

## The Half Hour That Changes the World

### Galatians

### Book 48

#### Basic Question behind the book:

*Why would you settle for second best and blow the greatest gift you've ever been given?*

#### Summary of book:

Paul's letters often start in the customary way of his time. After an initial declaration of who is sending it and who the intended recipient(s) might be, there is a blessing, followed by words of encouragement and congratulation, perhaps even a prayer, before they go into the meat of the issues of the main body of the epistle. Not so with this epistle: In verse 6 he jumps straight into chastising them for the way they have strayed from the Gospel he had preached to them. The issue at hand is important. It has to do with how we get right with God, how our sins are forgiven and how we might relate to God now. It has to do with honouring how God has worked with people in the past, but also to recognize how he is working now. It is about dealing with matters of authority and who we should listen to. It has to do with dealing with those things that hold us back and not letting them do so any longer, and so to live and move in the freedom of God. They had received the Gospel of God's salvation freely by faith, and now they were turning to works and observance of the law to try and justify themselves. Paul holds up the red card to them. This isn't on!

After the opening greetings (1:1-5) Paul launches into his tirade (vv.6-10). He speaks of his own calling by God and gives part of his testimony (1:11 - 2:14). This leads him to a summary of his teaching about how justification and faith work (2:15-21). In Chapter 3 he goes on to prove his position from Scripture, contrasting faith and the law, and speaking to some of the blessings of being a child of God. This continues in chapter 4 and in chapter 5 he speaks about the freedom of the Christian and the fruit of the Spirit, those evidences that the Spirit is at work in the believer's life. Chapter 6 gives some practical hints on living lives worthy of Christ and personal greetings.

It is a precious book of the Bible with so many treasures within it. Take time to read it. Hear Paul's harsh words of anger and reproach. Also, note what gems are to be found in the right sort of conflict.

#### Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To refute the Judaisers (who taught that Gentile believers must obey the Jewish Law in order to be saved), and to call Christians to faith and freedom in Christ.

Author: The Apostle Paul.

Recipients: Galatia isn't so much a particular place but rather a region, or even a people-group. Opinion varies as to the actual group, but there is good evidence it might be to the churches that Paul originally planted in his missionary journeying.

Dating: Probably written down about the same time as Paul was about to go to the Council of Jerusalem in about AD 49. There is no mention of the Council but the issues that the Council would debate are present throughout.

Setting: The most pressing controversy in the early church was the relationship of new believers, particular Gentiles, to the Jewish laws. This was especially a problem for the converts and for the young churches that Paul had founded on his first missionary journey. Paul wrote to correct this problem. Later, at the Council in Jerusalem, the conflict was officially resolved by the church leaders.

#### Other Reflections:

In another study we will have to look more closely at how we can move from going back to old ways of thinking, comforting though they may be, and start to move forward into what Christ has for us now and in the future, and somehow attaining to the mind of Christ.

#### Key verse:

*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (5:1)*