way to sanctification and the other is to let the Holy Spirit work in your life so that you go along for the ride. This book of Galatians is a book that shows us how to ride through life in the grace of God.

**Reason #5** - Because Galatians is a book that is extremely important to the history of the church.

There are basically two kinds of thinking when it comes to the righteousness of God. One way of thinking is that we become righteous by keeping the Law. The other way of thinking is we become righteous by developing in grace.

One historian observed had not Paul written Galatians, the Church would have been lost in slavery to Mosaic O.T. Law legalism and would have become nothing more than an offshoot sect of Judaism. This is the book that God used to stir Martin Luther, who launched the Reformation. J. Vernon McGee said that Galatians has been the backbone of every spiritual movement in the past 1900 years.

There are some old editions of John Bunyan's "Pilgrims Progress" that have a drawing of Bunyan seated by an open window totally absorbed in studying Luther's commentary of Galatians. Bunyan said next to the Scriptures, he preferred Luther's Galatians to all the books he had ever seen. So this is a book very important to the history of the Church.

**QUESTION #2** – Who wrote Galatians?

**There is absolutely no doubt that Galatians was written by the Apostle Paul.** In fact, this is the only N.T. book where Paul says that he wrote it "with my own hand" (**6:11**). We offer four simple proofs that Paul wrote Galatians:

**Proof #1** - The book says it was written by the Apostle Paul. **Gal. 1:1; 5:2**

**Proof #2** - The book contains much that is personal concerning Paul's life and ministry.  
**Gal. 1:11-2:14**

**Proof #3** - The book contains instruction and language that is peculiar to the Apostle Paul. One commentator said this entire book "from beginning to end breathes" Pauline authorship.

**Proof #4** - The universal testimony of Church history says Galatians was written by Paul.

The fact that this book was written by Paul clearly shows an amazing display of God's power. This is an amazing transformation of a man because no man was more devoted to law or ritualistic legalism than the Apostle Paul.

Paul had been a man devoted to religious traditions and ceremonial righteousness, but in this book Paul turns his back on all of it in view of the truth of God and in view of the grace of God.

Can we expect a Catholic or a Presbyterian or a Reformed or a Baptist church member to turn his back on religious rituals, traditions, laws and man-made legalism? Ask Mr. Luther.

Can we expect one who has been a Mormon or a Muslim or a Seventh Day Adventist or a Jehovah's Witness to turn their backs on their legal coded system of rules, regulations and Sabbath day mandates? Just ask Paul. He did it and he demands it and the proof of it is the book of Galatians, which he wrote.

**QUESTION #3** – To whom is the book of Galatians written?

There is a clear statement in **Galatians 1:2** that say the letter was written "to the churches of Galatia." In **Galatians 3:1** Paul lumps them all together in one statement "you foolish Galatians." So obviously we conclude that this book was written to a group of churches in a region known as Galatia (I Cor. 16:1).

The name Galatia comes from the warlike group of people known as Celts or Gauls, who migrated to Asia Minor in 278 B.C. The name “Gaul” means warrior and is a synonym for the word “Galatae” which means noble. The term Galatia may refer to one of two things: 1) An actual group of ethnic people who were literally Gauls, who lived primarily in the northern part of Asia minor. This land was originally inhabited by the Phrygians, but was overrun by the Gauls. This is a very mountainous area. 2) It can also refer to the entire Roman province known as Galatia, whose churches were primarily in the south—Pisidia Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. We believe it is the second group to whom this letter was written. Today this area is modern day Turkey.

**QUESTION #4** – When was the book of Galatians written?

There are two key matters in the book of Galatians that are important to the dating of the book:

**Matter #1** - The identification of Paul’s visit to Jerusalem. **Gal. 2:1**

In the book of Acts, Paul visits Jerusalem five times:

- 1) His first post-conversion visit after being saved. Acts 9:26-30
- 2) His famine relief visit in which he was to take finances to the elders in Jerusalem. Acts 11:30
- 3) His famous conference and council visit to defend what he had been teaching. Acts 15:1-30
- 4) His quick visit in which he went up to Jerusalem to greet them, then leaves. Acts 18:22
- 5) His arrest visit in which he is arrested in Jerusalem. Acts 21:15-17

The question is which of these visits fits the one of **Galatians 2**? More than likely it is visit #2 because in **Galatians 2:1** Paul mentions that he is visiting Jerusalem “again,” which would indicate he had been there before.

**Matter #2** - The implication of Paul’s two visits to Galatia. **Gal. 4:13**

We know from **Galatians 4:13** that Paul had been to Galatia at least once previously.

The Apostle Paul visited Galatia on every one of his three missionary journeys. However, on Paul’s first visit to Galatia, when he first established churches, he visited those churches twice—once on his way through and once on his way back (Acts 14:1, 6-7, 20-21). We think it is this visit that is referred to in **Galatians 4:13**.

**So our conclusion is that Paul wrote Galatians shortly after his first visit to this region, probably in the year A.D. 48-49.** If this is the case, then Galatians is the first N.T. book Paul wrote.

What is significant about this is that one of the first things that need to be understood early in the life of a new Christian is that the believer needs to be thoroughly indoctrinated with the theme of the Grace of God. They need to grasp grace apart from law, apart from legalism and apart from men's religious traditions.

**QUESTION #5** – Why did Paul write Galatians?

The underlying and ultimate reason why he had to write Galatians was because the Galatians were so doctrinally fickle and foolish that they could be quickly swayed and swept away by faulty, unsound doctrine. If the religious arguments seemed reasonable, these Galatians set aside their reason and believed it.

There are three reasons why Paul wrote Galatians:

**Reason #1** - Because there were those who were trying to discredit Paul. **Gal. 1:1**

In every single chapter of this book of Galatians, Paul mentions the fact that there were people who opposed him and his doctrine and they were trying to discredit him and his grace teaching (**1:6-7; 2:4-5; 3:1; 4:17; 5:7-12; 6:12-13**). Paul's teaching was opposed by everyone.

Had these people succeeded, Christianity built on grace would have been stifled. Legalistic Judaizers were infiltrating the churches and trying to undermine Paul's credibility and authority because he was preaching the pure grace of God. They were trying to say that Paul was not really called by God to be an apostle; they were saying he really didn't know what he was talking about. So Paul wrote this to defend himself. He defends his calling and he defends his doctrine.

**Reason #2** - Because there were those who were attacking the Gospel of pure grace salvation.  
**Gal. 1:6**

When it comes to those who talk about having faith in Jesus Christ, they tend to fall into two categories: 1) Faith in Jesus Christ plus works; 2) Faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing. Paul taught that salvation was faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing and he also said he did not get this grace gospel from any man (**Gal. 1:12**).

Many were attacking the message that said you are saved by faith alone in Christ alone. They were saying that this was not enough to save. They were claiming that you needed faith plus you needed to have works like that of the Law. This is still the thinking of many religious people today: Mormons teach faith plus law works; Jehovah's Witness teach faith plus law works; Seventh Day Adventists teach faith plus law works; Catholics teach faith plus law works as do some Reformed and some Presbyterians and even some Baptists. Paul calls this "another gospel" and he said let those who teach it be accursed.

You are not saved by what you do; you are saved by what you believe. Every false religion that should be accursed will tell you that you are saved by what you do and Paul says you are saved by what has been done for you and all you must do is believe in Jesus Christ.

**Reason #3** - Because there were those who were attacking pure grace sanctification.

We are saved by faith and that is how we are to live. We are free in Jesus Christ. We do not live by some legal code or by a few O.T. systems of legalistic laws. I love something one Bible teacher said, "Galatians is not only a proclamation of liberty; it is a protest against legalism."

We do not live by a focus on the religious traditions and codes invented by men. Those who try to make you believe that you are really spiritual by keeping their codes are attacking the truth of God and the grace work of the Spirit of God.

**QUESTION #6** – What is the theme of Galatians?

The theme of the book is that **New Testament believers have been called out of Law into Grace and they are never to try and mingle these two systems together for salvation or for sanctification.** One in Christ is set free by grace and has liberty by grace. Luther said I admonish all true teachers of the Word of God to bring people out of law and into grace.