

# Contents

1. Paul: Preacher to the Non-Jewish Nations—June 24–30.....	4
2. Paul’s Message and His Right to Lead the Church—July 1–7 .....	11
3. The Power of the Gospel to Unite Believers—July 8–14 .....	18
4. Saved by Faith Alone—July 15–21 .....	25
5. Old Testament Faith—July 22–28.....	32
6. The Most Important Part of the Promise—July 29–August 4.....	39
7. The Road to Faith—August 5–11.....	46
8. From Being Slaves to Becoming God’s Children—August 12–18 .....	53
9. The Heart of Paul—August 19–25 .....	60
10. The Two Contracts—August 26–September 1 .....	67
11. Set Free in Christ—September 2–8 .....	74
12. Living by the Spirit—September 9–15 .....	81
13. The Good News and the Church—September 16–22.....	88
14. Bragging About the Cross of Jesus—September 23–29.....	95

---

**Editorial Office:** 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600

Come visit us at our Web site: <http://www.absg.adventist.org>

**Printing and Circulation Office:** Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193

<b>Principal Contributor</b> .....	Carl P. Cosaert
<b>Editor</b> .....	Soraya Homayouni
<b>Contributing Editor</b> .....	George Belser
<b>Publication Manager</b> .....	Lea Alexander Greve
<b>Editorial Assistant</b> .....	Sharon Thomas-Crews
<b>Art and Design</b> .....	Lars Justinen
<b>Line Drawings</b> .....	Jon Gilbertson
<b>Pacific Press® Coordinator</b> .....	Wendy Marcum
<b>E. G. White Estate Consultant</b> .....	Dwain Esmond

The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Manuscript Evaluation Committee, the members of which serve as consulting editors. The published Bible study guide reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s). The Easy Reading Edition is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide in cooperation with Three Angels Deaf Ministries, PO Box 1946, Greenbelt, MD 20768; <http://www.3adm.org>.

© 2017 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. All rights reserved. No part of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* Easy Reading Edition may be edited, altered, modified, adapted, translated, reproduced, or published by any person or entity without prior written authorization from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. The division offices of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® are authorized to arrange for translation of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* Easy Reading Edition, under specific guidelines. Copyright of such translations and their publication shall remain with the General Conference. “Seventh-day Adventist,” “Adventist,” and the flame logo are registered trademarks of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® and may not be used without prior authorization from the General Conference.



## Martin Luther and the Letter to the Galatians

---

**A** large part of the Christian world is getting ready to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformation was a great religious awakening. It started in the 16th century. Its goal was to change the Roman Catholic Church for the better. That change led to the creation of the Protestant churches. Martin Luther was at the center of the changes started by the Protestant Reformation. The Holy Spirit guided him. With the Spirit's help, Luther brought to millions of people important Bible truths that long had been hidden.

One could argue that the Reformation itself was “born” out of the pages of Galatians and Romans. In fact, Luther was reading Galatians when he first came to understand the good news of being saved by faith. This great truth started the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation freed millions of people from hundreds and hundreds of years of wrong teachings about the Bible. Luther was changed by what he read in Galatians. And the world has never been the same since.

Seventh-day Adventists also owe a lot to the book of Galatians. E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones were two early Adventist thought leaders and Bible thinkers. They studied Galatians. And they used what they learned there to help the Adventist Church in the 1880s and 1890s to understand the truth about being saved by faith and faith alone.

What made Galatians such an important part—or backbone—of the Protestant Reformation? Why does this book of the Bible continue to touch the hearts of so many today? The answer is that Galatians deals with ideas that are important to the Christian soul. It does so in a way no book of the Bible does. Paul wrote the book of Galatians in the form of a letter. In this letter, Paul asks the age-old question: How can sinful humans be made right before a holy and just God? This question, more than any other, set Martin Luther on the path toward change. And Luther never turned back.

Of course, other books of the Bible deal with some of the same ideas that are found

in Galatians. Romans is one such book, for example. But Galatians is different. It says a lot more in fewer words. At the same time, its rich ideas are written in a way that is both personal and full of deep feeling. And so, even today, it touches hearts that are open to the Spirit of God.

It is true that Paul's letter to the Galatians speaks to us in a personal way. But our understanding and our ability to appreciate his words will deepen even more when we become aware of why and when Paul wrote his letter. Many Bible thinkers believe that Galatians may be the earliest of Paul's letters. It was written in A.D. 49, shortly after the famous Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). So it may be the oldest piece of Christian writing known.

Both the letter to the Galatians and the book of Acts show the fierce battle going on in the early church. These battles help us understand why Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians. Different groups in the church in Galatia fought one another over what it meant to be saved. One such group was known as the Judaizers. The Judaizers taught that non-Jews who accepted Jesus had to do two things (Acts 15:1). First, non-Jewish believers had to be circumcised. To be circumcised means that the skin at the end of the sex organ of a man or a boy is cut off. And second, the Judaizers taught that non-Jewish believers must follow the laws of Moses. In other words, the Judaizers said that faith alone was not enough to save a person. So it is no surprise what the Judaizers did when Paul started a church of non-Jewish believers in Galatia. The Judaizers traveled there "to fix things."

***In Galatians,  
Paul asks the  
question: How  
can sinners  
be made right  
before God?***

Word of this problem reached Paul. He took action right away. He felt very upset over the situation. He understood that the Judaizers were teaching a false gospel. It was a gospel of faith *and* works. It threatened to weaken the work of Christ. So Paul wrote the Galatians a strong defense of the gospel. He used the most powerful words possible. And he exposed this false teaching for what it really was: salvation by works.

This quarter's Bible study guide invites us to journey with Paul as he begs the Galatians to be true to Jesus. It also gives us a chance to think about our own understanding of the truths of salvation. These great truths are the same ones that opened the way for Martin Luther to break the power of Rome. And they helped Luther to bring to light the truths of the Bible that had been hidden long in darkness.

*Carl Cosaert, PhD, is a professor of biblical studies. He teaches at Walla Walla University in College Place, Washington.*