

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 27 - THE term “Luther’s *Galatians*” could conceivably be taken to refer to any one of five (or even six) commentaries on the Epistle to the *Galatians* by Martin Luther. Most often it is the *Galatians* published in 1585 that is referred to by this title. The first four chapters of that exposition have been published as Volume 26 of *Luther’s Works*, together with our historical introduction to the entire commentary.

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 26 - IF the Epistle of St. Paul to the *Galatians* is, as it has often been called, the Magna Charta of Christian liberty, then Luther’s *Lectures on Galatians* of 1531 (1535) deserves to be called a declaration of Christian independence—of independence from the Law and from anything or anyone else except the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Characteristically, Luther described his relation to the epistle in more vivid terms. “The Epistle to the *Galatians*,” he once said at table, “is my epistle, to which I am betrothed. It is my Katie von Bora.” ...

Luther:

WE have taken it upon ourselves in the Lord’s name to lecture on this Epistle of Paul to the *Galatians* once more. This is not because we want to teach something new or unknown, for by the grace of God Paul is now very well known to you. But it is because, as I often warn you, there is a clear and present danger that the devil may take away from us the pure doctrine of faith and may substitute for it the doctrines of works and of human traditions. It is very necessary, therefore, that this doctrine of faith be continually read and heard in public. No matter how well known it may be or how carefully learned, the devil, our adversary, who prowls around and seeks to devour us (1 Peter 5:8), is not dead. Our flesh also goes on living. Besides, temptations of every sort attack and oppress us on every side. Therefore this doctrine can never be discussed and taught enough. If it is lost and perishes, the whole knowledge of truth, life, and salvation is lost and perishes at the same time. But if it flourishes, everything good flourishes—religion, true worship, the glory of God, and the right knowledge of all things and of all social conditions. To keep from doing nothing, we shall begin again where we broke off, according to the saying (Ecclus. 18:7): “When a man has finished, he is just beginning.”

V. 35, p.384

Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the *Galatians*, 1546 (1522)

The *Galatians* had been brought by St. Paul to the true Christian faith, from the law to the gospel. After his departure, however, false apostles came along. They were disciples of the true apostles, but they so turned the *Galatians* around that they believed they had to be saved by works of the law and were committing sin if they did not keep the law—as even several dignitaries in Jerusalem maintained, Acts 15.

To refute them, St. Paul magnifies his office; he will not take a back seat to any other apostle. He boasts that his doctrine and office are from God alone, in order that he might silence the boast of the false apostles who helped themselves to the works and reputation of the true apostles. He says it is not true, even if an angel were to preach differently, or he himself, to say nothing of disciples of apostles, or of apostles themselves. This he does in chapters 1 and 2, and concludes that everyone must be justified without merit, without works, without law, through Christ alone.

In chapters 3 and 4 he proves all this with passages of Scripture, examples, and analogies. He shows that the law brings sin and a curse rather than righteousness. Righteousness is promised by God, fulfilled by Christ without the law, given to us—out of grace alone.

In chapters 5 and 6 he teaches the works of love that ought to follow faith.

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