

A Parting Shot

"For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves keep the Law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh" (Gal. 6:13). Paul has labored long, hard and conclusively to show that the law had been removed and that they who accepted had turned away from Christ and were fallen from grace. His masterful allegory in chapter four of Abraham's two sons who were conceived by different women, whom themselves stood symbolically for the two covenants, should have convinced any honest person that to turn to the law was both folly and soul-damning. In the first part of chapter five Paul showed the consequences which would result were Galatians to fully receive the law, but the remaining part of that chapter and early verses in chapter six provide practical advice for all Christians. Still, before he concludes the epistle, he cannot resist one parting shot at those who both enticed Christians to accept the law and circumcision -- thus he wrote the passage cited above.

He charged that many were circumcised to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ; he further charged those that who received circumcision (i.e., those who were advocates of the law) did not themselves keep the law: they glorified in the flesh of those whom they persuaded to be circumcised -- thus; that they had now become identified with physical Israel through accepting circumcision. Paul states, *"But for be it from me to glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world"* (Gal. 6:14). What a wondrous thought this is! To glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is to glory in that which it was -- a declaration of divine love. *"While we were weak in due season Christ for the ungodly."* *"For faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief"* (Rom. 5:6; 1 Tim. 1:15). The cross of Christ is a declaration of God's grace. And through the cross Paul said he had been crucified unto the world -- the guilt of his sins were removed by the blood our Savior shed there; that great act of divine love and grace crucified for Paul love for the world. *"We love because he first loved us ..."* (1 Jn. 4:19)

Paul then adds, *"For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature"* (Gal. 6:15). Elsewhere Paul wrote, *"Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God"* (1 Cor. 7:13). In essence Paul tell the Galatians it doesn't matter whether a man a Greek or Jew (in fact in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, Gal. 3:28f), the important thing is that one be a new creature. *"Wherefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17).

"And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy and upon the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). The rule to which Paul alludes is that one just stated: circumcision is nothing, uncircumcision is nothing: being a new creature is everything. Paul breathes a blessing upon those who walk (live) by this rule, which blessing he repeats later (Gal. 6:18). Those who walk by this rule, a new creature is everything, are those who constitute the Israel of God. The same thought is expressed in Paul's letter to the Philippians. *"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision, for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh ..."* (Phil. 3:2f). Then he adds, *"Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus"* (Gal. 6:16). Paul tells he was circumcised the eight day but that meant nothing to him nor should it mean anything to the Galatians. The marks of Jesus Paul bore in his body was doubtlessly the visible evidence in scars he carried from having *"stripes above means"* of receiving from Jews five times *"forty stripes save one"* of having thrice been beaten with rods, to which may be added *"once was I stoned"* (2 Cor. 11:23-28). Those who were being circumcised did so to avoid persecution. The real marks of Jesus were those Paul bore as evidence of his persecutions for preaching Christ Jesus. The benediction of Paul to these brethren illustrate that although he "pulled no punches" and "told it as it was," he held nothing but the tenderest regards and feelings for them his spiritual children. *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren"* (Gal. 6:18).

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