

Galatians 2:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

Analysis

For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. The conditional *ei gar ha katelysa tauta palin oikodomō* (εἰ γὰρ ἃ κατέλυσα ταῦτα πάλιν οἰκοδομῶ, "if the things which I destroyed, these I build again") uses architectural metaphor. The verb *katalyō* (καταλύω) means to demolish completely, tear down; *oikodomeō* (οἰκοδομέω) means to build, construct. What did Paul demolish? The system of justification by law-works, the idea that Gentiles must become Jews to be saved, the necessity of circumcision for righteousness.

If Peter rebuilds this demolished system by returning to law-based separation, the result: *parabatēn emauton syniستانō* (παραβάτην ἑμαυτὸν συνιστάνω, "I establish myself as a transgressor"). *Parabatēs* (παραβάτης) means law-breaker, transgressor—one who steps across boundaries. The compound verb *synistēmi* (συνίστημι, "to establish, demonstrate") indicates proving or showing conclusively. By rebuilding the law-system he demolished through the gospel, Peter proves he was wrong either in tearing it down or in rebuilding it—either way, he's a transgressor.

Paul's logic is devastating: there's no neutral middle ground. Either justification is by faith alone, making law-keeping unnecessary for righteousness (so returning to it is transgression against grace), or justification requires law-works, making the gospel itself transgression. Peter's inconsistency doesn't just confuse the issue—it

proves him a transgressor regardless of which position is true. Only unwavering commitment to justification by faith alone maintains consistency.

Historical Context

Paul had demolished the law-system by preaching faith alone to Gentiles, establishing churches that didn't require circumcision or law-keeping. Peter had endorsed this at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:7-11). By withdrawing from Gentile fellowship and effectively requiring them to "Judaize," Peter was rebuilding what both he and Paul had torn down. This inconsistency undermined his credibility and the gospel's clarity.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What demolished systems of self-righteousness might you be tempted to rebuild rather than resting in Christ's finished work?
2. How does inconsistency between profession and practice prove more damaging than clear error?
3. In what areas of your spiritual life are you trying to maintain both grace and works rather than grace alone?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	γὰρ	ἃ	κατέλυσα	ταῦτα	πάλιν	οἰκοδομῶ
if	For	which	I destroyed	the things	again	I build
G1487	G1063	G3739	G2647	G5023	G3825	G3618

παραβάτην	ἐμαυτὸν	συνίστημι
a transgressor	myself	I make
G3848	G1683	G4921

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