

GEMS FROM THE ENDINGS OF THE EPISTLES
Part II: Gems From The Ending Of Galatians, A. D. 40-49
(Galatians 6:11-18)

I. Introduction

- A. The Epistle of Galatians was written around A. D. 40-49 (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 434, 588; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1662, “Introduction to the Letter Of Paul to the Galatians: The Galatian Christians.”)
- B. The argument of the epistle is that justification occurs by faith without works, the same view upheld by the apostles at the Acts 15:1-29 Jerusalem Council, but since Paul did not mention that council’s decision in his Galatian epistle to support his stance, this letter was written before that council met.
- C. So, lacking the influence of that council’s verdict, Paul in Galatians 6:11-18 “again emphasized some of the great issues discussed throughout the epistle” that he “felt so strongly about.” (B. K. C., N. T., p. 610)
- D. We thus view Paul’s intense ending to the Galatians epistle for its great truths for our insight and application:

II. Gems From The Ending Of Galatians, A. D. 40-49; Galatians 6:11-18.

- A. As seen in the emphatic tone of the epistle, at Galatians 6:11, Paul took the pen from his scribe to whom he had been dictating the epistle and wrote the closing in his own hand using large letters. This demonstrated that Paul meant to emphasize the statements he was making in his closing. (B. K. C., N. T., op. cit., p. 610)
- B. Paul’s aim in the epistle had been to counter efforts by the Judaizers who were pressuring his readers to keep the Mosaic Law and be circumcised in addition to believing in Christ in order to be saved. (Ryrie, loc. cit., “The Problem”; Galatians 3:1-5; 5:2) Thus, Paul critiqued the Judaizers and their errors in Galatians 6:12-13:
 - 1. Paul claimed that the Judaizers were “only men-pleasers (cf. Gal. 1:10) seeking to make a good impression outwardly,” Galatians 6:12a; Bible Know. Com., N. T., op. cit., p. 611.
 - 2. He added that they were afraid of being persecuted by fellow Judaizers if they did not circumcise Paul’s Gentile readers as the reason why they were motivated to circumcise Paul’s readers, Gal. 6:12b; Ibid.
 - 3. Paul also noted that the Judaizers meant to circumcise his readers to boast to other Judaizers of the number of the Galatians they had won over to keeping the law “as a religious and merit-earning rite (v. 13),” Ibid. “The legalists knew the offense of the Cross would be softened if they openly proclaimed justification by faith *and works* (i. e., circumcision) and if they could claim conversions to that position in Galatia.” (Ibid.)
- C. In forceful contrast to the Judaizers, Paul did not diminish his identity with Christ’s Cross, but declared that to the contrary, his boast was in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, Galatians 6:14a. Paul added that by the Cross the world had been crucified to him and he to the world, Galatians 6:14b! “The world system with all its allurements, fleshly displays, and religions of human effort was cast aside by Paul. He looked at the world as if it were on a cross – and the world looked at Paul as though he were on a cross.” (Ibid.)
- D. To Paul, being in Christ left a believer a new creation by means of the spiritual new birth by faith (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17), for neither being circumcised nor being uncircumcised meant anything relative to salvation, Gal. 6:15; Ibid. Thus, Paul stated that God’s peace and mercy were on those who lived according to this rule of salvation by God’s grace through faith without works, be they Gentiles (Gal. 6:16a) or the “Israel of God,” Gal. 6:16b.
- E. [Some teach that Paul’s term “Israel of God” here in Galatians 6:16b refers to the Church in general, the Amillennial view that believers of all ages in the Old and New Testament constitute the Church (Ibid.), but there are three reasons why this “Israel of God” term here refers only to Hebrew Christians (as follows):
 - 1. The repetition of the preposition (“upon” or “to”) indicates two groups are in view, not one, Ibid.
 - 2. “(A)ll the 65 other occurrences of the term ‘Israel’ in the New Testament refer to Jews,” so it would “be strange for Paul to use ‘Israel’ here to mean Gentile Christians,” Ibid.
 - 3. Paul elsewhere in Romans 9:6 mentioned two kinds of Israelites – believing and unbelieving Jews, Ibid.]
- F. Paul’s final admonition in opposition to the Judaizers was that he should no longer be critiqued for teaching that salvation was by faith alone instead of by faith plus the works of the Law, for he bore in his body the scars he had suffered for holding to the gospel of salvation by faith alone, Galatians 6:17. With this parting directive, Paul called for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with his readers’ spirit, Galatians 6:18!

Lesson: *In closing His strong epistle on justification by faith apart from works, Paul exposed the false, worldly motives of his legalistic foes, the impotency of their false gospel of faith plus works and the credibility of his position as backed up by the scars on his body for the truth, that God’s peace be on saved Gentiles and saved Jews.*

Application: *May we follow Paul’s lead to hold firmly to the gospel of justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ.*