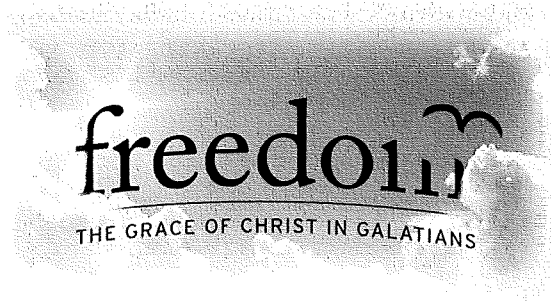


# Wednesday Night **BIBLE STUDY**

Wednesday, September 6, 2017 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



## **A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF GALATIANS** **Introduction**

It is doubtful if there is any greater joy on earth than the joy of being truly free. And the elation is heightened if a person has once been in bondage, held captive by a power that is impossible to overcome. Being liberated from such clutches brings pleasure beyond description.

Ask anyone who has been freed from prison. Or someone who has once been held captive by a foreign enemy or country. Or worse, a victim of endless demonic oppression who is now free of that awful, frightening influence.

Equally delightful is the experience of being delivered from the paralyzing chains of legalism. There are few more dreadful dungeons! And yet there are people today who have relinquished their liberty and surrendered themselves to the demands of the Law, selling themselves into the very slavery from which Christ came to deliver us. What's worse, there are merchants of legalism... modern day Judaizers... who prey on such unsuspecting Christians.

This letter sets us free. It is a bold statement of liberation, pointing us away from a "gospel" of works and toward the glorious grace Christ provides His own. May our Lord use these truths to free us from fleshly human bondage by the liberating power of His Spirit. As Jesus once said, "... you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" –John 8:32

### **"An Introduction to the Book of Galatians"** *Galatians (Survey)*

"The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Katherine." Moving words! These belong to Martin Luther, who considered Galatians the best of all the books of the Bible. We can understand why he would feel this way, for this letter has been called "the battle-cry of the Reformation" and the "Magna Carta of spiritual emancipation." Galatians is the New Testament book affirming Christian liberty... the cornerstone of the Protestant faith – "spiritual dynamite," according to Clark Pinnock. No other books (except

Romans, perhaps) so forcefully and pointedly answers the question, “Are we saved by believing or by achieving?” No other book grabs legalism so firmly by the throat! The deeper we dig into this mine of theological and practical wealth, the richer we shall be... and the more we shall understand why Luther called the letter his own epistle, “to whom I have plighted my troth.”

## I. THE THEMES WORTH NOTING –

One only has to read several times the chapters (one hundred forty-nine verses) of Galatians before realizing the themes which dominate Paul’s letter.

### **3 Themes Worth Noting in the Book of Galatians:**

1. **Strong affirmation of liberty based on grace** – Paul says in Galatians 5:1, “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*” And in Galatians 5:13, “*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty (freedom; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*”
2. **Bold attack on legalism based on works** – Paul writes in Galatians 1:6, “*I marvel that you (Galatians believers) are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel.*” And a little later in Galatians 3:1-2, “*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? <sup>2</sup> This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”* And in the very next chapter in Galatians 4:9 Paul says, “*<sup>9</sup> But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?”*
3. **Courageous encouragement for those caught in between (unable to defend themselves)** – Paul speaks to this in Galatians 2:4-5 when he says, “*<sup>4</sup> And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), <sup>5</sup> to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*” And in Galatians 5:6-10 Paul writes, “*<sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. <sup>7</sup> You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup> This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. <sup>9</sup> A little leaven leavens the whole lump. <sup>10</sup> I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.*”

## II. THE VALUES WORTH CONSIDERING –

The longer time is spent alongside a truth, the more its value is appreciated. The value of the book/letter of Galatians can be summed up this way:

### **4 Important Values Worth Considering in the Book of Galatians:**

1. **Galatians warns against leaving the true Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9)** – Paul writes some very strong words in Galatians 1:6-9, “*<sup>6</sup> I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, <sup>7</sup> which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup> But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say*

again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Note that the term “trouble” or “disturbing” in some translations means to shake, to stir or to agitate; it suggests unsettling one’s mind.

2. **Galatians upholds the significance of grace (Gal. 2:16, 21)**- Galatians actually has some of the strongest passages on grace of any place in Scripture. Although the actual word is not mentioned here Paul is speaking of a grace verses works salvation when he says in Galatians 2:16, “<sup>16</sup> Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” And a few verses down in verse 21 he says, “<sup>21</sup> I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.” Note that justification by faith is the term Scripture gives for the sovereign act of God, whereby He declares righteous the unbelieving sinner while he is still in his sinning state, and declares him free from guilt and with perfect righteousness in His sight, because of the work of Christ on the sinner’s behalf.
3. **Galatians presents the true function of the Mosaic Law (Gal. 3:23-26)** – The Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 3:23-26, “<sup>23</sup> But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” To look at the role of a first-century tutor is to make this analogy meaningful today. A tutor was a pedagogue or a “child-conductor.” He was generally a slave... the highest trusted servant. His owner’s son was trusted into his care so that he might escort (conduct) the child to and from school and, in fact, watch him all day long to see that he was obedient. When the child was disobedient, the tutor would administer discipline (which could be quite severe). The boy longed for the day that he would be free from his tutor. The Law performed the same service on man’s behalf. By its preparatory, disciplinary nature, the Law (the tutor) readied our hearts for eager acceptance of the Gospel when it was presented.
4. **Galatians provides a needed balance so that liberty is not abused (Gal. 5:13-16, 25-26)** – This is an important component of grace... that is that grace is never to be used as an excuse to sin, nor abuse others. Paul writes in Galatians 5:13-16, “<sup>13</sup> For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup> For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>15</sup> But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! <sup>16</sup> I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” And then he adds in verses 25-26, “<sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

### III. THE PARTICULARS WORTH CHARTING –

The purpose of the Galatian letter was to offer a defense of the Gospel at a time when Judaizers were defending their position that a man’s salvation was secured by faith plus works. Galatians says, in essence, “No... it is by faith alone.” This defense is vigorous, blunt, direct, and brief... yet full of love.

#### **6 Important “Need-to-Knows” About Galatians:**

1. **The Theme of Galatians – “Liberation (freedom) through the Gospel”**

2. **The Date of Galatians** – Written around 50 A.D. (it may have been Paul’s first letter)
3. **The Recipients of Galatians** – To Christians in churches in the regions of Galatia in Asia Minor, that Paul had founded in his first missionary journey, namely; Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe
4. **Key Words in Galatians** –
  - Law – Used 31 times
  - Flesh – Used 18 times
  - Spirit – Used 15 times
  - Faith – Used 21 times
  - Promise – Used 10 times
  - Bondage – Used 11 times (in some related sense)

*Note: Interestingly, the book of Galatians is very much about “grace” but the word is only used 7 times in the Paul’s letter.*
5. **Key Verse in Galatians** – Galatians 5:1, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”
6. **A Brief Outline of Galatians** -

	<i>ISSUE OF TRUTH</i>	<i>NATURE OF SALVATION</i>	<i>PRINCIPLES OF HOLINESS</i>	
INTRODUCTION 1:1-10	Confusion	Works vs. Faith	Don’t be enslaved!	CONCLUSION 6:11-18
	Clarification	Legalism vs. Justification	Through love, serve!	
	Correction	Bondage vs. Freedom	Walk in the Spirit! Bear other’s burdens! Let us do good!	
	1:11                      2:21	3:1                              4:31	5:1                              6:10	
	<i>PERSONAL NARRATIVE</i>	<i>DOCTRINAL EMPHASIS</i>	<i>PRACTICAL APPLICATION</i>	
	The Gospel is Authentic (Source)	The Gospel is Superior (Defense)	The Gospel is Liberating (Impact)	
	<i>AUTHORITY OF APOSTLE</i>	<i>FAILURE OF LEGALISM</i>	<i>POWER OF SPIRIT</i>	

#### IV. SOME INTERPRETIVE CHALLENGES –

##### **6 Interpretive Challenges in the Book of Galatians:**

1. **Paul’s visit to Jerusalem** – First, Paul described visit to Jerusalem and a subsequent meeting with Peter, James and John (Gal. 2:1-10). There is a question to be resolved in the text, as to whether that was his visit to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), or his earlier visit bringing famine relief to the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:27-30). This is important because it helps us date the letter.
2. **Baptismal regeneration** – Second, those who teach baptismal regeneration (the false doctrine that baptism is necessary for salvation or that baptism itself saves) support their view from Galatians 3:27, “<sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

3. **Biblical roles of men and women** – Third, others have used this epistle to support their attacks on the biblical roles of men and women, claiming that the spiritual equality taught in Galatians 3:28, *“<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* is incompatible with the traditional concept of authority and submission.
4. **Questions of eternal security** – Fourth, those who reject the doctrine of eternal security argue that the phrase *“you have fallen from grace”* in Galatians 5:4 describes believers who lost their salvation.
5. **Paul writing the letter by his own hand** – Fifth, there is disagreement whether Paul’s statement *“see with what large letter I have written to you with my own hand!”* refers to the entire letter, or merely the concluding verses.
6. **The blurring of the line between Israel and the church** - Finally, many claim that Paul erased the line between Israel and the church when he identified the church as the *“Israel of God”* in Galatians 6:16.

These interpretative challenges will be addressed at varying degrees throughout the study.

#### V. THE PRINCIPLES WORTH OBSERVING –

Paul apparently had these in mind as he wrote the Galatian epistle. We should fix our attention on these as well.

##### 3 Principles Worth Observing from the Book of Galatians:

1. No one (no one) is immune to the temptation to drift and desert – *why?*
2. Some things are worth vigorous defense... worth fighting for – *what things?*
3. All of us began at the same place, which puts all of us on the same level – *what does this tell us?*