

Galatians 1:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Analysis

Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Paul interrupts narrative with solemn oath. "Now the things which I write unto you" (ha de graphō hymin, ἀ δὲ γράφω ὑμῖν) refers to preceding autobiography (verses 13-19). "Behold" (idou, οἶδού) arrests attention—"look, pay attention!" "Before God, I lie not" (enōpion tou theou hoti ou pseudomai, ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι) invokes divine witness. Enōpion ("in the presence of") places oath under God's scrutiny.

Why this oath? The Judaizers must have challenged Paul's account, claiming he distorted facts about Jerusalem contact or misrepresented his relationship with apostles. Ancient culture valued honor and shame; calling someone a liar was serious accusation. Paul stakes his integrity on God's omniscience—if he lies, God knows and will judge. The oath's seriousness shows the controversy's intensity.

Similar oaths appear in Romans 9:1, 2 Corinthians 1:23, 11:31, 1 Timothy 2:7—Paul regularly invoked divine witness when opponents questioned his testimony. This wasn't casual oath-taking (forbidden Matthew 5:34-37) but solemn legal testimony. When gospel truth and apostolic authority are at stake, extraordinary measures are justified. Paul's willingness to invoke divine judgment demonstrates either complete honesty or stunning blasphemy.

Historical Context

Ancient legal systems allowed oaths invoking deity as witness and guarantee of truth. Roman law, Jewish law, and common practice across cultures used oaths for serious matters. Perjury offended the god invoked and incurred divine wrath. Paul's oath would have carried weight with both Jewish and Gentile readers. The Judaizers apparently questioned Paul's account of minimal Jerusalem contact and independent gospel reception—if they could prove he learned from apostles and deviated from their teaching, his authority collapsed. Paul's oath raises stakes: either he tells truth or he's damnable liar invoking God's name falsely. The Galatians must decide: trust Paul's sworn testimony or the Judaizers' accusations.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How seriously do you take truth-telling, knowing God witnesses every word and will hold you accountable?
2. When is it appropriate to invoke God's witness to confirm truth, and how does this differ from forbidden oath-taking?
3. What does Paul's need to defend his integrity teach about maintaining credibility in ministry and leadership?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-------|---------|----------|--------|---------|-------|-------|
| ἃ | δὲ | γράφω | ὑμῖν | ἰδού, | ἐνώπιον | τοῦ | θεοῦ |
| the things which | Now | I write | unto you | behold | before | | God |
| G3739 | G1161 | G1125 | G5213 | G2400 | G1799 | G3588 | G2316 |

ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| G3754 | not | I lie |
| G3756 | G5574 | |

Additional Cross-References

Romans 9:1 (Parallel theme): I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

2 Corinthians 11:31 (References God): The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

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