

Galatians 6:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

Analysis

As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. Paul exposes the Judaizers' motives. "As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh" (hosoi thelousin euprosōpēsai en sarki, ὅσοι θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκὶ)—as many as want to make a good showing, present well, look good in the flesh. Euprosōpeō (εὐπροσωπέω) means to have a good face/appearance. They want impressive external religious display.

"They constrain you to be circumcised" (houtoi anankazousin hymas peritemnesthai, οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι)—these are compelling, pressuring you to be circumcised. "Only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ" (monon hina mē tō staurō tou Christou diōkōntai, μόνον ἵνα μὴ τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διώκωνται)—only so they won't be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Paul reveals their real motive: cowardice. Proclaiming Christ crucified alone (without requiring law-keeping) brings persecution from Jews. Adding circumcision removes this offense, making Christianity appear as Jewish sect rather than new covenant community transcending law. They sacrifice gospel truth for social acceptance.

Historical Context

Jews fiercely opposed Christianity's inclusion of Gentiles without requiring circumcision and law-keeping (Acts 15:1-5, 21:20-21). Christians faced persecution from Jews and eventually Romans. Judaizers apparently sought to avoid this by making Christianity more Jewish—requiring circumcision, downplaying the cross's scandal. This removed the offense: if Gentiles become Jewish proselytes through circumcision, Christianity is just another Jewish party, not radical new creation. Paul exposes this compromise: they value safety over truth, good appearance over gospel integrity. Persecution tests who truly treasures the gospel versus who values comfort more.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. The Judaizers wanted to 'make a fair show in the flesh'—where are you compromising gospel clarity to gain social respectability?
2. Paul says they pushed circumcision 'only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross'—what gospel truths are you downplaying to avoid cultural backlash?
3. When religious leaders emphasize external markers to avoid the cross's offense, what does that reveal about their confidence in Christ's sufficiency?

Interlinear Text

ὅσοι	θέλουσιν	εὐπροσωπῆσαι	ἐν	σαρκὶ	οὗτοι	
As many as	desire	to make a fair shew	in	the flesh	they	
G3745	G2309	G2146	G1722	G4561	G3778	
ἀναγκάζουσιν	ὑμᾶς	περιτέμνεσθαι	μόνον	ἴνα	μὴ	τῷ
constrain	you	to be circumcised	only	G2443	G3361	G3588
G315	G5209	G4059	G3440			
σταυρῷ	τοῦ	Χριστοῦ		διώκωνται		
for the cross	G3588	of Christ		they should suffer persecution		
G4716		G5547		G1377		

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 5:11 (Cross): And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

Acts 15:1 (Parallel theme): And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

Colossians 2:23 (Parallel theme): Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

2 Corinthians 11:13 (References Christ): For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

Luke 16:15 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Galatians 2:3 (Parallel theme): But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: