

Paul's Conclusion and His Benediction

Galatians 6:11-18

Galatians 6:11-18: *"See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! ¹² As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴ But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷ From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁸ Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."*

Background Notes

The conclusion of Paul's letter to the Galatians is both a summary of the letter, and a final statement refuting the false teaching of the Judaizers. The Judaizers wrongly taught that practicing circumcision and keeping other requirements of the Old Testament Law were necessary for salvation. This is sometimes called "the Galatian heresy."

This heresy was quite an issue in the early Church - in fact, this was what the first Church council in Jerusalem was all about (Acts 15). The conclusion that the first council made was the same message that Paul taught all the way through this epistle to the Galatians. Verse 15: *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation."*

Circumcision and keeping the Law were **not** necessary for salvation. Justification – then and now – is by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Any other requirements would take away from the grace of God, and would add human effort to faith. How could **any** imperfect and weak human effort possibly add **anything** to the perfect work of salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross? So salvation is not attained by human "works" - and it's not attained not by "faith plus works"!

Furthermore, sanctification, which is the process of becoming more holy in the Christian life, is not by attained circumcision or following the requirements and works of the Law. That would be sanctification by works. Sanctification comes about by walking in the Spirit and **not** walking after the flesh.

In verses 12 and 13 Paul pointed out four faults of the Judaizers – clues for the Galatians so they could recognize the Judaizers as false teachers:

- They were seeking the favor of men, and not God.

Verse 12: *“As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh.”*

- They demanded circumcision because they were afraid of persecution.

Verse 12: *“These would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.”*

- They did not practice what they preached.

Verse 13: *“For not even those who are circumcised keep the law.”* The Judaizers didn't even keep the Law themselves!

- They weren't really interested in the Galatians at all.

Verse 13: *“But they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.”*

They were only interested in boasting about the number of circumcised converts, to magnify their own “accomplishments.”

Those four faults should have convinced the Galatians that the Judaizers were false teachers. We see these same four characteristics in false teachers today. False teachers love to gain “success” and make a name for themselves, they love to boast about how many followers they have, and they manipulate their followers, with no real concern for their souls at all.

What did Paul mean in verse 11, when he said: *“See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand”*? Most likely Paul had taken the pen from his scribe, and he had written this conclusion himself rather than dictating it, which was his normal method. Some commentators believe that Paul may have written the entire letter in his own handwriting. In any case, the large letters here may be an indication that he had bad eyesight, or it may have been his way to emphasize the importance of this letter.

In verse 16 Paul wrote, *“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”* What did the apostle Paul mean by the *“the Israel of God”*? Does this phrase mean that the Church is “the New Israel,” since the nation of Israel rejected her Messiah? Does this phrase mean that God is finished with Israel, and the Church has now taken the place of Israel, and has become the “Israel of God,” and thus now receives all the promises that God made to Israel?

No - we don't believe the Bible teaches that the Church is “the New Israel”! God still has plans for the Jewish people! Israel is only **temporarily** set aside from God's place of promise, and it will be brought back into the position of God's favor in the future. (Read Romans 11 in this connection.) Through the centuries there has always been a “godly remnant” of Jews, and they are the ones in view in the phrase “the Israel of God.”

The “Israel of God” at this present time is composed of the Christian Jews, or Messianic Jews - Jews who have become believers in Jesus. They are both the physical and spiritual “seed of Abraham.” These Christian Jews are the “godly

remnant” that is mentioned in Romans 11:5. So then, at this present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace: Jews who have believed in Jesus as Messiah and Savior. This is the “Israel of God” mentioned in Galatians 6:16.

Doctrinal Points

1. The cross means death to the flesh.

Verse 14: *“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*

What did Paul mean by *“crucified to the world”*? The world is the evil, satanic system which is designed to appeal to our fallen natures. 1 John 2:15-16 says, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”* Satan has designed this world system to appeal our fallen human natures, and we are extremely vulnerable - even as believers!

What’s the solution? The solution is to ***practice our position in Christ***. What does that mean – “our position in Christ”? Because Jesus Christ died on the cross as our Substitute, we have died with Him - and we have been raised to new life with Him. That’s the way God sees us, thus that is our righteous position before God. God sees us “in Christ” – and we need to practice that position. And - the more we recognize and practice our position in Christ, the less the world will appeal to us!

We must put our fallen natures in the “place of death.” Of course this doesn’t mean that we shoot ourselves, or literally die. No, it means that we practice our position in Christ – that we are dead to sin. Romans 6:11 says, *“...reckon yourselves be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Paul practiced his position in Christ - and we should as well. The cross means death to the flesh.

2. The cross means death to the world.

Verse 14 again: *“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*

What did Paul mean when he said, *“the world has been crucified to me?”* This present, evil, satanic world system is on its way out. 1 John 2:17 says, *“And the world is passing away.”* When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He not only died for our sins, but He died for the whole problem of sin - and all its effects. There’s coming a day when there will be no more sin and no more evil world system. Praise the Lord!

All of this wonderful truth is the result of the Lord Jesus' death on the cross. When He died, He ***did away with the entire problem of sin***. It's only a matter of time before the evil world system will be no more. Paul recognized this truth. In this sense, then, the world was crucified to Paul.

Do we recognize this truth? Do we recognize that this evil world system is passing away because of the Lord's work on the cross? If we do, then why are we still interested in gaining prestige, and popularity, and success, and wealth in this world? The world was crucified to the apostle Paul. A world that was passing away had no appeal to Paul. What about us? The cross means death to the world!

Practical Applications

1. What are we boasting about?

The apostle Paul said that he did not want to boast about anything other than the cross of Christ, and all that it meant in his life. What things do we boast about? Our athletic accomplishments? Our scholastic accomplishments? Our financial success and lavish lifestyle? Our travels and world knowledge?

If we are boasting about ***anything*** other than what Christ has done for us, we need to examine our priorities. What are we boasting about?

2. Do we bear the "brand marks" of Jesus?

The apostle Paul said, *"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (v17)*. Paul's body was scarred - literally - because of physical persecution. Listen to what the apostle Paul said about his experiences in 2 Corinthians 11:23-25: *"In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep."*

The apostle Paul literally bore the "brand marks" of Jesus on his body. There are Christians today who literally carry the brand marks of Jesus because they have been physically persecuted for their faith.

There are other ways to bear the brand marks of Jesus as well. For example, you have brand marks of Jesus if you choose a reduced standard of living, rather than choosing to enjoy the same luxuries as other believers, so you can give time and resources to serve the Lord. That is a way to bear the brand marks of Jesus.

Being mocked and ridiculed in school or on the job for your faith in Christ is another way of bearing the brand marks of Jesus. In fact, just being known as a committed Christian is a way to bear the brand marks of Jesus. Do we bear the brand marks of Jesus?