

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Part Sixteen

VII. Conclusion and Benediction (6:11-18)

Introduction

It is clear that the Apostle Paul begins his concluding remarks with verse 11. However, the exact meaning of this verse is rather difficult to ascertain. There are several possibilities:

- "large letter" may refer to the size of the epistle. This was the view of the translators of the Authorized Version.

- Lightfoot translates this verse, "Look you in what large letters I write with mine own hand." In Paul's day letters were often written in all capital letters, e.g., ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ. Paul evidently wrote in capital letters of abnormal size. He may have done so for emphasis, or because of some disability such as near-sightedness or a wounded hand. Paul had been badly beaten a number of times. He refers to the scars which he bore in his body in verse 17. Perhaps one of these scars was a hand so disabled so as to prevent him from writing normally.

Another related problem is whether this verse means that Paul wrote the whole epistle or just the last eight verses with his own hand. The latter is more probable. It was Paul's habit to employ an amanuensis (copyist or stenographer) who would copy down exactly what the apostle said. But since forgery was common in that day Paul would always add a parting word in his own hand to assure the genuineness of the letter. (See also II Thess. 2:2; 3:17,18; I Corinthians 16:21-24; Colossians 4:18, and Romans 16:25-27.)

Perhaps it was with great difficulty that Paul penned these last emotion-filled words. In them he draws together the arguments and exhortations of the epistle.

A. Final Warning Against the Judaizers.

1. Their wrong motives (verse 12)

a. they wanted to please men

"make a fair shew in the flesh" - in this regard the Judaizers were like the Pharisees: they had forgotten that Christianity is a religion of the heart and not simply an outward display of ordinances and ceremonies. The men that they were most interested in pleasing were the Jews, for the reason that:

b. they wanted to avoid suffering

"only lest they should suffer persecution" - the cross was an offense to the unconverted Jew. It was because Paul preached that salvation was only through the sacrificial death of Christ that the Jews persecuted him. The Judaizers wanted to avoid this suffering and tried to soften the offense of the cross by practicing circumcision.

During the Japanese occupation of Korea the Christians were ordered to bow to the Shinto shrines or suffer the consequences. Some Christians took the attitude that they could capitulate in order to avoid the suffering and death. This had a devastating effect on the church. Certainly if in the past Christians had compromised their doctrine or behaviour every time there was a threat of persecution, there would be no Christian church today.

2. Their hypocrisy (verse 13)

a. "neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law"

The term 'hypocrite' comes from a Greek word which meant a "stage player," an actor who would put on a mask and play the part of someone he was not. The word is not used here in this verse, but the people Paul describes certainly fit the term. They were play-acting, pretending to be like the Jews on the one hand, and professing Christ on the other hand. The last part of the verse indicates that the Galatian Christians were being used as stage props in their little drama.