

GALATIANS

THE LIFE I NOW LIVE

10 Publishing
a division of **10**ofthose.com

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (Anglicised Edition). Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica (formerly International Bible Society). Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers. All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of Biblica. UK trademark number 1448790.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from The ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Copyright © 2015 by Peter Mead

First published in Great Britain in 2015

The right of Peter Mead to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher or the Copyright Licensing Agency.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

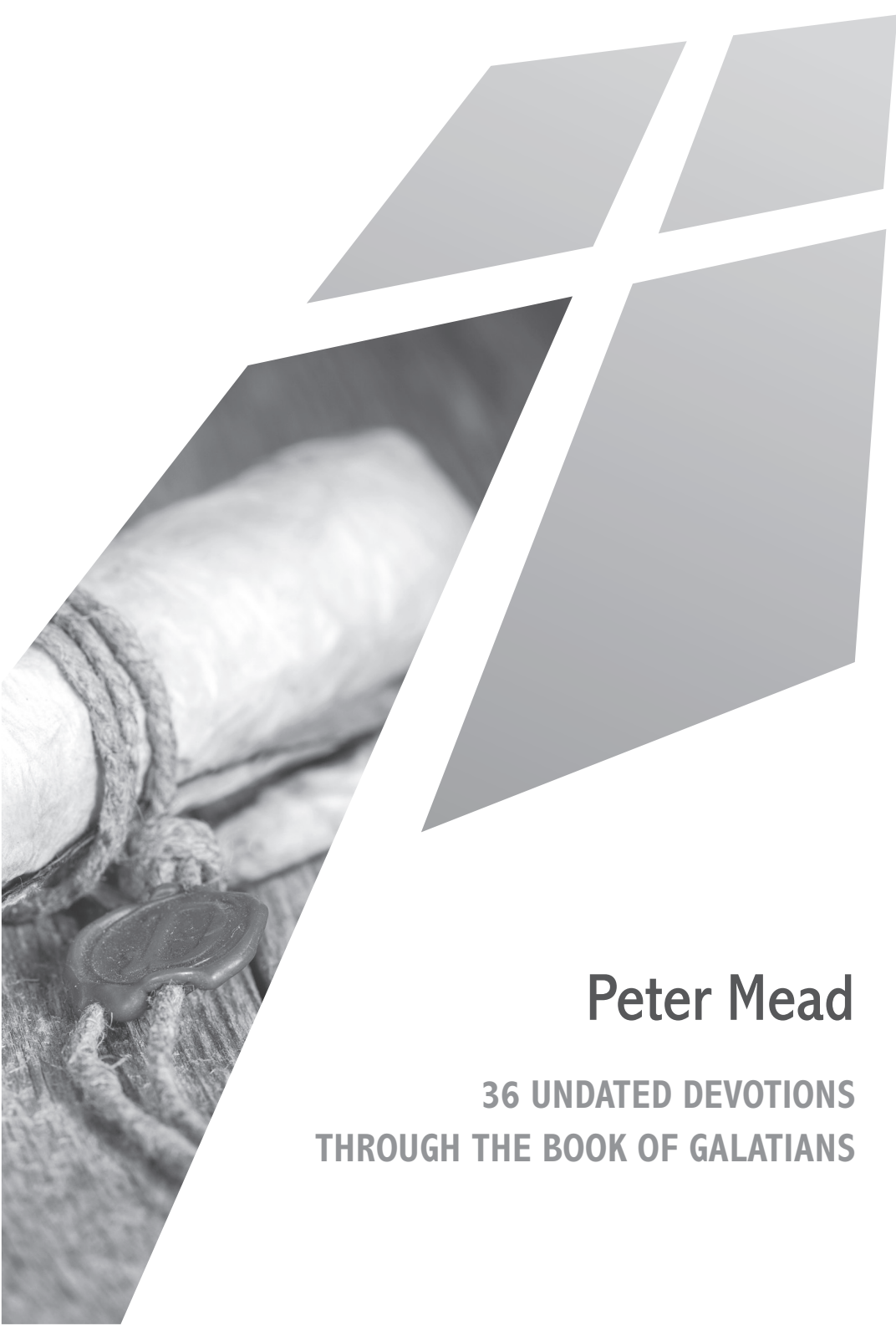
A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-910587-09-6

Designed by Diane Bainbridge

Printed in the UK

10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com
9D Centurion Court, Farington, Leyland, PR25 3UQ, England
Email: info@10ofthose.com
Website: www.10ofthose.com



Peter Mead

**36 UNDATED DEVOTIONS
THROUGH THE BOOK OF GALATIANS**

INTRODUCTION

When Paul returned from his first missionary journey, in about AD 49, he was distressed to hear that false teachers had been following him as he preached in southern Galatia. These false teachers were trying to undo the gospel impact of Paul's ministry. Paul was angry!

With a fire in his heart he wrote Galatians, his first epistle. The result is stunning. Galatians is a passionate defence of his own ministry and especially of the gospel. The letter to the Galatians can be described like C.S. Lewis' Aslan – it is neither safe nor tame, but it is so, so good. Why? Because it draws our hearts to the One who is good, to Christ, and to the wonder of living in fellowship with His Father, our good God.

Some might suggest Galatians is largely irrelevant today. After all, who would accept a preacher promoting circumcision, a key issue in Galatians? When Martin Luther wrote about Galatians he described both a black devil and a white devil. The first is all about sin as we tend to think of it – gross, immoral and hideous. The latter is when the enemy comes as an angel of light, couching his influence in very religious and apparently godly garb. For Luther, it was the white devil that was the greater threat to the gospel. The world at its best is really the world at its worst. We easily spot overt attacks on the gospel, but we are all susceptible when false teaching comes under the cover of godly religious instruction. The devil loves to corrupt our view of Christ and wreak havoc on our experience of the Christian life.

Paul was contending for the ongoing implications of the gospel for the Christian life. Luther wrote that, 'if we lose the doctrine of justification, we lose simply everything.'¹ The threat facing the young Galatian church is still alive and well today. Yet so is the glorious gospel Paul proclaimed. Luther also wrote, 'I know how often I suddenly lose sight of the rays of the Gospel and of grace, which have been obscured for me by thick, dark clouds.'² May our hearts be stirred as we study this powerful epistle together. May the rays of the gospel and of grace shine clearly in our hearts. And may our lives be transformed so that others will also be drawn to the wonderful gospel of God's glorious grace!

Galatians launches with a bang! Paul's ministry and message have been attacked. Is he a true apostle? Is his message the true gospel? Is Paul's gospel too good to be true?

To begin, Paul could have simply written, 'Paul, to the churches in Galatia: grace and peace.' Since Paul wrote more than that, let's be sure to notice all that he added.

In verses 1–2 he defends his ministry. He is a true apostle. He was not sent by other men, or even a specific man (i.e. a key leader in Jerusalem). No, Jesus Christ and the Father commissioned him. Also, Paul is not a maverick minister, for there are brothers with him.

In verses 3–5 he presents the truth of the gospel that he had preached among them. Notice four important ingredients in the gospel mix here:

1. Sin is very serious. Everywhere we look, everything is shot through with evil. We are all sinners and we need to be rescued.
2. What rescues us from this present evil age? It is the grace of God our Father and Jesus Christ who gave Himself for our sins. Paul could have chosen to expand on this: He came to earth, went to the cross, died the death we deserved, and rescued us from sin. The gospel is about the gracious plan of God the Father and

the Son working together to rescue sinners.

3. Notice in verse 5 that the grace of the Father and the Son working together results in all the glory going to God. The grace of God leads to the glory of God.
4. Look for our role in the rescue. Look carefully. What do you see? There is absolutely nothing about us! The gospel is God's grace at work. We don't earn it, deserve it, work at it, or add to it. In Paul's summary of the gospel we are simply recipients.

The gospel is all about the glorious grace of God that rescues sinners from evil. This was the message Paul preached in Galatia. His message transformed lives and established churches. Let's pray that this message also truly grips us!

REFLECTION

How much does the gospel you believe depend on the grace of God? How much does it depend on you?

Galatians is a life-changer, but for many Christians it remains only a biblical curiosity – an ancient letter to a small region in central Turkey. Perhaps people think that the dangerous teaching Paul opposed back then poses no threat now. After all, if the problem was merely the promotion of circumcision, then we can relax. Believers with a Jewish background who were pushing circumcision would not get an invitation to most churches today.

Circumcision was certainly a feature of the false teaching, it was even used as the label for the false teaching, but the real issue was broader than just circumcision. It was an anti-gospel promotion of law-keeping.

This is what the false teachers were effectively saying, ‘to be truly born again, not just born a bit, then you need the law, that is, to be circumcised. And if you want to live Christianity to the full, then you need to strive to keep the law. Paul’s grace message needs balancing with law.’

Now at this point in a typical letter we would expect Paul to write, ‘I give thanks to God for you ...’ Not this time! Get ready for an explosion. Paul is indignant! Verse 6 is like a landmine waiting to go off if you poke around it for too long. ‘I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting ...’

After hearing the gospel and responding to it, now the Galatians were turning

away. They were not just turning away from a message, but were turning away from a person, from God Himself!

Here comes the explosion. How were they turning away from God? Were they diving into gross immorality? No. Were they leaving Christianity and signing up to some other religion? No. What were they doing? They were actually becoming *more* religious, *more* Jewish, and, they might say, ‘*more* biblical’, even ‘*more* godly’!

Is it possible that a greater personal commitment to keeping the law could mean turning from God? That is what Paul is saying. How is that possible? Because any change and any addition to the gospel of God’s grace in Christ Jesus is a different and distorted gospel. **Anything that takes our eyes off Christ and onto ourselves is really no gospel at all!**

Surely this can’t be right? Either Paul is pro-sin, or he must have a better solution in mind.

REFLECTION

How could a greater commitment to so-called godliness actually be turning you from God? Do corruptions of the gospel stir appropriate anger in you?