

Galatians: verse by verse

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Dan Lehigh

Based on commentaries by William Barkley, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Holman NT Commentary, Everyman's Bible Commentary, NIV Application Commentary, and the books What's so Amazing About Grace, Phillip Yancey; In the Grip of Grace and The Applause of Heaven, both by Max Lucado and Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life and Simple Faith, both by Charles Swindoll.

Quote:

"This land will remain the land of the free only as long as it is the home of the brave."

—Elmer Davis

End of quotation

General Introduction:

William Barkley writes:

Someone has likened the letter to the Galatians to a sword flashing in a great swordsman's hand. Both Paul and his gospel were under attack. If that attack had succeeded, Christianity might have become just another Jewish sect, might have become a thing dependent upon circumcision and on keeping the law, instead of being a thing of grace. It is strange to think that, if Paul's opponents had had their way, the gospel might have been kept for Jews and we might never have had the chance to know the love of Christ.

You may recall the coup of 1983 which occurred in the Caribbean Island of Grenada. Under martial law, the people of Grenada lost their freedom/liberty literally overnight.

President Ronald Reagan quickly called on the military. Within a day, the island was free again.

Something like the coup in Grenada occurred in the first century church. Jewish believers—called Judaizers—invaded the Galatian churches and through legalism tried to steal the people's freedom in Christ. These Judaizers said several things about Paul and his message. They said that:

1. Paul was watering down and cheapening the gospel by saying salvation is through grace alone by faith in Christ.
2. They denied his apostleship

3. They said Paul's gospel of grace alone through faith would lead to lawlessness.

In answer to these false charges we have the great Epistle of Grace, the Book of Galatians. In it we see Paul's emotions as he defends what to him is a life and death matter.

Paul was horrified to see the Gentile Christians, who had experienced glorious freedom in Christ, choose to go back to the slavery of legalism and law.

Paul saw correctly that if anything was added to grace through faith the cross of Christ was stripped of its power and meaning.

The Writer

Paul identifies himself as the writer in chapter 1 verse 1.

There is perhaps no NT book whose authorship is so well accepted as the Book of Galatians.

The Recipients

The letter is addressed to "the churches of Galatia" (ch. 1, v.2).

In Paul's time there were two areas known as "Galatia".

Galatia was used in an ethnic sense to describe the territory in north-central Asia Minor and in a political sense to describe the entire province of Galatia.

The message of the epistle does not depend on or change for either group of people.

The Date

The date of the epistle is closely tied to its destination. If it was written to the southern Galatians, it was probably written soon after the first missionary journey, probably before the council at Jerusalem mentioned in Acts 15 which occurred in AD 50. It could have been written as early as AD 48, which would make it the earliest of Paul's epistles.

If it went to North Galatia, it would have been written much later, sometime between AD 52-56.

Holman NT Commentary:

IN A NUTSHELL

In chapter 1, Paul explains to the Galatian Christians: I am astonished that you are turning away from the gospel of grace which I taught you to a system of works and law. Anyone who teaches you this should be accursed. I learned this message from Jesus himself, as the church leaders in Jerusalem will verify.

I. Paul's Introduction...1:1-9

A. Salutation...1:1-5

Paul uses the customary pattern of letters written during the first century.

- 1:1 "Paul", his Gentile name, "Saul" would have been his Jewish name.
Paul sets out immediately to defend his apostleship. Paul says, "My authority is from God!"
"Raised from the dead"...The risen Christ appeared to Paul
- 1:2 Also from the Brethren with him, to help support his authority, message.
- 1:3 "Grace and peace" Always in that order. Grace- God's unmerited, unlimited favor
Peace (Hebrew shalom)
- 1:4 Christ gave himself for our sins. Did you hear that! Christ gave himself! To die! To suffer! To be humiliated! For us!
- 1:5 Praise to God forever!

Holman Bible Dictionary:

To praise is to recognize the importance of another, the weight the other carries in the community. With God it is to recognize the essential nature of his "Godness" that gives him importance and weight in relationship to the human worshipping community.

End of quotation

B. Theme of the Epistle...1:6-9

Paul expresses amazement at their defection from the faith.

- 1:6 "I marvel...to wonder at (Gr.), to be amazed
"Are removed"
"Turncoat"
There was still hope of turning them back.
- 1:7 Paul says works-based gospel is no gospel at all.
- 1:8 Hypothetical case
"Anathema"— a person/thing devoted to destruction for God or because it is hateful to God.

II. Paul's Apostleship Defended...1:10-2:21

A. A Special Apostleship Affirmed...1:10-17

- 1:10 Paul had spoken harshly. It should be clear now that the charge of the Judaizers that he sought to "please men" was baseless.
- 1:11 "Certify"...Make known in an emphatic way that which they had already been convinced of (Gr.)
 "Brethren"— Tender touch. Lit.— "from same womb"
- 1:12 Paul did not receive his gospel from men, through course of instruction, but by revelation from Jesus Christ.
- 1:13-14 I certainly didn't receive my gospel from my religious background/upbringing.
 "Conversation"— Manner of life— Way of living.
 "Persecuted", "Wasted", "Profited"...very strong words. Tense shows that they were a settled way of life for a long time with Paul.
 "I kept on persecuting/wasting". Acts 26:9-11.
- 1:15-16 God chose Paul while he was still in the womb
 Sovereign God who has our lives in his hands.
 Wants us to yield our lives to him.
- 1:17 Didn't go to home church at Jerusalem, but went to Arabia.
- B. Lack of early contact with the apostles at Jerusalem (1:18-24).
- 1:18 Acts 9:19-25...Paul driven out of Damascus, went to see Peter at Jerusalem.
- 1:19 Also saw James, the Lord's brother.
- 1:20 I'm telling the truth!
- 1:21 "Syria and Cilicia"
 Syria first because Paul ministered first at Antioch, then at Tarsus.
 Cilicia was a district of Syria.
 This verse records appo. 10 years of Paul's life.
- 1:22 Paul had been away from Judea for appo. 10 years.
- 1:23 "They kept constantly hearing"
- 1:24 lit., they kept on glorifying.

Holman NT Commentary:

PRINCIPLES

- Perversion of the truth is more difficult to spot than blatant falsehood.
- God has given us only one way to be saved—through Jesus Christ.
- A teacher may be sincere and still be sincerely wrong.
- Your testimony is a powerful witnessing tool.
- The gospel is true because it comes straight from God and it changes lives.

APPLICATIONS

- Beware of people who say we need more than simple faith in Christ to be saved.
- If you have never put your faith and trust in Christ to save you, then tell him now that you believe and accept him as your Savior.
- Thank God that you are free from the burden of having to earn his love and approval.
- List three changes Christ has made in your life.
- Enjoy the fact that God is working in your life.
- Pray and ask him to work even more.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does Paul mean by "the present evil age"? Do you have any alternative choice but to live in this present evil age?
2. What substitute gospels do people teach today that tempt people to depend on something besides Christ for security and salvation? How do you talk to people who believe such gospels?
3. What attitudes, actions, and habits do you have that show the world you are trying to please God and not people?
4. How did you hear the gospel for the first time? How do you know it is not something made up by human imagination?

End of quotation

C. Failure of Later Contact to Question his Apostleship or add to His Gospel...2:1-10

Apparently Judaizers said the visit showed Paul's subordination and inferiority to the Jerusalem apostles. Paul says not so! I went to show them my gospel and they received me as an equal and validated my message (right hand of fellowship).

2:1 14 years after what? Conversion? Stay in Arabia? No one knows for sure.

2:2 "Revelation"...Acts 15:2— Church sent/Lord confirmed by a revelation.

Wycliffe Bible Commentary:

Did Paul really have a fear that he was running in vain and had run in vain since his conversion, that he had possibly been wrong about the gospel and now needed to be set right? By no means. But circumstances forced him to submit his message to the apostles, for only in this way could he hope to shut the mouths of his detractors, the Judaizers, and the mouths of those who had been taken in by their propaganda.

End of quotation

2:3-4-5 Titus was a test case.

Paul understood the issue went straight to the heart of the gospel. If circumcision was required, in addition to faith in Christ for salvation, then the gospel was compromised.

Paul did not resist because of stubbornness, or a feeling of superiority. He knew when to go to the mat with an issue. This was an issue which he understood could not be compromised.

How do we do at picking issues to defend?

Three parties in the Jerusalem controversy:

1. Paul/Barnabas
2. The false brethren
3. The Jerusalem apostles

2:6-10 Paul's message was affirmed.

D. His independent authority vindicated in the encounter with Peter at Antioch...2:11-21

The third time Paul meets Peter. On this occasion Paul takes Peter to task because of his inconsistency in eating with Gentiles. Paul is using this incident to show the Galatians that he was not inferior to Peter.

2:11-13 "Withstood"— "To set one's self against

"Blamed"...Paul saw Peter as in the wrong.

"Dissembled"— "Concealing one's real character under the guise of conduct implying something different", "To answer from under" (As an actor who speaks from under a mask)

The church was split wide open.

Even Barnabas was carried into this hypocrisy!

Peter's example influenced others. Even Barnabas. How carefully we need to conduct our lives in order not to lead others astray.

2:14 The truth of the gospel was involved.

2:15-18 Paul pointed out to Peter that they, as Jews, had to come to the place of simply trusting Christ for salvation

2:18 Paul, showing great skill (tact), takes Peter's sin and transfers it to himself.
Why a public confrontation?
How do we determine a public or private confrontation today?

2:19-21 Paul became exhausted in his zeal for keeping the law.

2:20 Magnificent verse! Christianity is not a matter of carefully checking off a list of do's and don'ts. Not a matter of human effort trying to bring off a superior kind of morality, but divine life surging through the Christian (2 Cor. 5:17).

2:20 Christ's love/sacrifice for me!

2:21 "I do not set at naught, make void, or set aside" the grace of God as Peter and the Judaizers have been doing.

Everyman's Bible Commentary:

Only two religions in the world: Christianity which is salvation through grace by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ or salvation by man's efforts.

Unfortunately too much passes for Christianity which smacks of the latter.

End of quotation

Holman NT Commentary:

The Pure Gospel Stream

The gospel is like a pure stream. Those who drink from it receive eternal life; but when people add requirements to salvation that are unnecessary, the stream gets dirty. The false teachers in Galatia were polluting the gospel by requiring the Christians to obey Jewish law, especially circumcision in addition to believing Christ. Many today would have us return to trying to earn God's favor through following rituals or obeying a set of rules. Whenever anyone tries to earn their salvation, they are falling into the bondage of legalism. Legalism pollutes the stream, changing it from a pure, life-giving stream to a bitter, deadly-toxic stream. When we try to earn God's favor or eternal life, we are drinking from a deadly stream.

PRINCIPLES

- When you affirm others, you give them wings to fly!
- One of the greatest needs of your family, friends and coworkers is appreciation.
- Submission to authority is a sign of spiritual maturity.
- Confrontation is hard but often necessary.

APPLICATIONS

- Look for opportunities to affirm others.
- Express your gratitude to God and others for the good they do.
- Submit to spiritual authority which God places over you.
- Have the courage to confront someone over his sin if God shows you it is necessary.

Holman NT Commentary continued:

IN A NUTSHELL

In chapter 3, Paul gives six points to show the Galatians the superiority of grace over law. (1) By grace, salvation and the Holy Spirit are given. (2) Abraham, the father of our people, was saved by grace. (3) Grace gives redemption and salvation; the law brings condemnation. (4) Abraham was saved by grace hundreds of years before the law was given. (5) The law's purpose is to act as a guide that leads us to Christ. (6) By grace a love relationship with God and one another is obtained.

III. Paul's Gospel Explained...3:1-4:31

A. The Argument From Experience (The Galatians)...3:1-5 (1st argument)

Paul says the Galatians entered into freedom in Christ by faith in his death and that the Holy Spirit was given to them as a proof of their new life. Are they now going to throw away the freedom, in Christ, and return to the slavery of the law, to the folly of keeping the law through their own efforts?

3:1 "O Foolish Galatians"— Surprise mixed with indignation.
 "Bewitched" ...from the popular metaphor of the evil eye.
 "Jesus Christ set forth" ...Placarded

3:2 Tell me only this one thing! I rest my case on this argument alone

3:3 "Made perfect"...complete.
 "Flesh"...All the effort of the unsaved man

3:4 "Suffered"
 Don't know how, but Acts 14:2, 5, 19, 22 are a start.

3:5 "Therefore"
 "Ministereth"... "To supply abundantly or bountifully"

B. The Argument From Scripture...Abraham...3:6-9 (2nd argument)

3:6-9 Paul now goes to OT to show that the revered patriarch, and father of the Jews, depended on faith for righteousness. Only those with a faith like Abraham will be blessed by God.

See Rom. 4:9-12

3:6-7 Abraham was justified by faith (Gen. 15:1-6, Rom. 4:3, James 2:23). The real children of Abraham are not his natural descendants, but those who share his faith (Matt. 3:9, John 8:38-44).

3:8 This is their promised blessing, not a guaranteed salvation just because they are Jews.

C. The Argument From the Law...3:10-4:11

1. The Curse of the Law from Which Christ Must Deliver...3:10-14 (3rd argument)

Paul, having proved that physical descent does not guarantee salvation, now proceeds to the other refuge of Judaism, the possession of the law.

3:10 Faith brings blessings, but the law produces a curse

3:11-12 Not only is it impossible to be justified by law, but God uses another method anyway (The just shall live by faith...Hab. 2:4, Rom. 1:17).

3:13 Christ purchased our freedom at Calvary.

3:14 What was the blessing of Abraham? Justification.

2. The Inviolability of the Covenant of Promise and its Priority to the Law...3:15-18 (The argument from the permanence of the law— 4th argument)

Paul says a covenant, by nature, is fixed, not subject to change.

3:15 He wants to be sure they understand his point.
"Brethren"...Love, urgency, conciliation in his tone.
"Covenant"...One of two individuals obligating himself.

3:16 Christ brought to an end the age of Law.

3:17 The promise to Abraham enjoyed priority over the giving of the law since it came 430 years before the law.

- 3:18 Judaizers said salvation rested upon promise and the law. Paul says if the law affects the promise at all it makes it null and void. It cannot be added to it without destroying it.
3. The Purpose of the Law— Temporary and negative...What is the purpose of the law?
- 3:19 "Transgressions"...This revelation of the true nature of sin would cause man to fear God's wrath. Added alongside till Christ would come.
- 3:20 Mediation assumes two parties. But God is one.
- 3:21-22 The law does not oppose the promise of God.
4. Sonship Not Through the Law But Through Faith...3:23-4:7
- 3:23 Man could not come by faith under the law.
- 3:24 "Schoolmaster" (paidagogos)
"Kept" (v. 23)...Guardian of a child in its minority. Emphasizes both the inferiority of law to grace and its temporary character.
- 3:25-26 "The faith" in Christ (w. 22-23)
- 3:27-29 Baptized into Christ when they put faith in him as Savior. The Holy Spirit placed them in vital union with Christ.
Chrystostom says, "If Christ is Son of God, and thou hast put him on, having the son in thyself and being made like unto him, thou hast been brought into one family and one nature."
One heart now beats in all. No class, racial distinctions. These are merged in that higher unity of our common life in Christ. One mind guides all the mind of Christ.

Holman NT Commentary:

PRINCIPLES

- Some people have mental barriers preventing them from believing in Christ. It is our responsibility to help distinguish between legalism and righteousness that comes by faith.
- Our inability to obey the Ten Commandments perfectly shows us that we need Jesus Christ as our Savior.
- If observing the law could have saved us, then God would never have sent Jesus to die on the cross.

- The law was a guardian personally taking us by the hand and leading us to Jesus Christ—our personal Lord and Savior.
- Christ breaks down the barriers that divide people (v. 28).

APPLICATION

- Recognize that God's entrance requirements for heaven is perfection.
- Realize that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).
- Allow your imperfections to humble you before God.
- Put your faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness and eternal life.
- Thank God that his "grace way" is the best way.
- Rejoice that you now live under God's blessing and not sin's curse.
- Do not consider yourself as inferior or better than anyone else. We are all equal in Christ.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some ways people seek right standing with God other than the way of grace through faith? Why are these ways tempting?
2. How was Abraham a representative of the faith way of salvation even though he lived almost two thousand years before Christ? When did God initiate the faith way of salvation?
3. When did God decide that salvation should not be given only to Jews but also to Gentiles?
4. How does the law lead us to Christ?
5. What does it mean that we are all one in Christ? What distinctions have been extinguished? Which distinctions still remain true?

"It is doubtful if there is any greater joy on earth than the joy of being free. And the ecstasy is heightened if a person has once been in bondage, held captive by a power that is impossible to overcome. Being liberated from such clutches brings pleasure beyond description."

—Charles Swindoll

IN A NUTSHELL

In chapter 4, Paul explains the glorious reality of what it means to be God's children and how awful it would be to forfeit such a privilege. Thus he warns his readers not to listen to the false teachers seducing them away from Christ and back into slavery to the law rather than freedom in Christ.

End of quotation

4:1-3 The minor child who is an heir is no different from a servant.

4:4 "Fullness of time:...Time appointed of the father (v. 2). Roman world uniquely prepared for Christ:
Universal language (Greek)
Roman roads
Roman peace (pax romonas)

"Made of a woman"...stresses his virgin birth and his humanity.

4:5 Christ kept the law perfectly

4:6-7 This adoption is attested by "the Spirit of his son"

5. An Appeal Not to Return to Bondage...4:8-11

4:8 Before conversion, they served things which were not gods

4:9-10 But now you do know God. He knows you. He lives in you.
 How weak the law is compared with grace.

4:11 Paul was afraid his hard work / sacrifice would be for nothing

D. The Argument From Personal Reception by the Galatians..4:12-20

The attitude of the Galatians toward Paul stands in sharp contrast to their original appreciation of him as God's messenger.

4:12-13 Paul pleads with them to throw off the yoke of legalism.

4:14 You even resisted the temptation to despise me when I had a loathsome illness.

4:15-16 They congratulated themselves on being visited by an emissary of the Lord. Their gratitude was unbounded. They would have sacrificed their eyes for Paul. Some feel this indicates the disease of ophthalmia, a disease which causes much pain and discomfort and causes a repulsive appearance.

In v. 16 Paul contrasts his truth-telling with Judaizers' falsehood.

4:17-18 Paul told the truth. They flattered and paid false affection to the Galatians to win them over.

4:19-20 Paul's pain and concern

E. The Argument From the Covenant of Promise...4:21-31

Paul had called the Galatians "children" (4:19). Now he tells them a story to show them their folly.

4:21-23 If you desire to be under the law listen to the law

4:24-25 Allegory— Story capable of telling truth.

4:26-27 Another Jerusalem (allegory) refers to a present spiritual reality.

4:28-31 NT saints are children of promise.

"Legalists in our churches today warn that we dare not teach people about the liberty we have in Christ lest it result in religious anarchy. The Christian who lives by faith is not going to become a rebel. Quite the contrary, he is going to experience the inner discipline of God that is far better than the outer discipline of man-made rules."

—Warren Wiersbe

Holman NT Commentary:

IN A NUTSHELL

In chapter 5, Paul explains to the Galatian Christians: Through grace, Christ has set you free. Stand firm, and do not fall back into the slavery of the law. Yet do not use your freedom as an opportunity to sin. Do not give yourself over to the deeds of your carnal desires but rather to the deeds of the Holy Spirit.

End of quotation

IV. Paul's Gospel Practiced...5:1-6:15

A. The Gospel Practiced in Liberty...5:1-12

5:1 NAS— "**It was for freedom that Christ set us free**". There are some ways in which it's easier to live in slavery than freedom.

5:2-4 One must choose between Christ and circumcision.

5:5 The legalist is bogged down with insecurity.

5:6 Paul has shown faith's hope. Now he shows its outreach in love.

5:7-10 Paul is using the word picture of the running games.

5:11-12 Some may say Paul was inconsistent. He had Timothy circumcised (Acts. 16:3). We see that Paul saw circumcision as purely an outward form or habit, done simply to gain favor in God's eyes while missing the true meaning of being in covenant relationship with God.
How easy it is for us to do things because..."We've always done it that way!" Never mind if it makes sense, if it enhances our walk with God. It is simply form / habit.
How carefully we must watch this.

B. The Gospel Practiced in Love...5:13-15

Liberty and freedom can lead to license and sin. We need to constantly guard this. The one effective counter-measure to this is to serve others / God by "love".

C. The Gospel Practiced in the Spirit...5:16-26

This section with its contrast between the flesh and the spirit is very important if we are to win the battle against the desires of the flesh.

5:16-17 Walk in (by) the Spirit...Daily yield to him.

5:18 To realize victory over flesh, one must be led by the Spirit.

5:19-21 Works of the flesh will flourish in an atmosphere of legalism.

First, the sensual sins:

Adultery

Fornication

These words are used in KJV. But actually, the Greek says, "immorality, impurity, sensuality."

Immorality is a very broad word

Impurity

Sensuality

Next, Religious Sins:

Idolatry

Witchcraft— pharmakia (Gr.)

A third class includes the temperamental or social sins:

Hatred— Opposite of love

Variance— Contention
Emulations— Jealousy;
Wrath— Passionate, violent
Seditions— Dissensions and divisions
Heresies—
Envyings
Murders

In a fourth class:

Drunkenness
Revelings

5:22-23 The Fruit of the Spirit

All these fruit stand in contrast to the deeds of the flesh already listed. What a desirable list for us to strive for in our lives. How important for self-examination.

Love

Agape— The selfless, Godlike love which loves in spite of the response of the beloved.

Joy—Depends not on outward circumstances but on a deep, inner contentment

Peace— The gift of Christ (John 14:27).

Long-suffering—involves a refusal to retaliate or work vengeance for wrongs received.

Gentleness (Kindness)— Benevolence in action.

Goodness— An uprightness of soul that abhors evil

Faith— Faithfulness

Meekness— Strength under control

Temperance—The mastery of one's own desires and impulses.

"...Against such there is no law"— Law is to restrain evil, but the fruit of the Spirit have nothing to restrain. Rom. 8:4

5:24-26 Those who are truly Christ's must be like him in that they participate in his cross.

Holman NT Commentary:

PRINCIPLES

- Everybody is a slave to something...either good or bad. You cannot expect to harvest the fruit of God when you are sowing the seeds of evil.
- It only takes a few cancer cells of sin to infect and destroy vital spiritual organs.
- Freedom in Christ does not give us the right to do as we please, but the liberty to do as we ought.
- God must work in me so he can work through me.

APPLICATIONS

- Choose your bondages well. Make yourself a slave to Christ.
- Catch sin early. Like cancer, it spreads.
- Imitate Jesus in all you do.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what ways does the church with its programs and rituals threaten to enslave us and thereby keep us from the freedom Christ wants us to enjoy in him? What can we do to ensure that we are not enslaved to the church? What can we do to make sure the church is enslaved to Christ?
2. How does faith express itself? What evidence of faith do you see in your own life? In the life of your church?
3. Why does freedom in Christ not give you freedom to enjoy the pleasures of the world?
4. How do you keep in step with the Spirit?

"It is easy to talk about the fruit of the Spirit while doing very little about it. So Christians need to learn that it is in concrete situations, rather than in emotional highs, that the reality of the Holy Spirit in their lives is demonstrated." —James Boice

Holman NT Commentary continued:

IN A NUTSHELL

In chapter 6, Paul advises the Galatian Christians: In light of the gospel of grace and the power of the Holy Spirit (chap. 5), you are now free to help others. You can help them in three ways. First, you can help other Christians carry their burdens (6:1-5). Second, you can help your pastor(s) by financially supporting them. Third and finally, you can help others by serving them with pure motives.

End of quotation

D. The Gospel Practiced in Service...6:1-10

Christians still have a law to fulfill— the law of Christ. They can fulfill it only in the power of the Spirit, as they serve one another in the fellowship of the church.

6:1-5 "A man"...one like you
 "Be overtaken"— apprehended, taken by surprise

A sinning saint needs restoration as well as divine forgiveness. The one qualified is "spiritual", possessing to a notable degree the fruit of the Spirit, especially love and meekness.

The one who restores must meekly realize that he may someday fall into sin and need to be lovingly restored.

- 6:6-10 Paul returns to the thought of bearing each other's burdens, specifically giving support to those who are in Christian work.
- 6:6 NAS: "And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches."
"Communicate" "To share"

A selfish Christian sows "to his flesh", spending his resources to gratify his own personal desires.

E. The Gospel Practiced in Separation From the World...6:11-15

Paul uses this final section as a means of underscoring some of the emphases of the epistle as a whole, stressing the centrality and sufficiency of the cross and the division it created between believers and men of the world.

- 6:11 NAS: "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. "

What truly counts is not circumcision, but the new life that comes from being in Christ Jesus.

V. Conclusion...6:16-18

- A. Closing Prayer...6:16
- B. Closing Testimony...6:17
- C. Benediction...6:18

This parting word with its emphasis on "grace" summarizes the message of the epistle as a whole. Nothing could be more appropriate.

Holman NT Commentary:

PRINCIPLES

- Love is bighearted not bigheaded.
- Legalism condemns while grace restores.
- You impress others with what you know. You impact others with how you love.
- Conceit is deceit. The one who toots his horn the loudest is usually in the deepest fog.
- Life is like a boomerang; what you throw is what returns to you.

- You harvest spiritually, mentally, relationally, and physically in direct proportion to what you plant. There are no miracle crops.
- Not only our deeds, but also our motives, are important.
- Spiritual change is an inside job begun with the new birth and sustained by a new power—the Holy Spirit.
- Scars for Christ here on earth produce stars from Christ there in heaven.

APPLICATIONS

- Put yourself in others' shoes before you judge them harshly for sin.
- Put yourself in others' shoes before you turn away from their material needs. We cannot help everyone, but we must be sensitive to the Lord's leading.
- Do what you can to be sure your church is meeting your pastor's needs.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what way does your church function as a community to restore sinners and carry other believers' burdens?