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The Autograph: See the Large Letters I Am Writing with My Own Hand 6: 11-13

The autograph: see the large letters I am writing with my own hand DIG: Why did Paul write in inch high letters? What was the false motivation of the Judaizers? Why were the Judaizers trying to force the Galatian Gentiles to be circumcised? What were the Judaizers doing to prevent their own persecution from the Sanhedrin and the Jews in Jerusalem? Were they Torah observant themselves? Why did they want the Galatian Gentiles to undergo circumcision and try to observe the 613 commandments of Moshe?

REFLECT: Who do you need to address in capital letters so they can get the point about Yeshua Messiah? Can you present the difference between the way of divine accomplishment and the way of human achievement clearly to an unbeliever? When was the last time you did so? Is there someone in your life trying to force some form of legalism on you? How can this book of Galatians help you answer them? What and Who are you boasting in?

Paul closes his letter with a subscription in his own hand, in which he addresses the underlying motivations of the Judaizers in chiastic form.

Paul was in the habit of dictating **his letters** to others, but writing the concluding words in **his** own handwriting and **his** signature provided the evidence that **he** was indeed the author (**Second Thessalonians 3:17; Second Thessalonians 3:17-18; First Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18**). **Tertius**, for instance, was the secretary who wrote **the letter** to **the Romans** as **Paul** dictated to **him** (**Romans 16:22**). But **Paul** was so concerned that **the Galatians** understand the danger **they** were in that **he** took the pen away from **his** secretary and wrote: **Notice the large letters - I am writing to you with my own hand (6:11).**¹⁷¹

A word about **the large letters** in which **Paul wrote**. There were two styles of Greek writing, the literary uncial which consisted of inch-high letters formed singly and with no

connection with other letters, and the cursive, using smaller letters in what could be called a running hand (without lifting the pen from the paper), joined together. In addition, there were four classes of penmanship in the style of the manuscripts in the First Century. First, there was the work of a good professional scribe. Second, there was the work of a good ordinary scribe. Third, there was the work of an educated man, but not a professional scribe, writing a careful copy of a running hand. And fourth, there was the running hand of common everyday writing. **Paul** had dictated **his** letters to **Tertius, Sosthenes, Timothy** and **Silvanus**. These were educated men, but not professional scribes. Therefore, **their** writing would be that of an educated amateur, written in cursive, that is, small letters joined together by a running hand. That means that **Paul's** original manuscripts were in the cursive style of writing, and the part that **he** wrote in **his** own handwriting would be in inch-high letters.¹⁷²

The next question is why he wrote in such **large** inch-high letters. **Paul** had contracted an oriental eye disease called ophthalmia, which not only gave **him** a repulsive appearance, but rendered him almost totally blind (**to see link click [Bp - Until Messiah is Formed in You](#)**). This was **Paul's thorn in the flesh (Second Corinthians 12:7)**. It was therefore necessary for **him to write** in **letters large** enough so that with **his** darkened vision **he** could see what **he** was writing. **The Ruach ha-Kodesh** inspired **him** to add these closing words to give one more contrast between **the Judaizers** and **the Ruach-filled believers**. HE HAD SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY AND HE DID NOT WANT THE GALATIANS TO MISS THE POINT, SO HE WROTE IN ALL CAPS. **His** willingness to **write** this entire closing paragraph (**6:11-18**) with **his** own hand would certainly appeal to the hearts of **his** readers.¹⁷³

Having signaled the beginning of **the letter's** end, **Paul** continued to condemn **the Judaizers** (see **[Ag - Who Were the Judaizers](#)**) who were **confusing his** disciples by attempting to **turn** them **away from Paul's gospel** of grace, to a man-made **gospel, which is no gospel at all (1:7 NIV)**. These two approaches to salvation are the only two that mankind has ever known. **ADONAI's** way is the way of **grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9)**. All others, no matter how seemingly different, are the futile attempt at salvation through sinful human deeds. It is as if, on the shelf of world religions, there were hundreds of attractive packages, with a great range of shapes, sizes, claims, and prices. But inside all of them is the same tasteless, nutritionless sawdust of deeds of righteousness. Standing alone, unattractive and repulsive to the unsaved, is the life-saving **gospel**, which alone contains real food.

God's way is the way of divine accomplishment; all other ways rely on human achievement.

Those who follow the religion of divine accomplishment say, "I cannot accomplish anything in my own power or goodness, and I throw myself on the mercy of **YHVH**, trusting in the sufficient sacrifice of **His Son** on my behalf." Those who follow the way of human achievement, no matter what its packaging might be, say, "On my own merit and in my own power I can make myself acceptable to **Ha'Shem** and worthy of a place in heaven."¹⁷⁴

Verses 12-13 are in chiastic form (**A-B-C-C-B-A**):

A Those wanting to look good outwardly [in the flesh] (6:12a). First, **he** points out the false motivation of **the Judaizers**. **They** were not concerned about pleasing **God** by inward righteousness, but about impressing other men by outward legalism. It was in regard to such demonstrations of religious pride that **Yeshua** gave repeated warnings. On one occasion **He** told a parable designed especially for **some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, while holding others in contempt**. **He** told of a **Pharisee** who stood up proudly in the Temple and thanked **God** for **his** own goodness and of a **tax-collector** who stood some distance away and was too ashamed of **his sin** to even look toward heaven, as in the customary praying posture for **Jews** at the time. Instead, **he** beat **his** chest and pleaded for **mercy**. **The despised tax collector went down to his home declared righteous**, **Yeshua** declared, whereas **the** highly respected **Pharisee** did not (**Luke 18:9-14**).¹⁷⁵

B Are trying to force you to be circumcised (6:12b). To reinforce **their** own brand of legalism, **the Judaizers** also tried to **force** others in the **Galatian** churches **to be circumcised** as necessary for salvation. But, like **the Pharisees**, **they** would **travel over land and sea to make one convert**. **And when they** succeeded, **they** would make **him twice as much a son of Gehenna as themselves (Matthew 23:15)**. No matter who says they are a believer, no one relies on **the flesh** and promotes any benefit apart from **Yeshua**. **Messiah** accomplished the perfect and complete work of salvation on the cross, and deeds of **the flesh**, no matter what they are, can add to what our **Lord** has done for us. Instead, every such **flesh**-motivated and **flesh**-oriented activity is an offense to **Ha'Shem** and brings **His** condemnation rather than **His** approval.¹⁷⁶

C Only so they will not be persecuted for the cross of Messiah (6:12c). **The Judaizers** claimed to be believers and follow **Messiah**. But the Great Sanhedrin (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lg - The Great Sanhedrin**), and **the Jews** in Jerusalem viewed **them** as part of the Church that preached salvation equals faith-plus-nothing. As such, **the Judaizers** would have

been **persecuted** by **their** fellow **Jews** who had rejected **Yeshua** as **the Messiah**. In reality, **the Judaizers** did not believe in grace, but instead, in deeds of **the flesh** as a means of salvation. Now, to keep from being **persecuted** by **the Jews** on the charge that **they** had embraced salvation in faith in **the cross of Messiah**, **they** were attempting to **force circumcision**, and finally all of **the 613 commandments** of Moshe upon the Gentiles in the churches in **Galatia**.

The Judaizers wanted to please **their Jewish** brothers who still clung to legalism and refused to have anything to do with the visible Church. To do this, **they** would have to show the anti-missionaries in Jerusalem that **they** were still obedient to **the 613 commandments** of Moshe and **circumcision**, which was the main issue at that time. The **Galatian** Gentiles had already succumbed to the **Jewish** festivals of **days and months and seasons and years (4:10)**, neither out of joy in sharing what **God** has given **the Jewish people**, nor out of spiritual identification with **them**, but out of fear induced by **Judaizers** who had convinced **them** that unless **they** did so, **Ha'Shem** would not accept **them**. More legalism would be added as the opportunity presented itself.¹⁷⁷

C For not even the circumcised perfectly **keep the 613 commandments of Torah themselves (6:13a)**. **The Judaizers** not only attempted to impose **circumcision** on the Gentiles in order to placate their **Jewish** brothers outside the Church and win **their** confidence in spite of the fact that they were identified with a body of people who taught grace, but also to cover up **their** own failure to fulfill obedience to **the 613 commandments** of Moshe.

B Yet they want to have you circumcised (6:13b). **The Judaizers** were nothing more than legalistic **Jews** who claimed to follow **Messiah**. But **they** were in the churches in **Galatia** like **wolves** in sheep's clothing (see the commentary on **Jude Ar - These People are Hidden Rocks at Your Love Feasts, Shepherds only Feeding Themselves, Clouds Without Rain**). In **Paul's** farewell to the **Ephesian** leaders, **he** predicted what would happen when **he** left churches that **he** had started: **I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Even from among yourselves will arise men speaking perversions, to draw the disciples away after themselves (Acts 20:29-30)**. Therefore, those apostate **Judaizers** were not coming out of the closet and admitting that **they** were not really believers. **They** were deceitful. **They** were not taking off their sheep's clothing, so to speak, and revealing that **they** were really **savage wolves**. No. **Their** plan was more sinister. **They** were "only" asking the Gentile **Galatians** to undergo full

conversion: **circumcision** and to pledge obedience to **the 613 commandments** of Moshe to achieve a right standing before **ADONAI**. In other words, legalism. Their goal was ultimately the rejection of the gospel itself. In **their** act of forcing, if possible, **circumcision** upon the Gentiles, **they** could **boast** to **their Jewish** brothers in Jerusalem, and demonstrate how supposedly zealous **they** were for the **Torah** after all.¹⁷⁸

A So that they may boast about your flesh (6:13c). Since the time when Cain offered his unacceptable offering to **YHVH** (see the commentary on **Genesis Bi - Cain and Abel**), mankind has used religion as a cover for sin. As **the Judaizers** demonstrate, it is possible to be extremely active in a Messianic synagogue or church and yet be morally and spiritually corrupt. Nowhere is hypocrisy easier or more dangerous than in **God's** work. And nowhere does it arouse **His** wrath more than where it is practiced in **His** name. Of **the Torah-teachers and Pharisees** who sat **on the seat of Moses**. **Yeshua** said: **So whatever they tell you, do and observe. But don't do what they do; for what they say, they do not do. They tie up heavy loads, hard to carry, and lay them on people's shoulders; but they themselves aren't willing to lift a finger to move them (Matthew 23:2-3).** The greatest burden **the Torah-teachers and Pharisees** put on **people's shoulders** was the unbearable burden of salvation by human effort. Because of **their** hypocrisy, it was no great burden to **them**, but to the conscientious **Jew** it was unimaginably frustrating and hopeless. Every person is faced with the choice between **boasting** in what they have done in **the flesh** and **boasting** in what **Yeshua Messiah** has done for them on the cross (see **Ci - May I Never Boast, Except in the Cross of our Lord Yeshua**).¹⁷⁹

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, How much we love **You**! How wonderful that **You** are our joy and we can boast in you! **You** are holy, **One [six-winged Seraphim] called out to another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is ADONAI-Tzva'ot [Lord of heaven's angelic armies]! The whole earth is full of His glory"** (Isaiah 6:3). **You** are the **One** I can run to when I have a problem. **ADONAI** is **my rock**, my fortress and my deliverer. **My God is my rock, in Him I take refuge, my shield, my horn of salvation, my stronghold (Psalm 18:3).** **You** are always with me to help me. **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you"** (Hebrews 13:5c). **You** are Awesome and I love to worship and follow **You** with all my heart. In the holy name of **Your son** and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*