

What kind of things do you think are worth fighting for?
How do you choose your battles? What is the hill you want to die on?

I have no doubt Paul would say the gospel is worth fighting for.

The gospel is life and death; it is the power of God for salvation.

1. The gospel is the only way for us to have a real and right relationship with God.

There are 3 overarching themes throughout this epistle.

There is the focus of faith, **Faith is the way we access the gospel.**

There is the focus of freedom, **Freedom is the way we live in the gospel.**

There is the focus of good fruit, **Good fruit is the result of the gospel.**

So our series is:

Galatians: The Fight for Faith, Freedom, and Good Fruit.

This is a unique book in the NT, and in all of Paul's writing.

It really does have an aggressive tone.

Paul doesn't include people that say hi or that helped write the letter.

He probably wrote this letter himself rather than an assistant.

He shares personal examples and experiences.

He doesn't write the typical positive, thankful comments to start.

He just jumps right into the issue and brings his case before them.

This was also Martin Luther's favorite book.

As someone who fought for the purity of the gospel and the truth of

Scripture, Luther resonated with this powerful letter.

It is Paul's battle cry to fight against the contamination of the gospel of grace with the addition of works.

2. A contaminated gospel is a dangerous gospel.

When the gospel is contaminated the freedom of the gospel is reduced or eliminated and the good fruit produced from the gospel becomes stale at best and dead at worst.

People are always contaminating the purity of the gospel with works because

- **grace is hard to believe,**
- **it gives us something to do and feel good about,**
- **and it often gives leaders more power over people.**

Adding works to the gospel of grace is like taking clean, pure water...

...No additives, no calories, no side effects, no chemicals...

...and adding something...

-Maybe you add sugar to sweeten it up, but it rots your teeth and gives you a quick spike and a resulting crash.

-Maybe you add a colorful dye to make it look more appealing, but it turns your teeth red and makes you sick to your stomach.

Or maybe it is even worse than that...

The movie Dark Waters...

True story of one lawyer's fight against Dupont who had contaminated a community's water in West Virginia with chemicals that impacted 70,000 people and cattle.

He saw all sorts of health problems from sickness, to suffering, to death. And he started the fight to end the contamination and save people's lives.

Jesus said, come to me all you who are thirsty and I will give you living water...

But...drinking a contaminated gospel will bring all sorts of problems.

Paul wants us all to drink the pure living water of the gospel.

Let's look at the first couple of verses:

1 Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead),
2 and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

First, Paul makes clear his divine commission of apostleship.

3. Paul's gospel is God's gospel.

Paul was not selected by a group of men or a single man.
It was not the idea of a church, a group of leaders, or Peter or James.

Paul was called by Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul does not go to these lengths often to describe His call.

**Because Paul is going to fight for the message he begins with...
...the weight of his divine credentials and heavenly authority.**

The second thing we notice is he begins off the bat with the gospel...
“God raised Jesus from the dead.”

**Paul's first one two punch is...
...his divine authority and God's resurrection power in the gospel.**

Then Paul addresses the churches in Galatia:

So this is not just written to one church, but several churches.
This was not a small scale issue in one church...but for a region.
Legalism and works are still big issues in churches today.

Churches of Galatia:

There is considerable scholarly debate on what Galatia he is referring to.
Northern or southern area.

- Some believe he is referring to a group of people in the north which is more of an ethnic group originally referred to as the Gauls.
- Others believe it is referring to the southern area geographically called Galatia.

Southern Galatia is the area he visited on his first missionary journey.

*It is my opinion that Galatians was written to this southern area of churches
This is believed to put the letter around 49-50 AD.*

Which is before the Jerusalem Council we find in Acts 15.

*What is interesting about that council is they actually were officially
addressing the same sort of issue Paul is addressing here.*

(If he had written the letter later to the north, he would have most likely
referenced the Council.)

But what makes this interesting is that we know the circumstances of the
beginning of God's work in Galatia it is in Acts 13.

Churches include Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

Sometimes when we want to understand the present...

...it is a good idea to examine a little of the past.

Your past circumstances often inform your present problems.

**If you learn from the past you are less likely to repeat it, and it may
give you a better understanding of both your present and your future.**

So let's look back at Acts 13:38 to see the past circumstances in Galatia...

Context: Paul has given a very thorough Jewish foundation to his
presentation of the gospel to a group of people in the synagogue.

He talks about King David and the plan of God...

Then Paul brings up Jesus...and that is where things often go sideways.

There is something about the name of Jesus that sets people off.

We can talk about God all day.

We can reference the Big Man upstairs or other spiritual topics.

But, if we start talking about Jesus, that changes the conversation.

4. Jesus is the central point of the gospel.

Jesus taught that He is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one can come to the Father without Him.

...That is a very exclusive claim.

As long as there are different opinions that are valid and appreciated, most people are fine with you having your own opinions.

If you say that you like Chick-Fil-A, that is fine with people.
But if you say that people should only eat at Chick Fil A & you hate Cane's
...Trouble starts.

That is true with many things, but it is even stronger with Jesus.
There is a spiritual dynamic with Satan, the prince of this world.
Satan is fine with just about everything as long as it is not Jesus.

You want to follow Buddha's teaching, that's nice for you.
You want to know more about Muhammed? Sure.
You want to learn more about meditation and new age, no worries.
You want to just do good things and be kind to people, great.

**If you want to follow or investigate Jesus—
“how narrow and simple minded!”**

The bottom line is...

...**Jesus is the central point of the gospel...**

...**Everything else is just a distraction.**

What you believe about Jesus is the most important issue of life.

It creates a line of separation...believers and unbelievers.
It **doesn't** create a line of separation that is loved and unloved.

*God loves the world and wants everyone to be saved...
...but the only way you can be saved is through Jesus.*

What you believe about Jesus really is a matter of life and death, and that is why Paul thinks it is worth fighting for.

So let's jump into Acts 13...

13:38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; **39** and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Paul is making a clear distinction between Jesus and Moses.

Moses was an all-star to the Jews.

They had been depending on the law of Moses for thousands of years...this was a big change, and change is hard.

How are they different?

Moses brought laws and Jesus brings forgiveness.

The Law can't put me in right relationship with God.

The Law is great at showing us we don't measure up.

5. The Law shows me my need for the Gospel.

How?

- If I walk through life thinking I am pretty good with God.
- I compare myself to other people who are worse than myself.
- I know I have good reasons for the wrong things I do.

All of this works until I come up against the perfect law of God

When I find out one lie makes me a liar and guilty before God...

When I find out that one desire to have what someone else has is coveting and I am guilty before God...

When I find out that God looks at the heart and sees my hidden hatred and silent slander and secret lust, I am guilty before God.

I realize it is not about other people...

...it is about me and God and I am guilty.

So what they would do was keep offering sacrifices.

You could never keep the law perfectly...

...so you just kept killing animals to cover your sin.

But Jesus died once and for all.

When I am born again and receive His life...

...I am forgiven once and for all.

...I am right with God, once and for all.

In Christ I still ask for forgiveness, but there is no more sacrifice needed.

It is like when Jesus wanted to wash the disciples' feet...

I need my feet washed, but I don't need a bath.

I ask for forgiveness to restore my relationship when I have sinned...but I am always in right standing with God.

No doubt Paul was noticing his audience wasn't totally on board. And he gives them a warning...

40 Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 41 'Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.' ”

God is working and some of you won't believe it.

If you don't believe the work of God...you will perish, because your work is never going to be good enough.

So Paul from the beginning made it clear that faith in Jesus could accomplish something the law of Moses could not...

That is to be justified...

...**Justified means “to be declared righteous before God”.**

Jesus brings about the forgiveness of sins and the opportunity to be declared righteous before God.

42 So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. 43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

So for a lot of the audience this was a welcome message.

I can have a relationship with God, I can follow God and not have to keep all of these laws?!?

Central to all of the law was circumcision.

I don't have to be circumcised to be in relationship with God?

That is good news!!

44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.”

So here we see that even at the beginning there was division in Galatia.

But no matter the response...

6. The Gospel doesn't change.

There were some that would continue in grace and there were some that would oppose that grace.

Even from that rejection...

...the gospel didn't change, but a new direction began.

The message never changes, but the method always changes.

Paul began here to bring the message of the Good News not just to Jews but to everyone.

God made a way through the resurrection of Christ for everyone to have a real and right relationship with God.

Believing that Jesus, as the perfect, sinless Son of God who died for your sins and rose again for you to have life, is what you need to be saved.

We owe nothing for our sin...

...even though we owe Him everything for our life.

God doesn't force Himself on anyone.

If you choose to reject Him and His Gospel...

...that is your choice but you will perish without everlasting life.

You cannot change the gospel to make it more appealing or easier to believe.

That is when we have a false Gospel...

To add works changes the whole thing and leads to all sorts of problems...

For Paul and for the Lord, making sure that people are able to enjoy a healthy spiritual life is worth fighting for.

And that is what we will see as we study this book of Galatians.