

(11) See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand!

(12) It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law --- but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh!

(14) But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

(15) For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision...but a NEW creation! And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

(17) From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen!

Think on these things:

- 1) V. 11 may be a potential confirmation about Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7). We discussed this previously in lesson 6, Galatians 4:12-20 (called a 'condition' there). Do you recall what hindered Paul, something God allowed to afflict him and keep him humble?

**Paul seemed to have developed very bad eyesight (2 Corinthians 12:7 says "a messenger of Satan to harass me").**

- 2) There are three reasons given for those of the Circumcision Party compelling new believers in the Galatian churches to get circumcised. What are they (vs. 12-13)?

- a) **To show off their importance to everyone else.**
- b) **To not have to face persecution by dispersed Jews in the Roman empire.**
- c) **So they could boast about their conversion successes.**

- 3) But v. 13 says there is a MAJOR problem with this push to get people circumcised. What is the problem with forcing everyone to comply with the Jewish Covenant in Mosaic Law? Review Galatians 3:10 and 5:2-3.

**Those who are circumcised (the Jews) cannot keep the Law!! They compelled others to take on an impossible task: for to fail in any one thing is to fail in all Law matters.**

- 4) Vs. 12-13 can be modernized for our discussion. What are some things that Christians push on new believers today? What is most important (Christian actions or having faith)?

**Being baptized, speaking in tongues, 'proving' faith through works, going to church weekly, tithing, doing devotions, praying, reading through the Bible, etc.... Many of these have great value, but such wide-spread change is not easily achieved. Some new converts need time for the Holy Spirit to teach them God's Word and inspire changes here and there. Sometimes it takes years to change. What is most important is having faith (belief) in Jesus. Everything else comes as Jesus walks with us through life.**

- 5) In v. 14, what does Paul say he will boast about regarding Jesus? Why is this important for us? See Paul's testimony in Galatians 2:20-21. How does it impact our worldview?

**Paul says he will boast in the cross of Jesus. On it, Jesus died for the sins of the entire world. Jesus forgives sin and offers God's grace to the humble who repent. The effect on our worldview? Life is NOT about me...!**

- 6) V. 15 says being circumcised or not means nothing! You can substitute some of the ideas from Q4 with the same warning. So, what does Paul say is important? Jesus called this something else in John 3:3. Consider these verses: Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; and 1 Peter 1:23. Is this an internal thing or an external thing? Are we "to be" or "to do?"

**Paul says being a new creation --- "born again" by the Holy Spirit (John), with our minds changing as He transforms us (Romans) --- is the only thing that really matters in the Galatian Church's struggle with the Circumcision Party.**

**Old things begin to pass away, and new things become our focus (2 Corinthians) as God's Word (James) washes and regenerates us (Titus). Living obediently for Jesus is what brings purity into our lives (1 Peter). Being a Christian is first and foremost an internal matter; we are "to be" before we are "to do."**

- 7) How was Paul's ministry and Christian message deemed "genuine" as contrasted with that from members of the Circumcision Party (v. 17, and 2 Corinthians 11:23-27)? The Circumcision wished to avoid this (v. 12). Paul now demands that the Galatians recognize his legitimacy over them.

**Paul suffered much, physically, as a Christian missionary. He faced persecution for his life of faith establishing and serving the churches. The Circumcision Party desired to avoid persecution from Judaism by forcing Christian converts to accept circumcision also.**

People and situations I want to pray for this week: