

Galatians 6:11-16

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/gal/gal-6/galatians-611-16/>

Paul shows how he cares personally for the Galatians' spiritual growth. The competing Jewish "authorities" are manipulating them for worldly honor. For believers, we should consider the world dead, and live as new creations.

Paul begins to wrap up his letter to the Galatians. He draws attention to the *large letters* he wrote to the Galatians with his *own hand*. This implies that up until this point, a secretary had written down Paul's words while he dictated his thoughts. Now, at the end of the letter, he is signing off on it, making note of his large handwriting. This could be another hint that Paul had problems with his eyesight (see Galatians 4:13-15). In any case, Paul is showing proof that he has written this letter to them, to emphasize how much he personally cares about the Galatians' spiritual life. He is their spiritual father, and wants them to receive his fatherly correction. He is seeking their best.

He contrasts himself with *those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh*, those who were there in person in Galatia: the competing Jewish "authorities" who wanted the Galatians to seek to be justified in the sight of God by following the law. These are the false teachers who *try to compel the Galatians to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ*. This information adds insight into the motivation of the competing Jewish "authorities." They are afraid to commit to living a life of faith in Jesus. The gospel has caused trouble and persecution for Jews who walk faithful to Christ. Paul knows this persecution personally. He has suffered beatings, stonings, and angry mobs. Paul is pointing out that these competing Jewish "authorities" are not only cowards, but also hypocrites: *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*.

These false teachers don't keep the law (no one can, of course), but they think by converting the Galatians into Judaism and law-following (which begins with circumcision) they will look good to other Jews. They can show off all the Gentiles they have led into law-following. They seek safety from persecution. They seek worldly praise. Paul's point is that the competing Jewish "authorities" don't care about the Galatians' actual spiritual growth, rather, they just want to use the Galatians as trophies they can brag about.

Paul rejects this boastful, self-promoting attitude: *But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Paul only brags about Jesus and His saving work on the cross. We are declared righteous before God through faith in Christ alone, not through any religious ritual or rule-following, therefore only Christ deserves praise and glory from us. By only boasting in Christ, Paul's perspective of the world has changed, where *the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*. His hope is that the Galatians would stop trying to please the competing Jewish "authorities," who are themselves trying to show to others how "good" they are through obeying the law. Instead, believers should consider themselves dead to the world and

its “rewards.” It doesn’t matter what men think of us through worldly standards. Paul’s boast is in Christ alone.

One last time, Paul addresses the primary example of law-following: circumcision. He states the truth plainly, that *neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation*. Whether a man is circumcised or uncircumcised, it makes no difference. Labels don’t matter. Rituals don’t matter. As believers, the Galatians are each a *new creation*. Their hearts have been changed and the Holy Spirit lives in them. They are able to live the resurrection life of Christ, the life as a new person who is righteous before God. They are now able to live this spiritual life because they have been set free from the power of sin in the flesh. The question now is, “What will they, or we, choose?”

For the believers *who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God*. The Galatians will experience peace and mercy by living in the Spirit, not the flesh. Becoming circumcised, putting themselves under the law, living life trying to follow rules will not produce peace or mercy, but sin. To live that way misses the entire point of our identity as new creations. Paul expresses a call for unity by including *the Israel of God*. The people causing trouble in Galatia were Jewish believers, and Paul wants all believers to walk by the rule of the Spirit, whether Gentile or Israelite.

Biblical Text

¹¹ See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹² 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. ¹⁴ 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.