

Galatians 6:11-18 – Circumcision is Nothing, But a New Creation is Everything
Community Group Galatians Lesson 14

I. Review Galatians 1-6:10

- A. 1:1-24 – You have wandered from the gospel that came from Christ Himself.
- B. 2:1-21 – The authenticated gospel I gave was verified even to the shame of Peter.
- C. 3:1-29 – Everyone is justified by faith in the promise – even Abraham.
- D. 4:1-31 – Faith in Christ makes you Abraham’s child and heir; the law makes you a slave.
- E. 5:1-26 – We are set free to walk by the Spirit and serve one another rather than flesh
- F. 6:1-10 – Not under law but still commanded to love and serve by correcting and giving.

II. Circumcision is Nothing But a New Creation is Something (6:11-16)

- A. I reiterate that they put you under the law so **they** won’t be persecuted (vv. 11-12)
 - 1. *See by what large letters that this is my own hand.* This “my own hand” emphasizes his apostolic authority, and his direct involvement in what is being taught. It comes from the apostle himself. Remember 4:12-16, and his “bodily condition” that was likely an eye problem, thus reason for “large letters.” (v. 11)
 - 2. Those who wish to look good in their own flesh are trying to put you under the law through circumcision so no one will persecute them for their faith in Christ. Paul wants them to see that the reason Judaizers have emphasized circumcision and keeping the rituals of the law is that they want to be acceptable to man. (v. 12)
- B. Though they boast in the law, they don’t even keep the law themselves (v. 13)
 - 1. You are someone whose “conformity” they use to boast about themselves. Not only do they not strengthen you by grace, they are using you for self-promotion.
 - 2. Yet even they who attempt to use you (“*See, we made them obey the law!*”) do not themselves keep the law. He knows this because no one can (Acts 15:10; 1 Jn. 1:10), because he has witnessed others try (2:11-21), and because after Christ, it’s not needed.
- C. My only boast is the cross of Christ (*four points*) (v. 14)
 - 1. First, he doesn’t use the people as a source of boasting for himself, in contrast with the Judaizers. Recall 6:4 said that his boasting is in what God has done in him.
 - 2. Second, the only thing he cares to boast in (see also Philippians 3:7-9, which he wrote shortly after this) is the cross of Christ. This points them back to Christ.
 - 3. By the cross, the world was crucified to him. It is rendered insignificant and unimportant. (Remember 2:20 – *Christ is his life.*) He has no need to boast in this world about himself, and that is one reason he does not “use” them. Also, by the cross, he was crucified to the world. That is, he has died with respect to things in the world. People’s praise or credit for other’s apparent obedience is of no value to him. As Chuck Swindoll says about this verse, it reminds us of the old hymn refrain:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face.
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.*

- 4. From an application standpoint, this verse is good for us to think about. What do I boast in besides the cross? People accepting me? My success? The way I might know is, *what is there, if I lost it, I would despair, become enraged or loath myself?* My only boast is in the cross. There is nothing important about me besides that.

- D. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything (since Christ came) (vv. 15-16)
 - 1. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision gets you anything with God, and all that matters is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). (v. 15)
 - 2. Those who value this receive mercy and grace from God (v. 16)
 Whoever understands that she or he cannot do anything that buys credit with God are the ones who receive mercy and grace from Him. They are the new creation.

III. Benediction (6:17-18)

- A. *From now on, let no one trouble me, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.*
 He does not wish to defend himself as accurate with God’s words before such men as those who deceived the Galatians. He proved his allegiance to Christ by the marks on his body that were the result of persecution. “Marks” contrast with circumcision. (v. 17)
 This further emphasizes what he said about their fear of persecution which motivated them to try to control the Galatians. He bore the marks of persecution (2 Cor. 11:22-29) because of his confidence in Christ and because he refuses to live for man’s approval.
- B. *The grace of the Lord be with your spirit.* Here Paul blesses them. He does not have the personal and affectionate closing like he does in Romans, Philippians or Colossians. But even with a strong rebuke and correction in this book, he wants them to know that they are under the grace of Jesus. Even so, he wants them to recognize that God’s grace to them has been their hope, not their conformity to the Law and man’s pressure. (v. 18)

IV. Galatians Summary

- 1. I am coming to you under command of God and of Jesus Christ. (1a)
- 2. You are being deceived by teachers trying to get you conformed to the Law. I once defended the law as the means of righteousness and stand against Christ, too, but Jesus appeared to me and revealing that He was my righteousness. (1b)
- 3. The gospel I received from Him was tested and tried by the Jerusalem apostles and they approved of what I had been taught by the Lord Himself. (2a)
- 4. Even Peter was deceived in the early days from this gospel of grace when he gave in to the pressure of Judaizers, but I corrected him. (2b)
- 5. Remember that the means of righteousness has always been by faith! God even credited Abraham as righteous by his faith. (3a)
- 6. If we could have been made right by the law, Christ wouldn’t have come. The law’s purpose was to teach us that we needed someone else’s (Christ’s) righteousness. (3b)
- 7. You are sons of God! Don’t submit to rules and regulations to gain favor like slaves do. (4a)
- 8. We are children of promise. Cast off your rules and regulations which were only given to us to bring us to the freedom that is ours when we trust Christ. (4b)
- 9. That does not mean you are free to live for yourself in a fleshly manner. (5a)
- 10. Rather, serve others through love through walking by the Spirit. You will certainly know which of those two you are doing by the fruit in your life. (5b)
- 11. That service will sometimes look like correcting and teaching others in a spirit of meekness, since you, too, can fall, and will sometimes look like giving to others. (6a)
- 12. Whoever tries to look good by their flesh wastes their time. Those who are content to trust the Lord for their righteousness and walk in accordance with that promise will receive grace and mercy from God. (6b)

IV. Discussion

Where would you want to go as a group as you reflect on this book of Galatians?