

GALATIANS

GOD CREATES SATAN COUNTERFEITS

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Did you know that not only is God at work in your life right now...but so is Satan?

Anything valuable gets counterfeited. From forged autographs, to knock-off sneakers, and phony money, counterfeits are common. What is true physically is also true spiritually. Since nothing is as valuable as your relationship with God, it is not surprising that whatever God creates, Satan counterfeits. You can learn to discern between religious fakes and real faith as we study a book of the Bible called Galatians.

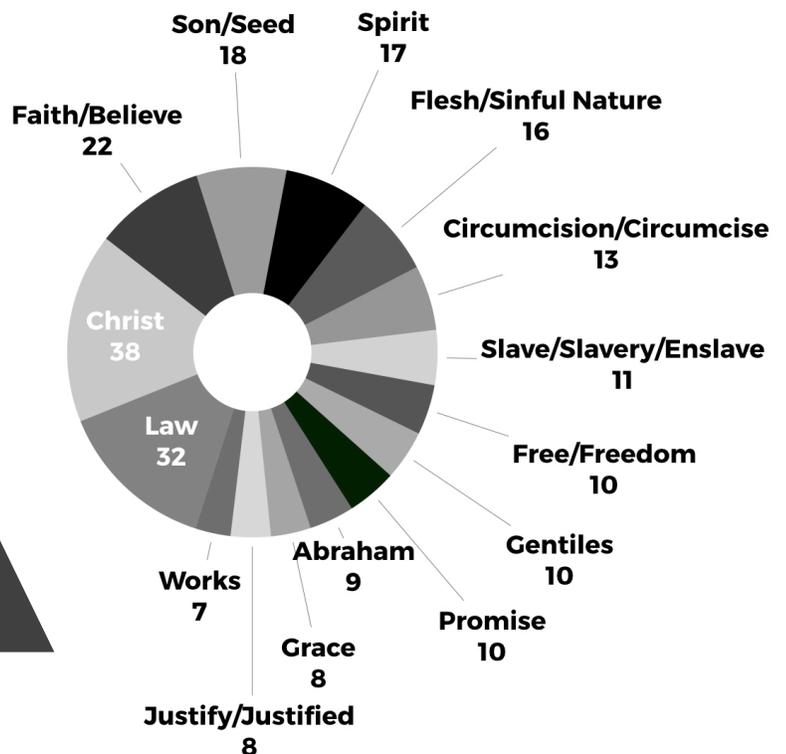
God Creates	Satan Counterfeits
Gospel of Jesus Christ	False gospels
God-given redemption	Manmade religion
Truth	Lies
Shepherds	Wolves
Church	False spirituality
Kingdom	World
God's grace	Man's works
Angels	Demons
Spirit	Flesh
Love	Hate
Life	Death

READING GALATIANS

You can start by reading and re-reading Galatians in your Bible, or on the YouVersion Bible App, which has multiple translations and the Bible in audio format to listen to at your convenience. You can read the entire book of 149 verses in roughly twenty minutes. As you do, start to look for the thing that God creates and Satan counterfeits. Here are some examples to look for as overarching themes in the book.

KEYWORDS IN GALATIANS

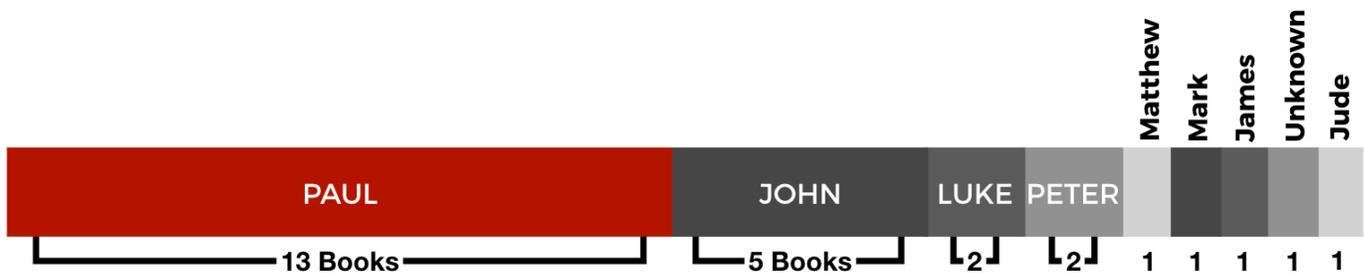
As you read and re-read Galatians here are some key words that appear frequently. It may be helpful to highlight or otherwise note the times they occur to start seeing major themes of the book. The number of occurrences will vary depending upon which English translation of the Bible you read:



THE APOSTLE PAUL

In almost any form of communication - from email to text and phone call - it's most helpful to know who the person communicating to us is. As we study Galatians, it's clear that the human author is Paul as he states this plainly at the front of the letter.

Who is Paul? As we get to know Paul through the letter he wrote to the Galatians, it's important to get some perspective on the magnitude of this man in human history. He wrote 13 or 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament (there is a debate about the unnamed author of Hebrews). Paul wrote more New Testament books than any other author, and Luke contributed the largest amount of content for the New Testament with his historical books of Luke and Acts. But Paul was Luke's pastor and Luke was Paul's doctor. They traveled and ministered together. Additionally, the history of Acts 13-28 focuses mainly on Paul which, combined with the books he wrote and influence he had on Luke, means that the majority of the entire New Testament is written by Paul, written about Paul, or written by someone working closely with Paul.



Paul's incredible intelligence includes studying under the renowned rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and being fluent in the languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and possibly Latin. In his letters, Paul used more than one hundred Old Testament quotations in addition to innumerable echoes and summations of biblical themes and terms (perhaps all from memory as he was often traveling by foot, an average of twenty miles per day, and often in jail during his roughly decade of ministry). Bible scholar Paul Barnett calls Paul the "first theologian in the early church, and arguably the greatest in the history of Christianity."¹ Early church father John Chrysostom wrote of Paul, "Put the whole world on one side of the scale and you will see that the soul of Paul outweighs it."² The apostle Paul is a towering figure in world history. The Protestant Reformer Martin Luther called him "the wisest man after Christ."

For Protestant Christians, Paul's letters to the Romans and Galatians are perhaps the most significant source of theological clarity. The Protestant Reformer Martin Luther was so fond of Galatians and taught it so passionately that he said, "The Epistle to the Galatians is my Epistle; I have betrothed myself to it; it is my wife."³ Others have called it, "the battle-cry of the Reformation," and "the Christian Declaration of Independence".

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Paul was the founder and spiritual father of the churches in the region of Galatia. After the churches were founded, Paul left the region and a false teacher (Gal. 3:1, 5:7, 5:10) and teachers motivated by pride (Gal. 4:17, 6:12) entered the churches to refute Paul's authority and teaching, which split the church and discouraged people (Gal. 5:15 5:26, 6:1,3,9). These false teachers went so far as to claim that Paul was a false teacher and that they were truly more godly, using the real gospel of Jesus Christ.

Apparently, the new and largely non-Jewish Christians had become enamored by the new teaching. This false teaching taught that, to truly be saved, someone needed more than faith in Jesus and must also be a circumcised Jew who followed Jewish social customs (Gal. 2:3, 2:11-14, 5:6, 6:12-13). In this way, they were teaching “Jesus plus a movement”, which continues in our day where someone is teaching that their particular style of Christianity is the only legitimate expression of the one true gospel. This can cause the movement and its’ leaders to take priority over Jesus Christ, or when something other than solely trusting in Jesus Christ is needed to be saved. In this way, they were promoting a works salvation (as opposed to grace) that elevated man and his potential while reducing the work of God the Holy Spirit (Gal. 2:21, 3:3, 5:2, 5:4, 5:16-25). The very existence of the churches that Paul loved was at stake and prompted him to write the strongly polemic letter to the Galatians with great urgency by his own hand (Gal. 6:11). This book is a passionate plea from a worried pastor to people he loves who are being led astray by counterfeit teachers with a counterfeit gospel and counterfeit spiritual power.

THE BOTTOM LINE OF THE DEBATE IS BETWEEN TWO VERY DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE GOSPEL:

- 1) Jesus’ grace + nothing = salvation
- 2) Jesus’ grace + human works = salvation

The first was revealed by God and taught by Paul. The second was Satan’s counterfeit. Speaking of this conflict, the famed old preacher Charles Spurgeon says, “The Galatians were a very fickle people. They seem very soon to have left the gospel, to have adulterated it, and to have fallen into Ritualism, into Sacramentarianism, into salvation by works, and all the errors into which people usually fall when they go away from the gospel.”⁴ Think of it this way. The gospel of Jesus Christ is pure like a glass of clean water. But, adding any human error to the gospel is like adding even one drop of filth to the glass of water so that the entirety is ruined.

RELIGION AND REBELLION

Like a car that is out of alignment, Christians tend to veer either toward liberalism on the left, or legalism on the right. In Galatians, Paul is clear to help us stay in God’s will rather than drifting. In some ways, Galatians is a bit of commentary on a famous parable that Jesus told and an exposé on how Satan counterfeits real Christianity with legalistic man-made religion, and liberal man-made rebellion.

In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), Jesus tells us about two brothers. The younger brother was rebellious. Dishonoring his father and family, the younger brother took his inheritance, moved away, and blew it all on debauchery. The rebellious younger brother bottomed out having pursued sin until he was face down in pig slop. Flat broke, hung over, and headed for starvation, this son eventually turned around and went home to his father.

His father’s response warms us. He didn’t turn away from his sin-loving son but instead ran to meet him, making a real scene because no respectable older man in that culture would break into a sprint. Why did the father run? He couldn’t wait another second to forgive and embrace his wayward child. The words used to describe their reunion include “love,” “compassion,” “embrace,” “kiss,” and “celebrate.” In a demonstration of extravagant grace, the father threw an enormous party to celebrate his son’s repentance. The rebellious brother was not a great son, but he was greatly loved by his great father.

The older brother was religious and legalistic. He reacted with fury to the lavish forgiveness extended to his guilty and dirty brother. He was so mad he refused to enter the home and join the reconciliation of his broken family.

The religious son and the rebellious son said nothing to each other. But the religious son had plenty of complaints behind his little brother's back. This "son of yours," he ranted to his father, had devoured family property and hooked up with prostitutes. And along with these proclamations of the rebellious brother's failings, the religious brother professed to be completely righteous. "All these years I've slaved for you," he grumbled to his father, "and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to." The religious older brother claims he is nothing short of perfect. Like all religious brothers, he is quick to point out he is better than others. He sees others' sin rather than his own.

It turned out that the heart of the older brother was as guilty and dirty as any. Honestly, neither brother loved their father. Both used their father. The key difference was that the rebellious brother repented, and the religious brother did not. Rebellious brothers and sisters live on today. Religious sisters and brothers still populate our world. Here is how their rebellion and religion stack up side by side:

Christianity at its core is not about either religion or rebellion. It is about repentance of sin and trusting in the Jesus Christ, who was neither rebellious nor religious. It tells us this story so that those who are religious or rebellious would trust in Him alone, the redeeming Son of God, and become more like Him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE TRINITY CHURCH SERMON SCHEDULE

MAY 5	#1 GALATIANS - 1:1-10	BEGINNING OF SERIES
MAY 12	#9 GALATIANS - 4:21-31	MOTHER'S DAY
MAY 19	#2 GALATIANS - 1:11-24	
MAY 26	#3 GALATIANS - 2:1-10	MEMORIAL DAY
JUNE 2	#4 GALATIANS - 2:11-21	
JUNE 9	#5 GALATIANS - 3:1-14	
JUNE 16	#6 GALATIANS - 3:15-29	FATHER'S DAY
JUNE 23	#7 GALATIANS - 4:1-7	
JUNE 30	#8 GALATIANS - 4:8-20	
JULY 7	#10 GALATIANS - 5:1-15	
JULY 14	#11 GALATIANS - 5:16-26	
JULY 21	TOPICAL SERMON	GUEST SPEAKER
JULY 28	#12 GALATIANS - 6:1-10	
AUGUST 4	#13 GALATIANS - 6:11-18	

FOR DEEPER STUDY

If you are looking for one study Bible, the ESV study Bible has great notes and other resources. If you visit bestcommentaries.com and search under "Galatians" there are also reviews on a wide range of commentaries from easy-to-read to scholarly.

You can find this sermon series and Daily Devotionals by Pastor Mark Driscoll at markdriscoll.org.

FOOTNOTES

1. Paul Barnett, *Paul: Missionary of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 198.

2. Quoted in Barnett, Paul, 198.

3. Kenneth L. Boles, *Galatians & Ephesians, The College Press NIV Commentary* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1993).

4. Charles Spurgeon, *Galatians, ed. Elliot Ritzema, Spurgeon Commentary Series* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), Gal 1:6.