

### Review Questions (Lesson #21)

#### Answer T for true, F for false

1. The "Israel of God" today is the nation of Israel in the mid-east.
2. Paul would not boast in matters of the flesh, but only in the cross of Christ.
3. Even under the New Covenant fleshly circumcision is a command of God.
4. A person becomes a new creature upon obedience to the gospel of Christ.
5. The Judaizers said circumcision was essential for salvation.

#### Give short answers:

1. How was the cross a stumbling block to unbelieving Jews? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What had Paul experienced that left "the marks of the Lord Jesus" on his body? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is "this rule" (Galatians 6:16a)? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How did Paul now view the fleshly things that he had previously valued highly? Why? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How did Paul and Barnabas deal with the Judaizers who came to Antioch? What was the result at the meeting with the apostles and elders at Jerusalem? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Fill in the blanks:

1. The Judaizers knew that their unbelieving Jewish brethren would not persecute them if the \_\_\_\_\_ converts were circumcised and made to observe \_\_\_\_\_. Such would deny the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ and make the \_\_\_\_\_ unnecessary.
2. "He is not a \_\_\_\_\_ who is one outwardly, nor is \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_; but he is a Jew who is one \_\_\_\_\_ that and circumcision is that of the \_\_\_\_\_."
3. "Therefore we were \_\_\_\_\_ with Him through \_\_\_\_\_ into \_\_\_\_\_, that just as Christ was \_\_\_\_\_ from the \_\_\_\_\_ by the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_, even so we also should \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_."
4. Though disappointed in the Galatians, Paul still recognized them as \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ them, and held out \_\_\_\_\_ for them.
5. Therefore if anyone is in \_\_\_\_\_, he is a \_\_\_\_\_."

### Galatians: Guarding the Gospel of Grace

#### Lesson #21 Distinct Differences (Galatians 6:11-18)

Truth and error simply don't mix. Paul has dealt at length with the error of the Judaizers as opposed to the truth of the gospel. As he closes Galatians, re-emphasizes that the Judaizers were not merely putting some harmless embellishments upon the gospel; they were replacing it with a perverted system that would cause those embracing it to be lost eternally.

The differences between truth and error were so important that Paul took the pen into his own hand to make certain everyone knew this letter was genuine, not a forgery. "See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!" (6:11). Ordinarily, Paul wrote a salutation (greeting) for each letter in his own handwriting, which all who knew him would recognize (see 1 Corinthians 16:21 and 2 Thessalonians 3:17). Then a secretary did the bulk of the writing as Paul dictated (see Romans 16:22, Tertius was the secretary). Paul may have penned the entire letter to the Galatians personally, or he may have written only these last verses himself.

Observe six distinctions between truth and error (between faithful Christians like Paul and false teachers like the Judaizers). First, the Judaizers were men-pleasers, whereas faithful Christians please God despite persecution (6:12, 17). Why did the Judaizers insist that Gentile converts be circumcised? "Only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ" (v. 12). To unbelieving Jews, the cross was a stumbling block (i.e. they abhorred the idea of Messiah suffering and enduring such a shameful death, see 1 Corinthians 1:23). The Judaizers knew that their unbelieving Jewish brethren would not persecute them if the Gentile converts were circumcised and made to observe Mosaic Law. Such would deny the power of the gospel and make the cross unnecessary. Paul, on the other hand, had demonstrated his willingness to suffer for Christ, and had the scars to prove it. "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (v. 17).

Second, the Judaizers boasted in their converts' flesh; but Paul and other faithful Christians boasted in the cross of Christ (6:13-14). Fleshly circumcision was part of the process by which a Gentile became a proselyte Jew in subjection to Mosaic Law (Exodus 12:48). The Judaizers considered it a feather in their cap to have a Gentile circumcised, and their unbelieving Jewish brethren would certainly applaud them for it. Yet Paul said the false teachers themselves didn't keep the Law, despite their vain claims. Jesus pointed out this same hypocrisy: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of Hell as yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).

Paul's own fleshly "credentials" gave him more right than the Judaizers to boast regarding the flesh: "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless" (Philippians 3:4-5). Before converting to Christ, Paul prized those things. Now, however, he counted them "as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8). "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14). The world no longer attracted Paul with fleshly glories or intimidated him with threats. While unbelieving Jews despised the cross, Paul boasted in it, knowing that salvation from sin came not through the Law of Moses, but through the cross of Christ.

Third, whereas the Judaizers stressed circumcision, Paul and other faithful Christians stressed being a new creature. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creature" (Galatians 6:15). The Judaizers stressed circumcision as being essential to salvation! At Antioch they said, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1b). Paul and Barnabas withstood them, and the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, inspired by the Holy Spirit, rebuked the Judaizers (Acts 15:24) while extending the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas (Galatians 2:9). A sinner becomes a new creature, not upon being circumcised, but upon obeying the gospel. "Or do you now know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in **newness of life**" (Romans 6:3-4). "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Next, the Judaizers identified with national Israel, but Paul and other faithful Christians identified with spiritual Israel (Galatians 6:16, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them and upon the Israel of God"). "This rule" goes back to the previous sentence which said what mattered was not circumcision but being a new creature. Under Mosaic Law,

every male Israelite had to be circumcised (Leviticus 12:3). But, as Paul wrote elsewhere, "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart" (Romans 2:28-29a). Fleshly circumcision began in Genesis 17:9-14 as a sign of God's covenant with Abraham. But only those who imitated Abraham's obedient faith would be saved. In this New Testament era, the "Israel of God" consists of those who believe and obey Christ's gospel. "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

Fifth, following up on the previous point, the Judaizers emphasized the mark of circumcision; but Paul emphasized the marks of the Lord Jesus (Galatians 6:17). As pointed out previously, fleshly circumcision was a visible mark of membership in the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, it is irrelevant. "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters" (1 Corinthians 7:19). Obviously Paul did not consider circumcision to be a command of God under the New Covenant. By contrast, he bore the marks of the Lord Jesus. "From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned" (2 Corinthians 11:24-25a). Feature the pain! Imagine the scars! Both the Judaizers themselves and their unbelieving Jewish brethren had instigated and administered much of this abuse. No wonder he wrote, "From now on let no one trouble me"! He had endured more than enough of their ungodliness and hypocrisy. No one had any right to question his loyalty.

Finally, the Judaizers focused on the flesh and the Law; Paul and other faithful Christians focused on the Spirit and on grace. "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen" (6:18). As discussed in lesson #7, the Law was geared primarily toward matters of the flesh (diet, ritual cleanness, etc.). The New Covenant shifts the focus toward the inner person (spirit). The Judaizers in Galatia and elsewhere failed to make the transition. Though Paul was disappointed in the Galatians, he still recognized them as brethren, loved them, and held out hope for them. His mention of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" would remind them of their need to follow Jesus rather than Moses and Jewish traditions.

Paul wrote the book of Galatians to guard the gospel of grace. Like Paul, let us seek to please God, regardless of the approval of men or lack thereof. Let our boast be in the cross! Let us emphasize the need to become new creatures through obedience to the gospel. The Lord will then add the saved to His church (Acts 2:47), which is the Israel of God.