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Galatians

...(for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), Galatians 2:8

This verse is parenthetical, and it is rightly placed that way by the NKJV. It is an explanation of the preceding verse which said, "...when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised *was* to Peter." What Peter had done through the power of the Holy Spirit was also accomplished by Paul, demonstrating and proving his apostolic commission. Further, Paul's words place himself on the same level, in all ways, as that of Peter.

Again, he is doing this for a reason. He is demonstrating to those in Galatia that his ministry is valid, and therefore the gospel message that he preached to them is valid. The purpose of his words is to refute the false brethren who had crept in and proclaimed a gospel of works, which is no gospel at all. Peter's name is being brought in for two separate reasons. First, because he was well known as an apostle with great authority; and secondly, because of what Paul will show about him in the verses ahead.

Taken together, these points will verify that Paul's message is sound and is to be listened to and adhered to. To demonstrate that what Paul did is comparable to

everything that Peter did, the book of Acts meticulously records their workings. Following them and placing them side by side shows the truth of Paul's words -

Act/Chapter

1. Peter's work began by the Holy Spirit (2)
1. Paul's work began by the Holy Spirit (13)

2. Peter was thought to be drunk and & then explains himself (2)
2. Paul was thought to be mad and then explains himself (26)

3. Peter's first sermon begins new section of book (2)
3. Paul's first sermon begins new section of book (13)

4. Peter has a time of work, preaching, and then persecution (2-11)
4. Paul has a time of work, preaching, and then persecution (13-19)

5. Peter has trouble after healing a man lame from birth (3)
5. Paul has trouble after healing a man lame from birth (14)
6. Peter says, "Silver and gold have I none" (3)
6. Paul says, "I have coveted no one's silver or gold" (20)

7. Peter's shadow heals (5)
7. Paul's handkerchief heals (19)

8. Peter is arrested in the temple and taken to Sanhedrin (4, 5)

8. Paul is arrested in the temple and taken to Sanhedrin (21-23)

9. Peter confronts Simon the sorcerer (8)

9. Paul confronts Elymas the sorcerer (13)

10. Peter performs an exorcism (5)

10. Paul performs an exorcism (16)

11. Peter raises Tabitha from the dead (9)

11. Paul raises Eutychus from the dead (20)

12. Peter lays hands for reception of Spirit (8)

12. Paul lays hands for reception of Spirit (19)

13. Peter worshipped (10)

13. Paul worshipped (14)

14. Peter imprisoned with miraculous escape (12)

14. Paul imprisoned with miraculous escape (16)

15. Angel stood by Peter (12)

15. Angel stood by Paul (27)

16. Peter called by vision to preach in Caesarea (10)

16. Paul called by vision to preach in Macedonia (16)

17. Peter's success brings Jewish jealousy (5)

17. Paul's success brings Jewish jealousy (13)

18. Peter heals the bedridden Aeneas (9)

18. Paul heals the bedridden father of Publius (28)

19. Peter ordains deacons (6)

19. Paul ordains elders (14)

20. Peter is "filled with the Spirit" (4)

20. Paul is "filled with the Spirit" (13)

Peter (twice) the Apostle to the Jews

Paul (four times) the Apostle to the Gentiles

1-12 - Peter mentioned 57 times (Simon 4) // Paul mentioned 0 (Saul 21)

13-28 - Peter is mentioned once (Simon once) // Paul mentioned 132 (Saul twice)

Life application: If you know someone who is caught up in the legalism of "returning to the law" such as in an aberrant sect or a Judaizing messianic church/synagogue, your greatest weapon in correcting their error is to show them, directly from the word, the movement of the focus of Acts from Peter to Paul. Then take them to Galatians for correction. If they still won't pay heed, show them in Hebrews where it explicitly says that the law is obsolete, annulled, and set aside. If they still won't listen, then you have done your job. They are brainwashed and would rather listen to men than God's word. Drop them from your fellowship, but not from your prayers.

...and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Galatians 2:9

These words follow naturally after the parenthetical insert of verse 8. To show the logical sequence of thought, follow the verses without the parenthesis -

"But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter ... and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised."

Paul's words show the elevation of his apostolic ministry to the same level as that of Peter; recognized as such by "James, Cephas, and John." James is named first as the leader of the church at this time. It was he who rendered the final decision at the Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15. Next "Cephas" is mentioned. This is Peter's other name. He, along with John, was a special part of Jesus' earthly ministry. Together, they were considered as leaders in their own right.

James is mentioned first when a particular act of the church is referred to. However, Peter or "Cephas" is mentioned first by Paul when speaking of the missionary function of the church. Concerning these three, Paul notes that they "seemed to be pillars." Vincent's Word Studies says that this is better translated as, "who are in repute as pillars." The term "seemed to be" gives the impression that such really wasn't the case. However, they were the pillars, and their reputation noted this.

The word "pillars" gives the obvious mental picture of those who support a body or an organization. They would be those who kept the organization strong and properly structured. In other words, Paul's naming of these three is intended to show that these great representatives were in full approval of his ministry. They

"perceived the grace that had been given to" him. Christ had set his seal of approval on Paul and his ministry, and they therefore gave both him "and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship."

In the Bible, the right hand is the prominent one. It signifies approval, power, and authority. In their eyes, Paul's apostolic ministry was fully qualified to receive this status. Barnabas is mentioned here because it was he who traveled with Paul and who helped establish the church at Galatia. Therefore, the message these two carried to them was fully sanctioned by the leaders of the church. They were to go "to the Gentiles" while James, Cephas, and John would continue to evangelize "the circumcised."

Paul has carefully and methodically shown that his ministry was fully approved of by the very leaders of the church. If this is true, then anyone who showed up afterwards with a different message could not claim that Paul's message was invalid. He is building his case against the false apostles and their false message which had come to infect the church at Galatia. This is important for us to understand because this letter is included in the Bible. It is a portion of the record and witness concerning the ministry of Paul to the Gentile-led church. To dismiss Paul is to stand opposed to the doctrines of Christ Himself.

Life application: Don't believe the false teachers of today who dismiss the words of Paul as having been "corrupted" by some later body (such as the RCC) who had an agenda to pervert the word of God. This is not an uncommon teaching among Judaizers, but it is without any biblical or historical support at all. Paul's words have been accurately maintained and stand as the necessary instruction for the church age. To state otherwise is to call into question the competence of the Lord who has given these words to 2000 years of church history.

They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. Galatians 2:10

News Flash: This verse must be kept in its proper context.

Paul has just acknowledged that he was the designated Apostle to the Gentiles. In this acknowledgment, he shows that he and Barnabas were given "the right hand of fellowship" from James, Cephas, and John - the pillars of the church in Jerusalem. In this capacity, he was ordained as the one to go forth, evangelizing the Gentiles. However, they asked that he not forget one important thing which is "that we should remember the poor."

The "we" in this verse means Paul and Barnabas. The context shows this is not a general "we" meaning the whole church. Additionally, the "we" was to extend to those who they evangelized, meaning the Gentiles. Further, there was intent behind this. The "poor" is not speaking of the poor in general, but the poor among the Jewish believers. Paul was being asked to make an effort to bind these categories of Christians together through this remembrance of the poor.

The admonition was given by these pillars of the church for a couple of reasons. The first is that there may be charges that Paul had such a disposition towards the Gentiles that he would forget his own Jewish roots altogether. And secondly, that even if he never forgot his roots, they desired that he would be willing to actively bless those from whom the Gentiles received their spiritual heritage.

The record shows that Paul was careful to take this to heart. His later dealings in Acts, Romans, and 1 & 2 Corinthians shows that he was faithful to this charge. His words in Romans perfectly reflect this attitude -

"But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶ For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. ²⁷ It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things." Romans 15:25-27

Concerning our News Flash above, the context here does not concern assisting the poor elsewhere. This does not mean that it is wrong to help them, and other admonitions in the Bible show that helping the poor is a notable thing to do. But this verse is especially dealing with the poor who are Christians, and in particular those from whom our spiritual heritage is derived. At this time, it was Jews; later in church history, it applies to those who have carried the message on to other people groups.

Paul finishes his thought on this by saying that it was "the very thing which I also was eager to do." Vincent's Word Studies notes, "Lit. which, this very thing. The expression is peculiarly emphatic, and brings out the contrast between Judaizing hostility and Paul's spirit of loving zeal."

As always, Paul's words have intent. What he relays in this verse is directed towards the Galatians in particular. They had turned their allegiances towards the false apostles and away from Paul and his true gospel message. One of the points which Paul uses to show that the Judaizers were concerned with power and control rather than true evangelism is that they failed to follow through with this one admonition of the leaders of the church. Paul, however, never failed to adhere to it.

Life application: Context is king. When someone cites a verse such as this one, it must be carefully evaluated in order to ensure that its actual purpose is understood and adhered to. Too many churches will use a verse like this as an appeal to a social gospel for helping the poor. Although helping the poor is certainly a wonderful thing, we are not to tear verses out of context in order to justify our personal agendas.

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; Galatians 2:11

In verse 1:18, Paul introduced Peter into the epistle. He brought him in again in 2:7, 2:8, and 2:9 (calling him Cephas in verse 9). The naming of Peter and the

words used to describe him were not without specific intent. Instead, that intent now begins to be realized. Paul will show that his gospel message is correct by showing how Peter, one of the great pillars of the church, actually departed from it. Thus, the correction was to be made in him, not in Paul.

There is a dispute between some texts as to whether the name "Peter" or "Cephas" was originally used in verse 11. Both refer to the same individual, and so it doesn't change the overall intent, but Paul probably used "Cephas" here. This would be to tie him back to his Jewish name and identity, which then is a connection to the entire intent of the passage.

Either way though, he begins with, "Now when Peter had come to Antioch." This was probably shortly after Paul's visit to Jerusalem and the council's decision which was rendered in Acts 15. Antioch was in a Gentile area and counted many Gentiles among the roles of the church. While there at Antioch, Peter's actions (which will be explained) necessitated Paul to withstand "him to his face." In other words, there would be a dispute which required an open admonishment because of a failure to adhere to the gospel. As Paul says, "...because he was to be blamed."

The word for "blamed" here is *kataginóskó*, and it is more appropriately translated as "condemned." The actions of Peter brought about their own condemnation. The explanation of the thought is actually clearly given by Paul in Galatians 5 -

"Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴ You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Galatians 5:2-4

Like being circumcised in order to obtain God's favor, what Peter will be described as doing in this account is actually the setting aside the grace of Christ. It is a self-condemning act. Paul will have to correct him on this.

As a side note, there have been numerous bizarre attempts by scholars to change the severity of what occurs in this account into one of a less serious nature. This is certainly because of the status of Peter. Some say that it is not the same Peter, but rather a lesser disciple. The fact that Paul repeatedly brought Peter into the account, giving both names at one time or another, shows this to be ludicrous.

Some have tried to assign Paul as the wrongdoer by showing open hostility to Peter and asserting that he was to be "condemned" for his actions. In essence, he was actually pointing the finger at God who selected Peter as an apostle and who revealed Christ through him. Others have tried to turn this account into a metaphorical battle between Judaism and Christianity. And others have blamed both apostles by saying that one was in error by his actions and the other was in error for his open rebuke of those actions.

All of these (and any other such nutty commentary) are entirely unfounded. The account of what occurs is clear, it is precise, and it is to be taken at face value. Paul was in the right, he will correct Peter because of his failures, and the account is being relayed to the Galatians to show them that their actions are just as worthy of condemnation as the great pillar Peter.

Life application: Keep away from nutty commentaries and nutty teachers who attempt to justify the great sin of setting aside the grace of Christ. Instead, hold fast to it as it is your very life and your connection to God through Him.

...for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. Galatians 2:12

Verse 12 now begins to explain the comment of verse 11 where Paul said he withstood Peter to his face. The reason why is because "before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles." Why these men came from James isn't stated. They may have been visitors, or they may have been appointed to go

and check on doctrine, or for some other reason. The fact that they came from James, not why they came from James, is what Paul focuses on.

Before their arrival, Peter did what would otherwise ceremonially defile him according to the Jewish customs; he would eat with the Gentiles. He knew from a previous encounter with Gentiles that God had accepted them as they were and that he could not be defiled by them. This is found in the account of Acts 10 & 11. However, Peter failed to take the lesson to heart and to apply it in all circumstances.

Instead, "when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision." Charles Ellicott notes that, "The Greek expression brings out the timid and gradual withdrawal, ending in complete separation." Peter didn't have the intestinal fortitude to stand firmly on the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Instead, he was more worried about the perception of him in the eyes of the Jews who came from James, and so he slowly withdrew himself from them.

The Greek word for "withdrew" comes from the idea of drawing in something like a sail, or in the contracting of fingers. He closed himself off and backed away from the Gentiles he had been so cozy with before these Jewish believers came. He feared that they would find fault in him. He may have further feared that they would report it back to the church in Jerusalem.

Paul gives this account of Peter now to show those in Galatia that there is a proper adherence to the gospel, and then there is pursuing a false path as well. Peter had chosen the latter and he became an object lesson for Paul to teach them (and thus us!) the truth of the gospel of grace.

Life application: Are we really willing to stand on the gospel of grace and to never waiver in our convictions concerning it? Let us never shrink back from the truth of this wonderful gift which came at such a high price. Christ fulfilled the law and died in fulfillment of it. What more could we add to that?