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Galatians

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

“Therefore” is stated for us to think on what has just been presented. Paul has been speaking of sharing all good things and not wearying while doing so. To sum this thought up, he adds in that “as we have opportunity, let us do good to all.” Not only should we share in all good things, and not only should we not weary in doing good, but we are admonished to do so to all. This then includes Jew and Gentile, it includes men and women, and it also includes the otherwise unlovable. We are asked to use our fruits of the Spirit in a manner which will be evident to any and all around us.

But Paul next places an extra stress on “especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Those who are believers in Christ are to be given extra attention in our efforts of doing good. When they are in need, we are to open our hand and provide them a blessing. When they are sick, we should come to them with comfort; when they are in grief, we should mourn with them. We should be willing to go an extra step in carrying the burdens of our fellows in Christ because they are our eternal family members. We are united in this household of faith by the work of Christ.

Life application: It is not always easy to find a loving attitude towards some of our fellow Christians. However, we have been called to share ourselves with them to the greatest extent possible. Let us endeavor to fulfill the words of admonition given to us by the hand of Paul in order that we will be pleasing to God who inspired his words to us.

See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! Galatians 6:11

This single verse is one which involves the highest of speculation by scholars as to what Paul means. Some see it as a confirmation that he wrote the entire epistle with his own hand; something that can be confirmed by the large size of the handwriting he uses.

It could also refer to the important nature of the letter. In essence, “See how great of an epistle I have written to you... with my own hand!” It would mean that he took the time to write the entire letter himself to show how concerned he was over the issue. Instead of having a scribe write it, he wrote the whole thing himself.

The aorist tense he uses here could refer to the entire letter, or to just the final verses. If the final verses only, then he had a scribe write the letter. After this, in order to authenticate it, he begins this final greeting in his own hand.

Further, the tense of the verb – regardless as to whether he is referring to the whole letter or just the final verses – may be Paul’s way of inserting himself into the reader’s position as the letter is being read. In essence, “See with what large letters I am (right now) writing to you.” In this, he would be making the letter active at the moment it is being read.

As to why he wrote with large letters, speculation again is high. But what appears to be the most logical explanation is that he suffered from eye troubles which necessitated writing that way, as anyone with bad eyes would be prone to do. This idea is substantiated in other passages where Paul’s vision seems to be deficient.

Another view, however, is that he wrote with large letters to highlight the importance of the contents of the epistle. IT WOULD BE LIKE TYPING AN ENTIRE EPISTLE IN CAPITAL LETTERS! This is possible, but the content of the letter itself calls out that it is of the highest importance. Writing larger would not add anything to the substance of what is said.

In all, the entire verse is one of present day mystery and speculation. No matter what, it is a note of authentication concerning Paul’s authorship. It is further a note of the extremely important nature of the letter.

Life application: Paul's concern over inserting the law into our life and conduct was so sincere that he took the time to write this letter. In it are many warnings that we are not to fall back on deeds of the law for our justification before God. Christ Jesus fulfilled the law and the law is now obsolete and annulled. Even if verses like Galatians 6:11 carry high speculation, the overall content of the letter does not. We are saved by grace and we are to rest in the finished work of Christ.

As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these *would* compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. Galatians 6:12

Paul lays bare the very heart of the matter in this verse. He clearly and openly displays the intent of the Judaizers and one of the main reasons behind their aberrant teachings. "As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh" speaks of externals. In essence, "If I do these external things, people will see and will nod in satisfaction." Or even more, "If I have this outward appearance, I will seem more holy and righteous than those around me." It is the same attitude as the hypocrites whose attitude Jesus rebuked –

"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward." Matthew 6:5

The external prayers of these people was to draw attention to themselves. The same is true with the Judaizers. In turn, they compelled those in Galatia "to be circumcised." Paul has shown that circumcision in the flesh means nothing. Christ fulfilled that type and picture and thus it no longer applies to the people of God. And yet, because they were circumcised, they tried to make it a point of personal righteousness to the Galatians.

It was, as the scholar Ellicott notes, "To wear a specious exterior in the earthly, unspiritual element in which they move."

Paul is using circumcision as representative of any deeds of the law. Therefore, the same thought follows through with a Sabbath observance, observing the Feasts of the Lord, wearing certain garments, conducting a service in Hebrew, not eating certain foods banned under the

law, and on and on and on. All of these are externals; all are fulfilled in Christ. They are set aside and no longer are required.

In demanding this of the Gentiles, it then allowed them control over the Gentiles. They became the standard, not Christ. This sad, twisted thinking is still realized today in the Hebrew Roots Movement and in many independent messianic synagogues. And unfortunately, so many are brought under this aberrant teaching, to their own detriment.

But Paul explains why these Judaizers still follow the customs, traditions, and precepts of the law. He says it is so “that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” This is the heart of the matter. They can claim to be law-observant Jews while claiming to be followers of Christ. The two are contradictory and mutually exclusive. If one is a follower of Christ, he is not an observer of the law which Christ fulfilled. Instead, he follows Christ who embodies that law.

Life application: Follow Christ; nothing else.

For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. Galatians 6:13

This is the second reason that the Judaizers insisted on circumcision. The first was so that they wouldn't have to suffer persecution. By continuing to practice deeds of the law, they wouldn't be faced with rejection by those who held only to the law. They could say, “I'm a follower of Jesus, but I am also a follower of Moses.” The “Moses” part would then gloss over the offensive “Jesus” part and save them from being persecuted.

The second reason is now given. He first says, “For not even those who are circumcised keep the law.” This is speaking specifically of the Judaizers who claim they are followers of Jesus, but the premise holds true with anyone under the law. Paul clearly shows in Romans that no one is able to keep the law. This is the reason why there was an annual Day of Atonement. Anyone who didn't observe the Day of Atonement was to be cut off from the people. This is because no one ever met the law, even for a single year of their life.

Thus, it demonstrates that even the Judaizers, who demanded that the Gentiles be circumcised, didn't keep the law. And so their demanding circumcision in the Gentiles wasn't at all for what they claimed. Rather, it was because "they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh."

Boasting in the flesh means "works." Works are contrary to grace. Therefore, they are boasting in doing what Christ was implicitly unable to do. To them, if Christ can't save by grace alone, then their idea is that it is "grace plus works." For these people, the cross is insufficient; God failed; they need to overcome God's deficiencies. It is that simple. Anyone who insists (or even implies) that we need to do things from the Law of Moses in order to be pleasing to God has rejected the grace of Christ. In our walk, it is all Christ or it is a rejection of Christ.

Roman Catholicism is similar to the teachings of the Judaizers in that they says works are necessary because justification by grace alone is insufficient to save. This is found in the canons of the Council of Trent. One of several such canons is Canon 9. It states –

"If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema."

This is heresy. One cannot cooperate in grace. Reject this stupid, heretical stuff.

Life application: Cling to the cross of Christ.

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Galatians 6:14

The emphasis of the Greek in this verse is in the word "I." Paul had just said, "For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh." He now contrasts himself to these false teachers. They boasted in the flesh of those they misled; Paul boasted in Christ's cross. They boasted in that which only

leads from death to death; he boasted in that which leads from death to life. They boasted in that which was carnal; he boasted in that which is spiritual.

His words then reflect the very heart of God's redemptive plans for man. In man, there is sin, separation, and death. In Christ, there is freedom from sin, adoption as sons of God, and eternal life. There is no other place that anyone should ever make the boasting of their religious life, because only in the cross of Christ is there any true hope.

A question arises as to which it is that Paul is speaking of though in his boasting. Is it the cross or is it the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, should this read "by whom" or "by which?" The Greek allows for either, and so one must refer to the previous verse to really make the proper deduction. The Judaizers had boasted in the flesh based on circumcision. It was where their boast lay. Therefore, as a contrast to that, Paul introduces His boast which is the cross based on crucifixion. Therefore, the term "by which" or "through which" is a better rendering of this verse.

It is the cross of Christ, meaning His work, which we boast in. This in no way diminishes the glory of Christ, but rather highlights it. When we say, "My son got straight A's," we are boasting in his accomplishment. And yet, at the same time, we are highlighting the son. Had Christ not suffered and died on the cross, there would be no point of boasting. However, the cross is the instrument of His victory. It is that instrument "by [which] the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

We are dead to sin because our sin has been nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). The law which stood against us is no longer in effect because it is Christ who was nailed to the cross, and it is Christ who embodies the law. The boast is in the act; the highlight is on the Son. Charles Ellicott eloquently describes the matter –

"The Apostle is aware that in this he is putting forward a startling paradox. The cross of Christ was "to the Jews a stumbling-block." They attached to it only ideas of ignominy and shame, and yet it is precisely this of which the Apostle is most proud. He is proud of it as the ground of his salvation, and therefore as the cardinal object of all his hopes and aims."

The term “the world” here is speaking of the carnal world of the flesh. This is the very thing that the Judaizers boasted in. But such things are ended in Christ’s cross. They are no longer able to trap us and tempt us if we have our focus on Christ. Instead, we are dead to the world through life in the Spirit. Praise God for the cross of Jesus Christ!

Life application: Memorize this verse.