

“For If I Build Up Again ...”

“... those things I once destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor” (Gal. 2:18). This verse is part of a section that seems to baffle folks a bit. Paul records his rebuke to Peter for his hypocrisy for first fellowshiping Gentiles, then withdrawing that fellowship from them. Paul asked, *“If thou being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?”* (Gal. 2:19). The uncertainty is, were verses 15-21 part of his rebuke of Peter, or did Paul abruptly turn from that rebuke to address Galatians? Likely these verses were part of that rebuke but we cannot affirm that with complete certainty. There is no doubt that the verses are inspired: the only question is, for whom were they intended, Peter or the Galatians?

When Paul wrote, *“we being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law,”* the passage is but an echo of Peter’s own words in Jerusalem. *“... and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why make ye trial of God that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus, in like manner as they”* (Gal. 2:15f; Acts 15:9-11).

Now Paul does as so often he does in argumentation: he asks and then answers his own question. *“But, if while we sought be justified in Christ, we ourselves also were found sinners, is Christ a minister of sin? God forbid”* (Gal. 2:17). Peter had believed in Christ but by his deeds, proved himself a transgressor. He was Christ’s but Christ WAS NOT responsible for Peter’s sin. Here is a compelling argument AGAINST Calvin’s doctrine of Predestination and Foreordination. Paul argues that Christ is not responsible for our sins, a point that could not be made if men only acted as they are decreed to act! Calvinists try to free God from the guilt their doctrine would put Him in were it true, but they cannot. If man is simply an instrument in God’s hands, then it is God, not man, who must ultimately bear the blame for sin. But Paul denied that. Peter had erred, but it was not Christ who was responsible for his error: it was Peter. And, when we sin, it is we who must shoulder the guilt of sin. Christ is not a minister of sin!

And so he says, *“For if I build up against those things I once destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor.”* Were Paul correct in preaching the gospel, he was wrong when he opposed it! Were he right in opposing the gospel; he was wrong in propagating it! In essence, if Peter was right in eating with

Gentiles before men came from Jerusalem, he was wrong in separating himself from them. If he was right in separating from them, he was wrong with having eaten with them. Either way, opposite actions showed Peter to be a transgressor, just as opposite action in Paul's life proved him a transgressor, a fact which he freely acknowledged, calling himself the chief of sinners because he persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. 15:9).

Obviously, in a personal analysis, there is wrong and right in the lives of us all. The important thing is that we so order our lives according to His word that when He comes, the life we are then living, is pleasing and right with God! NEXT: "I through the Law died unto the Law."

Jim McDonald