

Final Warning Against the Judaizers

Galatians 6:11-18



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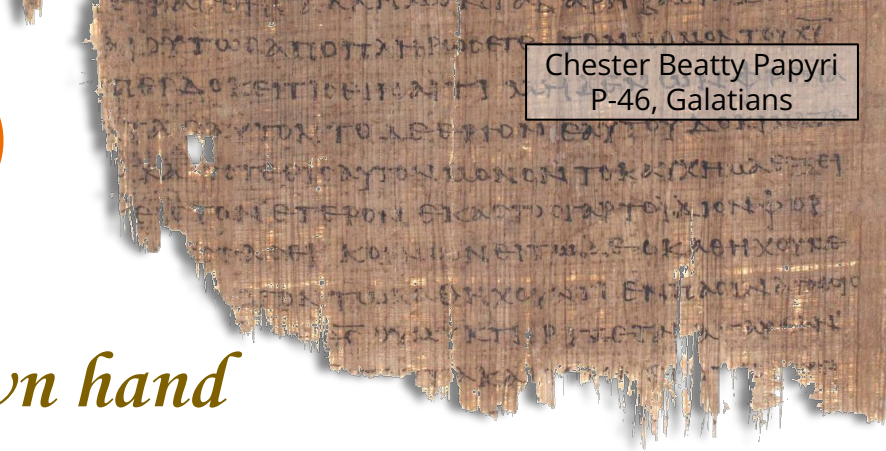
The writing of this letter (6:11)


Chester Beatty Papyri
P-46, Galatians

See with what large letters
I am writing to you with my own hand

- Paul wrote the final part of his letter by hand using large characters.
- He typically dictated his letters to a scribe or amanuensis (cf. Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 16:21; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17).
- "**with what large letters**" called attention to the fact that Paul's own handwriting was clearly distinct from that of the scribe.
- Paul's signature would have helped to certify the authenticity of the letter.

The Judaizers' motivation (6:12)

- Their constant "**desire**" (*thelō*, present tense), design, or intention was to "**make a good showing**" (*euprosōpeō*) ~ "to display a pleasing appearance." This fleshly attitude was not a fruit of the Spirit.
- "**flesh**" (*sarx*) has the same meaning it has elsewhere. It identifies the fallen, sinful nature of human beings apart from God.
- "**compel you to be circumcised**" (*anagkazō*) depicts bending the arm (*agkalē*) in order to pressure a person to do something.
- "**simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ**" ~ their first motive was to avoid persecution from the Jews by teaching that the Law is still in force.

They do not even keep the Law themselves (6:13)

- "**those who are circumcised**" ~ the Judaizers.
- Their hypocrisy ~ they "**do not even keep the Law themselves**." They were only concerned with outward appearances.
- A second motive of the Judaizers' actions ~ "**so that they may boast in your flesh**."
- "**boast**" (*kauchaomai*) ~ the verb form of the noun Paul used earlier. This verb means "having a basis for glorying or exaltation," and the context here gives it a negative connotation.
- The Judaizers desired to gain fleshly glory from men for their accomplishment of leading others into bondage to the Law.

They desire to boast in your flesh (6:13)

- "**in your flesh**" may involve a play on words since physical circumcision involves bodily flesh that is surgically removed.
- But Paul consistently used the term "**flesh**" (*sarx*) to represent the corrupt nature of human beings who depend on their own "works of the flesh" and human effort apart from God.
- Liturgies, rituals, and other religious acts are often produced by the flesh in order to please the flesh, which enjoys religious displays that require no heart righteousness or reliance on the Holy Spirit.
- The underlying motive of the false teachers was ungodly ambition, and they wanted to boast in the numbers of followers they recruited.

Paul would only boast in the cross of Christ (6:14)

- "**But**" by contrast, Paul did not desire to boast in fleshly deeds that count for nothing toward justification before God.
- The only thing worthy of exultation or glorying is what Christ accomplished on our behalf.
- "**the cross**" represents God's entire program of salvation by grace.
- "**the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world**" ~ Paul associated the cross with the separation that frees a believer from bondage to the ungodly world system. Not only does the believer receive a new inner presence and power, but the Spirit also provides the outward ability to relate to the world in a new way.

Not circumcision, but the new creation (6:15)

- Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision provides any advantage when standing before God. Faith in Christ alone is all that matters.
- Once a person receives God's free gift of salvation he will have a new ability to love and serve others, which Paul attributed to the "**new creation**." This is the new birth of regeneration (2:20; 3:21).
- Paul is referring to a nature that is of a completely "**new**" (*kainos*) quality. This is something that only God can accomplish, and it is all that matters for justification and sanctification.
- The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit empowers that new nature to live in a way that pleases God.

Walk by this rule to receive peace and mercy (6:16)

- "**this rule**" = salvation by faith in Christ alone, which results in the new birth, and the guidance and enabling of the Holy Spirit.
- "**peace**" (*eirēnē*) ~ the result of being justified by God on the basis of the finished work of Christ.
- "**mercy**" (*eleos*) ~ God does not give to believers what they deserve.
- "**Israel of God**" ~ two interpretations for this phrase:
  - "peace and mercy be upon Gentile believers as well as on Jewish believers."
  - "peace and mercy be upon all who walk by the rule of faith, namely, the Israel of God" (3:9, 14, 29; 4:28).

Paul's final comments (6:17-18)

- "**no one cause trouble**" (present imperative) ~ Paul had definitively defended his apostolic authority and the truth of his gospel message.
- "**I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus**" ~ Paul had suffered greatly during his years of ministry for the Lord Jesus. His visible scars were a silent witness to the authenticity of his apostleship.
- He had started this letter with "grace" (1:3) and now he ended the letter expressing his desire for God's ongoing "**grace**" in their lives.
- "**Grace**" is the undeserved favor of God that provides salvation and new life to those who put their trust in Christ alone.
- "**brethren**" ~ conveys affection (1:11; 3:15; 4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1).

Was Paul's letter effective?

- Around the time Paul was writing, Judaizers also arrived in Antioch.
- The resulting confrontation led to a meeting with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to resolve this controversy (Acts 15).
- The Jerusalem Council decree: **Gentile believers would not be required to submit to the Mosaic Law.**
- Paul carried this decree to the Galatian churches. This seemed to resolve the issue (Acts 16:5). His two subsequent visits showed that those churches remained true to God's Word (cf. Acts 18:23).
- Paul's letter to the Galatians ***did*** accomplish its purpose.