

## 48 – Galatians: Live in Freedom!

- Galatians was written to **several churches in the region called Galatia**, generally thought to include the cities in central Asia Minor of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Not just to one church group. The date is debated, but probably somewhere between 48 and 60 AD.
- This book is thought to be **addressed mostly to Jews**, as Paul identified himself with them (as having been “under the law”). He stated that the Law had previously been a “schoolmaster”, though now they were not under the Law. It appears these people had returned to the traditions and laws of Judaism, rather than the freedom under grace.
- False teachers, what he calls “Judaizers”** had crept into these churches, turning them back to the ways of Judaism (in particular circumcision), enslaving them again to the Law, rather than living in the freedom of grace. They mixed the Christian faith with the traditions and laws of Judaism, and taught that people were saved by faith *and by keeping the Torah*. This was a dangerous threat to the simple fact that we are not saved by the Law, but by God’s grace. They also discredited Paul. Paul wrote to correct this, and to once again defend his apostleship and his teachings.
- This is **one of Paul’s shortest letters, but is thought to be one of the most influential**. Some people have even called it “a short Romans” as it contains similar teachings. It clearly proclaims justification by faith, and has a platform of Christian freedom as opposed to legalism under the Law.
- In the early church a division rose between the Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians over these issues. Paul tried to stop this division and keep the church united.
- This book was so important at this time, and in later years, that it was called “the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation” because its theme is salvation by grace through faith alone. Luther leaned heavily on the book of Galatians.
- Galatians **has also been called the “Magna Charta of Christian Liberty.”** The Magna Charta was an English proclamation written in 1215 detailing the rights and liberties of the common people (*it greatly influenced the American Constitution*). Galatians makes it clear that our salvation from the penalty and power of sin is not by works, but by God’s grace alone, through faith in His Son’s work on the cross. That is the freedom of the believer, free from the enslaving nature of the Law.



*For freedom  
Christ has set us free;  
stand firm therefore,  
and do not submit again  
to a yoke of slavery.*

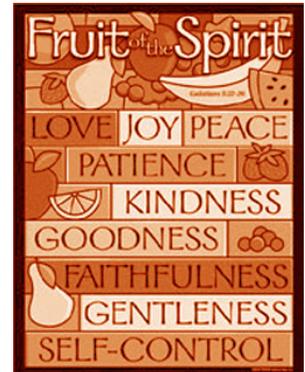
Galatians 5:1

### Highlights

<p><b>Chapters 1-2 Rebuke and Defense</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greetings (1:1-5)</li> <li><u>There is only one gospel, the gospel of grace</u>, rebuke and Paul’s amazement at their turning from it (1:6-10)</li> <li>Paul <u>defends his authority to teach</u>; independent of disciples, his gospel given by revelation, events surrounding his conversion, recognized by the disciples, rebuke of Peter for differentiating between Gentiles and Jewish believers (1:11-2:21)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Chapters 3-4 The doctrine of Grace Justification by Faith</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Defense of the doctrine</u>; Galatians experience, example of Abraham, effect of the Law, work of Christ, permanence of faith, purpose of Law, believer’s current position (3:1-29)</li> <li><u>Illustration of the doctrine</u>; a legal illustration, personal plea not to turn to legalism, to remember their relationship, consider his attitude toward them</li> <li><u>Biblical illustration</u> (4:21-31) the sons of a freewoman (Sarah and Isaac) and a slave (Hagar and Ishmael) (4:21-23) and allegorical interpretation (4:24-27), personal application of this truth (4:28-31)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Chapters 5-6 Flesh vs Spirit Led</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Defense of Christian Liberty</u> (5:1-6:10); turning back to Law ruins grace (5:1-2), makes us debtors (5:3), is to fall away from grace (5:4-6), restricts progress of believers (5:7-10), removes offense of Cross (5:11-12); Freedom from Law is not permission to sin (5:13-15)</li> <li>▪ <u>Live according to the Spirit</u> (5:16-26); Detailing the works of the flesh (5:19-21) vs works of the Spirit (5:22-23); Victory over sin (5:24-26)</li> <li>▪ <u>How to live the believer's life</u> (6:1-10), actions toward believers who have sinned (6:1), one who is burdened (6:2-5), pastors and teachers (6:6-9), toward all men (6:10)</li> <li>▪ Concluding thoughts (6:11-18), Paul's "signature" (6:11), his enemies (6:12-13), his boast in the cross of Jesus (6:14-16)</li> <li>▪ Benediction and closing (6:17-18)</li> </ul>
--	--

- In the first two chapters Paul shows his amazement for their turning away from grace, and defended his authority to teach, and the teachings he gave them. In chapters 3 and 4 he defended the doctrine of grace, and justification by faith in Jesus alone, not dependent on works. In chapters 5 and 6 he indicated that freedom in grace does not mean lawless behavior, but a life powered by the Holy Spirit, not the flesh. This book is as relevant today as it was then. Our salvation is ONLY by the grace of God, through His Son, Jesus.



- ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*** (5:22-23)  
**The fruit of the Spirit...notice this is singular, not plural.** It is not “fruits” but fruit. The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is evident by nine different graces, all of which make up ONE manifested fruit of the Spirit in us. All of these things should be found in us, not just a few. Remember which is first – **LOVE**. All the others are based in this one, as Paul emphasized in his first note to the Corinthians: ***“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*** (1 Cor 13:13) Notice also that *we are not producing this fruit*. It is the Holy Spirit in us. Ultimately, this fruit is simply the life of Jesus lived in us. The only way we can do that is to give ourselves over to Him completely. He is the Master. The works of the flesh are listed in the verses before this. They are set in contrast to one another. We live and walk in this world by the Spirit, not by the flesh.
- This letter does not correct their *behavior*, but their *general beliefs*. The very foundation of their faith was being threatened by returning to the Law and abandoning the doctrine of grace. This letter is also stripped of “niceties.” No mention of others, no request for prayers, no mention of their standing. Paul, a former Jew in good standing with a stellar pedigree, had absolutely no tolerance for legalism under the Law of Moses. This is a stern and serious letter to correct some serious problems of doctrine.
- It should also be noted, however, that the book of Galatians **does not disregard the Law of Moses**, or criticize it in any way. Its perfection and demands are still affirmed. But these same qualities make it impossible for mankind to fulfill. God has provided another way. Justification by FAITH in Jesus Christ. Jesus fulfilled the Law *for* us.
- Some people today are also in the same danger as the Galatians. Many Christians today are attracted to our rich background in Judaism as the foundation of Christianity, and some have even taken this to the place where they believe they must follow the Law. However, we still cannot achieve salvation by fulfilling the Law of Moses. It is impossible. We are not under the Law anymore. Also, many other religions have a garbled mixture of law and grace requiring both faith and works. This is not God’s plan, and we cannot earn our salvation. These other religions actually make people slaves, rather than set them free, as God has done with us. Paul proclaims this freedom in the book of Galatians.
- **COMMENTARY: Few books have had a more profound influence on the history of mankind than has this small tract, for such it should be called... Christianity might have been just one more Jewish sect, and the thought of the Western world might have been entirely pagan had it never been written...Galatians embodies the germinal teaching on Christian freedom which separated Christianity from Judaism, and which launched it upon a career of missionary conquest... It was the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation, because its teaching of salvation by grace alone became the dominant theme of the preaching of the Reformers.—Merrill Tenney**