

**6:6 And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.**

**6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.**

**6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.**

**6:9 And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.**

**6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.**

6:10 forms the conclusion to the paragraph and encapsulates the main idea behind verses 6-9; namely, we should do good to the household of the faith while we have opportunity to do so. Verse 6 gives an example of a good thing we can do.

In verse 6 the word “share” most likely refers to giving financial support (Ro. 12:13; Phil. 4:15). Similarly, “good things” can also be used of the things necessary to live (Deut. 28:11; Lk. 12:18-19; 16:25). Thus, this is an exhortation to support those who teach the word of God (I Cor. 9:11, 14; I Tim. 5:17f.). Those who benefit from the instruction of a teacher should meet their teacher’s needs so that he can focus on studying and teaching the word of God without being distracted by worldly cares. The same idea is in I Corinthians 9:6-11. Supporting those who preach the word of God isn’t something relatively new; it is a practice that began with the infant church. Unfortunately, with the practice arose the temptation to preach *in order to be paid*. This is a tragedy in the modern church as well. Peter warns the elders to “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and *not for sordid gain* (not for money), but with eagerness” (I Pet 5:2). Similarly, Paul tells Titus that an elder “must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money” (Tit 1:7).

“Do not be deceived” (Gal. 6:7), reminds the readers to make no mistake of the ensuing truths. The first truth is that God cannot be mocked or fooled. Specifically, the God-ordained law of sowing and reaping cannot be manipulated into something it is not. One cannot reap what he has not sown. This concept is found throughout the Bible (Job 4:8; Prov. 22:8; Hos. 8:7; 10:12f.; 2 Cor. 9:6).

There are two kinds of sowing spoken of in verse 8; one can sow to the flesh or he can sow to the Spirit. Sowing to the Spirit is the result of walking in the Spirit (5:16), being led by the Spirit (5:18), or keeping in step with the Spirit (5:25). Just as there are two kinds of sowing, there are also two results to the sowing one does. He who sows to his flesh (that is, he who lives in order to please his sin nature) shall reap corruption; his life will result in moral and spiritual corruption ending in death. The one who lives to please the Spirit reaps eternal life (Ro. 2:7). The primary antithesis is between decay/death and life. In other words, a man’s whole life is a period of sowing that will bring forth a harvest at the judgment.

In verse 9, “doing good” is an example of sowing to the Spirit. In Acts 10:38 it says of Jesus that “He went about doing good.” There is a tendency in all people to lose heart in their efforts or lose a sense of what’s important. However, if we endure, God, in His perfect plan and timing will give us our due reward.

Verse 10 is the logical conclusion to the previous comments. There is a time for reaping and sowing; we need to be doing what is proper to the season. The time we live in is the opportunity to do good and to sow. If we sow now, we will reap a harvest in the age to come.

***6:11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.***

***6:12 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 Christ.***

***6:13 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.***

Paul evidently had someone else write the letter for him as he dictated it, for he makes a point that he is now writing himself. People speculate that the large letters show that his sight was failing, possibly from a disease. In Galatians 4:11-15 Paul had mentioned coming to Galatia with a bodily illness, and that in spite of it the Galatians had received him. In fact, he said that if possible, they would have plucked out their eyes and given them to him (Gal. 4:15). Others simply think he is stressing that the letter is from him, and that they need to pay attention to his final thoughts. In other words, he is writing and he is writing in large letters to emphasize that they need to take notice of what he is about to say. The intent of His letter, in a nutshell, is that believers need to glory in the Lord Jesus Christ (6:14).

In verse 12 Paul reveals the motives behind those who were insisting that believers needed to submit to the OT law (1:7; 5:2-4, 10). He lists two primary reasons:

- (1) their primary concern was that they wanted to look good before others (particularly to the Jews)
- (2) they also wanted to avoid persecution.

The Judaizers believed that circumcision provided evidence of their obedience to the law, but more importantly, it was the sign that identified them as God’s covenant people and the recipients of His favor. When others were circumcised, it provided further reason to boast, for it demonstrated their success in proselytizing the churches in Galatia (v. 13).

Even though the opponents insist on keeping the law, in reality, they hadn’t even mastered it themselves (Ro. 2:17-24).

**6:14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**

**6:15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.**

In contrast to the Judaizers who were most concerned with finding praise from men and avoiding persecution, Paul boasted in the cross, for in it he found that Christ had done all that was necessary for salvation (1 Cor. 2:2). "To glory in the cross of Christ, is to glory in Christ crucified. But something more is implied. In that death, — so full of disgrace and ignominy, which God himself has pronounced to be accursed, and which men are wont to view with abhorrence and shame, — in that death he will glory, because he obtains in it perfect happiness. Where man's highest good exists, there is his glory" (Calvin).

As Matthew Henry says,

By the cross of Christ is here meant his sufferings and death on the cross, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer. This was what the Jews stumbled at and the Greeks accounted foolishness; and the judaizing teachers themselves, though they had embraced Christianity, yet were so far ashamed of it that in compliance with the Jews, and to avoid persecution from them, they were for mixing the observance of the law of Moses with faith in Christ, as necessary to salvation. But Paul had a very different opinion of it; he was so far from being offended at the cross of Christ, or ashamed of it, or afraid to own it, that he gloried in it; yea, he desired to glory in nothing else, and rejected the thought of setting up anything in competition with it, as the object of his esteem, with the utmost abhorrence; God forbid, &c. This was the ground of all his hope as a Christian: this was the doctrine which, as an apostle, he was resolved to preach; and, whatever trials his firm adherence to it might bring upon him, he was ready, not only to submit to them, but to rejoice in them. Note, the cross of Christ is a good Christian's chief glory, and there is the greatest reason why we should glory in it, for to it we owe all our joys and hopes.

The cross had introduced new creation (6:15; 2:20), freedom from slavery (5:1), and sonship (4:6-7). The cross removed the curse of the law (3:13), and crucified the passions of the flesh (5:24). Paul says that in the cross the world has been crucified to him, and he to the world. The world is dead to him. He has been decisively separated from it. Its offerings of prestige, power, fortunes, and fame are not alluring to him. Elsewhere Paul said, "I count everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8; also see Gal. 2:19-20). The cross of Christ had captured the supreme affection of Paul's heart. The Judaizers were seeking reason to boast; the cross had erased all reason to boast in anything else but Christ.

Paul doesn't say, "I boast in *my* Lord Jesus Christ" but "in *our* Lord Jesus Christ." He wants the Galatians to never forget that this Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for a people, for a company of men and women of which they were a part. Paul never loses sight of the importance of the body of Christ.

Through the cross there is death and new creation. The new creation has been inaugurated in Christ and will be consummated at the end of the age when Christ returns in glory. For now, all of creation awaits for the revealing of the sons of God (Ro. 8:18-22).

The new creation is spiritual and not focused on external forms (6:15). Although Paul had argued against circumcision as a means to gain merit with God, he now says that uncircumcision does not find God's favor either. If the Jew's boasting about circumcision is meaningless, so would be the Gentile's boasting about uncircumcision. The new creation is a result of a creative act of God, not anything within men.

***6:16 And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.***

After launching a blistering critique of the Judaizers who wanted to add circumcision and the Mosaic Law to the gospel, Paul reached out to those ethnic Jews who had not fallen for the error of the Judaizers and recognized them as the true "Israel of God." As S. Lewis Johnson stated: "What more fitting thing could Paul write, it is said, in a work so strongly attacking Jewish professing believers, the Judaizers, than to make it most plain that he was not attacking the true believing Jews. Judaizers are anathematized, but the remnant according to the election of grace are "the Israel of God." (S. Lewis Johnson, "Paul and 'The Israel of God' An Exegetical and Eschatological Case Study," in Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost). It should be noted that some see "the Israel of God" as a designation for the church (see Schreiner who does little to fairly articulate the view he opposes, and Moo for better arguments favoring the view that the Israel of God is a reference to the church). Although this may be appealing from a preferred theological viewpoint, the NT evidence is much more compelling in favor of taking the term "Israel" as those who are within ethnic Israel who are saved and true children of Abraham (see Rom. 9:6).

***6:17 From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.***

***6:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.***

Verses 17 and 18 form the conclusion. Paul had suffered much as a Christian and bore the scars of the abuse he received on his body. The scars demonstrated his commitment to Christ, and were in contrast to the mark of circumcision borne by the Jews.

Paul prays that their spirit would bear witness of the grace of God which they had received when they believed the gospel he had preached to them. It is in the inner man where the power of grace is felt.

NOTE on “The Israel of God” in 6:16

The term Israel occurs sixty-eight times in the New Testament and, except for a few disputed texts, all of the others clearly refer to the national covenant people of the Old Testament.

Concerning the Gospels, Mark Elliott says,

The one consistent feature of the usage of the word [Israel] in the Gospels—in conformity with its use in the Jewish world generally—is that it retains its dignity. It continues to imply privilege associated with covenant, election and theocratic ideals. . . . Nor do the Gospels deviate from the traditional significance of the term as referring to the descendants of Abraham (through Jacob). Never, for example, is the term used either of the church or of Gentiles.

There is no change when we turn to the writings that have direct application to the church. With regard to Luke’s writings which include fifteen uses of “Israel” in Acts, Jacob Jervell affirms that the term “always refers to the Jewish people. At no time does it serve to characterize the church, i.e., it is never used as a technical terms for the Christian gathering of Jews and Gentiles.” The remaining references to Israel are found primarily in Paul’s writings (17 of which 11 are in Romans).

Two of Paul’s references in particular have been cited as evidence that the term Israel is used with a new meaning, namely, a “new Israel” composed of Jew and Gentile believers in the church. Although used less frequently by modern interpreters, one text that has historically been cited is Romans 9:6: “But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.” By itself, this might seem to extend the meaning of Israel to include Gentile believers outside the historic Jewish Israel. But consideration of the context indicates that the apostle is not referring to Gentiles, but rather to a division within Israel. Having introduced the major section by declaring his concern for “my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites” (Rom. 9:3-4), the apostle goes on to elaborate God’s elective purpose within the physical descendants of Abraham (cf. 9:7-13). The point of the entire section is that while the promises of God to Israel may appear to have failed when one looks at the totality of Israel, which is predominantly unbelieving, there is a faithful remnant within Israel—what John Murray aptly calls “an ‘Israel’ within ethnic Israel.”

The text most frequently used for the church as “new Israel” is Galatians 6:16. After declaring that circumcision is of no value in the new creation in Christ, Paul says, “And those who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). The Greek word (καὶ), translated “and” in the phrase “and upon the Israel of God” (NASB) is sometimes understood to be used in an explicative sense, i.e., that it introduces something that explains what precedes it. This leads to the translation, “And those who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, *even* upon the Israel of God” making “those who walk by this rule”—all believers or the church—the equivalent of “the Israel of God. Aside from the fact that the vast

majority of versions retain the meaning “and” in this text, there are several factors that militate against equating the church with Israel here.

Most importantly, if Paul uses “the Israel of God” for the church in this text, it would be the only instance. Ernest Burton rightly argues that because “there is . . . no instance of his [Paul’s] using Ἰσραήλ (Israel) except of the Jewish nation or a part thereof,” we should view “the interpretation of the expression as applying not to the Christian community, but to Jews.” Adding weight to this argument is the fact that Galatians is probably the first of Paul’s extant writings. If he did, in fact, believe that the church was the “Israel of God,” why do we not find evidence of this meaning in his many subsequent uses of the term “Israel.” W. D. Davies rightly reasons, “one would have expected to find support for it in Rom. ix-xi where Paul extensively deals with ‘Israel.’”

The message in Galatians also militates against referring to the church as “the Israel of God.” In this letter the apostle is not only defending justification by faith, but also his ministry of salvation to Gentiles as Gentiles—i.e., the new messianic salvation encompassed the Gentiles as well as the Jews (cf. 3:8, 14). This makes it extremely unlikely that he would conclude his argument by calling Gentiles “the Israel of God.” In all probability, Paul used these words in 6:16 to encourage the faithful Jews—the true Israel—who recognized and lived by the truth of Paul’s message, and also to prevent the Gentiles from an attitude of pride in relation to Israel (cf. Rom. 11:17-18). As Peter Richardson says, “to prevent the Galatians from moving . . . to a new Christian exclusiveness and sectarianism, he adds his prayer for mercy on God’s faithful people” (Robert L. Saucy, *The Relation of Israel and the Church in Progressive Dispensationalism*).