

Galatians 6:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Analysis

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Paul pronounces blessing. "And as many as walk according to this rule" (καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τοῦτῳ στοιχήσουσιν, καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν)—and as many as will walk by this rule/standard. Kanōn (κανών) means measuring rod, standard, rule—we get "canon" from this. The rule is: new creation in Christ, not circumcision (verse 15). Stoicheō (στοιχέω) means to walk in line, keep in step (same verb as 5:25).

"Peace be on them, and mercy" (εἰρήνη επ' αὐτοὺς καὶ εἰρήνη ἐπ' αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔλεος)—peace upon them and mercy. "And upon the Israel of God" (καὶ επὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ Θεοῦ). This phrase is debated: does it mean

1. believing Jews (ethnic Israel who believe in Christ), or
2. all believers (spiritual Israel, the church)? Context favors the latter: throughout Galatians, Paul argues that faith-believers (Jew and Gentile together) are Abraham's seed (3:7, 29), heirs according to promise. "The Israel of God" is the true covenant people: all who walk by faith in Christ as new creations, not merely ethnic descent.

Historical Context

"Israel of God" parallels "children of Abraham" (3:7), "Jerusalem above" (4:26), and "new creation" (6:15)—all referring to the church as God's covenant community. This redefinition of Israel as all believers in Christ (Romans 9:6-8, Philippians 3:3) was revolutionary and remains controversial. Paul's blessing echoes Psalm 125:5, 128:6. Peace and mercy summarize covenant blessings: reconciliation with God (peace) and unmerited favor (mercy). These belong to all who walk by faith in Christ, the true Israel, not limited to ethnic Jews or circumcised proselytes. This theological move transformed understanding of God's people.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does identifying the church as 'the Israel of God' affect your understanding of the Old Testament promises and covenant?
2. What 'rule' or 'canon' governs your Christian life—external religious performance or internal new creation reality in Christ?
3. How do peace and mercy characterize the life of those who walk according to Paul's gospel of grace through faith?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ὅσοι	τῷ	κανόνι	τούτῳ	στοιχήσουσιν	εἰρήνῃ
And	as many as	G3588	according to	this	walk	peace
G2532	G3745		G2583	G5129	G4748	G1515

ἐπὶ	αὐτοὺς	καὶ	ἔλεος	καὶ	ἐπὶ	τὸν	Ἰσραὴλ	τοῦ	θεοῦ
be on	them	And	mercy	And	be on	G3588	the Israel	G3588	of God
G1909	G846	G2532	G1656	G2532	G1909		G2474		G2316

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 3:29 (Parallel theme): And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Philippians 3:3 (References God): For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Romans 4:12 (Parallel theme): And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Hosea 1:10 (References God): Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

Isaiah 45:25 (References Israel): In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

Psalms 73:1 (References God): Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.

John 1:47 (References Israel): Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!