

INTRODUCTION.

- A. It was Paul's custom, after dictating a letter, to take the pen and write his own farewell. His standard signature was, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (1Th. 5:28; 2Th. 3:17-18). But 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. [WWW]
- B. Note Gal. 6:11.
See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.
Some Bible students believe that Paul's thorn in the flesh (2Cor. 12:7-10; Gal. 4:14-15) was some kind of eye trouble. If he did have eye trouble, his willingness to write this closing paragraph with his own hand would certainly appeal to the hearts of the readers. [WWW]
- C. He has shown them that the believer living under Law and the believer living under grace are diametrically opposed to each other. It is not just a matter of "different doctrine," but a matter of two different ways of life. They had to choose between bondage or liberty (Gal. 5:1-12), the flesh or the Spirit (Gal. 5:13-26), and living for self or living for others (Gal. 6:1-10). [WWW]
- D. Paul approaches this delicate subject in an interesting way. The legalists wanted to subject the Galatian believers to circumcision, so Paul takes this up and relates it to the work of Christ on the cross, and also to his own ministry. [WWW]

THE LEGALIST (6:12-13).

Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

- A. **They are braggarts.**
Their main purpose was not to win people to Christ, or even to help the believers grown in grace. Their chief purpose was to win more converts so they could brag about them. They wanted to "make a fine impression outwardly" even though they did no good inwardly. Their work was not done for the good of the church or for the glory of God; it was done for their own glory. [WWW]
- B. **They are compromisers.**
 - 1. Why did they preach and practice circumcision and all that went with it? To escape persecution. Because Paul preached the grace of God and salvation apart from the works of the Law, he was persecuted (Gal. 5:11). [WWW]
 - 2. When Paul obeyed Christ, he identified himself with the cross and took the consequences. To the Jew the cross was a stumbling block, and to the Gentile it was foolishness (1Cor. 1:18-31). The legalists, emphasizing circumcision rather than crucifixion, won many converts. Theirs was a popular religion, because it avoided the shame of the cross. [WWW]
- C. **They are persuaders.**
The word 'constrain' or 'compel' carries with it the idea of strong persuasion and even force (see Gal. 2:14). While it does not mean "to force against one's will," it is still a strong word. It indicates that the Judaizers were great persuaders; they had a "sales talk" that convinced the Galatian believers that legalism was the way for them. [WWW]
- D. **They are hypocrites.**
"They want you to submit to the Law, but they themselves do not obey the Law." the legalists belong to the same group as the Pharisees about whom Jesus said, "they say and do not" (Mt. 23:3). [WWW]

JESUS CHRIST (6:14-16).

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. **15** For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. **16** And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Paul keeps coming back to the cross (Gal. 2:20-21; 3:13; 4:5; 5:11,24; 6:12). "If righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ died in vain" (Gal. 2:21). The Judaizers boasted in circumcision; but Paul boasted in a crucified and risen Savior. [WWW]

A. Paul knew the Person of the Cross.

Jesus Christ is mentioned at least 45 times in the Galatian letter, which means that one third of the verses contain some reference to Him. The person of Jesus Christ captivated Paul, and it was Christ who made the Cross glorious to him. [WWW]

B. Paul knew the power of the Cross.

1. The cross (death by crucifixion) was the ultimate example of weakness and shame. Yet Saul of Tarsus experienced the power of the Cross and became Paul the apostle. The cross ceased to be a stumbling block to him and became, instead, the very foundation stone of his message: "Christ died for our sins." [WWW]
2. So while the legalist inflates the ego, flatters the flesh, and pleases the world; the true Christian crucifies all three. [WWW]
3. To have the "world crucified unto me" means that the world has nothing to offer by which I might be tempted. To be "crucified unto the world" would mean that one is not even looking to the world for pleasure or reward. [gls]

C. Paul knew the purpose of the Cross.

1. One purpose of the cross was to bring into the world a new "people of God." For centuries, the nation of Israel had been the people of God, and the Law had been their way of life. All of this was preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:1-7). Now that Christ had come and finished His great work of redemption, God had set aside the nation of Israel and brought into the world a "new creation" and a new nation, "the Israel of God." [WWW]
2. One purpose of the cross was to bring in a new creation (Gal. 6:15; NIV). This new creation is the church, the body of Christ. The "old creation" was headed by Adam, and it ended in failure. The new creation is headed by Christ, and it is going to succeed. [WWW]
3. Another purpose of the cross was to create a new nation, "the Israel of God: (Gal. 6:16). This is one of the many names for the church found in the NT. Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Mt. 21:43). Peter identifies that nation as the family of God: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1Pet. 2:9). [WWW]
4. Believers today may not be "Abraham's children" in the flesh, but they are "Abraham's seed" through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:28-29). They have experienced a circumcision of the heart that is far more effective than physical circumcision (Rom. 2:9; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11). For this reason, neither circumcision nor the lack of it is of any consequence to God (Gal. 6:15; see also 5:6). [WWW]
5. It is surprising that any could misunderstand this, as if Paul were, in any manner, invoking a blessing upon racial Jews. "Israel of God," in the true sense, with Paul, was never racial Israel, but the spiritual Israel. See Rom. 2:28,29; 4:13-16 and 9:6-8. This meaning of "spiritual Israel," of course, included all of every race, including Jews, who accepted Christ. [JBC]

THE APOSTLE PAUL (6:17-18).

From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

- A. There was a time when Paul was proud of his mark of circumcision (Phil. 3:4-6), but after he became a believer, he became a "marked man" in a different way. He now gloried in the scars he had received and in the suffering he had endured in the service of Jesus Christ. [WWW]
- B. This is doubtless a reference to the scars of such suffering as Paul's stoning at Lystra, among these very Galatians, on the first tour; and he considered such "marks" as positive and undeniable evidence of the genuineness of his apostleship. [JBC]
- C. When you read 2Cor. 11:18-33, you have no difficulty understanding this claim of his, for in many ways and in many places Paul suffered physically for Christ. [WWW]
- D. Paul was no armchair general; he was out in the front lines, waging war against sin, and taking his share of suffering. So, Paul comes to the end of his letter; and he closes just the way he began: GRACE! [WWW]
- E. Paul gave no commendation at the beginning of Galatians, and the tone of the whole letter is one of hurt surprise, sorrow and indignation; but in this final word "brethren," one finds the loving heart of Paul yearning for his beloved converts in Galatia. It is a final word of love and hope for all of them. He had not given them up; they were still brethren. [JBC]

SUMMARY OF THE EPISTLE.

- A. The fact that we are justified by grace through faith means we have spiritual freedom (1:3).
- B. We are not under bondage to the dictates of the OT Law. Paul soundly condemns anyone who would disparage the grace of God and attempt to change the gospel (1:8-10).
- C. He gives his apostolic credentials (1:11-2:14) and emphasizes that righteousness comes through Christ not the works of the Law (2:21).
- D. The Galatians must stand fast in their freedom and not be "entangled again with a yoke of bondage (that is, the Mosaic law)" (5:1).
- E. Christian freedom is not an excuse to gratify one's sin nature; rather, our freedom is an opportunity to love one another (5:13; 6:7-10).
- F. The Christian life is to be lived in the power of the Spirit, not the flesh (5:16-18).
- G. The flesh has been crucified with Christ (2:20); as a consequence, the Spirit will bear His fruit in the life of the believer (5:22-23).
- H. In the end, the issue is not whether a person is circumcised but whether he is a "new creation" (6:15).
- I. Salvation is the work of the Spirit, and we must be born again (see Jn. 3:3). External religious rites such as circumcision are of no value in the realm of the Spirit.

From: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-Galatians.html>.

The End.