



Fight to Be Free

RECAP

This week's focus: The Gospel + Nothing = Salvation

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, a deeply conflicted monk, walked a half mile from his home in Wittenberg to the door of the village church and nailed up 95 theses demanding change in the church. Luther believed that centuries of religion and man-made traditions had covered up the Gospel that Jesus taught, and the Apostles proclaimed. His courageous stand for change started what is known as the Protestant Reformation. Luther would go on to translate the Latin Bible into German making the Bible available to the common man. The changes that Luther brought about in the church for how we think and talk about God's Word and the Gospel cannot be overstated.

Luther considered Paul's letter to the Galatians one of the most important books of the Bible. He called it "my epistle". He stated that, "if it were possible to marry an epistle, Galatians would be my wife". He summarized that the book of Romans clearly explains what the Gospel is while Galatians explains what the Gospel is not.

The book of Galatians has been given many titles such as "the Magna Carta of spiritual liberty", "the Christian Declaration of Independence", and "the battle cry of the Reformation". Galatians teaches believers about the Gospel of grace and equips them to discern the difference between the true Gospel and all other counterfeits.

In Paul's day, the main issue confronting the church was adding old customs and cultural practices to the Gospel. For them, this meant making the Jewish custom of circumcision a requirement for salvation. Legalism quickly raised its ugly head and false teachers began teaching a false Gospel, turning people away from the Gospel of grace.

Paul writes this letter with urgency and passion calling for believers to actively combat distortions of God's truth. If we were to write a math equation for this opening chapter, it would be: The Gospel + Anything = Nothing. Paul repeated the theme throughout the book that salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone. To add anything to the Gospel would nullify the death and resurrection of Jesus and be a completely different Gospel. Paul was willing to fight for the true Gospel at any cost and so should we.

Unfortunately, legalism is extremely difficult to root out even today. We must walk a fine line—on one hand, we do not want to fall into the legalism that the Galatians struggled with, but on the other, we cannot just live as if anything goes. The Christian's commitment to Christ is based on the free gift of grace through faith, but as Paul articulated at the end of Galatians, it also results in a life of walking by the Spirit.

Too often we lose ourselves to the extremes, ending in a legalistic attempt to earn our salvation or having an extremely lax attitude about our sin. When we focus on the grace of God and dive deeper into the truths of the Gospel, we will find that the motivation to live for Christ isn't a duty or drudgery, but a joy and an honor. His love compels us to live a life pleasing to Him.

You were called to be free. Fight for that freedom and let the book of Galatians be an encouragement to you to pursue a life of freedom in Christ, not in your own strength but in the knowledge of God's empowering grace in your life.



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SHARE (5-10 min)

Icebreaker Question: Who have been some of the most influential people in your life?

STUDY (about 30 min) Read Galatians 1:1-12, Acts 14

1. What about the message on Sunday and this passage stood out to you? What is your primary takeaway from Galatians 1:1-12?
2. In the greetings of verse 3-4, what does Paul say has already been done for you? Why do you think he starts with this greeting?
3. In verse 6-7, Paul addresses the issue head on. How would you describe what is happening? Why do you think Paul is so confrontational? What is at stake?
4. Read Acts 14. What kind of influence did the Gospel have on the people in Galatia? Two years prior to Galatians 1, how did they respond to Paul's message?
5. What caused the Galatians to turn away from the influence of Paul and the Gospel he preached to them in Acts 14?
6. Paul points out the difference between the true Gospel and counterfeits. What are some of those differences? How can you spot a counterfeit today?
7. The Judaizers in Paul's day were weighing believers down with additions and conditions to the Gospel like circumcision. Paul clarifies that the Gospel + Nothing = Salvation. What do we do today to add to the Gospel? Why do you think we are so inclined to add to the Gospel?
8. Who and what are currently the biggest influences in your life? What effect are they having on you? How are those influences impacting your view of the Gospel of Jesus?

SUPPORT (15 min)

Pray: Spend time sharing personal needs and prayer requests. Be sure to keep a journal. Consider breaking up and praying in smaller groups. Ask God to grow your faith and love for His Word as we study the book of Galatians.