

BOASTING IN THE CROSS AS THE NEW CREATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG	Walter Bauer, Fredrick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
LXX	Septuagint – Greek translation of the Old Testament
MT	Masoretic Text
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>

BOASTING IN THE CROSS AS THE NEW CREATION

Introduction

Previous to his conversion, Paul had a religious fervor for the Mosaic Law and the practices of Judaism. With great zeal for the ancestral traditions, he well surpassed many kinsmen his own age, so much that according to “righteousness of the Law, he was found blameless” (Gal 1:14; cf. Ac 22:3; Phil 3:4-6). However, after God called him by His grace, this man, who formerly hounded the church of God, would now labor to reveal Christ crucified to the nations (Gal 1:15, 16). No longer did the apostle Paul place confidence in his flesh, but in the grace of God, by which all that was once gain in Judaism was now considered a loss for the sake of the gospel (cf. Gal 1:10; 5:11; Phil 3:7). Justification before God, for the redeemed Paul, was by faith in Jesus Christ, apart from works of the Law (Gal 2:16; 3:11). Christ’s cross and resurrection is wholly sufficient for justification (1:1, 4; 3:13). To add anything more to this gospel was to make the *good news* not good news. For the churches in Galatia, the truth of the gospel had been distorted by the Judaizers, who taught one had to be circumcised for justification and acceptance into the covenant people of God (2:3, 4). Paul’s aim in his letter to the Galatians was to condemn the teaching of the Judaizers, and thus preserve the true gospel (1:8, 9; 2:5). In the exegesis of Gal 6:11-16 below, one will observe that Paul understands the covenant people of God to be those who live not as the circumcised, but as the new creation, boasting only in the all-sufficient cross of Christ for redemption.

Literary Context

The boundaries of the pericope (6:11-16) were selected according to five outstanding characteristics. First, the ἄρα οὖν of v. 10 marks the beginning of a summary statement for the previous exhortations found in vv. 1-9.¹ Second, the imperative Ἴδετε of v. 11 is clearly calling attention to a unique section within the letter as a whole, one which is written by the apostle's own hand, instead of his amanuensis'.² A third observation is that the next imperative does not occur until v. 17 (παρεχέτω), by which Paul prohibits anyone from causing him any further trouble. Also observed in v. 17 is the adverbial use of λοιπός, which serves to bring the matters of the letter to a close, then followed by his salutation. The fifth characteristic is noted by the apostle's conditional blessing of peace and mercy upon those who live by the rule of the new creation (v. 16). Together, these characteristics mark vv. 11-16 as a unique section which play a vital role in the interpretation of the apostle's aim within the letter as a whole.³

Christians in Galatia, who were once running in the right way, had recently been hindered in their obedience to the truth (5:7; cf. 1:6; 3:1; 4:11, 16). Due to certain false brethren who slipped in unnoticed (i.e. the Judaizers), believers were beginning to subject themselves to 'another' gospel that sought justification by works of the Law, rather than through faith in Jesus Christ (1:7; 2:3, 4, 16). The emotionally charged letter

¹The five imperatives of vv. 1-10 (καταρτίζετε; βαστάζετε; δοκιμαζέτω; Κοινωνεῖτω; πλανᾷσθε) mark the exhortations that are summarized in v. 10.

²This second observation only distinguishes vv. 11-18 from vv. 1-10, but the remaining three demonstrate the pericope ends at v. 16.

³Hans Dieter Betz, *A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 313. Following Betz' lead is J. A. D. Weima, "Gal. 6:11-18: A Hermeneutical Key to the Galatian Letter," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993): 90-107.

to the Galatian churches is Paul's reaction to the dire situation, and 6:11-16 are meant to echo the weighty appeals made earlier in the text: The Judaizers compelling message was centered on circumcision (6:12; cf. 5:2), but the good news was only to be centered on the Lord Jesus (6:14; cf. 5:1). The Judaizers' desire was to boast in flesh (6:12, 13), but Paul's boast was only in the cross of Christ (6:14; cf. 2:19; 3:1, 13). The Judaizers turned people to the rigorous practices of the physical Israel (6:12, 13), but the gospel pointed to the new creation of the Israel of God (6:15, 16; cf. 3:29).

Translation of Galatians 6:11-16

(11) See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand. (12) All who are wishing to make a good showing in the flesh, these are compelling you to receive circumcision, only so that they may not be persecuted because of the cross of Christ; (13) for not even those who are circumcised follow the Law themselves, indeed they want you to receive circumcision in order that they themselves may boast in your flesh. (14) But for me, may it never be that I myself boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. (15) For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation. (16) And all who will follow this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, that is upon the Israel of God.

Exegesis of Galatians 6:11-16

Paul's Apostolic Signature (6:11)

After summing up in v. 10 his exhortations made in vv. 1-9, the apostle Paul takes the pen from the hand of his amanuensis, and finishes the letter by his own hand. He begins this closing with, *Ἴδετε πηλικοίς ὑμῶν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ*. The imperative of command, Ἴδετε ("See!"), would cause the Galatians' ears to perk up. The singular use of this imperative was used in v. 5:2, when he begins to spell out the consequences for trusting circumcision rather than Christ. Here, Paul uses it again in the

plural, and thus calls the Galatians to give attention not only to his own apostolic signature, but also to the significant closing remarks thereafter.

Ἐγγραψα is best interpreted as an epistolary aorist.⁴ Paul is self-consciously placing himself in the “position of the reader,” and so writing as if his letter was already in the hands of his audience.⁵ In other words, he takes it upon himself to write so that when the letter is read to the churches, they will not hear, “See with what large letters I *write* to you.” This implies that the apostle scribed the entire epistle.⁶ Instead, Paul wants them to clearly distinguish that it is at this point in which he takes the pen from his amanuensis to finish the letter with his *own* hand. So he writes, “See with what large letters I *have written* to you with my own hand.”

To propose that Paul used an amanuensis or secretary to write the majority of Galatians is not far fetched. Several Pauline epistles indicate that another person would write the majority of the letter on behalf of the apostle (esp. Rom 16:22), and then he would add the concluding remarks.⁷ This is observed most clearly when Paul’s instrumental use of τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ (“with my own hand”) in v. 11 is compared with the same words in other Pauline epistles (cf. 1Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; 2Thess 3:17;

⁴C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 12n1; Timothy George, *Galatians*, New American Commentary, vol. 30, ed. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 431; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, eds. I. H. Marshall and W. W. Gasque (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 268; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary, ed. Henry Chadwick (London: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993), 335.

⁵Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 563; Moule, *Idiom*, 12.

⁶Betz is “inclined to attribute the whole composition to Paul himself” (Betz, *Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, 312).

⁷Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 440.

Phlm 1:19). Although his writer penned the bulk of the text, Paul made sure to add his unique, authoritative, apostolic signature to every letter. This is clarified in 2 Thessalonians 3:17, when Paul adds οὕτως γράφω (“it is the way I write”) to his comment about the distinguishing mark in every letter. As a mark of authority, it confirms what was written regarding his gospel in 1:10-2:10, seals what was appealed to in 1:6-6:10, and points to the closing statements for his hearers in 6:11-18.

The correlative pronoun *πηλίκοις* (“how large”) is only found here in the Pauline epistles. It is being used as an adjective, which modifies the substantive *γράμμασιν* (“letters”).⁸ The apostle is writing with “large letters.” Several explanations have been put forth for this unique style of writing. Some suggest that it is because Paul had trouble seeing smaller script as a result of an eye illness mentioned earlier in the letter (cf. 4:13, 15).⁹ This idea would be possible, but only if the clause¹⁰ of v. 4:15 was referring to an eye illness. According to R. Longenecker, it seems best to take the clause as a “Greek idiom” to express the pains they would have undergone for Paul’s welfare.¹¹ If this is the case, then Paul’s large handwriting is not because of an eye illness. James Dunn has expressed that the large letters might have been used so that the reader would

⁸Here *γράμμα* is referring to “a unit of an alphabet” (Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. and trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, and Fredrick W. Danker [BDAG], 3rd ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], s.v. “γράμμα.”). It is not referring to a document such as in Acts 28:21. This is also made clear by the fact that *γράμμασιν* is a dative of material and is directly related to the verb (see Wallace, *Grammar*, 170). Thus, it is answering *what* Paul used to accomplish his writing—*letters*.

⁹Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41, ed. Ralph P. Martin (Dallas: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 191, 193.

¹⁰4:15b: *ὅτι εἰ δυνατόν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑμῶν ἐξορύξαντες ἐδώκατέ μοι* (“if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes [and] given them to me”).

¹¹Longenecker, *Galatians*, 193.

be able to poster Paul's final comments before the audience's eyes, that they too could read them for themselves.¹² This is also possible, but given the reality of the cost of papyri and the considerable amount that would be needed to write this expressively big, it is probably less likely. Deissmann suggested that because Paul worked with large tools and tough leather as a tentmaker, he was clumsy when writing.¹³ However, H. D. Betz rightly notes that Paul used *πηλικοίς γράμμασιν*, "not 'clumsy letters.'"¹⁴ Numerous others in modern scholarship follow J. B. Lightfoot, and conclude that Paul's large letters have something to do with the force of his closing statements and thus can be compared to modern bold-type font.¹⁵ This seems most plausible, and would agree with the rest of this emotionally charged letter. For the listeners in Galatia, the large print would have its proper effect of emphasis, stirring the reader to finish the public reading of the letter with an uncompromising force.

Boasting in the Cross, not in Circumcision (6:12-14)

Following this apostolic appeal is the content of Paul's closing remarks concerning the aim of the letter at large. Verse 11 stood as a marker for the readers to take note that Paul is finishing the letter himself, as a rhetorical device for emphasis, and as a break between the main argument of 1:6-6:10 and the implications of these matters revealed in 6:12-16. Unlike other Pauline epistles that end with greetings (e.g. Rom 16:3-

¹²Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 335; cf. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 441.

¹³Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, trans. William E. Wilson (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957), 49.

¹⁴Betz, *Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, 314.

¹⁵J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 10th ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), 221; cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 290; Betz, *Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, 314; George, *Galatians*, 432.

23; 1Cor 16:19-20, 2Cor 13:12, 13; Phil 4:21, Col 4:10, 14, 15) or prayer requests (e.g. Eph 6:19-20; 1Thess 5:25), Galatians presses the pending issue to the very end. In the same vigorous manner the letter opened, so also the apostle closes it, hoping that with such force, his audience will immediately cease turning from the gospel of Christ (cf. Gal 1:6).

Paul begins v. 12 by describing his opponents with the dependent clause, ὅσοι θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί (“All who are wishing to make a good showing in the flesh”). The correlative pronoun, ὅσοι (“as many as”), reveals the subject of this sentence. Its function is to limit the group to only those defined by the helper verb θέλουσιν (“they wish”) and complementary infinitive εὐπροσωπῆσαι. The progressive idea in θέλουσιν reveals the existing desires of these individuals to confuse believers in Galatia as Paul was writing to them (cf. Gal 1:7; 4:17). Εὐπροσωπεω is a *hapax legomenon* and rare to antiquity.¹⁶ It means, “to make a good showing,”¹⁷ and is related to one “outwardly showing off.”¹⁸ The Judaizers wanted to make a good showing before men; indeed, they wanted to make a good impression ἐν σαρκί (“in the flesh”¹⁹).

Two questions need to be answered concerning this prepositional phrase. First, is he speaking of the flesh which is in opposition to the Spirit, or in more of a literal sense of flesh in relation to circumcision? His emphasis seems to be the latter, though the

¹⁶Eduard Lohse, “εὐπροσωπεω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament [TDNT]*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 6:779.

¹⁷BDAG, s.v. “εὐπροσωπεω.”

¹⁸J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, “εὐπροσωπεω” in *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 ed., 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 88.236.

¹⁹Unlike the NIV and REB which fail to translate σαρκί as “flesh.”

former is still implied. Circumcision is the issue at hand, and Paul's aim is to expose the Judaizers' folly (6:12, 13, 15; cf. 2:3; 5:2-6; Rom 2:28; Eph 2:11). Second, is he describing the Judaizers as those who desire to make a good showing in their own flesh or in the flesh of the Galatians who are being compelled to receive circumcision?²⁰ In light of v. 13, it seems that the latter is more likely. That is, they desire to make a good showing by convincing converts to be circumcised. Indeed, this would make quite an impression toward those who refused to consider the Gentiles as part of the covenant people apart from circumcision. Thus, Paul identifies not all of the Galatians, but only his opponents, the Judaizers, who are wishing to make a good showing in the flesh.

He portrays them even further with the next clause, *οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι* ("these are attempting to compel you to receive circumcision"). The demonstrative pronoun, *οὗτοι* ("these"), is pointing back to the subject of the sentence, *οἱ*. First he described the motive behind their actions, and now he reveals their rigorous attempts in skewing the truth of the gospel. *Ἀναγκάζουσιν* ("they compel") is functioning as a conative present. That is, the decision of the converts in Galatia is pending. The Judaizers are *attempting to* compel them *περιτέμνεσθαι* ("to be circumcised"); however, it is the apostle's hope that his letter would serve its intended end in persuading them otherwise.

The rest of v. 12 explains why these false brethren were preaching circumcision to the Gentile converts in Galatia. They were doing so *μόνον ἵνα τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴ διώκωνται* ("only so that they may not be persecuted because of

²⁰Betz, *Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, 315.

the cross of Christ”). Μόνον (“only”), as Weima observes, is functioning here as “a rhetorical device providing emphasis.”²¹ Specifically, it is highlighting the basis for the Judaizers’ compelling actions Paul is to disclose. A loose translation might read, “The only reason they are doing such things is this.” The use of ἵνα plus the subjunctive verb (διώκωνται; “to be persecuted”) marks a result clause. The Judaizers especially do not want the result of their preaching to be persecution (5:11; cf. 4:29). In fact, Paul further notes on what grounds their persecution would have occurred with the causal dative,²² τῷ σταυρῷ (“the cross”). If their preaching were to result in persecution, it would do so *because of* the cross of Christ.

The cross means that Christ gave himself for sinners to rescue them from this present evil age (1:4). It signified that Jesus became a curse on a tree, in order that those enslaved to the Law might be redeemed, and those far away from the covenant promises might be brought near (3:13; 4:4-5; cf. Eph 2:13). Preaching the cross asserted that the blessings of Abraham had come to the Gentiles in Christ (3:14). Whoever placed their faith in the true seed, Jesus, they too would be made heirs of the promise and thus become a part of the covenant people of God (3:29). The righteous would live by faith in the crucified Christ, and not by following the works of the Law (2:16; 3:11). For one to let the believing Gentiles be considered members of the covenant body apart from circumcision was to open up possibilities for persecution from those who had close ties

²¹Weima observes that this is the case in comparison to its use elsewhere in Galatians (e.g. 1:23; 2:10; 3:2; 4:18; 5:13), (Weima, *Gal. 6:11-18*, 96).

²²Moule, *Idiom*, 45.

with Jerusalem (Ac 6:14; 15:1). To escape this, the Judaizers opted to save their selves and sacrificed the truth of the gospel.

Paul, on the other hand, showed no tolerance towards those who sought to change the gospel of Christ (cf. Gal 1:7), and further reveals their motivation in v. 13. He argues, *οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουσιν* (“for not even those who are circumcised follow the Law themselves”). The postpositive *γὰρ* (“for”) is explanatory, and serves to link v. 13 with the previous assertions concerning the Judaizers’ evasion of persecution. Together with the ascensive use of the negative conjunction *οὐδὲ* (“not even”), Paul sets out to lodge a stick in the spokes of his opponents’ wheel. Instead of naming his opponents, Paul continues to describe them according to their commitments. These who wish to make a good showing in the flesh, and who decide not to suffer for the cross, are here identified with the substantival participle *οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι* (“those who are circumcised”).²³

There is debate over how *περιτεμνόμενοι* is to be interpreted. Johannes Munck insists that it should be rendered, “those who receive circumcision,” and refer to Gentile Christians in Galatia who have submitted to the ways of Judaism, instead of Jewish Christians who seek to have Gentile believers circumcised (cf. 5:3).²⁴ Though possible, Munck’s understanding of the Judaizers is wrongheaded. It is not Gentile Christians who are causing problems, but Jewish Christians (cf. 2:3, 12-13, 15-16; 3:23-24; 4:25)—if they are even Christian at all (1:6-9). As Longenecker observes, Munck

²³The significance of the definite article (*οἱ*) is highlighted by Moule when he writes, “*if the article had been omitted, the sense would have been for not even when they get circumcised do they keep the law themselves*” (emphasis is original; Moule, *Idiom*, 107).

²⁴Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1959), 87-89.

does not take into consideration the issue clearly expressed in v. 12.²⁵ That is, if Jewish Christians upheld what Christ accomplished at the cross (i.e. the enabling of Gentiles to become part of the covenant people by faith apart from works of the Law), they would be persecuted by Jews who adamantly taught that one must be circumcised. Thus, Paul is describing the motivation of those Jewish agitators who *are circumcised*, rather than those who are receiving it.²⁶

It is these men who do not even follow (φυλάσσουσιν) the Law themselves. Paul's assessment is that although the Judaizers are making every effort to preserve circumcision, they still fail to fulfill what the whole Law demands of them. The apostle is recalling what he has already established in 3:10-12 and 5:3; namely, if one strives to keep one point of the Law, that person is obligated to keep the whole Law. For this reason, a curse abides on everyone who is unable to fulfill this demand. The Judaizers were advocating only one piece of the Law for the Gentiles' acceptance into the covenant people of God. Paul clarifies, however, that though they promoted the Law by compelling others to be circumcised, their lives reflected nothing of Law observance. Their actions were just as antinomian as the 'Gentile sinners.' Therefore, the hypocrisy of the Judaizers alone should convince the Gentile converts that they have no reason to subject themselves to circumcision (cf. 2:11-14).

In fact, Paul further emphasizes a particular reason they want the Gentiles to be circumcised. This is noticed by the clause ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι ("indeed

²⁵Longenecker, *Galatians*, xcii.

²⁶F. F. Bruce observes περιτεμνόμενοι as a *causative* middle referring to the Judaizers who are "causing to be circumcised" (Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 270). Since this is so close to the meaning of the passive voice, it is better to submit it as so.

they want you to receive circumcision”). Since v. 13b is not standing in contrast to v. 13a, ἀλλὰ should not be translated adversatively. Instead it should be noted that Paul is using it in a rhetorically ascensive²⁷ manner to emphatically point to the end of his opponents’ desires (θέλωσιν) in the following clause. By using the passive complementary infinitive, περιτέμνεσθαι (“to receive circumcision”), he first defines the means to that end; namely, making sure that the Gentiles receive circumcision.

In v. 12, circumcision of Gentile believers would provide for the Judaizers an escape from persecution. Here, their desires served a further purpose: ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρῃ σαρκὶ καυχῆσωνται (“in order that they themselves may boast in your flesh”). Not only did they seek to evade persecution, but even more, to pursue an ungodly boast in the Gentile converts’ flesh. The use of the indirect middle, καυχῆσωνται (“they *themselves* may boast”), shows that the agitators are acting for their own interests. They want the Gentiles circumcised, because it would serve their boast. The verb καυχαομαι means, “to glory in,” or “to boast in.”²⁸ It is used thirty-five times by Paul and only twice by James in the NT,²⁹ and depending on its context, it can be understood positively or negatively. It is clear that Paul is using it negatively against the Judaizers, who were using the Law not as principle, but for boasting.³⁰

²⁷BDAG, s.v. “ἀλλὰ”; F. W. Gingrich, “ἀλλὰ” in *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

²⁸BDAG, s.v. “καυχαομαι.”

²⁹The total number of uses of the verb καυχαομαι was found using a search tool in *Bible Works 7, Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research* (2006).

³⁰Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 270.

The sphere of their potential boasting is underlined by the preposition ἐν (“in”), followed by the dative construction τῇ ὑμετέροια σαρκί, where ὑμετέροια is functioning as a possessive adjective modifying σαρκί. Their boast was *in* the Gentiles’ flesh. This could be interpreted in two ways. Either, they wanted to boast in ecclesiastical numbers, making head counts of *how many* would receive circumcision,³¹ or their boast was to be in ethnic identity, seeking to preserve that which was particularly Jewish.³² The former seems plausible, and would make sense that one might make it his aim to boast in the number of Gentile converts. However, the latter seems that it would also give someone just as much of a boast, and squares with other texts which reveal similar instances of *Jewish* boasting (cf. Rom 2:17, 23; cf. Gal 2:3; Eph 2:11; Phil 3:3). The Judaizers’ aim was to boast in the physical circumcision of the flesh, rather than pointing people towards true covenant identity, that of faith and spiritual circumcision of the heart.

Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:10), would have absolutely no participation with those who boast in the flesh, and thus continues his last remarks with an “antithesis”³³ between circumcision and the cross. He begins v. 14 with the independent clause, ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“But for me, may it never be that I myself boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”). The δὲ (“but”) is adversative, and reveals the contrast Paul is making between the Judaizers’ boast and his *own* (ἐμοί; “for me”). An even higher note of

³¹Leon Morris, *Galatians: Paul’s Charter of Christian Freedom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 188; George, *Galatians*, 433-4; Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 270.

³²Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 339.

³³Weima, *Gal. 6:11-18*, 93.

emphasis is struck with the voluntative optative use of $\mu\eta\ \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$ (“may it never be”). Used fourteen times in his epistles, in every case the phrase stresses his utter repulsion towards any possible inference which is contrary to his gospel.³⁴ In other words, “God forbid that I [Paul] would boast in anything but the cross.”

Unlike v. 13, where the verb $\kappa\alpha\upsilon\chi\alpha\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ was used negatively against the boasting of the agitators, v. 14 uses it in a positive sense *for* those who, like Paul, boast in the cross. Thus, there is a kind of boasting which is to be condemned (i.e. that which is “in the flesh”), and a kind which is to be implemented in the life of the believer. This is especially observed by the way $\epsilon\grave{\iota}\ \mu\grave{\eta}$ (“except”) modifies the middle infinitive, $\kappa\alpha\upsilon\chi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ (“that I myself boast”), so as to limit its implications. In other words, not all boasting is excluded. For Paul, if a man is to boast, he *must* boast in the Lord (1Cor 1:31; 2Cor 10:17; cf. 1Cor 1:29, 31; 3:21; Eph 2:9). One’s boast is to be in weakness and suffering (Rom 5:3; 2Cor 11:30; 12:5, 9), in the outworking of faith in giving hearts (2Cor 9:2), and in the hope of salvation (Rom 5:2, 11), all of which are wrought in the cross of Christ.

Throughout his letter, Paul repeatedly points the Galatians to the cross (2:18-21; 3:1, 13; 5:11; 6:14; cf. 1:4, 16, 23; 4:5). Preaching “the cross” would have stung their first century ears, due to the terrible death it represented. For its appropriate affect, Paul’s boast in the cross could be compared to a modern day boast in lynching.³⁵ He preaches the cross not only to knock the feet out from under his opponents’ doctrine, but also to

³⁴Cf. Rom 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; 1Cor 6:15; Gal 2:17; 3:21. The LXX’s use carries over this same idea of utter repulsion (“far be it...;” e.g. Gen 44:7, 17; Josh 22:29; 24:16).

³⁵That boasting in the cross could be compared to boasting in lynching was first made aware to me in a book by John Piper, *Don’t Waste Your Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 50.

display all that was accomplished for the Galatians at Calvary. The prepositional phrase, ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ (“in the cross”), speaks of the sphere in which the apostle boasts. It is not “in the flesh,” as the Judaizers were pompously committed, but “in the cross,” where Paul saw his weakness and God’s power, his need and God’s supply.

The noun σταυρός (“cross”) is used ten times in the Pauline epistles. Eight of those occurrences paint more of a metaphorical statement about a reality, rather than speaking of the actual physical pieces of wood upon which the Lord was hung (cf. 1Cor 1:17f; Gal 5:11; 6:12, 14; Eph 2:16; Phil 3:18; Col 1:20). Leonhard Goppelt brings this out when he states that “the cross” is more of a “theological code word for the dying of Christ in its theological significance.”³⁶ As observed above, the cross means that Jesus became a curse and died for sinners enslaved to the Law, that they might be redeemed and given the promises of Abraham by faith. Such theology was a direct attack on the Judaizers’ objective, for they sought to live by the Law and not by faith. To accept the teaching of the cross would be to admit “human failure” and “human condemnation by God.”³⁷ Instead, they twisted the gospel to suit their own agenda of glorying in the flesh. Paul, however, acknowledging the “bankruptcy of the Law”³⁸ and the weakness of his flesh, realized that his glorying could only be done in the cross. He gloried in the cross not only for redemption, but for the enabling power it purchased for him to walk in step

³⁶Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament: The Variety and Unity of the Apostolic Witness to Christ*, vol. 2, ed. Jürgen Roloff, trans. John Alsup (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 91.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸F. F. Bruce, *Paul Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 80.

with the Spirit (cf. 3:3; 4:5-6; 5:16, 22-24), having to add nothing to it such as circumcision. Christ's cross was a sufficient cross.

The cross is that “of our Lord Jesus Christ” (τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). This particular chain of genitives is used twenty-seven times by the apostle Paul alone. It is used in greetings (e.g. 1Cor 1:2; 2Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; Col 1:3; 1Thess 1:3), apostolic exhortations (e.g. Rom 15:30; 1Cor 1:10; 2Thess 3:6), blessings (Gal 6:18; Eph 5:20; 1Thess 5:23, 28; 2Thess 3:18), and at major points of emphasis concerning salvation (e.g. Rom 5:1; 15:6; 1Cor 15:57; 1Thess 5:9; 2Thess 2:1). Observed in each of these instances is the comprehensive attention that is drawn to the historical Jesus of Nazareth (Ἰησοῦς), who is our Lord by faith, who is the Christ (Χριστός), and who purchased salvation by *his* cross (κυρίου; possessive). Since Paul uses the possessive ἡμῶν, meaning *our* Lord, it is evident that a change of lordship had previously occurred for the Galatian believers, and one that was still to be evident in the outworking of their faith. Thus, in his unswerving allegiance to preach Christ crucified (1Cor 1:23; cf. Gal 1:16; 2:2; 5:11), Paul makes it very clear for his Galatian audience, that if there is to be any boasting, it will be in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ alone.

In the remainder of v. 14 Paul points back to the cross and the consequences of its power he delights to boast in. In other words, he is now mentioning the grounds for his boasting.³⁹ He writes, δι’ οὗ ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται (“through which the world has been crucified to me”). The preposition διὰ (“through”) is expressing the agency, or means, by which the verb has been carried out, and points the reader to the relative pronoun, οὗ (“which” or “whom”). It is debated whether or not this pronoun is referring

³⁹Betz, *Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, 318.

to “our Lord Jesus Christ,” or to “the cross” in the previous clause.⁴⁰ Is it through Christ’s *cross* that Paul was crucified,⁴¹ or through Christ *himself* on the cross?⁴² The immediate context suggests Paul means “the cross” (6:12; cf. 5:11); yet, the letter at large gives ample support that it is “our Lord Jesus Christ” (2:20; 3:1; cf. 3:13, 26; 4:4-5). With these texts in mind, the best solution might be to again consider Goppelt’s words (above). If Paul is using ὁ σταυρός as a “theological code word,” then by considering the cross he is considering Christ who died on it.⁴³ The two are soteriologically inseparable. Thus, specifically, Paul is looking back to the cross; and broadly, he is looking to all that was accomplished for him together with the crucified Lord.

The κόσμος (“world”) which Paul is speaking of here is the world in its hostility against God.⁴⁴ Within this letter alone, he characterizes it as being part of this present evil age (1:4), where people are in bondage under the Law (3:23), enslaved to fundamental principles (4:9), and bent towards the desires of the flesh (5:13-17). Indeed, both George and Dunn have it right when they describe this κόσμος as that “world

⁴⁰Both Witherington (*Grace in Galatia*, 450n28) and Longenecker (*Galatians*, 294) give the option that οὗ could be masculine, referring to “our Lord Jesus Christ,” or neuter referring to “the cross.” It is obvious, however, that the noun σταυρός is *masculine*. The option for the neuter is simply not supported by the text.

⁴¹George, *Galatians*, 437; Bruce, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 271; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 450.

⁴²Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 340-41; Morris, *Galatians: Paul’s Charter*, 188-89.

⁴³Goppelt, *Theology*, 91. Betz seems to take this same view when he states, “Whether δι’ οὗ refers to the cross of Christ, or to the person of Christ is of no consequence, since for Paul ‘Christ’ is always the crucified redeemer Christ” (*Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, 318).

⁴⁴BDAG, s.v. “κόσμος.”

system alienated from God.”⁴⁵ This is the world that has been crucified to Paul, and Paul to the world (κἀγῶ; reciprocal pronoun).

As an extensive perfect, ἐσταύρωται (“*has been crucified*”) expresses that a particular action has occurred in the past (i.e. the crucifixion of the κόσμος), which has extended results for the present. Thus, with reference to ὁ σταυρός, Paul is emphasizing that the world was crucified to him *in* the death of Christ at Calvary, and in such death *with* Christ there is continued results for his present life. In other words, Christ himself went to the cross in our place (cf. 3:13). It was there at Golgotha that the rebellious world was crucified to him, and he to the world. All those who are corporately united to Christ in his death have too been crucified to the world, and the world to them. Paul is therefore able to say, “I have been crucified *with* Christ, and no longer do I live, but Christ lives in me” (2:19). Christ’s death was his death. Therefore, for the world to be crucified to Paul, meant that the chains of the Law, sin, and death which once held him captive had now been broken. At the cross, his flesh was crucified with its passions and desires (5:24). The old self was killed that he might be set free from sin and this present evil age (1:4; cf. Rom 6:6ff; Eph 4:22). United with Christ and his cross, Paul sought no longer to live for himself, which was once attached to the world (Gal 1:13f; cf. Phil 3:4f), but for Christ, who died and was raised on his behalf (2Cor 5:14f). Thus, v. 14 makes plain, that the apostles’ only grounds for boasting was through the cross, and all that is sufficiently supplied through his redeemer’s death.

Circumcision is Irrelevant; the New Creation is Everything (6:15-16)

⁴⁵George, *Galatians*, 437; Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 340.

Without alleviating the force of his message, Paul now reaches the crucial point for which the entire letter has been written. The gospel he preaches is authoritatively from Christ (Gal 1:6-2:10), the foundation of the agitators' message has been destroyed (2:15-4:7), and their self-glorifying motives have been laid bare (6:12-14). Therefore, Paul is able to adamantly affirm his position in v. 15 with the "maxim,"⁴⁶ οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστίν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ καινή κτίσις ("For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation").

Now, not all manuscripts have the same reading at the beginning of v. 15. One other textual variant adds ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, and is thus translated like 5:6, ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε ("for in Christ Jesus neither..."). This variant is supported by some of the more important uncials which date back to the fourth, fifth, and sixth century AD (Ⲙ A C D), as well as by what is found in three of the Latin church fathers (Jerome^{2/3} Victorinus-Rome Palagius). Also, its geographical distribution seems to be more widely spread, including Alexandrian (Ⲙ A C 6 81 104 424), Western (D F G 1912), and Byzantine (K L P) witnesses. Supporting οὔτε γὰρ, however, is the weighty evidence from one of the oldest manuscripts, P⁴⁶, along with the notable uncial, B, dating back to about 350 AD. This shorter reading is also found in several church fathers, Greek and Latin alike (Gregory-Nyssa Chrysostom Theodore; Ambrosiaster Jerome^{1/3} Augustine). Additionally, the longer variant seems to be harmonizing v. 15 with 5:6, something characteristic of the Byzantine family. Therefore, since the shorter reading has the earliest manuscript evidence, and since it would be more likely for someone to have added ἐν

⁴⁶Longenecker, *Galatians*, 295.

Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ to further clarify v. 15, then οὐτε γὰρ is most likely closer to the original.⁴⁷ In either case, the other variant does not change the theological interpretation of the text. Paul is still reinforcing what he has already established in his letter (5:2-6), though is doing so here with a kind of maxim.

The postpositive γὰρ (“for”) is explanatory, referring back to what is true for the individual in Christ who has been crucified to the world, and looking forward to what should be evident in the outworking of this truth amongst the believers in Galatia. That is, they are not to consider circumcision (περιτομή) or uncircumcision (ἀκροβυστία) to be anything. Paul’s use of the indefinite pronoun τί (“anything”) excludes all possibilities of boasting, whether it is for the agitators who are preaching circumcision or for the uncircumcised who might react in a prideful manner after the letter has served its purpose. To treat either circumcision or uncircumcision as essential for justification and becoming part of the people of God, was to place confidence in the flesh (cf. Phil 3:3), and seek after things which “appeal to human pride.”⁴⁸ The true covenant people of God have always been about identification with the promise to Abraham in Christ-the-seed, not circumcision-the-rite. To proclaim circumcision for justification, would be to turn away from the gospel that was preached beforehand to Abraham (3:8), and instead to the physical things of the old order.

This is precisely why Paul finishes the maxim with ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις (“but a new creation”). Ἀλλὰ (“but”) is being used as a strong adversative to draw a clear

⁴⁷Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 530.

⁴⁸George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 439.

distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision which mean nothing, and the *καινή κτίσις* (“new creation”) which means everything. The force of v. 15 could be understood in the gloss, “Circumcision and uncircumcision are irrelevant, but the new creation is of utmost importance.”

Appearing also in 2 Corinthians 5:17, *καινή κτίσις* is an important phrase to consider. The word *κτίσις* is a substantive derived from the verb *κτίζω*.⁴⁹ Of its twenty-eight occurrences in the LXX, *κτίζω* is used sixteen times as the equivalent of the Hebrew verb *bārā*—a term which has large theological implications throughout the OT.⁵⁰ *Bārā* (“to create”) appears forty-six times in the MT,⁵¹ and is used exclusively for God in his creative role. Where the translators of the LXX used *κτίζω* for *bārā*, the passages express God’s creative power to bring forth something out of nothing (Deut 4:32; Ps 89:12, 47; 104:30; 148:5; Eccl 12:1; Ezek 28:13; Amo 4:13; Mal 2:10), and his supremacy to orchestrate events in history (Is 45:7; 54:16). More importantly for the context of Galatians, it is also used in passages which communicate God’s omnipotence to initiate something *new*. This is seen in his ability to create a new covenant with Israel (Jer 31:22), generate a new people for worship (Ps 102:18), and even more, produce a new heart within the sinner. The latter is especially seen when David prays, *καρδίαν καθαρὰν κτίσον ἐν ἐμοί, ὁ θεός* (“Create in me a clean heart, O God;” Ps 51:10=LXX 50:12). Thus, as an equivalent to *bārā*, the theological significance of the Greek word

⁴⁹H. H. Esser, “κτίσις” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 378.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 379.

⁵¹Werner Forester, “κτίσις” in *TDNT*, 3:1027.

κτίζω is clear: all things are created and have their existence due to the one source and initiator, God. This same understanding of κτίζω flows over into the writings of the NT. From the beginning God created man and woman for marriage (Mt 19:4), and everything on the earth which exists throughout history (Mk 13:19). He is worthy to be praised, for all things came into being by his will (Rev 4:11).

As its derivative, the noun κτίσις refers to the “act of creation” itself (e.g. Mk 10:6), or to the “result of a creative act” (e.g. a created individual or being).⁵² Κτίσις is used nineteen times in the NT, eleven of which are used by Paul. The majority of the time he uses it to describe the creation itself—consisting of the physical earth, plants, animals, humans, heavenly hosts, etc. (Rom 1:20, 25; Rom 8:19-22, 39; Col 1:15, 23). However, there are two occasions whereby it is used to express a new (καινή) creative activity by God within the individual sinner (2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). Both of these occurrences are directly linked with the soteriological work of God in the cross of Christ. By using κτίσις, Paul is drawing out the implications that salvation involves a new creative act of God. Where there was previously no form or matter of new-ness, God would so act to create it. In the same way that God commanded light to shine forth out of darkness in Genesis 1:3, he shines in the hearts of sinners to reveal “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Cor 4:6). God is the initiator of that which is *new* in the believer. He has created “a new form of existence,”⁵³ not based upon the fundamental principles of this world, but on supernatural work of God in Christ by the

⁵²BDAG, s.v. “κτίσις.”

⁵³Michael Parsons, “The New Creation,” *Expository Times* 99 (October 1987): 3.

Spirit (Gal 4:4-7, 9). “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2Cor 5:17).

Therefore, in Galatians 6:15, Paul is using the phrase, ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις, to announce the new creation that has come in Christ. Salvation is the result of the creative work of God, not the ritual practices of man. The new creation exists because of the past work of Christ on the cross, and presses onward because of what Christ continues to carry out by his Spirit (Gal 4:6).⁵⁴ Those of the new creation no longer live in bondage under the Law, but in freedom under the Lord Jesus Christ (5:1, 13). The new creation participates not with the old order of boasting in circumcision or uncircumcision, but with the new order of faith working itself out through love (5:6).

Paul then gives a peace benediction upon those who will abide by the ‘new creation’ maxim of v. 15. He states, καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν, εἰρήνην ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔλεος, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ (“And all who will follow this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, that is upon the Israel of God”). The conjunction καὶ (“and”) is functioning in a manner that connects Paul’s maxim in v. 15 to his benediction in v. 16. This blessing is then qualified by his use of the correlative pronoun ὅσοι (“all who”), which limits the group to those defined by the following verb στοιχέω (“to follow”). It is therefore a “conditional benediction.”⁵⁵ In 5:25, στοιχέω expressed the way one is to conform his life in the Spirit. If one lived by the Spirit, then surely he should also walk by the Spirit. Likewise, it is being used here to explain the particular

⁵⁴Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 343.

⁵⁵George, *Galatians*, 438; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 451.

manner in which one should live; that is, if the hearers are to claim the benediction as their own.

The manner in which they are to live is defined by the demonstrative pronoun *τούτω* (“this”), and the dative of rule⁵⁶ *τῷ κανόνι* (“*in accordance with the rule*”). The term *κανών* (“rule” or “standard”) should be understood in the same way Paul uses “the law of Christ” in 6:2. In other words, Paul is not tearing down justification by works of the Law only to establish new moral codes to live by. Rather, he is reaching for obedience that comes from the heart. Thus, the only *κανών* for the one who is in Christ is the new creation. To follow this rule means to put on Christ (3:27), walk by the Spirit (5:25), boast only in the cross (6:14), bear good fruit (5:22), live in freedom (5:13), and love one another (5:14). Indeed, only by following this rule will any peace and mercy permeate the people of God.

The last few phrases which make up the contents of Paul’s benediction have led many commentators to varied interpretations. The reason for this is twofold. First, Paul’s repeated use of the preposition *ἐπί* (“upon”) and the conjunction *καί* (“and” or “even”) could lead some to think Paul is speaking of two distinct groups of people in his benediction. Second, Paul’s phrase *Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ* (“Israel of God”) is not found anywhere else in Scripture, making it difficult to discern what is precisely meant. Though both of these reasons bring some difficulty for interpretation, there are large pointers within Galatians and Paul’s understanding of the OT promises which will help refine what is meant by his benediction.

⁵⁶Wallace, *Grammar*, 158.

In an attempt to clarify matters, Peter Richardson moves the punctuation in the sentence so that there would be two distinct blessings spoken over two distinct peoples.⁵⁷ His gloss reads, “May God give peace to all who will walk according to this criterion, and mercy also to his faithful people Israel.”⁵⁸ Though this interpretation of the text is possible, matters must not be limited to grammar in this case. One must look also to the entirety of Paul’s purposes in Galatians. Richardson’s interpretation is not supported by such observations. Paul is writing to uphold that everyone who has faith in Christ, the true seed of Abraham, becomes part of the children of promise, Jew and Gentile alike. Aspects of the Law, like circumcision, are irrelevant for covenant membership. To end the letter by making a distinction between the two groups would be contrary to what he is trying to accomplish for the Galatian congregations. Instead of using the first *καί* to divide the benediction, and thus the people, it is better to see it linking the two nouns *εἰρήνη* (“peace”) and *ἔλεος* (“mercy”). If this is so, then Paul is wishing both peace and mercy upon one group of people in the first phrase, “Grace *and* peace be upon them.” This is confirmed by the personal pronoun, *αὐτοὺς* (“them”), the antecedent for which is *οἱ* of v. 16a, and better serves Paul’s purposes in the letter. Therefore, peace and mercy are to be upon all of those who follow the new creation rule.

Though this clarifies the first half of the benediction, another question still remains, “What does Paul mean by the *καί* in the second phrase, *καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ*?” Some have suggested that it is serving in a connective manner, and so is used to

⁵⁷Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 81-82.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 84.

highlight a distinction between two peoples (i.e. “*also* upon the Israel of God”). Like Richardson (above), they see the blessing going out to two different peoples. That is, Paul’s benediction is not only upon those who will follow the rule in Galatia, but *also* upon the ethnic Jews.⁵⁹ As stated above, this becomes a problem with Paul’s purpose in Galatians. Throughout the letter Paul has been explaining that if one is in Christ, there is no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile (3:28). To say that Paul is making a distinction in the final words of his letter would seem for him to be contradicting his purposes.

On a more plausible note, others treat the καὶ expegetically.⁶⁰ In so doing, they argue that Paul is further explaining the αὐτοῦς in the first phrase with τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ in the second (i.e. “*that is* upon the Israel of God”). All who follow the new creation rule, Jews and Gentiles alike, are to be seen as the “Israel of God.” In other words, Paul not only wishes peace and mercy upon the church, but names her “the Israel of God.” Support for this interpretation is not scarce. 1) It supports Paul’s purpose in Galatians to establish that believing Gentiles and believing Jews are both considered the true children of Abraham, since they trust in the one seed, Jesus Christ. To give such a “Jewish blessing” was to tear down walls and create unity in the body of Christ.⁶¹ 2) By naming the church, “the Israel of God,” Paul maintains continuity with regard to the

⁵⁹Ibid.; W. D. Davies, “Paul and the People of Israel,” *NTS* 24 (October 1977): 10.

⁶⁰G. K. Beale, “Peace and Mercy Upon the Israel of God,” *Biblica* 80 (1999): 217; Andreas Köstenberger, “The Identity of the ἸΣΡΑΗΛ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ (Israel of God) in Galatians 6:16,” *Faith & Mission* 19 (Fall 2001): 18; Weima, *Gal 6:11-18*, 106; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 299; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ, a Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 482-3; Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 584.

⁶¹Dunn, *Epistle to the Galatians*, 344.

covenant promises, and a discontinuity with regard to ethnic and true Israel.⁶² In other words, the inclusion of the Gentiles into the covenant people of God by faith has always been in line with God's historical redemptive plan (3:8; cf. Rom 9-11; Eph 2:11-22). 3) Paul is using the phrase, "Israel of God," as he uses other OT phrases to speak of the church in the NT. For example, those within the church are of the "true circumcision" (Phil 3:3), and are being built up together as a "temple" unto the Lord (Eph 2:20). 4) This interpretation, as G. K. Beale extensively argues, is also in line with the new creation themes of Isaiah, and concludes that Paul understands Gentile believers to be sharers with true Israelites in such blessings.⁶³ Identification with Christ, the end of the messianic promises of the new creation, is what matters for the *true* Israel, not circumcision. Paul's emphasis is that believing Gentiles, together with Jewish Christians are to be considered the eschatological locus of God. Therefore, to all whom so live by the new creation rule, Paul ascribes the name "Israel of God," and wishes peace and mercy to be upon them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Galatians 6:11-16 reveal that circumcision is irrelevant for salvation and membership in the covenant people of God. After noting his apostolic signature in v. 11, Paul then proceeds to contrast the Judaizers' folly with the gospel of the cross in vv. 12-16. The Judaizers' are only seeking selfish gain in the flesh, and want to escape the persecution which comes with those identified with Christ and his cross. Their motives to uphold the Law piecemeal for their own boast are hypocritical and contrary to the truth of the gospel, which teaches that no man has a boast except for in the

⁶²Köstenberger, *Identity*, 17.

⁶³Beale, *Peace and Mercy*, 204-223.

cross of 'our Lord Jesus Christ.' The covenant people of God are not those who trust in circumcision, but those who have faith in the true seed, Jesus Christ. They are to live not as 'the circumcised,' but as 'the new creation,' boasting only in the all-sufficient cross of Christ for redemption.

APPENDIX A

Exegetical Outline

Paul's overall intention in Galatians 6:11-16 is for his reader to understand that the covenant people of God are those who live not as the circumcised, but as the new creation, boasting only in the all-sufficient cross of Christ for redemption.

I. Paul's Apostolic Signature (v. 11)

- a. Paul finishes the letter in his own hand rather than his amanuensis'.
- b. This marks Paul's apostolic signature and draws attention to the emphases he will make in vv. 12-16.

II. Boasting in the Cross, not in Circumcision (vv. 12-14)

- a. The Judaizers' preach circumcision to escape persecution that would have come from those who are contrary to the cross of Christ.
- b. Although the Judaizers seek justification by works of the Law, especially with regard to circumcision, they themselves fail to uphold the Law.
- c. The Judaizers' motivation is to boast in the flesh of those whom they could convince to receive circumcision.
- d. Boasting is to be only in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all that he sufficiently purchased in his death.

III. Circumcision is Irrelevant; the New Creation is Everything (vv. 15-16)

- a. Circumcision or uncircumcision is irrelevant for salvation.
- b. The new creation, wrought by God alone, is everything.
- c. Those who live according to the new creation rule are the Israel of God, and can claim the benediction of peace and mercy as their own.

APPENDIX B

Sermon Brief

I. Paul's Apostolic Signature (v. 11)

Expl. Paul is finishing the letter in his own hand, rather than his amanuensis'. This is his sign in every letter.

Illus. Refer to Romans 16:22 for a clear example of Paul using an amanuensis.

App. Address the sensitive issues that might arise within the hearts of the congregation with regard to inspiration.

II. Boasting in the Cross, not in Circumcision (vv. 12-14)

Expl. The Judaizers desire to escape persecution and boast in the flesh of the Gentiles who receive circumcision. For Paul, boasting is limited to the cross of Christ which has delivered him from the bondage to the things of the world.

Illus. Explain the severity of the crucifixion in the Roman empire, and relate it to a modern day boast in lynching. The cross was Paul's obsession.

App. The only boast that one should have is in the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ should be our only obsession.

III. Circumcision is Irrelevant; the New Creation is Everything (vv. 15-16)

Expl. Circumcision is irrelevant for salvation. The new creation rule means everything for salvation and the people of God.

Illus. Read Ephesians 2:11-22 to display all that Christ's cross accomplished for Jew and Gentile.

App. Explain the practical outworking of the new creation 'rule' in the life of the community of believers.

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