

Galatians 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Analysis

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. Paul answers an accusation: that he's a people-pleaser who softens the gospel for Gentile audiences. "Do I now persuade men, or God?" (the Greek syntax is difficult—likely "Am I now seeking human approval or God's?"). The obvious answer: God's approval alone matters. "Or do I seek to please men?" (ē zētō anthrōpois areskein) asks directly what motivates him.

"For if I yet pleased men" (ei eti anthrōpois ēreskon) suggests past accusations that Paul once preached circumcision (5:11). "Yet" or "still" (eti) implies change. Before Damascus, Pharisee Saul pleased men by persecuting the church; now Apostle Paul pleases God by proclaiming free grace. The conditional structure makes pleasing men and serving Christ mutually exclusive.

"I should not be the servant of Christ" (Christou doulos ouk an ēmēn)—doulos (δοῦλος) means "slave," not mere servant. Christ's slaves have no freedom to accommodate the message to human preference. The Judaizers' gospel was digestible to Jewish sensibilities; Paul's gospel of grace offended Jewish pride and Gentile moral philosophy. Gospel faithfulness costs popularity.

Historical Context

The Judaizers likely accused Paul of teaching circumcision to Jews (Acts 16:3, 21:20-24) while omitting it for Gentiles—theological inconsistency for pragmatic success. Paul's letters show he became "all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22) in nonessentials but never compromised gospel core. His refusal to circumcise Titus (2:3) demonstrated principle over popularity. In patronage culture, teachers depended on pleasing benefactors for financial support. Paul's tent-making ministry (Acts 18:3) freed him from this pressure, allowing prophetic boldness.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Where are you tempted to soften biblical truth to gain approval, avoid conflict, or maintain relationships?
2. In what ways does financial independence or dependence affect your freedom to speak unpopular truth?
3. What does it mean practically to be Christ's slave rather than men's servant in your workplace, family, or church?

Interlinear Text

Ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώποις πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν ἢ ζητῶ
now **For** **men** **do I** **or** ^{G3588} **God** **or** **do I seek**
G737 G1063 G444 G3982 G2228 G2316 G2228 G2212

ἀνθρώποις ἡρεσκον εἰ γὰρ ἔστι ἀνθρώποις ἡρεσκον
men **I** **if** **For** **yet** **men** **I**
G444 G700 G1487 G1063 G2089 G444 G700

Χριστοῦ δοῦλος οὐκ ἂν ἤμην
of Christ **the servant** **not** **I should** **be**
G5547 G1401 G3756 G302 G2252

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 2:4 (References God): But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

Acts 5:29 (References God): Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Ephesians 6:6 (References Christ): Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

James 4:4 (References God): Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Matthew 22:16 (References God): And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

Colossians 3:22 (References God): Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

Romans 2:29 (References God): But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

1 John 3:9 (References God): Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Romans 1:1 (References Christ): Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Romans 2:8 (Parallel theme): But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

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