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Galatians

As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:9

There is a great divide between scholars concerning the words, "As we have said before." Because of Paul's seemingly great surprise at what has transpired in Galatia (read verse 6 to see this), it seems to some scholars that it is unlikely he had any idea that this turning away from the truth so quickly would have been possible. Therefore, the "before" appears to be speaking about the preceding sentence (read verse 8 to see this). In other words, "before" indicates the substance of verse 8 and what he says in verse 9 is a repetition for stress.

However, other scholars look to the structure of this verse and adamantly suppose that he is speaking of a previous warning which is not recorded elsewhere. Vincent's Word Studies, for example, state -

"Not to be referred to the preceding verse, since the compound verb would be too strong, and now in the following clause points to an earlier time, a previous visit."

What seems the most likely is that the first case is correct. The incredulity of Paul in the opening verses of his letter appears to indicate that he was taken completely by surprise by what has transpired. The repetition for stress is a common means of expression found throughout the Bible.

In Exodus 25, the Lord describes the construction of the ark of the testimony. In verse 16, He then says, "And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you." Then, just a few verses later, after describing the mercy seat, He repeats the thought with, "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you." This is seen again and again in Scripture. It is a grammatical device called parallelism. It is a repetition for emphasis.

The Lord used this type of repetition as well -

"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."
Matthew 18:18-20

The substance of the words changes a bit, as it does now from Paul's pen, but the intent of the words, with their accompanying emphasis, remains the same. The changes in Paul's words are of *substance*, but not of *intent* -

8 - But even if we, or an angel from heaven, (the absolute negation of anyone after the original)

9 - As we have said before (speaking of the original)

9 - so now I say again (emphasis)

8 - preach any other gospel to you (from the absolute negation of anyone else)

9 - if anyone preaches any other gospel (who would dare!)

8 - than what we have preached to you, (what Paul originally preached)

9 - to you than what you have received, (what they received from Paul)

8 - let him be accursed. (stated penalty)

9 - let him be accursed. (stated penalty)

Life application: If you come across difficult passages in Scripture, there is a whole host of sound resources that you can refer to for an explanation of them. If these scholars are at polar opposites concerning a conclusion, then you must refer to your own knowledge of Scripture in order to make the best possible conclusion concerning the issue. The more familiar you are with the rest of Scripture, the better chance you will have of coming to the correct conclusion. Also, making diagrams and comparisons of what is being analyzed may help in the decision making process.

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. Galatians 1:10

Paul begins this verse with the Greek *arti gar* - "For now." The use of the adverb *arti*, rather than the more common word for now, *nun*, is used to indicate "*here-and-now; exactly now, in the immediate present*" (HELPS Word Studies). James Strong says that it indicates to "draw close together." For this reason, these words of Paul are probably not speaking of his former life in Judaism which is just now being contrasted with his conduct in Christ. He has been converted for almost a quarter of a century at this point.

Rather, he is making an immediate connection with the words he just expressed -

"As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."

The "right now" attitude which he is expressing gives the thought of, "It is necessary to leave off with my usual way of greeting a church in my letter and to be stern and direct. If the matter weren't so urgent, I would give a happy and friendly greeting. However, at this time, the matter is so urgent that it is just not possible."

The urgency has prompted him to simply open the letter and move directly into a curse upon those would attempt to "persuade men." The word "persuade" is not the intent here, though. It is better translated as "seek approval of." Paul is concerned about the Galatians looking for the approval of the false apostles; something he was completely unwilling to do. In contrast, he would rather seek God's approval than that of any man.

In addition to seeking approval, he next asks, "Or do I seek to please men?" The false apostles were doing just that. If they were seeking to please God, they would hold fast to the true gospel of Jesus Christ - salvation by grace through faith. Instead, they were seeking to please men through the observance of matters of the law; a law which was set aside by the work of Christ. This leads directly to his final proclamation of this verse -

"For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ."

Paul had come out of the Old Testament system; the Law of Moses. This was certainly displeasing to those who were still under it. But that law was fulfilled. It was annulled, it was set aside, and it was nailed to the cross. If he were a men-pleaser, he would still be pursuing works of the law, and he would still be teaching others to do those works - "Don't eat!" "Don't touch!" "Observe the Sabbath!" "Get circumcised!"

But because Christ had fulfilled those and established a New Covenant of grace, Paul determined that he would "be a bondservant of Christ" rather than under the bondage of the law. He had a new Master and his face was set on pleasing Him. There is only one choice that is set before man - either please men through some type of work and thus reject Christ, or follow Christ and willingly receive what He has done, putting aside the works of the flesh.

Life application: Galatians is given to show us the utter severity of not receiving and adhering to the finished work of Christ. It is only through a complete submission to Him that we can be saved. We must realize that there is NO WORK which we can do in order to please God except to receive the completed work of His Son. This is why Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." John 6:29

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. Galatians 1:11

Paul is now going to defend the message he relayed to the Galatians. In doing so, he calls them "brethren." The word is not without significance. They had departed from the true gospel and instead started following a false one. And yet, he still acknowledges that they are saved. The term "brethren" shows this. The correction then is for those who follow. If they receive a false gospel, they will never be saved. But the salvation of those who first received the true gospel is not in question.

After Paul pronounced his curse on anyone who would present a false gospel, one contrary to the one he first proclaimed to them, he then followed up with, "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (verse 10).

Verse 11 logically follows after that. He has shown that his intent was not to seek the approval of men, but rather God. As he was so motivated, he truly was "a bondservant of Christ." If so, then what he preaches is logically what was

preached to him and it was the message of Christ. It was "not according to man." This corresponds to what he said in verse 1, and this is the first in a list of arguments that he will make concerning the gospel he preaches. As Charles Ellicott notes -

"The Apostle now enters at length upon his personal defence against his opponents. He does this by means of an historical retrospect of his career, proving by an exhaustive process the thesis with which he starts that the doctrine taught by him comes from a divine source, and possesses the divine sanction. My doctrine is not human, but divine; it could not be otherwise."

Where his doctrine came from will be discussed throughout the rest of this chapter and also chapter 2. It will not be from his earlier years (studying as a Pharisee). It won't be from those who were there at his conversion. Instead, it will come by revelation while in alone in Arabia. It also won't come from the other apostles, as he will defend in his words. In fact, they were unaware of the scope of Paul's ministry for quite some time. Eventually though, they will acknowledge him as a true apostle and they will confirm his ministry to the Gentiles.

These points, and many others, will be seen in the verses ahead. As the other apostles confirmed his ministry and his apostleship, then it had to have been a gospel which came directly from the Lord. No other source had been a factor in what he preached, and yet he was fully accepted by the church leaders and also by proofs of the Holy Spirit.

Life application: It needs to be asserted and reasserted that if the letters of Paul are dismissed by the church, then there is no Gentile church. Only he carries the message of our being brought into the commonwealth of Israel. Further, if Paul is dismissed, then Luke must be dismissed because Luke testifies of Paul in Acts. If Luke is dismissed, then the Gospel of Luke must be tossed out, and thus the other two synoptic gospels are also in question. Further, Peter speaks of Paul in one of his epistles, confirming Paul's letters as Scripture. Therefore, Peter must be tossed out. If Peter is tossed out, then John and Jude must also be tossed out as their writings are dependent on the truth of Peter's apostleship. Therefore, there is no

New Testament at all. Either Paul is who he claimed he is, or we have no hope at all. Shun anyone who rejects the gospel which Paul proclaims.

For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:12

This verse further bolsters Paul's statement of verse 1 concerning His apostleship which was "...not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead." The words he gives now are to show the contrast between his teachings and those of the false apostles who had come into the churches in Galatia and infected them with the doctrines of mere men.

They had first received their false teachings from man, or they had made them up. Either way, the message that those in Galatia had received was of human origin. Paul stood in contrast to this. The "neither" and the "nor" of this verse both independently stem back to the preceding verse. If we tie them independently to that verse, the fuller meaning of what Paul is saying can be seen -

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man...."

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man; nor was I taught *it*,"

In the first instance, he is says that the gospel he preached was not received from man. There was no human origin involved in what he presented to the Galatians. If not human, then it was of divine Source. "The gospel is not from any human as it had come to you."

In the second instance, he was not actually taught this gospel that he preached as if it were of human origin. "The gospel is not from any human as it came to me."

Rather, its Source was "through the revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul had been converted on the road to Damascus. At that time, and then for the next three days as he waited to be healed of his blindness, he was able to process what had happened, coming to the realization that all of the Scripture he had been trained in and knew so well pointed to Christ. After this, Ananias came as directed and we read this -

"Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Ananias did not give him any instruction; instead, he simply obeyed the Lord and proved the Lord's message by restoring Paul's eyesight. Even after this, there is no note of human instruction for Paul. Instead, the account simply states the following -

"Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

¹⁹ So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

²⁰ Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God."

When Paul was strengthened, he immediately went out preaching the Christ; the gospel message. There was no need for him to be taught by a human because the revelation, working through the knowledge he already possessed, and through the proofs of the encounter with the risen Christ, were sufficient to make the gospel known from that point on. Other instances of visions from the Lord are noted as well, but this first divine revelation was enough for Paul to understand and proclaim the gospel to others.

Before going any further, we must ask ourselves, "If Paul's words are through the revelation of Jesus Christ, then shouldn't we look for our doctrine in Paul's letters

and not from the misguided teachings of others?" His commission is clearly laid out in Acts. If it is an untruthful account, then the entire book of Acts is suspect and is to be disregarded. However, if Paul's revelation (and thus his calling as an apostle) is true, then his words must be what the Bible portrays them as, which is the very word of God.

Life application:

- 1) Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. This is noted several times in Scripture.
- 2) This is now the Gentile-led church age.
- 3) Therefore, Paul's writings are doctrine for this dispensation of time. They are prescriptive and they are to be accepted as such. Should we fail to accept them as he intends, then we also disregard the One who speaks through him.