

14 th August 2022	<p><i>FREEDOM FOR EVERYONE</i></p> <p>What counts is New Creation</p> <p>Conclusion to Galatians</p>
Key Passages	<p>Galatians 6:11-18</p> <p>2 Corinthians 5:17-21</p> <p>Romans 8:18-21</p>
Main Points	<p>After a joke about his handwriting (11 <i>following tradition, Paul takes the pen from his scribe to conclude his letter</i>), Paul becomes serious. He makes a final, hard-hitting point to warn against the Jewish Jesus-followers teaching that the new non-Jewish believers need to be circumcised. There's an underhand reason for this: the Jewish Jesus-followers will be able to tell their Jewish friends that these guys have become Jews, and not mention the gospel of Christ crucified which really brings the new people of God together. (12-13)</p> <p>For Jews (and Muslims) today, the Gospel of Christ crucified is blasphemous. Paul, however, states that he is not ashamed to preach the Gospel of a crucified Christ because this is the only means to salvation (14), <i>Freedom for Everyone</i>, the title of this series.</p> <p>The death of Christ is the most important event in the history of the world. It signals a mighty end and resurrection signals a miraculous new beginning, the possibility of a new start for EVERYONE: a new heart; a new mind; a new life. But much more than that, the cross marks the beginning of the end of the Old Creation and the resurrection the start of a New Creation. So, Paul says, whether someone is circumcised or uncircumcised is a non-issue (15-16). What matters is New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Romans 8: 18-21). The Cross (death and resurrection) of Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, alone brings this about. From Creation and Fall, everything pointed to the cross. Now everything points back to the cross and forward to the renewal of the whole of Creation. Those who believe this are the true "Israel of God." The people of God ... the Church ... the new people of God.</p> <p>All Paul's writings show the cross was central in his life and preaching. Here, he contrasts the physical mark of circumcision with the marks he has from persecutions resulting from his fearless witness to the cross (17).</p> <p>But he ends in warm, conciliatory fashion, praying God's grace on the community and recognising his family relationship with them all (18).</p>
Discussion questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think we can be guilty of finding ways to avoid sharing the simple message of the Cross <i>in order to avoid the offence it causes and the 'persecution' it still brings</i>. 2. Do you think Christians are sometimes guilty of making secondary issues more important than the Gospel of the cross? For example: buildings, rituals, styles of worship, dress etc. etc. 3. Is it okay to have differences between us as the people of God?

	<p>Try a two-fold test: i. do they seriously divide us? ii. Do they detract from the Gospel? (the fourth century Nicene Creed has been held across ALL main denominations of the Church both East and West)</p>
This week	<p>1. Recognise and experience the power of the Cross alone to renew and transform i. our individual lives, ii. the Church which is the body of Christ and iii. the whole of Creation.</p> <p>2. Through our own experience of the Cross let's be emboldened to share the Gospel with others, whatever the immediate consequence, knowing that this is key to growing the Church and bringing in the Kingdom of God.</p>