

Notes on the Greek New Testament Week 66 – Galatians 5:16-6:18

Day 326: Galatians 5:16-21

Verse 16

Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε.

περιπατεω walk, walk about, live

Frequently used by Paul and John in the sense, 'live' – a Hebrewism. The present imperative implies keep on doing what you are already doing.

ἐπιθυμία, ας f desire, longing, lust, passion

τελέσητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl τελεω complete, finish, fulfill, carry out

Verse 17

ἢ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός· ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιήτε.

ἐπιθυμεω long for, desire, lust after
κατα prep with i) acc according to; ii) gen against, throughout

ἀντικειμαι oppose, be against

"Here in v 17 Paul gives a precis of his basic soteriological anthropology, which underlies not only what he has said in v 16 but also his whole understanding of humanity before God since 'sin entered the world' (cf. Rom 5:12): 'the flesh' and 'the Spirit' are diametrically opposed to one another, with the result that one cannot do what he or she knows to be right in 'the flesh' (i.e., when living only humanly according to one's own guidance and the direction of whatever is simply human) but only when 'in the Spirit' (i.e., when living in the new reality of being 'in Christ' and directed by God's Spirit)." Longenecker
The dualism is neither cosmological nor anthropological, it is ethical.

ἐὰν see v.10

θελω wish, will

"In effect, Gal 5:17 sets out in rudimentary fashion what is later spoken of more fully in Rom 7:14-25, with both passages expressing the plight of humanity 'of itself' (cf. αὐτός ἐγω, 'I of myself' or 'dependent on my own resources,' of Rom 7:25)." Longenecker

Verse 18

εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον.

"The phrase ὑπο νομον ('under the law') is undoubtedly to be read, as elsewhere throughout the Galatian letter (e.g., 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21), as referring to the nomistic lifestyle advocated by the Judaisers, against which Paul argued and exhorted from 2:15 through 5:12... The antidote to license in the Christian life is not laws, as the Judaisers argued, but openness to the Spirit and being guided by the Spirit. For being 'in Christ' means neither nomism nor libertinism, but a new quality of life based in and directed by the Spirit." Longenecker
"Life by the Spirit constitutes for the apostles a third way of life distinct both on the one hand from legalism and on the other from that which is characterised by a yielding to the impulses of the flesh. It is by no means a middle course between them but a highway above them both, a life of freedom from statutes, of faith and love." Burton

Verses 19-26

Catalogues of virtues and vices were common in Paul's day though Paul may also be influenced by Jewish 'two ways' teaching.

Verse 19

φανερά δὲ ἐστὶν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἐστιν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια,

φανερος, α, ον known, evident, plain, visible

ἅτινά pronoun, n nom & acc pl ὅστις

There are some additions to this list. A number of MSS, followed by the TR, add μοιχεία at the head of the list of vices.

πορνεία, ας f sexual immorality

In the Greek world of the NT sexual immorality was not considered a serious fault – it was a commonplace.

ἀκαθαρσία, ας f impurity, immorality, uncleanness

ἀσελγεία, ας f sensuality, vice

Verse 20

εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις,

εἰδωλολατρία, ας f idol worship, idolatry

"In Paul's usage, not only is the worship of an image or the god represented by an image idolatry, but also eating food that had idolatrous associations (1 Cor 10:7, 14) and being covetous or greedy (Clo 3:5)."

Longenecker

φαρμακεια, ας f **sorcery, witchcraft**
 έχθρα, ας f **enmity, hostility, hatred**

Perhaps particularly hostilely towards God (cf. Rom 8:7; Eph 2:14; Jas 4:4).

έρις, ιδος f **strife, rivalry**
 ζηλος, ου m, and ους n **jealousy, envy**

TR reads έρεις, ζηλοι. "The textual tradition shows that many scribes attempted to make the list uniform by recasting the singulars into plurals, but external attestation is not strong enough to warrant our acceptance."

Longenecker

θυμος, ου m **anger, rage, fury**
 έριθεια, ας f **selfishness, selfish ambition, self-seeking**

διχοστασια, ας f **division, dissension**
 αίρεσις, εως f **religious party, faction, false teaching**

Verse 21

φθόνου, μέθαι, κώμοι, καί τὰ ὅμοια
 τούτοις, ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν καθὼς προείπον
 ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν
 θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν.

φθονος, ου m **envy, jealousy, spite**

A large number of MSS include φονου (murders) after φθονου. Metzger writes in the Textual Commentary on the UBS text, "Although the shorter reading may have originated in accidental omission due to homoeteleuton, a majority of the Committee, impressed by the age and quality of the witnesses supporting φθονου, was inclined to think that φονου was added by copyists who recollected Rom 1:29."

μεθη, ης f **drunkenness**
 κωμος, ου m **orgy, revelry, carousing**
 ὁμοιος, α, ον **like, of the same kind as**

Suggests that the list is intended to provide a number of examples; it is not intended to be comprehensive.

προλέγω say beforehand, warn in advance

τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative pronoun and adjective such, of such kind, similar, like

πρασσω practice, do

κληρονομεω receive, gain possession of, inherit

Longenecker says, "The language of the statement, 'Those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God,' seems not quite Pauline at a number of points... So what we probably have here is a ὅτι *recitativum* used to introduce a portion of the catechetical instruction of the early church given by Paul to his converts when he was with them and now repeated by way of warning, the purpose being, of course, that they might again realise the seriousness of allowing their freedom in Christ to degenerate into only 'an opportunity for the flesh' (cf. 5:13b)."

Day 327: Galatians 5:22-26

Verse 22

Ο δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἀγάπη, χαρά, εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία, χρηστότης, ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις,

καρπος, ου m **fruit, harvest, outcome**

Note the singular, καρπος – one fruit with many evidences. The fact that the list begins with 'love' highlights the unity of the fruit, for Paul has stressed in 5:14 that love is the source of all Christian virtues (cf. 5:6).

"Perhaps also the last of the items on the list, that is, ἐγκρατεια ('self-control'), should be seen as being emphasised as well, for the final position in a Greek structure is also where one would expect to find anything being stressed. And 'self-control,' which became by the time of Paul a central virtue in Hellenistic ethics, certainly makes an important, positive contrast to the vices of 'drunkenness' and 'orgies' that conclude the catalogue of vv 19-21."

Longenecker

χαρα "'In the Holy Spirit' joy is associated with 'righteousness,' 'peace' and hope (cf. Rom 14:17; 15:13, 32-33) and not just with pleasant circumstances." Longenecker

είρηνη, ης f **peace**

Reflects the OT understanding of Shalom but now with its focus in the work of Christ which has brought peace with God and has made peace a hallmark of the Christian life in all its relationships.

μακροθυμια, ας f **longsuffering, patience**

"Most commonly ... it occurs in the NT in the sense of patient endurance of wrong without anger or taking vengeance (so 2 Cor 6:6; Eph 4:2; Col 1:11; 3:12; 2 Tim 3:10; 4:2; Heb 6:12; Jas 5:10), with Paul urging his readers to live out their faith in terms of μακροθυμία toward one another and toward all people (so Eph 4:2; Col 1:11; 3:12; cf. also the verb μακροθυμῶ of 1 Thess 5:14)." Longenecker

χρηστοτης, ητος f kindness, goodness, mercy

ἀγαθωσυνη, ης f goodness

"πιστις, though used repeatedly elsewhere in Galatians to signify a person's response of trust regarding God's salvation provided in Christ Jesus (cf. 2:20; 3:6ff.; 5:6), here undoubtedly means the ethical virtue of 'faithfulness.'" Longenecker

Verse 23

πρα της, ἐγκράτεια· κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος.

πραυτης, ητος f gentleness, humility
ἐγκρατεια, ας f self-control

"The position of the word here corresponding to that of μεθη, κωμοι in the list of the works of the flesh, suggests a special reference in this case to control of the appetite for drink and of the consequent tendency to unrestrained and immodest hilarity. But this parallelism does not warrant the conclusion that the apostle had exclusive reference to this form of self-control." Burton

τοιουτων see v.21

"In the context of Paul's argument throughout Galatians, the statement 'against such things there is no law' is probably best understood as an understatement given for rhetorical effect. As such, it reiterates in a latent manner the assertion made in 5:14 that 'such things' fully satisfy the requirements of the law, for they go beyond the law's requirements. Furthermore, the statement makes it clear that the list of enumerated virtues is not given as a set of legal prescriptions – that is, it is not to be taken as some kind of new law for Christians, as though by setting such goals and seeking to put them into practice believers can present themselves as acceptable before God." Longenecker

Verse 24

οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ] τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις.

σταυρω crucify

παθημα, τος n suffering, passion, desire

ἐπιθυμια, ας f desire, longing, lust, passion

"The self-giving of Christ through death on a cross is the central soteriological theme of Galatians (cf. 1:4; 3:1, 13; 6:12, 14), just as it was the focus of early Christian preaching (cf. the sermons recorded in Acts and the passion narratives of the Gospels). Identification with Christ in his crucifixion means a new type of existence for the believer, for now 'Christ lives in me' (2:20). Likewise, just as the proclamation of 'Christ crucified' has implications for issues having to do with legalism and nomism (cf. comment on 3:1), so identification with Christ in his crucifixion has implications for issues having to do with libertinism (so here at v 24). For Paul, to claim identification with Christ in his crucifixion means that one cannot espouse a lifestyle that expresses either a legalistic or a libertine orientation. For in being crucified with Christ both the demands of the law and the impulses of the flesh have been crucified as well (cf. Rom 7:1-6; Col 2:13-15)." Longenecker

Verse 25

εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν.

A precis of Paul's message.

ζωα live, be alive

στοιχεω walk, conduct oneself

"The verb στοιχεω has as its basic meaning the idea of 'stand in a row' (cf. comment on the cognate expression τα στοιχεια at 4:3; also 4:9), and so came to connote 'be in line with' or 'agree with.' Its use elsewhere by Paul, however, suggests 'walking in the footsteps' of another (cf. Rom 4:12) or 'living in accordance with a standard' (cf. Gal 6:16; Phil 3:16; also Acts 21:24). So here by exhorting his converts to 'be in line' or 'keep in step' with the Spirit, Paul is asking those who claim to live by the Spirit to evidence that fact by a lifestyle controlled by the Spirit. That he exhorts believers to do what is the work of the Spirit to produce (cf. vv 22-23) is typical of Paul's understanding of Christian ethics, for Paul never views the ethical activity of the believer apart from the Spirit's work nor the Spirit's ethical direction and enablement apart from the believer's active expression of his or her faith." Longenecker

Verse 26

μη γινωμεθα κενόδοξοι, ἀλλήλους
προκαλούμενοι, ἀλλήλοις φθονοῦντες.
κενόδοξος, ον conceited, boastful
ἀλλήλων, οισ, ους reciprocal pronoun one
another
προκαλεομαι irritate, make angry
φθονεω envy, be jealous of

Longenecker suggests that 6:1-10 unpacks what Paul has in mind in this verse.

Day 328: Galatians 6:1-5**Verses 1-10**

Practical instructions spelling out what it means to live by the Spirit. These verses take the form of a series of exhortations regarding personal and corporate responsibilities. "Throughout Paul endeavours to remind the Galatians of their accountability to God and their responsibilities to one another, and he is especially concerned with the problems of pride and dissention in the Galatian churches which threaten to destroy them altogether. He appeals to them to sow to the Spirit, having shown that only the fruit of the Spirit can counteract and overcome these problems in their midst." JMG Barclay

Verse 1

Ἀδελφοί, ἐάν καὶ προλημφθῆ ἄνθρωπος
ἐν τινι παραπτωματι, ὑμεῖς οἱ
πνευματικοὶ καταρτίζετε τὸν τοιοῦτον ἐν
πνεύματι πρα τητος, σκοπῶν σεαυτόν, μὴ
καὶ σὺ πειρασθῆς.

ἐάν Conjunction ἐάν if, even if, though
προλημφθῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s
προλαμβανω do (something) ahead of
time, catch (in sin)

The passive generally has the sense 'taken by surprise,' 'overtaken' or 'entrapped'.

παραπτωμα, τος n sin, wrongdoing

A 'false step'. Longenecker suggests that Paul uses this word here rather than ἁμαρτια "because of its etymological imagery ('fall beside,' 'false step') that would be in sharp contrast to the imagery of the verb στοιχωμεν ('walk in a straight line,' 'conform to a standard,' 'keep in step') of 5:25."

πνευματικος, η, ον spiritual, pertaining to
the spirit

"Paul has repeatedly spoken elsewhere in Galatians of all Christians as being possessed by and being in possession of God's Spirit (cf. 3:2-5, 14; 4:6, 29; 5:5, 16-18, 22-23, 25; 6:8). There is, therefore, no reason to doubt and abundant reason to believe that Paul here uses this designation with approval in speaking about *all* his converts in Galatia. They are, despite their legal and libertine enticements, 'true spirituals' simply because by being 'in Christ' they have become the recipients of God's Spirit. So by reminding his converts of their status as πνευματικοι Paul calls on them to live up to their status." Longenecker

καταρτιζω mend, restore, make complete
τοιοτουτ see 5:21

"The accusative singular τον τοιοτουτον ('such a one,' 'that one') parallels the nominative plural τα τοιαυτα ('such ones') that functions as a correlative adjective in 5:21, and so signals that what is in mind here in 6:1 is a person who engages in such 'works of the flesh' as those listed in 5:19-21." Longenecker

πραυτης see 5:23

There is no room for pride since none is beyond falling – hence the following exhortation.

"Significantly, it is more the attitudes and actions of 'those who are spiritual' that Paul deals with here than the attitudes and actions of those who have sinned. Libertinism among the Galatian Christians evidently expresses itself in pride, aloofness, and conceit (as sadly it does also among Christians today)." Longenecker

σκοπεω pay attention to, watch out (for),
be concerned about
σεαυτου, ης reflexive pronoun yourself
πειρασθῆς Verb, aor pass subj, 2 s
πειραζω test, put to the test, tempt

Verse 2

Ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε, καὶ οὕτως
ἀναπληρωσετε τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

"Central to the believers' new existence 'in Christ' is the concept of mutuality. Such a concept is highlighted here in v 2 by the emphatic position of ἀλλήλων ('one another') at the beginning of the sentence." Longenecker

βάρη Noun, nom & acc pl βαρος, ους n
burden, weight
βασταζω carry, bear, endure
ἀναπληρωω complete the full measure of,
meet (the requirements)

The aorist imperative ἀναπληρωσατε is strongly supported but the future indicative was preferred by the UBS committee "on the basis of early and diversified external attestation as well as transcriptional probabilities."

"ὁ νομος του Χρισου here (cf. ἐννομος Χριστου of 1 Cor 9:21) stands in Paul's thought for those prescriptive principles stemming from the heart of the gospel (usually embodied in the example and teachings of Jesus), which are meant to be applied to specific situations by the direction and enablement of the Holy Spirit, being always motivated and conditioned by love... Paul is not setting forth Jesus as a new Moses. Nor does he view Jesus' teachings as ethical prescriptions to be carried out in a rabbinic fashion." Longenecker

Verse 3

εἰ γὰρ δοκεῖ τις εἶναι τι μηδὲν ὄν, φρεναπατᾶ ἑαυτόν·

Longenecker suggests that this is a traditional maxim of the Greco-Roman world which Paul uses by way of general support for the directive of v.2.

δοκεω think, suppose
μηδεις, μηδεμια, μηδεν no one, nothing;
no; μηδεν adverb not at all, in no way

εἰ γὰρ δοκεῖ τις εἶναι τι μηδὲν ὄν "If anyone thinks that he is something when he is not ..."

φρεναπαταω fools, deceives
ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον reflexive pronoun,
himself, herself, itself

Verse 4

τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμαζέτω ἕκαστος, καὶ τότε εἰς ἑαυτὸν μόνον τὸ καύχημα ἔξει καὶ οὐκ εἰς τὸν ἕτερον·

ἕκαστος, η, ον each, every
δοκιμαζω test, examine, prove
τοτε then, at that time
μονος, η, ον i) adj only, alone; ii) adv
μονον only, alone
καυχημα, τος η ground for boasting,
object of boasting, boasting, pride
ἔξει fut ἔχω
ἕτερος, α, ον other, another, different

"The warning here is not to live as spiritual people in a state of pride or conceit, always comparing one's own attainments to those of others and so feeling superior, but rather to test one's own actions and so to minimise the possibility of self-deception. Christian feelings of exultation and congratulation should spring from one's own actions as seen in the light of God's approval and not derive from comparing oneself to what others are or are not doing." Longenecker

Verse 5

ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον βαστάσει.

ἴδιος, α, ον one's own
φορτιον, ου η burden, load
βασταζω see v.2

Again, Longenecker suggests this is a traditional maxim (as also vv 7,9). "Paul ... uses the maxim in general support of his directive that 'each one should test his own actions' in v 4, with ἕκαστος ('each one,' 'everyone') as the subject of both the directive and the maxim, tying these two statements together and the content of the maxim being generally confirmatory, though admittedly used out of context."

Day 329: Galatians 6:6-10

Verse 6

Κοινωνεῖτω δὲ ὁ κατηχούμενος τὸν λόγον τῷ κατηχούντι ἐν πάσιν ἀγαθοῖς.

κοινωνεω share, take part, contribute
κατηχεω inform, instruct

The situation in the Galatian churches that called for this exhortation is unclear, but it forms part of Paul's exhortations urging mutual helpfulness among Christian believers.

Verse 7

Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, θεὸς οὐ μυκτηρίζεται· ὁ γὰρ ἐὰν σπεῖρη ἄνθρωπος, τοῦτο καὶ θερίσει·

πλαναω lead astray, mislead, deceive

μη πλανασθε is used as an interjection before a solemn warning, cf. 1 Cor 6:9; 15:33; Jas 1:16 also Lk 21:8.

"The warning implies a liability to deception or error." Eadie.

μυκτηριζω mock, make a fool of

Literally 'to turn up the nose at', to sneer at'. Longenecker suggests that θεός οὐ μυκτηρίζεται was a proverbial statement of warning. "Paul's point in the warning statement of v 7 followed by the explication of v.8 is that one cannot expect to sow to the flesh and then reap eternal life, and so mock the justice of God, for 'God is not mocked.'"

ἐάν see 5:10

θερίζω reap, harvest

Appears to be another traditional maxim.

τουτο is emphatic. "Let him sow what he like ... that and that only, that and nothing else, shall he also reap... The reaping is not only the effect of the sowing but is necessarily of the same nature with it." Eadie

"Our liberality is restrained by the supposition that whatsoever passes into the hands of another is lost to ourselves, and by the alarm we feel about our own prospects in life. Paul meets these views by a comparison drawn from seed-time, which, he tells us, is a fit representation of acts of beneficence... How 'very gladly' would we 'spend and be spent' (2 Cor 12:15) for the good of our neighbours, encouraged by the hope of the coming harvest! No operation is more cheerfully performed by husbandmen than throwing the seed into the ground." Calvin

Verse 8

ὅτι ὁ σπείρων εἰς τὴν σάρκα ἑαυτοῦ ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς θερίσει φθοράν, ὁ δὲ σπείρων εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος θερίσει ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

εἰς τὴν σάρκα Eadie suggests that the εἰς here has the sense of that for the gratification of which the seed is sown. But Longenecker thinks that the picture is of "casting seed into two entirely different fields, and from these two different fields he reaps a harvest that corresponds to the nature of the fields themselves: either φθοράν ('destruction') from 'the flesh' or ζωὴν αἰώνιον ('life eternal') from 'the Spirit.'"

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body, human nature

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον reflexive pronoun, himself, herself, itself

φθορα, ας f decay, corruption, depravity

Verse 9

τὸ δὲ καλὸν ποιῶντες μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν, καιρῷ γὰρ ἰδίῳ θερίσομεν μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι.

το καλον that which is good, lovely, beautiful

Cf. Mt 12:12. "The expression το καλον ποιουντες ('doing the good'), as Betz observes, 'includes everything the Christian is responsible for doing,' and so 'is identical with the concepts of the 'fruit of the Spirit' (5:22-23) and of 'following the Spirit' (5:25; cf. 5:16)'... In particular, it has reference to those matters commanded in 6:1-6: restoring someone entrapped by sin (v 1), bearing the oppressive burdens of others (v 2), and sharing materially with those who teach the gospel message (v 6)." Longenecker

ἐγκακεω become discouraged, tire of

The TR has ἐκκακεω ('lose heart') in all six places where ἐγκακεω is the better attested reading – evidently because the latter unfamiliar to many scribes.

καιρω ἰδίῳ in due time, in the appropriate time

ἐκλυομαι give up, faint

"Those who do not persevere resemble indolent husbandmen who, after ploughing and sowing, leave the work unfinished, and neglect to take the necessary precautions for protecting the seed from being devoured by birds, or scorched by the sun, or destroyed by the cold. It is to no purpose that we begin to do good if we do not press forward to the goal." Calvin

Verse 10

ἄρα οὖν ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν, ἐργαζομεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς πάντας, μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως.

ἄρα signals the conclusion of the main point of discussion, cf. Rom 5:18; 7:3,25; 8:12; 9:16,18 etc.

ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν "Paul qualifies his exhortation for believers to 'do good' in a manner suggesting that such actions be viewed as availing oneself of God-given opportunities and be undertaken as part of a Christian's redemptive mandate. Paul is certainly not relegating ethics to some incidental or optional category of Christian living, as some seem to read his words here. Rather, he is highlighting through his use of the noun καιρος the divinely given and strategic nature of opportunities set before the Christian for doing good." Longenecker

πρὸς πάντας "The universal character of God's redemption corresponds to the universality of Christian ethical and social responsibility. If God's redemption in Christ is universal, the Christian community is obliged to disregard all ethnic, national, cultural, social, sexual, and even religious distinctions within the human community. Since before God there is no partiality, there cannot be partiality in the Christian's attitude towards his fellow man." Betz

μαλιστα especially
οἰκειος, ου m member of the household

Cf. Jn 13:34-35. "For Paul, 'in Christ' believers make up τοὺς οἰκειοὺς τῆς πίστεως ('the household of faith'), which speaks metaphorically of the corporate unity of Christians, and the members of such a household are to be cared for in particular." Longenecker

Day 330: Galatians 6:11-18

Verses 11-18

Lightfoot observes that 6:11-18 functions by way of "summing up the main lessons of the epistle in terse eager disjointed sentences." Betz says of these closing section, "It contains the interpretive clues to the understanding of Paul's major concerns in the letter as a whole and should be employed as the hermeneutical key to the intentions of the apostle." Longenecker provides the following analysis, "The subscription of Galatians (6:11-18) highlights three matters that are to the fore in all that Paul has written regarding the judaizing threat previously in the letter: (1) the motivation of the Judaisers as Paul saw it (vv 12-13); (2) the centrality of the cross in the Christian gospel (v 14); and (3) the nature of a proper Christian lifestyle as believers attempt to express their faith in the circumstances of their day (v15). Then there is an expanded peace benediction pronounced on all those who view the Christian life in such a way as set out in v 15 (v 16), which is followed by a further comment of warning and authority (v 17) and a grace benediction (v 18). Thus the subscription provides important clues for understanding the issues discussed throughout Galatians, particularly those having to do with the judaizing threat brought into the churches by certain legalistically oriented Jewish Christians, for it not only summarises the main points dealt with earlier in the letter but also allows us to cut through all of the verbiage and see matters in their essence as Paul saw them."

Verse 11

Ἴδετε πηλικοὺς ὑμῖν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ.

ἴδετε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s ὄρω trans see, observe, perceive, recognise;
intrans make sure, see to
πηλικος, η, ον how large, how great
γραμμα, τος n letter (of alphabet), letter, communication, learning

γράμμασιν must here refer to Paul's handwriting. If Paul had been speaking of the length of his communication the word would have been in the singular, or rather, he would have used the term ἐπιστολή. Longenecker follows Lightfoot and Burton in suggesting that the large handwriting is most probably intended to emphasise the importance of what was written (like bold faced type) and was not due to some infirmity in Paul.

ἔγραψα is an epistolary aorist, cf. Rom 15:15; 1 Cor 5:11; 9:15; Philemon 19,21.

ἐμος, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my, mine

χειρ, χειρος f hand, power

"The phrase τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ ('in my own hand') not only alerts Paul's converts to a change of handwriting but also signals for them where the body of the Galatian letter ends and its subscription begins. Such a phrase rarely appears in the extant Hellenistic letters of Paul's day, for any difference of script would have been immediately obvious to the recipients of those letters as they read them. Paul's letters, however, were to be read aloud in the churches to which he sent them (so, e.g. 1 Thess 5:27) – even at times to be read aloud to other churches (cf. Col 4:16) – so there was need for him to make such an explicit reference as to where the body of the letter ended and the subscription began, for not everyone would have been in a position to observe the change of script itself." Longenecker

Verse 12

ὅσοι θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί, οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι, μόνον ἵνα τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μὴ διωκῶνται.

ὅσος, η, ον correlative pronoun, as much as, how much, how farr; pl. as many as, all

θελω wish, will

εὐπροσωπῆσαι Verb, aor act infin

εὐπροσωπεω make a good showing

A rare Greek word, here alone in NT.

ἐν σαρκί 'in the realm of the flesh'

ἀναγκαζω force, compel, urge

περιτεμνω circumcise

σταυρος, ου m CROSS

τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ 'for the sake of the cross of Christ'

διωκω persecute, seek after, pursue,
follow

"What the Judaisers 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 (cf. 1 Thess 2:14b-16). For, as Robert Jewett observes, in the rising tide of Jewish nationalism in Palestine, with the antagonism of the Zealots being directed against all who had Gentile sympathies and all who associated with Gentiles on a nonproselyte basis, 'If they could succeed in circumcising Gentile Christian, this might effectively thwart any Zealot purification campaign against the Judean church!'" Longenecker

Verse 13

οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουσιν, ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχῆσονται.

οὐδε neither, nor

Some suggest that the reference is to those 'getting themselves circumcised', i.e. the Gentiles who had acceded to the pressure of the Judaisers, but most commentators (including, for instance, Eadie and Longenecker) believe this to be a designation of the party of the Judaisers.

φυλάσσω keep, guard, defend

"Probably ... Paul means here ... that despite the loftiness of their assertions and their rigid theology, the Judaisers, at least in Paul's eyes, fell short of keeping all the law scrupulously themselves. For, as Paul hints in the *propositio* of Gal 2:15-21 and develops extensively in his letter to the Roman Christians, no one has ever been able to keep the law fully (cf. Rom 1:8-3:21; 3:23; 7:7-25; 8:3...)." Longenecker

ὑμετερος, α, ον possessive adj of 2 pl your
καυχασμαι boast, boast about

Verse 14

ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι• οὐ ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται κἀγω κόσμῳ.

ἐμοὶ is emphatic, 'but as for me'

γένοιτο Verb, aor opt, 3s γινομαι

καυχασμαι boast, boast about

σταυρος, ου m CROSS

"Paul expresses the fervent wish that he may never exult in matters having to do with 'the flesh' – that is, merely human attainments, with particular application here to counting converts and success in ministry – but only in that which has to do with the cross of Christ. "... For Paul the central feature of the Christian gospel and the focus of the gospel's proclamation is 'Christ crucified.' By metonymy, such associated terms as 'cross' and 'death' were used by him to represent the basic Christian κηρυγμα (cf. 1 Cor 1:17-18; 15:3; Phil 2:8; 3:18; Col 1:20; 2:14-15). Thus, as noted at 3:1, the gospel of Christ crucified so completely rules out any other supposed means of being righteous before God that Paul found it utterly incomprehensible for anyone who has once embraced such a gospel to ever think of supplementing it in any way. "... What Paul means by boasting 'in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' is spelled out in Rom 5:3b-5,11 (where the deponent verb καυχασμαι appears three times) and 1 Cor 1:18-31 (where καυχασμαι appears twice)." Longenecker

ἐσταύρωται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s

σταυρωω crucify

κἀγω a compound word = και ἐγω

"The perfect indicative passive form of the verb σταυρωω ('crucify') lays stress on a past action with present results. κοσμος ('world') here connotes not the physical world, the world of humanity, or even the world of sinful humanity alienated from God, but rather, as Burton aptly puts it, 'the mode of life which is characterised by earthly advantages, viewed as obstacles to righteousness.'... cf. Matt 16:26; Jas 1:27; 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15." Longenecker
"Each had been nailed to the cross, each to the other was dead. Christ's cross effected this separation." Eadie

Verse 15

οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστίν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία, ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις.

This verse may have been a traditional maxim which circulated in Christian circles and with which the Galatians would have been familiar. Paul takes it up and uses it to reinforce his message.

οὔτε not, nor (οὔτε ... οὔτε neither ... nor)

περιτομή, ης f circumcision, those circumcised, Jews

ἀκροβυστία, ας f uncircumcision, non-Jews

Cf. 5:6.

καινός, η, ον new

κτίσις, εως f creation, what is created, act of creation

What is important is not whether or not a person is circumcised but whether a person has become a new creation through the work of the Spirit which unites the believer to the risen Christ.

"All external expressions of the Christian faith are to be understood as culturally relevant but not spiritually necessitated, for all that really matters is that the Christian be 'a new creation' and that he or she expresses that new work of God in ways reflective of being 'in Christ' and directed by 'the Spirit.' ... It is not just 're-creation' that God effects 'in Christ' and 'by the Spirit,' thereby taking believers back to some primordial state. Rather, what God has done 'in Christ' and by 'the Spirit' is to effect a 'new creation.' Therefore, 'all that matters' (ἀλλα) for the Christian is the fact of being 'a new creation,' with that newness of creation reflected externally in culturally relevant lives of worship and service." Longenecker

Verse 16

καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν, εἰρήνη ἐπ' αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔλεος, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ.

ὅσος, η, ον see v.12

κανων, ονος m limits, rule, principle

Again, the use of this term suggests v 15 is a traditional maxim.

στοιχεω walk, conduct oneself

Cf. 5:25.

εἰρήνη, ης f peace

ἐλεος, ουσ n mercy, compassion

Israel of God can be understood in at least three ways: i) The καὶ has the sense of 'even', the two groups spoken of are the same, the Israel of God is the company of born-again believers from Jew and Gentile (so Calvin, Luther, Ridderbos ...); ii) The καὶ means 'and also', the Israel of God refers to Jewish believers, those who are not merely Jews outwardly but who also live by faith in the promises of God (so Eadie, Elicott, Bengel). iii) Given the unusual order εἰρήνη ... καὶ ἔλεος the verb should be repunctuated to read, 'Peace on all those who follow this rule, and mercy on the Israel of God,' the latter blessing being pronounced on pious Jews who may yet come to accept the gospel (so Richardson, following suggestions by Burton).

In the context of Paul's argument in this letter, the first of these seems the most likely meaning. "In a letter where Paul is concerned to treat as indifferent the distinctions which separate Jewish and Gentile Christians and to argue for the equality of Gentile believers with Jewish believers, it is difficult to see him at the very end of the letter pronouncing a benediction (or benedictions) that would serve to separate groups within his churches – whether he means by 'the Israel of God' a believing Jewish remnant within the broader Church of both Jews and Gentiles, a non Judaising group of Jewish Christians in Galatia, or an eschatological Israel that is to be saved at the time of Christ's return. Certain elements within Paul's other letters may be used to support one or the other of these views, but Galatians itself cannot easily be used in such a manner.

"Rather, it seems better to argue that here Paul is using a self-designation of his Jewish-Christian opponents in Galatia – one that they used to identify their type of fulfilled Judaism vis-à-vis the official Judaism of their national compatriots (so tentatively, Betz...). Furthermore, this was a self-designation that they must have included in their message to Paul's Gentile converts, assuring them that by observing the God-given Jewish laws they would become fully 'the Israel of God.' Their phrase itself is not found in the extant writings of Second Temple Judaism or later rabbinic Judaism, and does not appear elsewhere in Paul's letters. So it may be postulated that it arose amongst the Judaizers and became part of their message to Paul's Galatian converts. If that be the case, then Paul here climaxes his whole response to the judaizing threat in something of an ad hominem manner, implying in quite telling fashion that what the Judaizers were claiming to offer his converts they already have 'in Christ' by faith: that they are truly children of Abraham together with all Jews who believe, and so properly can be called 'the Israel of God' together with all Jews who believe." Longenecker

Verse 17

Τοῦ λοιποῦ κόπους μοι μηδεὶς παρεχέτω, ἔγω γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σωματί μου βαστάζω.

λοιπος, η, ον rest, remaining, other; του λοιπου henceforth, finally
 κοπος, ου m work, labour, trouble
 μηδεις, μηδεμα, μηδεν no one, nothing
 παρεχω act & midd cause, bring about, do, offer

The present imperative suggests action already in progress.

στιγμα, τος n mark, scar, brand

A brand placed on a slave to mark ownership.

σωμα, τος n body
 βασταζω carry, bear, endure, tolerate, remove, support

"What Paul had in mind by the use of τα στίγματα here were the scars and disfigurements left on his body as the effects of his sufferings as an apostle (cf. 2 Cor 6:4-6; 11:23-30; perhaps also Gal 4:13-14). That these were physical scars and disfigurements is made clear by the phrase ἐν τῷ σωματι μου ('on my body'). And that Paul took them to be identifying marks of his Christian apostleship is suggested by the possessive genitive τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ('of Jesus').

"There is no self-indulgent pity here in Paul's statement. Rather, it is a statement that highlights Paul's relationship to Jesus and his apostleship established by Jesus. Furthermore, the statement gives a warning regarding any continuing judaizing threat within his Galatian churches. For what takes place in those churches affects him personally as the Galatian Christians' apostle and evangelist. So he warns that he should not be troubled further since he is Christ's 'marked man,' with markings suggesting, positively, that he is under Christ's ownership and protection, as well as, negatively, that those who try to harass him will come under Christ's judgment and retribution." Longenecker

Verse 18

Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί· ἀμήν.

"The addition of the vocative ἀδελφοί ... highlights Paul's continued affection for his converts even amidst his tones of sternness and severity." Longenecker

Conclusion

"Historically, Paul's letter to the Galatians has been foundational for many forms of Christian thought, proclamation and practice. Likewise, today, how one understands the issues and teaching of Galatians determines in large measure what kind of theology one espouses, what kind of message one proclaims, and what kind of lifestyle one lives. May it be, by God's Spirit, that what Paul has written so long ago in this letter finds a new home in our lives, thereby establishing, encouraging, challenging, and transforming us for God's glory." Longenecker