

LutherFacts # 11

For Martin Luther, the book of Romans emerged as the central biblical text in shaping the events that led to the Reformation. But he also had a special fondness for Galatians, jesting more than once that he was married to this small but important Pauline letter: "The Epistle to the Galatians is my own epistle. I have betrothed myself to it. It is my Katie von Bora." Why did he identify so strongly with this book? In 1516, as he first began to lecture about it, Luther found a framework for his own battle against the Papacy and indulgences. In Galatians, Paul had warned against the self-righteousness of church leaders and rejected those who sought to cast him as a false teacher. He urged his readers in Galatia not to return to the law but to go forward into the freedom that comes with faith. Finally, the epistle powerfully declares: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) In Paul's message to the Galatians, Luther found a vision and justification to restore the medieval church to a time when faith prevailed over works.