

Galatians: Free in Christ
All That Matters
Galatians 6:11-18

Paul ends this magnificent letter where he began—with grace and peace. He sums up his message: the motives of those who distort the gospel are selfish and cowardly, joy is to be found in Christ alone, and all that matters in a believer's life is the liberating work of the Spirit.

Bad Motives

Paul takes the pen from his scribe and finishes in ALL CAPS so the Galatians know he wrote it. This wouldn't stop the slander ("He doesn't write; okay he writes, but terribly"), but it shows his affection and sincerity. The motives of the false teachers are self-serving: 1) They want to look good so they compelled the Galatians to be circumcised (v12). "Guess how many circumcisions we had this week?!" This is bad doctrine because only God gives the increase, but it's also unambitious, settling for a pitiful reward—the praise of men (1 Cor. 3:6-7; Matt. 6:3-4). 2) False teachers also want to avoid persecution (v12). The cross doesn't mean we need a little help, but that we are alienated from God because we love sin. In the case of Stephen persecution meant death, and Paul himself was a leader in persecution (Acts 7, 9:1-2). This is an *ad hominem* argument addressing the motives and character of the man, but it's legitimate because their hypocrisy is relevant (v13). Paul has already dismantled their bad theology and arguments throughout this letter. An *ad hominem* argument is bad only when it's alone or inaccurate.

Boasting in Christ

It's not a question of boasting in the flesh versus not boasting. They boast in the flesh; Paul boasts in Christ (v14). Everyone is going to be justified, it's only a question of how. That *how* will be an object of affection, pride, joy, and boasting. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ becomes the only thing of which we boast because on that cross we died and so did the world (v14). The "world" is all the shiny things that appeal to the sinful heart—the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; the gold, glory and girls (1 Jn. 2:16). The triads that used to motivate us have no more power or appeal because they were crucified in Christ. He became that sin so that we could become righteous (2 Cor. 5:21). We and the world were crucified with Christ, and so there's nothing left to boast in but Jesus. This doesn't free us from an earthly, physical life, but actually frees us to enjoy this life for the glory of Jesus.

A New Creation

The gospel is the ultimate leveler. It's not circumcision or uncircumcision that matters, but a new creation (v15). The issue is *what does it mean*. Why is someone getting circumcised, because God told him to or a false teacher did

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(Gen. 17:10; Gal. 5:2)? We have to think. Should we eat the fruit or not? Look at the serpent or destroy it? Build the temple or flee from it? Circumcise our children or say that it doesn't matter? Baptize our children or not? Drink or abstain? The Holy Spirit has no handles, cannot be controlled, and His work is to grow us up into wisdom (Heb. 5:14; Jn. 16:13). Christians love the truth, and the way to test whether we love it rightly is to see if moves us to love and good works. As the elect of God, do we put on tender mercies (Col. 3:12)? It's not a matter of rich or poor, black or white, male or female, educated or uneducated, or anything else. What matters is the new creation the Holy Spirit has begun and is working out in a person's life. The theological word for the beginning of this work is regeneration, but it continuously avails as the Spirit works (v15).

Walk According to this Rule

Some insist on circumcision to avoid persecution, therefore those who refuse it will suffer, and yet peace and mercy are theirs (v16). They are the true Israel of God, an integrated multitude of people from every tribe, language, nation and walk to life. Even though *Galatians* is an early letter, Paul already has scars (*stigmata*) which have not stopped him, so fools might as well leave him alone (v17). G. Campbell Morgan said, "It is the crucified man that can preach the cross." That crucified man is you, and Paul your brother blesses you with the grace of Christ of Jesus Christ (v18).