

Galatians 6 - Sacrificial Service For Sinning Christians, Burdened Christians, Pastor-Teachers, and all People

III. Practical (Gal 5:1—6:26)

(2) Service to:

- (A) Sinning Christian (6:1)
- (B) Burdened Christian (6:2-5)
 - (a) Bear one another's burdens (6:2)
 - (b) Pride prevents burden sharing (6:3)
 - (c) Testing ones own actions prevents pride (6:4)
 - (d) The believer can test his own actions based upon his willingness to carry his expected load (6:5)
- (C) Teachers (6:6-9)
 - (a) Responsibility for all believers to financially support the teaching of God's Word (6:6)
 - (b) Law of sowing and reaping (6:7)
 - (c) Application of the law of sowing and reaping to supporting teachers (6:8)
 - (d) Exhortation not to give up (6:9)
- (D) All (6:10)

- (3) Conclusion (6:11-18)
 - (A) Paul's autograph (6:11)
 - (a) Paul's emphasis
 - (b) Paul's amanuensis
 - (B) Paul's adversaries (6:12-13)
 - (a) Avoid persecution (6:12)
 - (b) Hypocrisy (6:13a)
 - (c) Seeking a personal following (6:13b)
 - (C) Paul's boast (6:14-15)
 - (a) Paul's boast in the cross (6:14a)
 - (b) The cross yielded two benefits (6:14b-15)
 - (i) Caused the world to lose its power over Paul (6:14b)

- (ii) Brought forth a new creation (6:15)
- (D) Paul's benediction (6:16-18)
 - (a) Paul's blessing (6:16)
 - (b) Paul's credentials (6:17)
 - (c) Paul's conclusion (6:18)

Galatians 6

- (2) Service to:

Now that Paul has addressed how a believer can live the Spirit-led life, he continues his theme of application and practice by explaining to us what Christian service looks like. If a believer is truly controlled by the Holy Spirit, displaying the fruit of the Spirit in my interactions with others through the Holy Spirit's power, then the Holy Spirit will give me the desire to serve God and serve His people.

In v1-10 Paul gives us four groups of people whom we will naturally desire to serve as we live a Spirit-filled life:

1. The sinning Christian (6:1)
2. The burdened Christian (6:2-5)
3. Teachers (6:6-9)
4. All people (6:10)

- (A) Sinning Christian (6:1)

1 Brothers and sisters, even if a person is caught in any **wrongdoing**, **you who are spiritual** are to **restore** such a person in **a spirit of gentleness**; **each one** looking to yourself, so that you are not tempted as well.

1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; **each one** looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

1 Brothers, if a person is caught doing something wrong, those of you who are spiritual should restore that person gently. Watch out for yourself so that you are not tempted as well.

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

– "...wrongdoing" - in context, a new or immature believer who had been hoodwinked by the Judaizers and thus caught up in legalism

— These are believers who bought into the legalistic doctrine of the Judaizers, and believed that they could please God and grow in their faith by keeping a set of manmade rules in their own power rather than trusting in the Spirit's power

- Paul says that if we are aware of a believer in this predicament, we are to restore that believer in a spirit of gentleness
- "...you who are spiritual" - a Spirit-led believer, in contrast to a believer who is caught in legalism
- "...restore" - *katartizō*, to mend or repair; to put in order; the same word used in Matt 4:21 is translated as "mending"
- It means that God's people are to reach out to a sinning believer to restore them or mend them, to bring them back to a state of wholeness
- "...a spirit of gentleness" - Jesus analogized restoration using a log and a spec (Cf. Matt 7:5)
- The Spirit-led believer must approach the sinning believer as if they are helping the sinning believer remove a spec from their own eye, when the Spirit-led believer has a log in their own eye
- If you were to get a spec out of someone's eye, first you would do it with great care, diligence, attention to detail, and tenderness. They would take their time to be sure to do it right and do no damage.
- The reason why such care, gentleness, and humility must be taken is because the "spiritual" person can be tempted as well. All of us are vulnerable to temptation, all of us are vulnerable to false doctrine, and all of us can be pulled into legalism at any time.
- Thus, when we are restoring a sinning brother or sister, we are to do so with an attitude of "if not for the grace of God, so go I." The correction is not to come from a place of superiority, but a place of tenderness and humility.

(B) Burdened Christian (6:2-5)

(a) Bear one another's burdens (6:2)

- 2 Bear one another's **burdens**, and thereby fulfill the **law of Christ**.
- 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.
- 2 Practice carrying each other's burdens. In this way you will fulfill the law of the Messiah.
- 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.
- While v1 deals with restoration, v2-5 deal with prevention
- "...burdens" - *baros*, a heavy, crushing, load—more than a man could carry without help; compare with "load" (*phortion*) in v5
- Though the principle would apply to all burdens, the context has special reference to the heavy and oppressive weight of temptation and struggle with the flesh.
- A burdened brother or sister may be someone caught up in legalism, or it may be someone in the midst of difficult circumstances beyond their control (health issues, financial problems, economic turmoil, etc.)

- "...law of Christ" - encompasses the whole of Jesus' teaching, both His own while on earth and through His apostles following His ascension
- It means to live out the principles of Jesus Christ under the power of the Holy Spirit
- Paul tells the Galatians...since you're so enamored about law, here is a new law for you: follow the principles taught and lived by Jesus Christ, under the power of the Holy Spirit. That's the law you should be following, not the Mosaic Law.
- It boils down to love God wholeheartedly and one's neighbor as oneself (Matt 22:36-40; John 13:34-35; 15:12; 1 John 3:23). The law of Christ is encapsulated by John 13:34: **I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**
- See Law of the Spirit (Rom 8:2); also Law of Christ, The

Sacrificial Service

A believer is free from the Law of Moses and possesses liberty in the Spirit, but he must fulfill the law of Christ, and this can only be done in the power of the Spirit. Such a life involves sacrificial service directed toward:

1. Sinning Christians (6:1)
2. Burdened Christians (6:2-5)
3. The pastor-teachers (6:6-9)
4. All people (6:10)

(b) Pride prevents burden sharing (6:3)

- 3 For if anyone thinks that he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
- 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
- 3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is really nothing, he is only fooling himself.
- 3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.
- Our pride will kill off any desire for burden-sharing that the Holy Spirit may put on our heart
- Pride will neuter and deter the law of Christ and a service mindset in a split second
- So to reduce our tendency to compare ourselves to another brother or sister, in order to keep a lid on my pride so that burden-sharing will continue, I'm not to compare myself with other brother/sister, but instead I'm to compare myself to Christ
- As our pride decreases, our desire for burden sharing and fulfilling the law of Christ increases

(c) Testing ones own actions prevents pride (6:4)

- 4 But each one must **examine** his own work, and then he will have *reason for boasting, but to himself alone, and not to another.*

4 But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for boasting* in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.

4 Each person must examine his own actions, and then he can boast about his own accomplishments and not about someone else.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

- Two things keep a believer from bearing another's burden is: conceit (v3), thinking himself to be more important than he is

— The second is always comparing himself and his own work with others (v4)

— "...examine" - *dokimazo*, everyone is told to test his own actions (Cf. 1 Peter 1:7). This means that rather than comparing himself with others, he should step back and take an objective look at himself and his accomplishments. Then he can take comfort in what God has done in and through his life (Cf. Rom 12:3).

(d) The believer can test his own actions based upon his willingness to carry his expected load (6:5)

5 For each one will bear his own **load**.

5 For each one will bear his own load.

5 For everyone must carry his own load.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

- A believer can test his own actions (examine himself, v4) based on his willingness to carry his own load

— In the Christian life, there are normal responsibilities that every believer is expected to carry (v6-10). If I am willing to shoulder my expected responsibilities, I will no longer be testing myself against someone else but instead I'll be testing myself against God's standard and pride will disappear.

- "...load" - *phortion*, a normal or expected load

— This is the load (burden) Jesus assigns to His followers (Cf. Matt 11:30; Rom 15:1; 1 John 3:16-17)

If my car breaks down, my neighbor can help drive my children to school, but he cannot assume the responsibilities that only belong to me as their father. [Wiersbe]

(C) Teachers (6:6-9)

(a) Responsibility for all believers to financially support the teaching of God's Word (6:6)

6 The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.

6 The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.

6 The person who is taught the word should share all his goods with his teacher.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

- Paul likely brought up the topic of financial support for Bible teachers because the Judaizers in Galatia were dissuading support for the teachers who taught the gospel of grace

— This is a great example of burden-bearing: the financial support of those who teach the Word

— Paul says that the normal responsibility ("load") of a believer who is controlled by the Holy Spirit is to financial support ministries that teach the gospel of grace (Cf. Luke 10:7; Rom 15:27; 1 Cor 9:11; 2 Cor 11:7-12; Phil 4:10-19; 1 Thess 2:6,9; 1 Tim 5:17-18)

— This includes the local church along with para-church ministries. Paul here is referring specifically to the local church because para-church ministries did not exist yet.

— The admonition is clear that as a teacher shares the good things of the Word of God, a believer is to reciprocate by sharing all good things with his instructor

— Many Christians have this idea that church is free. It's not church that is free, it's the gospel that is free. Church is not free, it must be supported financially (Cf. Luke 10:7-8; 1 Cor 9:13-14; 1 Tim 5:18).

— This concept of voluntary giving to provide for the Lord's servants was revolutionary at that time, since Jews were taxed for the support of their priests and Gentiles paid fees, made vows, etc., to sustain their religions

(b) Law of sowing and reaping (6:7)

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a person sows, this he will also reap.

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

7 Stop being deceived; God is not to be ridiculed. A person harvests whatever he plants:

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

- Most Christians have been taught and understand the law of sowing and reaping, but many do not understand it in the context in which it is taught here

— The law of sowing and reaping is simple to understand: whatever I put into the ground, I will get later during the harvest season. If I put an apple seed into the ground, it will yield an apple tree.

— The law as applied to a believer's life is that whatever we do or say now (put into the ground) will come back to us in some way (harvest) at a later date.

— There are two sides to the law of sowing and reaping: a positive side and a negative side

- Positively, I can be industrious in my sowing, and I will reap a bountiful harvest. If I put good seed into the ground, I can expect a good harvest.
- Negatively, I can neglect my responsibility to sow completely and receive absolutely nothing at the harvest. I can put bad seed into the ground, and consequently I will reap a bad harvest.
- There are many things that we do in our lives, both good and bad, and we reap both the goodness and the consequences of these things later on. If I'm walking in the Spirit, in the will of God, and I make a good decision, then I reap a blessing from that decision down the road. There are other things that I've done that are foolish, stupid, that I shouldn't have done, and a decade or two later I end up paying a price for it later on.
- The same principle applies to our health...if I eat like a pig, drink like a whale, smoke like a chimney, and cuss like a sailor, then later in life I can expect problems in my physical body. Alternatively, I can take care of myself, eat healthy, speak life, and exercise, and I can expect my physical body to be in pretty good shape as I get older.
- "Do not be deceived" - we are often deceived because we plant a seed but the negative consequences haven't arrived yet, so we think they never will
- Just because you do not receive an immediate return on investment do not think that the harvest will never come, good or bad, because it's an immutable law of God
- "...God is not mocked" - it is God Himself who ordained the law of sowing and reaping
- If I were to put bad seed into the ground and not get a negative return, God is mocked because His law has been violated
- This verse describes God's "Consequential Wrath" (Cf. Col 3:6)
- See notes on the consequences of David's sin with Bathsheba in 2 Sam 13:39

(c) Application of the law of sowing and reaping to supporting teachers (6:8)

- 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap **eternal life** from the Spirit.
- 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.
- 8 The person who sows through human means will harvest decay from human means, but the person who sows in the Spirit will harvest eternal life from the Spirit.
- 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.
- Paul is saying that this basic tenet of agriculture, the law of sowing and reaping, will be applied to the topic of the flesh vs the Spirit
- The context here is Bible teachers (v6).
- With the money that God has entrusted me with, I can use my money according to how I want to use it, use it to indulge my flesh. I can say no to my financial obligations to my local

church and use the money to please myself. Consequently, there will be no quality Bible teaching in the local church.

— If every believer took to this mentality, Christian ministries will fall one by one. And with no quality teaching, the spiritual life of all believers would be damaged. You won't lose your salvation, but you will have a lower level of spiritual living because you will have no one consistently holding up a doctrinal standard from the pulpit week by week.

— The biggest reason there is such a low level of Christian living today is because we have lowered the doctrinal standard in the pulpit. The reason you can't find solid, verse-by-verse biblical teaching today is that believers have stopped supporting it financially. As a consequence, there is a famine of God's Word in the land today.

— If I choose to sow my money to please my flesh rather than supporting quality teaching in the local church, I will reap a low level of spiritual living, a low doctrinal standard, and a famine of God's Word

- But on the positive side, if I take my money as a Spirit-filled Christian and take it as my responsibility to financially support my local church and para-church ministries, we will reap a consistent and high application of the Word of God, a higher level of spiritual life, and we will reap eternal life

— Continuous, abundant, Spirit-motivated sowing will yield the best harvest. If we use our funds to support the Lord's work, or sow to please the Spirit, that promotes our own spiritual growth, we will reap a harvest that will last forever.

- "...eternal life" - when Paul refers to "eternal life" here, he is saying that the quality of your spiritual life will increase, as you find yourself in a church that financially supports solid Bible teaching

— Jesus used this term the same way in John 10:10. It's not just about getting the gift of eternal life, but it's experiencing that life to the fullest and in its totality

— As believers walk in the principles of God's Word, as taught to them faithfully by financially supported pastors/teachers, the level of everyone's spiritual understanding and living begins to increase

(d) Exhortation not to give up (6:9)

9 Let's not become discouraged in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not become weary.

9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

9 Let's not get tired of doing what is good, for at the right time we will reap a harvest—if we do not give up.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

- Why would Paul say to not lose heart? Because in the law of sowing and reaping, there is rarely a quick return on investment. There is a time period, often many months, between

the time the seed goes into the ground and the time of the harvest.

— When we sow good seed but after some time do not reap the good from it, Paul says to not lose heart or be discouraged from continuing to sow good seed because you eventually will, in due time, experience a positive harvest of good

- Young people/adults will often live any way they want, and because they do not experience the negative consequences of these actions right away, they continue down that path. But they should not be deceived, just as surely as the positive consequences are accruing to be reaped by those who do good, the negative consequences are also accruing to be reaped by those who do evil.

— While they continue living to please themselves, the law of sowing and reaping continues. The difficulties and adversities that come into a person's life are just as sure as the time they sowed those bad seeds. There is a payday someday.

— Often people when they get older regret what they did, and would give anything to get back on the other side of the sowing in order to do it much differently. They now at their age that the law of sowing and reaping is very real, and they would do anything to be able to sow differently. They would take God's Word much more seriously. They would take their responsibilities to their local church much more seriously. They would treat their body differently. They would control their emotions more fully.

— As they have gone about their lives sowing to the flesh, they have no realized that the consequences have come...emotional, physical, spiritual, psychological, financial, and relational. And when they say that they wish they could do it all over again, they are saying that they wish they could go back and do the sowing differently.

(D) All (6:10)

10 So then, while we have **opportunity**, let's do **good to all people**, and **especially to those who are of the household of the faith**.

10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

10 So then, whenever we have the opportunity, let's practice doing good to everyone, especially to the family of faith."

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

- "...opportunity" - today you may have the opportunity to serve God in a particular way, but that opportunity may not be available tomorrow. There is no guarantee that the opportunities we have today will be around tomorrow.

- "...good" - constructive behavior toward others (Cf. 5:22, see notes there)

- "...all people" - the world (unbelievers) are our target market for service

- Christians have a measure of responsibility to all people to do good, when the occasion arises. (When Jesus fed the 5,000, both saved and unsaved participated.)
- "...especially to those who are of the household of the faith" - charity begins at home
- The benevolence of Christians should not be restricted, but believers are to have the priority. As in a home, family needs are met first, then those of the neighbors (1 Tim 5:8).
- There is a hurting, needy world out there, but before you move in that direction, first meet the needs of those at home who are part of the household of faith (believers in your local church)
- The Lord lays on our hearts the financial needs of the brethren and He asks us to act on what He has laid on our hearts. This is the outworking of the Spirit-led life.

(3) Conclusion (6:11-18)

As Paul brought the Galatian letter to a close, he again emphasized some of the great issues discussed throughout the epistle. His conclusion contains both a summary and final statement of the issues the apostle felt so strongly about.

(A) Paul's autograph (6:11)

- (a) Paul's emphasis
- (b) Paul's amanuensis

- 11** See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!
- 11** See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.
- 11** Look at how large these letters are because I am writing with my own hand!
- 11** Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.
- Paul did not use an amanuensis to write his first epistle as he did with many of his other works (1 Cor 16:21; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:13; Cf. 1 Peter 5:12)

(B) Paul's adversaries (6:12-13)

- (a) Avoid persecution (6:12)

- 12** All who want to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.
- 12** Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.
- 12** These people who want to impress others by their external appearance are trying to force you to be circumcised, simply to avoid being persecuted for the cross of the Messiah.
- 12** As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.
- Paul lists three motives of the false teachers creeping into the Galatian church:
 1. The legalistic doctrine was attractive because it allowed people to avoid persecution

- The gospel is a stumbling block or offense to unbelievers (Cf. 5:11)
- When you get right down to it, the appeal of legalism is pride. Our human ego and pride wants to believe that we can do something to contribute just a little bit to our salvation. God can do 99%, but I need to do 1%.
- There is always a tendency to add something to the gospel. If the gospel stops being the gospel, it loses its offense and it also loses its saving power. It simply becomes an appeal to the flesh.

(b) Hypocrisy (6:13a)

(c) Seeking a personal following (6:13b)

13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they want to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

13 Why, not even those who are circumcised obey the Law! They simply want you to be circumcised so that they can boast about your external appearance.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

- The people who want to put people back under the Law do not even keep the Law themselves (Cf. Rom 2:17-29)

— The legalist is always telling people to do this and that to please God, but if you examine their lives, they do not do the very things that they preach to others

- The legalists are simply after numerical growth, which in turn increases their popularity and sphere of influence. This is the motive behind their preaching (Cf. Matt 23:15).

— There are a number of people who seek to do the work of God, but you have to look at what their motive is. Is their motive the people of God, or is their motive to somehow build a personal following (Cf. Acts 20:30).

(C) Paul's boast (6:14-15)

(a) Paul's boast in the cross (6:14a)

(b) The cross yielded two benefits (6:14b-15)

(i) Caused the world to lose its power over Paul (6:14b)

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

14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

14 But may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world!

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

- Paul now describes his motives, what gets him out of bed in the morning to do the arduous work of ministry...

— In contrast to the corrupt motives of his opponents, the singular thing that motivated Paul in ministry was the cross of Jesus Christ

- "...far be it from me" - *mē ginomai*, the strongest negation in the Greek language

- The first of two benefits of the cross to Paul was that it caused the world to lose its power over Paul

— Paul had lost his interest in the world, and the world had lost its interest in Paul

— This is something that Paul, nor anyone, could ever achieve through keeping the Law or through human striving. It was simply a benefit that accrued to Paul because of the cross of Jesus Christ.

- "...world" - *cosmos*, the Satanically-energized philosophy that seeks to alienate the believer's affections away from God

— As we begin to walk with the Lord, the world does not have the same attractiveness that it did before we were saved

(ii) Brought forth a new creation (6:15)

15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **newcreation**.

15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

15 For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters. Rather, what matters is being a new creation.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

- "...new creation" - describes the new birth (Cf. 2 Cor 5:17)

— Every person is a creation of God physically, but only those who have trusted in Christ are creations of God spiritually (Cf. John 1:12-13)

— Paul is saying that he doesn't want to get into long discussions or arguments about circumcision or uncircumcision because neither of these bring about the new birth. Paul was only interested in preaching the gospel, which is the only thing that can bring about the new birth in a person.

(D) Paul's benediction (6:16-18)

(a) Paul's blessing (6:16)

16 [NIV] Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God.

16 [NASB20] And all who will follow **this rule, peaceandmercybeuponthem, andupon the Israel of God.**

16 [NASB95] And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

16 [ISV] Now may peace be on all those who live by this principle, and may mercy be on the Israel of God.

16 [KJV] And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

- This verse, in particular the phrase "the Israel of God," has been the source of much misunderstanding and misinterpretation. This is the most important passage produced by Covenant (Reformed) Theology to support the view that the Church is "spiritual Israel," or that Gentile believers become spiritual Jews (other passages they point to include: Rom 2:28-29; 9:6; Gal 3:7,29; 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9-10). In truth, those who believe this faulty interpretation are guilty of spiritual identity theft.

— Their tenacity seems derived from their need to support their amillennial eschatology. Professing Christians hijack Israel's identity and take exclusive ownership of the promises (but not the curses—no, never the curses) God made to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

- "...all who" - Gentile believers in Galatia (the same group as "them" later in this verse; see note below)

- "...this rule" - the same rule he has been hammering on throughout this entire epistle: we are sanctified in the exact same way we were justified, which is by faith alone in Christ alone

— Consequently, for those who follow this rule Paul pronounces a blessing on both the Gentile and the Jewish members of the Galatian churches

- "...peace and mercy" - Paul wished these on all who would "walk according to this rule" that he expounded: justification through faith alone, apart from works

— Paul pronounces this blessing on members of the two groups who would follow this rule of salvation through faith alone. The first group is "them"—the uncircumcision, the Gentile Christians to, and of whom, he has devoted most of this epistle. The second group is the "Israel of God"—the circumcision—the Jewish believers who, in contrast with the Judaizers, followed the rule of salvation by grace through faith alone.

- "...upon" [2x] - *epi*, the repetition of the preposition (*epi* "upon" or "to") indicates two groups are in view. This blessing is pronounced on believing Galatians (Gentiles) and on believing Jews ("Israel of God").

— Paul designates two groups elsewhere, namely in v15: "circumcision" = Group 1, Gentiles; "uncircumcision" = Group 2, believing Jews; same thing in 2:7-8

— If Paul was addressing only one group, he wouldn't have used the 2nd *epi* "upon"; the fact that he uses two prepositions indicates that he is referring to two separate groups

- "...them" - the Gentiles, which was the predominant group that Paul was writing to

- "...and" - *kai*, clearly separates the two groups—Gentile believers ("them"; the "uncircumcision") and Jewish believers—("the Israel of God"; the Remnant)
- The interpretation of *kai* determines the relationship between "the Israel of God" and "as many as walk according to this rule." Are the two entities one and the same, or are they distinct? That is the issue.
- Dispensationalists and others use the *most common* translation of *kai* ("and") because it introduces another category of believers, namely, Jewish believers in Jesus. This is by far the most common interpretation of *kai* in the NT.
- Replacement theologians use the *least common* translation of *kai* ("even") in order to blur the distinctions within the body of Christ. This interpretation makes both entities ("the Israel of God" and "as many as walk according to this rule") the same entity. If this is the correct translation, the Church is most likely the "Israel of God."
- The NIV translation of *kai* ("even") is the rarest translation of *kai* in the NT. So Replacement Theology has built its entire theology on the rarest use of *kai* in the NT, and completely ignores the most common translation of the word.
- This is the best example why a word-for-word, literal translation of the Bible is important, rather than a watered-down thought-for-thought paraphrase. You can't study the Bible properly using a paraphrase version of the Bible.
- S. Lewis Johnson, professor of Greek at Dallas Theological Seminary, comments on the NIV's translation of *kai* in Gal 6:16: *It is necessary to begin this part of the discussion with a basic but often neglected hermeneutical principle. It is this: in the absence of compelling exegetical and theological considerations, we should avoid the rarer grammatical usages when the common ones make good sense. An extremely rare use has been made to replace the common usage. Even in spite of the fact that the common and frequent usage makes common and good sense in Gal 6:16.*
- If Paul wanted to introduce Replacement Theology in this verse, he could've easily done so by leaving out the *kai* ("and") altogether
- "...Israel of God" - the second group Paul refers to (distinctive from "them"—believing Gentiles). This unusual title refers to saved Jews. They were the Jewish believers who accepted Paul's teaching of the gospel of the grace of God without works. Jewish believers who trusted in Jesus and nothing else! They are in contra-distinction to the Judaizers.
- "Israel" is used 73x [KJV] in the NT (15x elsewhere in Paul's epistles; 72x elsewhere in the NT; 1800x in the OT). The 72 other occurrences of the term "Israel" in the NT *all* refer to national Israel...every. single. time. If you include "Israelite" in the count along with "Israel," together they are used ~2500x times in the Bible.
- It would thus be strange for Paul to use "Israel" here to mean Gentile Christians. This is the only time the term "Israel" could possibly be interchanged with "Church" without reducing the passage to absurdity.

- “Israel” is a “technical word” meaning it means the same thing every time it’s used. Israel never means Gentiles, it never means the Church, it never even means a mixed audience of Jews and Gentiles...it only means Israel (direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob).
- Additional strong confirmation of this interpretation (that “Israel of God” refers to a subset in the church of believing Jews) comes from the total absence of an identification of the Church with Israel until 160 AD. And at that time, there was a total absence of the term “Israel of God” to characterize the Church.
- Replacement Theologians want you to believe that Paul, in his conclusion and summary of his epistle to the Galatians, introduced this whole idea and doctrine of the church replacing Israel in the plan and program of God. And they want you to believe that out of all 2500+ usages of “Israel” or “Israelite” throughout Scripture, this usage in Gal 6:16 is the only time “Israel” doesn’t mean Israel.
- See: [The Coming Kingdom 29 Replacement Theology \(Gal 6:16\)](#) for more information.

Covenant theologians believe that “Israel of God” is the Church, but the evidence does not support such a conclusion. They build their case largely by redefining the term “Israel” in the NT—this verse in particular—and making it apply to the Church.

There are a range of faulty interpretations of “the Israel of God”:

1. The “Israel of God” is the NT Church, the spiritual seed of Abraham who have displaced the physical seed of Abraham. This is the majority view in Christendom today.
2. It’s an eschatological reference to the “all Israel” that Paul says will be saved at the end of the age (Rom 11:26)
3. It’s a self-designation used by Paul’s Judaizing opponents in Galatia and elsewhere (the Judaizers were observant Jewish individuals who had professed faith in Jesus Christ, but insisted that non-Jews should undergo a de facto conversion to Judaism (via circumcision) in order to gain full recognition as Christians).
4. It was a localized phenomenon in Paul’s day—i.e. a “non-judaizing” group of Jewish Christians in Galatia

In reality, “Israel of God” is a reference to Jewish people anywhere who are believers in Jesus—they represent the overlap between Israel and the Church.

Commentators who object that Jewish believers constitute the “Israel of God” claim that it’s inconsistent with Paul’s statement in Galatians that under the terms of the New Covenant, there is no more distinction between Jew and Gentile (3:28). But is that really what the verse is saying? After all, during the course of his missionary journeys, Paul often mentioned his own Jewish heritage and ethnicity, and was readily recognized by others as Jewish (Acts 19:34; 21:39; 22:3; 23:6; 26:5; Phil 3:5). His statement in 3:28 about the unity

of believers, then, was surely not intended to suggest that a Jewish believer is no longer recognizable as Jewish once he's in the Body of Christ, just as it wasn't meant to suggest that men and women are no longer distinguishable from one another in the family of God. The fact is that Paul continued to embrace his Jewish identity long after he became a follower of Christ.

The Church is never called "spiritual Israel" or a "new Israel." The term Israel is either used of the nation or the people as a whole, or of the believing Remnant within. It is never used of the Church in general or of Gentile believers in particular. In fact, even after the Cross there remains a threefold distinction:

- A distinction between Israel and the Gentiles (1 Cor 10:32; Eph 2:11-12)
- A distinction between Israel and the Church (1 Cor 10:32)
- A distinction between Jewish believers (the "Israel of God") and Gentile believers (Rom 9:6; Gal 6:16)

See [Remnant of Israel](#) for the historical origin and future of the Remnant.

We should remember the context when interpreting this verse...Galatians is concerned with Gentiles who were attempting to attain their sanctification through the Law. The ones deceiving them were Judaizers, who were Jews demanding adherence to the Law of Moses. To them, a Gentile convert had to convert to Judaism before he qualified for salvation through Christ.

Paul speaks of himself as an Israelite (Cf. Rom 11:1). He also speaks of "a Remnant according to God's gracious choice" (Cf. Rom 11:5), words that in context refer to believing Israelites? What more fitting thing could Paul write, in a work so strongly attacking Jewish professing believers (the Judaizers) than to make it most plain that he was not attacking the true believing Jews? Judaizers are anathematized, but the Remnant according to the election of grace are "the Israel of God." Perhaps this expression, "the Israel of God," is to be contrasted with his expression in 1 Cor 10:18, "Israel after the flesh" [KJV], as the true, believing Israel versus the unbelieving element. Likewise in Rom 9:6 the apostle distinguishes two Israels, one elect and believing, the other unbelieving, but both ethnic Israelites (Cf. Rom 9:7-13).

(b) Paul's credentials (6:17)

17 From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the **marks** of Jesus.

17 From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

17 Let no one make any more trouble for me, because I carry the scars of Jesus on my own body.

17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

- "...marks" - scars, brand marks. Paul had the scars on his body to prove that his motives for ministry were pure. He had received some of those marks/scars as he was ministering to the Galatians (Acts 14:19-20).

— These marks/scars, suffered in persecution, spoke more eloquently than the mark of circumcision that the Judaizers sought to impose (Cf. 2 Cor 11:23ff)

If something costs us nothing, we will value it as nothing.

(c) Paul's conclusion (6:18)

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers *and* sisters. Amen.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

18 May the grace of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be with your spirit, brothers! Amen.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. To the Galatians written from Rome.

- Note: Paul closes without any personal salutations. However, he ended as he began, expressing his heartfelt desire that the grace of God would be their abiding portion (Cf. 1:3).