



# Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

## Chapter 6, Verses 11 - 18

by Tim Kelley

Paul's was just about through with his letter. He had made a good case, replete with personal examples, allegory, and current cultural practices that would help the Galatian people understand what YHWH was doing in their day. Assuming that they'd be stirred to do the right thing, he gave them four things to do so as to restore the congregation. That's all he could do, so he began to deliver a few closing remarks.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Galatians 6:11-12** <sup>11</sup> See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!

There are many theories as to what Paul is trying to point out with his statement about writing with large letters. Was he indicating that he himself had penned this letter, and in so doing had written in large enough letters that he could read it himself, or was the letter written by someone else, and he was simply bringing attention to the fact that the remainder of the letter was being penned by himself and that he was doing this in "bold – 20 point type" in order to get his audience's attention<sup>1</sup>. I tend to believe the latter is true.

Paul did not actually pen all of his epistles, but instead dictated his thoughts to a scribe, who would then write Paul's words on the papyrus. Evidence of this is found in a number of Paul's writings such as the end of the book of Romans –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Romans 16:22** I, Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, greet you in the Lord.

It was actually Tertius who wrote down the words of the letter to the Romans, but they were definitely Paul's words. In some of his letters, Paul closes the letter in his own writing. For example, the letter to the fellowship in Colossi was closed with Paul's own hand –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Colossians 4:18** I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Other places include 1 Corinthians 16:21 and 2 Thessalonians 3:17 where Paul seems to indicate that closing the letter with his own hand had become somewhat of a trademark –

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Thessalonians 3:17** I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.

Thus it's quite probable that Paul, at this point in the letter, simply sat down at the scribes desk and finished writing with his own hand, but instead of closing the letter, he again emphasized his purpose for the letter by writing in big letters what he perceived to be the Galatian problem.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Galatians 6:12** 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.

There were those in the congregation, some of whom may have come from Jerusalem, who were trying to impress others. The NKJ says "make a good showing" and this is a good rendering of the Greek word

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Strong's, the Greek word for "written" is the word "grapho" (Strong's 1125) and that it's in the "aorist" tense, which is a default tense and can be either present tense or past tense. Though the KJV uses the past tense, the ESV uses the present tense.

“euprosopeo” (Strong’s 2146) which comes from root words meaning “good face”. Their “good showing” was “in the flesh”, indicating that they were not trying to impress God, but obviously other people. Apparently, these persons had “higher ups” they had to answer to, and thus were trying to win converts to their way of thinking so as to fulfill the purpose for which they were sent<sup>2</sup>, and that purpose was to avoid persecution that came with belief that Yeshua was the Messiah.

What was a likely reason for the persecution Paul was referring to? It was simply the fact that non-Jews were becoming a part of the synagogue.

Up until the day when Peter paid a visit to Cornelius, being a believer that Yeshua was Israel’s promised Messiah just made you part of another sect within Judaism. For the most part, the Jewish believers were never persecuted for their belief in Yeshua unless they either taught the resurrection from the dead (before an audience of Sadducees or priests)<sup>3</sup>, used the name of God – YHVH<sup>4</sup>, or broke the traditions that defined the separation between Jew and non-Jew. With Cornelius came the age of non-Jewish, i.e. – “gentile” believers in the YHVH, the God of the Jews. This opened up a whole new avenue of persecution because many non-Jews were being brought into the synagogue, and they were not following the traditional conversion process. This led to fears that the Greek/Roman culture could be re-introduced into the synagogue and the Jewish culture. A byproduct of this assimilation of cultures could result in the Romans revoking the special status the Jews enjoyed<sup>5</sup>. Thus it was important in the mind of the Jewish leadership that all non-Jewish believers eventually convert to Judaism - and pressure was put on the leaders of the synagogue to bring that about. In doing so, it would be clear to the Romans that the synagogue was not “harboring” non-Jews for the purpose of avoiding the Roman cult religion.

Thus the persecution that the perpetrators were trying to avoid would have come from the Jewish leadership – not because they believed that Yeshua was Messiah, but because Yeshua paved the way for non-Jews to become part of the people of God without having to convert to Judaism. With every non-Jewish believer that converted to Judaism, the closer the synagogue came to being “totally Jewish”, and less likely to suffer persecution at the hands of the Jewish leadership.

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

The perpetrators were making a big deal out of the one aspect of oral law pertaining to conversion, an aspect of the law that didn’t pertain to them. Being born Jewish, there was no need for conversion, nor its rite of circumcision. In regards to rest of the oral law, they were (according to Paul) not very diligent in following it either, yet they were expecting the non-Jews to adopt it, even though they knew it was not necessary in light of Yeshua’s sacrifice. For them, every non-Jew who converted was just another feather in their hat, something they could report back to the leadership in Jerusalem.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Galatians 6:14-15** <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

---

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 2:4

<sup>3</sup> Acts 4:1-3

<sup>4</sup> Acts 4:17-18; 18:15

<sup>5</sup> This is alluded to in John 11:48 where Yeshua had raised Lazarus from the dead, thus beginning the fulfillment of the prophecy in Ezek. 37:13 and reference in John 11:24

Once again we see the word “boast”, this time translated from the Greek word “kauchaomai” (Strong’s 2744) just as it was in the preceding verse. This word is nearly the same as “kauchema” (Strong’s 2745), the Greek word used for “boast” in verse 4. You’ll recall that in that passage, those who were boasting were doing so because of their relationship to Abraham. Here, Paul is saying that the only thing worth boasting about is your relationship to Messiah Yeshua. Whereas the Jewish people were continuing to divide and separate, in many cases as a result of the oral law, Yeshua ushered in an era of restoration - restoring the people to the Torah of Moses, the servant of God – and Paul was part of that restoration.

Many people, both Jew (circumcised) and non-Jew (uncircumcised) were returning to God. YHVH had put a “new heart” in them and they were being led to once again walk in His ways –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Ezekiel 36:24-27** "For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.

In essence, they would become a new creation. This prophecy, which precedes the Dry Bones prophecy of Ezekiel 37, is directed toward Israel. It is clear in this prophecy that YHVH is the one who’s bringing about the restoration, and that with the restoration of Israel, many “gentiles” will be drawn with them<sup>6</sup>. Thus, it doesn’t really matter if you’re Jewish, Israelite, or Gentile. What matters is if when you’re drawn to YHVH, you use your newly created “heart of flesh” to walk in the Torah that God gave Israel through Moses.

Paul makes it clear in his letter to the Corinthians –

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 7:19** For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.

But keeping the Torah is not the only measuring stick, God also looks at our heart in regards to how we deal with our brother. Paul brought this out earlier in the letter when he began to show them the need for restoration in the community –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 5:6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Galatians 6:16** <sup>16</sup> And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

This verse is tied to the previous verse by the Greek word “kai” (Strong’s 2532) which means “and, also, even”. Thus “this rule” must be a reference to becoming a “new creation” which implies walking in the commandments along with faith in the sacrifice of Messiah and love for you brother . . . all topics discussed by Paul in this letter. What’s more, Paul prays for peace and mercy to be upon those who become a new creation, who are then the Israel of God.

Let’s look at this a little deeper . . .

The Greek word translated “walk” in this verse is “stoicheo” (Strong’s 4748). It’s the verb form of word “stoicheion” (Strong’s 4747) found in Galatians 4:3 and 4:9, where it’s translated “elements”. As we saw in Galatians 4, “stoicheion” means the first in a prescribed order. The verb form used in 6:16 simply means to proceed in an order. The order that Paul’s referring to begins with “this rule”, that is, becoming

---

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 49:6

a new creation. The Greek word for "rule" is "kanon" (Strong's 2583), and means "a strait piece of rounded wood to which anything is fastened to keep it straight". It's like a dowel rod that one might hang a banner by. It could also be something you measure with, like a yard stick.

Thus Paul is saying that for those who begin their strait walk realizing that they did not arrive at the starting point because of their ethnic background, but because of the sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua, he prays that they will enjoy shalom and chesed, peace and mercy, and then – in the Hebrew parallelism style – refers to them as "the Israel of God".

The term "Israel of God" is not used anywhere else in the Bible nor in any other Jewish writings of that day<sup>7</sup>. It's a term Paul coined to describe those who understand and walk according to what he's been trying to show the Galatians. In the context of Galatians, Paul has repeatedly shown that those who are of the spirit are those who see that they have been brought near and now have standing with YHVH because of the sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua. On the contrary, those of the flesh are those who believe they have standing with God because they are descendents of Abraham. Thus Paul makes a division in Israel, not a separation of one people from another as it was with Israel and Judah, but a "pulling out" of a people who have risen up above their brothers as a result of grace. It's sort of like Joshua and Caleb, who though they remained Israelites throughout the 40 years in the wilderness, were separate in that they didn't die along with their fellow Israelites. In other words, the Israel of God is a subset of Israel

Paul explains this in Romans 9 –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Romans 9:1-7** I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, <sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; <sup>5</sup> of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen. <sup>6</sup> But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel, <sup>7</sup> nor *are* they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."

Paul continues to discuss this as we read further in the book of Romans -.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Romans 9:27-28** <sup>27</sup> Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. <sup>28</sup> For He will finish the work and cut *it* short in righteousness, Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth."

This, of course, is a quote from Isaiah 10:22 where the prophet foretold the return of the remnant to the land. Paul further defines the remnant by associating them with a prophecy in Hosea. In that quote from Hosea 2:23, He shows that the term "Gentile" can sometimes mean the remnant of Israel, specifically Ephraim.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Romans 9:22-26** *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, <sup>24</sup> *even* us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? <sup>25</sup> As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." <sup>26</sup> "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, '*You are not My people,*' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

The Hosea passage just quoted by Paul was part of a prophecy that clearly pertains to the Ephraim, the northern tribes of Israel – the ones who were scattered throughout the nations. Thus Paul's "Israel of God" is those who walk in God's ways after receiving redemption by the blood of Messiah Yeshua.

---

<sup>7</sup> Paul's Epistle to the Galatians; Tim Hegg; pg. 277

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Galatians 6:17-18** From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. <sup>18</sup> Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

The Galatians would now need to decide what they were going to do. Paul had made numerous arguments in support of his view of the gospel message as delivered to him by Messiah Yeshua, and he bore the marks of the beatings he'd endured as he tried to promote that message. There was no need for them to inquire about his view any more. All they needed to do is to ask the perpetrators if they were willing to support their view as much as Paul did his.

This last statement has profound meaning if you really think about it. Though the prophecies of the Messiah are supported by 3000 years of history and attested to by millions of Jewish rabbis, sages, and teachers, the testimony that those prophecies ever came to pass was only given by eight Jewish men. For the most part, we can only have faith in their testimony because history tells us what those men did and endured so that they could get that testimony out to the nations. Paul was one of those men.

Shalom Alecheim