

Galatians 2:17-18

But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ,

we too were found

to be sinners,

is Christ then a servant of sin?

Certainly not!

For

if I

rebuild

what I tore down,

I prove myself to be a transgressor.

Paul addresses the Jewish Christians who were causing problems in Galatia:

[You want us to force the Gentiles to live like Jews, and even keep our distance from them,] (17)

But if, while we are seeking justification through faith in Christ alone

└ [we are Jews by birth who know the true gospel and believe, and so we are seeking our justification in Christ, not the works of the law (15-16)]

you spy on some of us (2:4) and find

that we are acting like those you would call “Gentile sinners” (14)

└ [because they don’t live like Jews (15)]

└ [because of our growing understanding of the implications of the gospel, like Peter in Acts 10-11, we don’t do everything just as we used to]

[and so if we grow in our understanding of the implications of the gospel; and if you conclude that our actions then make us sinners (by eating with Gentiles, for example); and if you then can’t even fellowship with us, as Peter couldn’t fellowship in Antioch; then]

aren’t you thereby suggesting that Christ in some way supported or encouraged us to sin?

But Christ absolutely does not support or encourage sin!

[And so there is obviously something wrong with your view! We are not sinning by growing to understand and act upon the implications of the gospel of Jesus!]

(18)

[To go further, we can be even more certain that there is something wrong with your view]

For,

if I

└ [or Peter or any other Jewish Christian; but Paul emphasizes that he is included, for they were actually putting pressure on him to follow the law of Moses and teach it too]

begin to depend upon the law again in some way that suggests it is essential for salvation, I would be rebuilding

something that I tore down

└ [the old understanding of the law, and my dependence on it, before its fulfillment came in Christ and I trusted in Him alone]

and so I would actually be the true transgressor, not those “Gentile sinners!”

└ [because I would be living contrary to the cross of Jesus, the example of Jesus, and the teaching of Jesus]

[So your view actually has it backwards. It’s not the Gentile Christians who are sinning by not following the Law; it’s the Jewish Christians who are sinning by returning to the necessity of the works of the Law.]

Message: Paul says to those who were misleading the Jewish and Gentile Christians: “You’re saying that if we live out the implications of the gospel (by eating freely with Gentiles, for example) we end up back in sin. But, in reality, we end up back in sin if we don’t live out the implications – if we don’t learn to live in step with the truth of the gospel (2:14).”