

Introduction: This book is often described as the Magna Carta of Christian Liberty. Because it communicates the foundational teaching of Christian liberty and grace just as the Magna Carta outlined the liberties of English people under English law in 1215.

The book of Galatians is often described as the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation of 1517. It was of tremendous influence on Martin Luther. This was because of its primary teaching that salvation from God was obtained by grace through faith alone—contrary to what he was taught and believed as a Roman Catholic Priest. Martin Luther called it “my epistle” and likened it to a wife.

Authorship: The apostle Paul. (Gal. 1:1, 5:2)

Recipients: Galatia is not a city but a region. The letter was not sent to one church but rather to a group of churches. It is debated which area of Galatia it was written to—north or south. It’s not all that important in my view, for the letter ultimately is to the entire church of Jesus Christ including you and I today. However it seems more likely that he wrote it to the church of the southern region that he had visited: Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Iconium and Derbe.

Date of Writing: Galatians was one of Paul’s earliest letters. It is believed to have been written between AD 48-49 from Antioch in Syria.

Occasion: Paul is writing to warn the churches of Judaizers who had come to them and were corrupting the pure gospel of Jesus Christ, (Salvation by grace through faith alone) They were doing this by adding adherence to the OT law as necessary for Salvation. This included the rite of circumcision. (Gal. 1:6-7; 5:1-6 See Genesis 17 for a broader context of this subject.) Paul is also writing to defend his authority as an apostle of Jesus, a claim that the Judaizers challenged in the presence of these churches. (Galatians 1:1; 2:2-9) This letter was to be a remedy to a desperate situation. It was a powerful statement that eternal salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ apart from works. It has been highly relevant throughout the centuries and is so today.

Key teachings: The seriousness of the Gospel message and communicating it accurately. (Gal. 1:6-9) The powerlessness of The Law to save. (Galatians 3:10-11) The purpose of the OT Law. (Gal. 3:19) Justification before God is by grace through faith alone. (Gal. 2:15-16) The relationship between the Old and New Covenants. (Gal. 4:21-24) The believers freedom for Sin and the OT Law. (Gal. 5:1,13). Living by the power of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:16-18) The importance of doing good. (Gal. 6:9)

