

GALATIANS 6

COMMENTARY

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.

6:1 While there is a chapter break between Galatians 5 and 6, there is certainly no break in the subject matter that Paul is addressing, as he simply continues his thoughts regarding the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23), and further emphasizes what it means for Messiah followers to live in the Spirit (5:25). Paul focuses on some of the key characteristics that are to be present in God’s community, which are to be evident in the life of His people regardless of circumcision status (cf. v. 15). Paul details some of the significant elements of what it means to serve God’s people, indeed indicating that no single person can make it alone.

Much of what is said in Paul’s closing words in ch. 6 concern the Body of Messiah as a whole, and not just single individuals. Such is the case when Paul instructs the Galatians, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted” (ESV). Paul emphasizes that if one is engulfed by sinful behavior, which Richard N. Longenecker classifies as probably relating to “pride, aloofness and conceit,”¹ than a person should be restored in gentleness.

Many have thought that when Paul refers to “anyone caught in a trespass,” he is actually referring to someone *being caught* committing a sin. Certainly, this only intensifies the fact that mature members of God’s community are to desire restoration of the sinner in an appropriate manner. The verb *katartizō* (καταρτίζω) can mean “to adjust or put in order again, restore,” and “N.T.:—metaph. to restore to a right mind” (LS),² used for mending nets (Mark 1:19) or repairing factions (1 Corinthians 1:10).

The need to mend problems in the assembly, “in a spirit of gentleness,” is evidence that people are demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit. This would be in contrast to those in a community whose members might demand an oath for entrees “to keep the whole Law” (5:3), and then are likely to meticulously observe the conduct of the proselyte who has entered in from the outside. While some might use such a contrast to say that the Torah is unimportant for Believers’ conduct, note that those who are to be gentle are also described as “spiritual” (Grk. *pneumatikos*, πνευματικός)—something that the Torah is as well (Romans 7:14). One

¹ Longenecker, 274.

² LS, 414.

guided by God's Spirit will carefully and properly see that those who commit sin are restored to Him, and to other Believers, in a way that concurs with a Torah ethic tempered by the love demonstrated by Yeshua. Parallels can be noted between v. 1 and other passages in the Apostolic Scriptures:

"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother" (Matthew 18:15).

"If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained" (John 20:23).

"Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the [assembly] and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him" (James 5:14-15).

Unfortunately, the fact that the Torah must be used as a standard, for judging sin (cf. 1 John 3:4), leads some commentators, such as Hans Dieter Betz, to insist instead, "the Galatians considered introducing the Torah. When we look at Paul's recommendation...he suggests a way of dealing with the offense, which does not require the introduction of the law at all."³ In v. 2, however, Paul tells the Galatians that by bearing each other's burdens they will "fulfill the law of Messiah." Is this something different from the Torah itself, or is it only the command to love others?

2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Messiah.

6:2 V. 2, obviously very short, is actually one of the most controversial pieces of Paul's entire letter to the Galatians for today's Christians *and* Messianic Believers. Paul implores the Galatians, "Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ" (NLT). No one should disagree with how the central focus of this is love for neighbor (5:14). There are, to be sure, echoes here of Paul's later words regarding mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21) and making another's needs more important (Philippians 2:3-4).

Is *ton nomon tou Christou* (τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ) something totally different and divorced from the Torah?⁴ This is a difficult concept for many examiners to grapple with. Betz himself indicates, this "concept...is strange, since it occurs only here and seems to advocate what Paul has repeatedly rejected in his letter—that the Christian is obliged to do the Law."⁵ And indeed, some of the commentators with whom we have engaged throughout our study of Galatians do assert that "the Law of Christ" is something widely different than the Torah or

³ Betz, 286.

⁴ Both the Salkinson-Ginsberg and UBSHNT versions render *ton nomon tou Christou* as *Torah haMashiach* (תּוֹרַת הַמָּשִׁיחַ).

⁵ Betz, 299.

Law of Moses. (And it is certainly very easy for people who deny Mosaic origins of the Torah to accept the view that “the Law of Christ” and Law of Moses are totally separate and different.)

To assert that “the Law of Christ” is somehow related to or involving the Torah, would certainly give continued validity to the Law of Moses in the life of Believers today. There are, in fact, divisions among contemporary Christian commentators, between those who think that “the Law of Christ” is something contrary to or different than the Mosaic Torah, *versus* those who think that “the Law of Christ” is related to, or at least somehow involves, the Mosaic Torah:

THE “LAW OF MESSIAH”	
CONTRARY TO/DIFFERENT THAN THE TORAH OF MOSES	RELATED TO/INVOLVING THE TORAH OF MOSES
<p>“[T]he law of Christ” must have relevance to what the Judaizers were proposingPaul is not setting forth Jesus as a new Moses. Nor does he view Jesus’ teachings as ethical prescriptions to be carried out in rabbinic fashion.⁶ Richard N. Longenecker</p>	<p>Almost certainly Paul refers in this shorthand way to the Jesus-tradition as indicating how Jesus interpreted the law in his teaching and actions....the fact that Paul does not call for an abandonment of the law, but retains it (reinterpreted through Christ) as a norm for ethical behaviour and relationships among Christians, is an important reminder that Paul did not see Christianity as constituting a complete break with the religion of Israel, but as its mature form.⁷ James D.G. Dunn</p>
<p>...by ‘the Law of Christ’, Paul does not mean Christ’s interpretation of the still binding Mosaic Law, nor even the Torah of the Messiah in some general sense not based in the actual experience of Jesus, including his death on the cross. The Apostle...is...perfectly capable of speaking of two different Laws.⁸ Ben Witherington III</p>	<p>The Law of <i>Christ</i> is the Law as Christ selflessly fulfilled it in his life and death, when he gave himself for others by embracing the love commandment.⁹ Frank J. Matera</p>
	<p>Students of the letter have long and vigorously contested the meaning of the phrase “the law of Christ” in 6:2. Some see in this explanation a</p>

⁶ Longenecker, pp 275, 276.

⁷ Dunn, *Galatians*, pp 322, 323.

⁸ Witherington, 424.

⁹ Matera, in *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*, 2088.

	<p>reference to a new law that the Messiah would institute, but little evidence either in Paul's letters or elsewhere in the NT supports such a thesis...If 5:14 has in view Christ's own fulfillment of the law, then the "law of Christ" may be the law as Christ has taken it captive by his own loving obedience to God's will.¹⁰ Beverly R. Gaventa</p>
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F.F. Bruce's remarks sit somewhere in between what we see in the above chart, as he asserts, "It may be that Paul speaks of the law of Christ here as a contrast to the law which his converts were being urged to accept: the law of Christ is a 'law' of quite a different kind, not enforceable by legal sanctions."¹¹ From this point of view, the "Torah" as thrust upon the Galatians by the Judaizers/Influencers had a different focus (i.e., circumcision) than that of love, something clearly epitomized in the teachings and actions of Yeshua, principally in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chs. 5-7).

Evangelical Christians today who think that "the Law of Christ" may be different from the Torah of Moses, tend to look at the content of the Sermon on the Mount as constituting *ton nomon tou Christou*. While Messianics cannot totally agree with this assertion, we should not disagree with the claim that "these commandments" (Matthew 5:19) which are discussed and certainly highlighted by our Lord in this teaching, **do have a high priority for us today** (albeit they are definitely concepts deeply rooted in the Torah). If fully considered, the "law of Christ," that many Christians look to (Matthew chs. 5-7), is actually something predicated on the continued validity and relevance of Moses' Teaching!¹²

Many commentators feel that Paul is appropriating the Influencers' language that is very Torah centric, and then turns it up on its head, as he is proposing that a "new law" has emerged. Ironically and somewhat paradoxically, when we examine the previous chart, there are more liberal commentators who actually hold to "the Law of Christ" being *related* to the Mosaic Torah, and more conservative commentators who hold to it being *different* than the Mosaic Torah. Clearly, the motives of the more liberal commentators are not to offend Judaism. But what of the motives of the evangelical commentators? Are they not somewhat disturbing, especially as the problems today's evangelicals suffer from have largely come about because of casting aside the Law as relevant instruction for redeemed Believers?

Such a view, while easily classified as being antinomian—as God's commandments are often not discussed in today's contemporary Christianity—is perhaps better classified as neonomian. Walter C. Kaiser considers this to be "the doctrine that a new law, opposed in

¹⁰ Gaventa, in *ECB*, 1383.

¹¹ Bruce, *Galatians*, 261.

¹² For a further discussion, consult the author's exegesis paper on Matthew 5:17-19, "Has the Law Been Fulfilled?"

some respects to the old law is a law of principles rather than precepts, especially the law of love and faith and is therefore higher than the former.”¹³ The challenge of such a neonomian view—asserting that only love of God and neighbor, and faith in God, are what are important today for Believers—is that without a grounding in God’s Torah *very few* may actually know how to demonstrate His love and the proper actions of faith. Stripped from a Torah foundation, concepts such as “love” and “faith” could possibly be imbued with ideas that run contrary to the New Covenant.

Paul speaks of “the law of Messiah” in the context of the Galatian Believers serving one another. As he will later explain to the Romans,

“Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves. Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Messiah did not please Himself; but as it is written, “THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME [Psalm 69:9]” (Romans 15:1-3).

It is absolutely true that those who serve one another (5:13) must bear a heavy burden no different than Yeshua. Witherington is right to conclude, “To bear one another’s burdens was a fulfillment of the Law of Christ because it amounted to taking up one’s cross and following the pattern of Christ’s life and also heeding his teachings about self-sacrificial behavior.”¹⁴ Service to the Body of Messiah is by no means an easy thing—but is this service something completely and totally different from what is seen in the Torah and Tanach? Do we not see important examples of those who bore heavy burdens in the Scriptures, from the Patriarchs to Moses to David to the Prophets? Have not all of those who have entered into covenant relationship with God—and especially with *God knowing them* as His own—had to bear some kind of burden of service?

The “Law of Messiah” is rightly considered to be *Torah max*. The CJB rightly paraphrases v. 2 with “the *Torah’s* true meaning, which the Messiah upholds.” For Messianics today, bearing one another’s burdens and loving one another are to be the central focus of our Torah observance—especially in view of a fallen world which needs to see the good news of Yeshua in action (cf. Deuteronomy 4:6). Performing these critical actions finds its lead in the Gospels via the ministry of Yeshua, just as He says, “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:30).

Many Christian figures of the past (i.e., John Wesley, Adam Clarke, Albert Barnes, et. al.) have simply interpreted “the Law of Christ” as being synonymous with “the law of love.” Yet, such Christians of the past had a much higher regard for the Torah—even if they just thought all that was necessary to be followed was the “moral law” of God—which is significantly lacking among too many today. Leviticus 19:18 does clearly command, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.” Yeshua reemphasizes in John 13:34, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” The command to love one’s neighbor was likely considered “new” by many

¹³ Kaiser, 146, fn#17.

¹⁴ Witherington, pp 425-426.

people not because the command was new, but because it may have fallen out of use by far too many people in His day.¹⁵

What we certainly see in the ministry of Yeshua the Messiah, and consequently the ministry of Apostles such as Paul, is a reorientation of priorities in the Torah. Much of that reorientation occurred via emphases such as love, often regarded First Century (mis)handling or (mis)interpretations of the Torah, and not the Torah's own prioritization as the *Shema* certainly commanded Ancient Israel to love the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:5).

3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 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. 5 For each one will bear his own load.

6:3 According to Paul, a key element of observing the Torah via the example of Messiah Yeshua is to be **self-critical**. He tells the Galatians, "For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves" (NRSV). This is undoubtedly because the burden of proof for legitimately following the Torah by Yeshua's example is not found in the circumcision of the Influencers, but rather in bearing one another's burdens, and serving God's community. As the NLT paraphrases v. 3, "If you think you are too important to help someone in need, you are only fooling yourself. You are really a nobody." In order to be a mature, spiritual member of the Body of Messiah, a willingness to recognize one's faults will be in order. Paul will tell the Corinthians,

"Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Yeshua the Messiah is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

6:4 Paul further instructs the Galatians, *to de ergon heautou dokimazetō* (τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμαζέτω), "let each one test his own work" (ESV). In being-self critical, a mature Believer is to see whether or not he or she is evidencing the fruit of the Spirit and the proper obedience that accompanies a confession of faith in Yeshua. The result of such personal testing is that one will have "reason to boast...in himself alone and not in his neighbor" (ESV). This is an important statement by Paul, because later in v. 13 he says that the Judaizers/Influencers "desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh." Ironically perhaps, Paul tells the Galatians to find the proper actions of faith that they themselves can "boast" about, because those leading them astray *have no such actions* present in their lives. All they can "boast" about is what other people have done because of them. 1 Peter 1:7 astutely says, "the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is

¹⁵ The term *kainos* (καινός), appearing in John 13:34, can "**pert. to being not previously present, unknown, strange, remarkable**" (BDAG, 496) or simply "*unknown, unheard of*" (CGEDNT, 90). Yeshua's reference to *entolēn kainēn* (Ἐντολῆν καινῆν) or "a new commandment" could very easily relate to how *properly embodying* the Torah command to love had gone out of favor.

perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah.”

6:5 There is an emphasis on personal responsibility seen in v. 5, where Paul says “For each one will bear his own load.” Many have thought this to be a reference to eschatological judgment (cf. Romans 14:10, 12; 2 Corinthians 5:10), in that each member of the Galatian community, whether those who have followed Paul, or those who have followed the Judaizers/Influencers, will have to answer for the choices that they have made. Of course, undeniable in Paul’s words is the need for one’s personal responsibility as a member of the faith community, *to serve the community in the here and now*. Those, who can learn to properly serve and bear one another’s burdens (v. 2), will only have good things to answer for in eternity. In weighing Paul’s statements throughout ch. 6, as he shifts between individual and corporate responsibility—it is clear that God’s corporate people can only be restored by the restoration of individuals. Once redeemed, a born again Believer makes up a larger assembly that is to work together to accomplish the aims of the gospel.

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

6:6 V. 6 includes an admonition by Paul for the Galatians to truly help those who teach them. He says, “Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor” (NIV). Paul tells the Galatians, without saying so directly, that “I need your financial support.” Bruce validly notes, “he made it his personal policy both by way of example to his converts not to live at the expense of others...he had a naturally independent spirit in this regard: it embarrasses him even to express gratitude for a gift of money from Philippi, while he deeply appreciates the loving thought which prompted it (Phil. 4:10-20).”¹⁶ And indeed, with all of the controversy that had erupted in Galatia, some could have easily overlooked the fact that Paul had material needs. Paul himself does attest that the Galatians had been quite generous with him when he visited the first time (4:15).

Donald K. Campbell further explains, “This concept of voluntary giving to provide for the Lord’s servants was revolutionary since Jews were taxed for the support of their priests and Gentiles paid fees, made vows, etc., to sustain their religions.”¹⁷ Indeed, part of observing the “Torah of Messiah” (v. 2) is going beyond some of the demands of the Mosaic Torah, and helping others in need when it is not specifically required or specified. Paul instructing the Galatians to share their resources is not akin to “selling the gospel,” but rather to legitimately support those who are called to the full time service of the Lord. It is incumbent upon the students of a teacher to support him financially. And, one can support in other ways—via “good things (Grk. *pasin agathois*, πᾶσιν ἀγαθοῖς)—not exclusively limited to financial resources.

¹⁶ Bruce, *Galatians*, 263.

¹⁷ Campbell, in *BKCNT*, 610.

It is also probably not emphasized enough what Paul is actually referring to when he makes reference to “the word” in v. 6. Many commentators have thought that this is only a reference to the gospel or good news, and while this certainly cannot be discounted, do note that v. 6 specifically refers to *teachers*. Paul makes a direct reference to those who exposit from God’s Word, the Scriptures, to the Galatians. Tim Hegg indicates, “he means the Scriptures as contained in the Tanach, as well as the oral teachings of Yeshua and the Apostles”¹⁸ available at the time. While many consider Paul’s letter to the Galatians to cast aside the relevance of the Tanach or Old Testament, v. 6 actually emphasizes its importance. If the Galatians were not instructed from the Scriptures of Israel, how would they know about figures such as Abraham,¹⁹ Hagar,²⁰ or Isaac,²¹ *all mentioned by name*, much less all of the other Tanach individuals Paul refers to by implication? It is clear that too many have ***underemphasized*** the role that the Tanach actually played in molding the spiritual character of the Galatian Believers.

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

6:7 As he gives his Galatian friends some final spiritual words, Paul employs a metaphor drawn from a common agricultural image: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.” Some commentators have actually referred to vs. 7-9 as the “agriculture of the Spirit,”²² as Paul’s instruction gives readers important clues on how Believers are to see the fruit of the Spirit cultivated in their lives. It is notable that there were regulations in the Torah regarding reaping crops (Leviticus 19:9; 23:10; 25:11; Deuteronomy 16:9), and also important admonitions throughout the Tanach on how a person’s deeds produce their own harvest:

“According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it” (Job 4:8).

“He who sows iniquity will reap vanity, and the rod of his fury will perish” (Proverbs 22:8).

“For they sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; it yields no grain. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up; they are now among the nations like a vessel in which no one delights” (Hosea 8:7-8).

¹⁸ Hegg, *Galatians*, 217.

¹⁹ Galatians 3:6ff, 14, 16, 18; 4:22.

²⁰ Galatians 4:24f.

²¹ Galatians 4:28.

²² Cf. Dunnam, 126.

“Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD until He comes to rain righteousness on you” (Hosea 10:12).

The Galatian Believers are told by Paul that they were not to be deceived, because if anyone is in the process of committing sin, God will not be “mocked.” The verb *muktērízō* (μυκτηρίζω) more specifically means, “to turn up the nose or sneer at” (LS).²³ The reason God is ultimately not mocked is because one’s own sinful activities will catch up in the end, if no repentance from such sin takes place.

6:8 Paul explains that this will take place, “because the one who sows to his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit” (HCSB). The key is that if one is following the example of Yeshua, empowered by God’s love, then one sowing to the Spirit will reap not only eternity with Him—but great rewards in that eternity!

Some readers have actually thought that a person sowing to his “sinful nature” (NIV) is a reference to living a life of Torah obedience. Certainly, obeying God’s commandments—especially via the example of the Messiah (v. 2)—is a *good thing*. Yet, living a life of rote Torah observance can be “fleshly” when the motives for such observance are not a love for God or wanting to live a sanctified life. In these cases, a life of Torah “obedience” can be one motivated by flesh—but it has everything to do *with the individual*, as opposed to God’s holy commandments.

It is very true that in today’s Messianic community we do encounter people who practice “Torah observance” through the power of the flesh. Some people “follow Torah” with Messiah-devoid intentions. How many do we encounter today who are Torah obedient to emulate Yeshua, and obey God’s commandments as a natural, Spirit-led outworking of their faith? How many people truly experience spiritual fulfillment, versus people who use “Torah observance” as a springboard for getting into other things that they have no business getting into? These are questions that we are going to be internally dealing with until the Messiah returns, and why heeding the message of Paul in Galatians is so important.

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

6:9 According to Paul, one who is guided by God’s Spirit need not think that bearing another’s burden (v. 2) or sowing to the Spirit is totally useless. He encourages the Galatians, “don’t get tired of doing what is good. Don’t get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time” (NLT). Instantaneous change does not occur either in the life of an individual, or certainly in the life of God’s corporate people. Some of the Galatians, especially after hearing Paul’s message to them and being convicted, were

²³ LS, 522.

undoubtedly worried that they were not up to the task to returning to a stable faith in Yeshua. Paul, however, does seem to indicate that the Galatians' problems will not be over anytime soon, and for those faithful to the Lord to not lose sight of the good that they have performed (cf. 3:3-5; 4:15). Plowing God's Word into a person's life, and serving God's community, are life-long processes.

As one grows properly in faith, at the *kairos* (καίρος) moment, God's harvest to reap will come. The term *kairos* could be rendered as "right time." It is the common Septuagint equivalent "for Heb. 'ēt [עֵת] and *mô'ēd* [מוֹעֵד]...[and] first means 'decisive point in time,' but with more stress on divine appointment than ethical demand" (*TDNT*).²⁴ The poor Galatians, utterly confused by the Influencers, and now being set back on the right path by Paul, had to be reminded that all good things come in God's proper timing. This was a true word for them, and even we have to be reminded that things occur "in due season" (ESV)—as instant results often do not ensure a bountiful harvest. One cannot try to rush the harvest of God, and must let His produce grow at a natural pace. The Judaizers/Influencers in Galatia, though, tried to push things.

6:10 One of the ways to ensure that Believers reap God's blessings is to remember, as Paul instructs the Galatians, "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." Paul says that "work[ing] for the good of all" (NRSV, HCSB), *pros pantas* (πρὸς πάντας), was the manner by which the Galatians would be able to reap the Lord's harvest. This word ran contrary to the agenda of Paul's opponents, who would have likely insisted that doing good *only* to Jewish Believers and those circumcised as proselytes would have been necessary. Paul completely subverts this and universalizes the agenda of doing good. For although God had called Ancient Israel as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6), He would first assert that "all the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5).

Of course, Paul clearly does tell the Galatians that they were to do good *pros tous oikeious tēs pisteōs* (πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως), "unto those of the household of the faith" (YLT). In all likelihood, this is a specific admonition to help the poorer members of the faith community. A few commentators have even thought that this is a reference to Paul insisting that in spite of the Influencers claiming the support of the Jerusalem assembly, the Galatians nevertheless have a responsibility to support Jerusalem.²⁵ If indeed true, this would be an indication that Paul did not want the Galatians and the Jerusalem leaders to be at odds.

11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

6:11 In v. 11, it is evident that from this point onward that Paul is somehow writing the letter himself, *tē emē cheiri* (τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ) or "with my own hand." Up until here, he has likely employed a scribe to write down his letter, as using an amanuensis for secretarial work was

²⁴ G. Dellling, "kairós," in *TDNT*, 389.

²⁵ Cf. Mikolaski, in *NBCR*, 1104.

quite common in ancient times, and is not at all uncommon in the Pauline Epistles (cf. Romans 16:22; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17).

There is often not agreement among commentators as to what Paul means when he tells the Galatians, *idete pēlikois humin grammasin egrapsa* (ἴδετε πηλίκοις ὑμῖν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα). What does he mean when he says that he writes with “large letters”? Some have attributed this to poor eyesight on the part of Paul, requiring him to write large letters and that he had poor handwriting. Others have suggested, though, that “large letters” should be viewed as Paul writing bold statements.

The key more than anything else is to remember that at the very beginning of the epistle, Paul must vigorously defend his apostleship (1:1, 11-12, 15). Paul thought it important enough to actually write down some of his own letter with his own hand, authenticating its message *from him*. It is not impossible to assume that when he had visited Galatia previously, that the Galatians knew he had poor penmanship.

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 Messiah. 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.

6:12 The words that Paul wanted to express with his own handwriting directly pertained to the motives of the Judaizers/Influencers who had been disrupting the Galatian assemblies. He says, “Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ” (NIV). He employs the verb *euprosōpeō* (εὐπροσωπέω), “to have a good appearance” or “to stand well with others” (TDNT),²⁶ perhaps concurrent with ancient dramas when an actor would put on a mask. The reason the Influencers were compelling the Galatians, to go through ritual proselyte circumcision, was so that they could play a role, to avoid some kind of “persecution.”

The Judaizers/Influencers were somehow being persecuted themselves, likely because of their connections to the Synagogue and accusations of them bringing in uncircumcised people. The CJB paraphrases v. 12 with, “they are doing it to escape persecution for preaching about the Messiah’s execution-stake,” as they are attested to proclaiming some kind of “gospel” (1:6-7) specifically to “please people” (1:10, NRSV). Longenecker asserts, “What the Judaizers wanted, as Paul reads their motives, was to lay the religious compulsion of circumcision on Gentile believers in Galatia—thereby bringing Gentile Christians within the orbit of the Jewish nation on a proselyte basis—and so to relieve themselves and Jewish Christendom generally from persecution at the hands of fellow nonbelieving Jews.”²⁷ Others are more inclined to think that by the non-Jewish Believers going through proselyte

²⁶ E. Lohse, “*euprosōpēō*,” in TDNT, 952.

²⁷ Longenecker, 291.