

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

Galatians 6:11-18, CONCLUSION

- A. Paul's signature (11), *See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.*
1. So far, Paul had dictated the letter to a scribe.
 2. Here, Paul completed his letter by writing it himself as he did in other epistles.
 - a. 2 Thessalonians 3:17, *I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.*
 - b. Warren Wiersbe, . . . *so concerned is Paul that the Galatians get the message of this letter that he takes the pen and writes an entire concluding paragraph with his own hand.*
 3. The *large letters* were probably capitals used for emphasis and to distinguish his writing from that of the scribe, Grant Osborne, *These points are 'written large' so you will look at them carefully.*
- B. Paul's final warning concerning the Judaizers (12-13)
1. Their motive was to avoid persecution by the Jews (12), *It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.*
 - a. *good showing in the flesh*
 - 1) *Good showing* means to *impress others by outward appearance, to make a display of religious zeal, win a good opinion.*
 - 2) *Flesh* refers to *the external or outward side of life.*
 - 3) Paul identified the Judaizers as those whose focus was on the external or physical, not the internal or spiritual, specifically on circumcision.
 - 4) F. F. Bruce, *Whereas Paul was concerned about the Spirit's inward work in his converts, so that Christ should be 'formed' in them, the Judaizers' concern was for an external mark, a mark produced in the 'flesh' of those whom they could win over to their side.*
 - 5) Philippians 3:3, *For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—*
 - b. Their motive was to avoid persecution.
 - 1) The cross of Christ
 - a) Paul is speaking of the doctrine of salvation.
 - b) The cross of Christ represents the grace of God received by faith in Christ alone.
 - c) The works of the law have no part in justification.
 - 2) The cross of Christ is offensive.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 1:23, *but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,*
 - b) Max Anders, *The Christ way is a cross way, a suffering way. The enemies' way is a pride way, a self-achievement way, a way of present perfection. It never leads to suffering.*
 - c) John Stott, *The fact that Jesus died hanging on a tree remained for Jews an insurmountable obstacle to faith, until they saw that the curse He bore was for them. He did not die for His own sins; He became a curse 'for us.*
 - d) Donald Campbell, *The legalists knew the offense of the Cross would be softened if they openly proclaimed justification by faith and works (i.e., circumcision) and if they could claim conversions to that position in Galatia.*
 - e) 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, *For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!*
 2. The Judaizers' purpose was to brag over their converts (13), *For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.*
 - a. Paul declared that those who were demanding circumcision as a requirement for salvation did not keep the law themselves.
 - 1) In verse 12, Paul said that the Judaizers promoted circumcision as a means of avoiding persecution.
 - 2) Here, he affirmed their motivation as not zeal for the law since they didn't keep the law themselves.
 - 3) Next, he proclaimed that their real motivation was the desire to boast in the circumcision of converts.

- b. Their motivation was to have converts for whom they could boast.
- 1) *boast*
 - a) It means *to take pride in oneself*.
 - b) Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
 - 2) Circumcised converts furnished evidence of their ministry success.
 - a) Those converts validated their doctrine of faith in Christ plus works.
 - b) It was a way of demonstrating their zeal for the law despite their lack of personal interest in the law.
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *Their reverence for the Law was only a mask to cover their real goal: winning more converts to their cause. They wanted to report more statistics and get more glory.*
 - d) Charles Spurgeon, *They wanted to boast of their many followers and to curry favor with the Jews by showing that their converts to Jesus were also proselytes to circumcision.*
 - 3) John Stott, *The risen Christ gave baptism to the church, as God gave circumcision to Abraham. Baptism is a sign of covenant membership, as circumcision was. But both baptism and circumcision, however great and spiritual the truths they signify, are themselves outward and bodily acts. And it is absurd to magnify such things as indispensable means of salvation and then to go on to boast about them.*
- C. Paul's motive for boasting (14-15), ***But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.***
1. Paul only boasted in the cross of Christ.
 - a. The Judaizers' focus was on what they did whereas Paul's focus was on what Christ did.
 - b. *The world*
 - 1) Herman Sasse (German pastor), *Here he refers to "the world" in its character as "the epitome of unredeemed creation," that is, "of everything outside of Christ in which man seeks his glory and puts his trust."*
 - 2) F. F. Bruce, *Paul is saying also that the cross now forms a permanent barrier between the world and him and between him and the world.*
 - c. The cross of Christ was the means by which Paul was separated from the world system.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 1:18, *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*
 - 2) Donald Campbell, *For the Judaizers the Cross was an object of shame; for Paul it was the object of glorying. They gloried in the flesh; he gloried in the Savior. . . He looked at the world as if it were on a cross—and the world looked at Paul as though he were on a cross.*
 - 3) Max Anders, *He looked at the world as if it were on a cross; that is, he considered the world as good as dead and he as good as dead to the world.*
 - 4) The atoning death of Christ on the cross alone provides justification by faith apart from the works of the law.
 2. Paul's reason is because trusting the cross of Christ alone counts for eternity.
 - a. *New creation*
 - 1) This term is identical with *new birth*.
 - a) 2 Corinthians 5:17, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
 - b) John 3:7, *Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'*
 - 2) The death of Christ on the cross brings death to one's old life and His resurrection brings forth a *new creation*.
 - a) Romans 6:4, *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*
 - b) Ephesians 2:10, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*
 - b. The *new creation* is a break with the old system of the external mark of circumcision.
 - 1) Jesus' crucifixion is an absolute break between law and grace.
 - 2) Ronald Fung, *Therefore, what matters now is no longer circumcision or uncircumcision, since that distinction belongs to the old world, but participation in the new order of existence. This new order is characterized by a new relation to God which is bound to Christ and accepted by faith.*
 - 3) Charles H. Spurgeon, *The idea of a ceremony claiming to be made more of than faith in Jesus provoked him until his heart grew hot with indignation.*

- c. Nothing compares with the *new creation*.
 - 1) John 5:24, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*
 - 2) 2 Timothy 1:10, . . . *through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,*
 - 3) Max Anders, *The message of the Judaizers was powerless to change hearts. What changes hearts is faith in Christ for both salvation and spiritual growth.*
- D. Paul's blessing on all believers (16), ***And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.***
- 1. *As for all who walk by this rule*
 - a. Paul looks back to verse 15 where he declares the centrality of the cross of Christ.
 - b. He is looking back to the entire epistle which proclaim the only true salvation rule is faith in Christ alone.
 - c. This is a conditional blessing by Paul for those who *walk* (live) according to the Gospel, consider Romans 8:6, *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*
 - 2. Paul's blessing is on Gentile Christians, those who have experienced the new birth through faith in Christ alone.
 - a. His blessing is in contrast to his curse on those who promote faith in Christ plus, Galatians 1:8, *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.*
 - b. He asks that *peace and mercy be upon them*
 - 1) *peace*
 - a) It means *welfare, health, tranquility*
 - b) 2 Thessalonians 3:16, *Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.*
 - c) Ephesians 2:14, *For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.*
 - 2) *mercy*
 - a) It means *compassion of God with men.*
 - b) 2 Timothy 1:2, *To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*
 - c) Ronald Fung, "Mercy" is basically the grace of God, although the word used has particular regard to the needy condition of the recipient, whereas the emphasis in "grace" is on the undeserved character of God's goodness.
 - 3. Also, Paul's blessing is on *the Israel of God*
 - a. Some believe this refers to the church as supplanting the role of Israel in God's plan.
 - b. The better view is that Paul is referring to Jewish believers in the Church Age.
 - 1) Israel has a future because God always keeps His promises and not all national promises have been fulfilled.
 - 2) There is a distinction between Israel and the Gentiles and between Israel and the Church, 1 Corinthians 10:32, *Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,*
 - 3) Paul referred to two kinds of Jews, believing and unbelieving, Romans 9:6, *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,*
 - 4) The other 65 times Israel is used in the New Testament, it refers to Jews.
- E. Paul's command that the controversy end in Galatia (17), ***From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.***
- 1. The controversy in Galatia caused Paul trouble.
 - a. His message of faith in Christ alone had been challenged by the Judaizers.
 - b. His calling as an apostle was made suspect.
 - c. His appeal to end the controversy was to members of the church in Galatia to distance themselves from the Judaizers.
 - 2. Paul declared his faithfulness through suffering for the cause of Christ.
 - a. *The marks of Jesus*
 - 1) *Mark* means *brand* as in a master identifying his cattle or slaves with his brand.
 - 2) Paul stated that his sufferings identified him as Christ's bond-slave.
 - a) Some of the scars may have been received in Lystra when the people stoned him, Acts 14:19, *But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.*
 - b) Other times were mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:25, *Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;*

- b. Paul's scars were in contrast to circumcision promoted by the Judaizers.
 - 1) They were demanding circumcision as a requirement for salvation.
 - 2) Paul declared that his scars affirmed his commitment to Christ through faith alone.
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *The contrast with the legalists is plain to see: "The Judaizers want to mark your flesh and brag about you, but I bear in my body the brands of the Lord Jesus Christ—for His glory." What a rebuke! "If your religious celebrities have any scars to show for the glory of Christ, then let them be shown. Otherwise—stop bothering me!"*
 - 4) Max Anders, *These marks are Paul's way of saying, "Here me well. I've earned the right to be heard, respected, and obeyed."*

F. Paul's benediction (18), *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.*

1. *Grace*

- a. He appealed for grace for the Galatians at the beginning of the letter, Galatians 1:3, *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,*
- b. *Grace* is God's unmerited favor and enablement as most evidently seen in the Gospel, Ephesians 2:8, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,*
- c. Paul's use of grace is in direct contrast to the Judaizers who promoted works, circumcision and the law of Moses.

2. *Your spirit*

- a. Paul may have simply used this to represent *you*.
- b. He may have been emphasizing the importance of life in the Spirit in this epistle.
- c. Ronald Fung notes, . . . *it is in the spirit of man that the operations of grace make themselves felt.*

3. *Brothers*

- a. This is the only time Paul refers to the recipients of an epistle as *brothers*.
- b. He is probably trying to show his sincere love and concern for them despite their change of opinion toward him, Galatians 4:15, *What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.*
- c. Robert Wilkin, *Paul ends the letter by affirming their spiritual position in Christ as his brethren. In spite of the foolish attention they had been paying to the deceptive Judaizers, Paul loves them and recognizes them as his spiritual kin.*

CONCLUSION

- A. External acts of religion smack of works of law not grace.
- B. Those who brag over their works are far from the grace of God.
- C. Pray for those who are being tempted to substitute works for grace.