

This completes Paul's rebuke of the Judaizers. He first carefully showed how they were doctrinally in error, and with that solid background brings out that they fell into this error because of their cowardliness and hypocrisy.

B. Final Reminder of God's Gracious Salvation. (verses 14,15)

Paul's only boasting was in the Cross of Jesus Christ. By Cross, here is meant the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. The Cross is the greatest expression of God's love and grace. It is the focal point of history and of God's plan of redemption. Salvation comes only to those who stand before a Holy God, empty-handed, humbled and pleading only the merits of the crucified Son of God.

There are two other crucifixions mentioned in these verses. Paul says that he was crucified unto the world and the world unto him. Paul again identifies himself with Christ on the cross as he did in Chapter 2, verse 20. He says in effect: "By means of the cross of Jesus Christ the world died to me and I died to the world." In this position, carnal ordinances have no place. It does not matter whether a person is circumcised or uncircumcised. What matters is that Christ has made us to be new creatures. Paul thus completes the identity with Christ in His atoning work. We not only died with Him, but also are risen with Him to newness of life: (See also II Cor. 5:17; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10 and Romans 6:4-12.)

Any system of salvation by works is an attempt to improve man in his fallen, sinful condition. Every attempt at improvement falls short. What is needed is a complete change, a new creation. This is only available through the atoning work of Christ and is all of God's grace.

C. Final Exhortation to Live the Christian Life. (verse 16)

1. "As many as walk according to this rule"
"Rule" refers to a measuring rod used to verify the exact length or size of an object. This is the same word translated "canon" which refers to Scripture as the "only infallible rule of faith and practice." Here Paul refers to the rule set down in verse 15. The key to victory and peace in the Christian life is realizing our identity with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. We are dead to the world and alive unto Him.
2. "The Israel of God"
This does not only refer to Jewish Christians, but to all who are the true spiritual seed of Abraham.

D. Final Testimony to Paul's Apostolic Authority. (verse 17)

1. "Let no man trouble me"
Paul's authority should no longer be questioned. His words are saying, "Let no man question my authority as a spokesman for Jesus Christ."
2. "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"
He bears the stamp of his authority in his body. Here we see a vivid contrast between the apostle and the cowardly Judaizers. They were willing to compromise the Gospel in order to escape suffering. Paul had been true to Jesus Christ and had not avoided the offense of the Cross. The scars on his body witnessed to this fact.

There was a custom in that day of branding slaves or soldiers with the name of their master. It may be that Paul is saying that his scars were the brand that showed him to be a true bondsman of Jesus Christ.

Benediction

"Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, Amen." (vs18)

- Paul ends this "Reformation" epistle with a tender reference to the Galatians as his "brethren."
- The theme of the whole epistle and of the life of its writer is bound up in the words, "the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."