

The Peter Principle has been defined as identifying a person or employee who has been promoted to his level of incompetence. In today's Templates of Truth, Paul points out such an inconsistency in the Apostle Peter that provides us an interesting spiritual perspective to the Peter Principle.

Paul never backed down from a challenge. When he saw a spiritual inconsistency with the people he worked with or ministered to, he always confronted the issue straightforward. While defending the gospel to the Galatian believers, Paul said, *“When Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned”* (2:11). The unique Greek structure of that last phrase means that Peter's actions were self-condemning. What were those actions? Paul went on to explain, *“For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision”* (2:12). Peter's actions were self-condemning because they were inconsistent with his message, revealing a level of spiritual incompetence.

Paul made an emphatic point in this discussion. He said, *“If I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor”* (2:18). In a most basic sense, Paul was saying that if my actions become inconsistent with my spiritual convictions, I condemn myself. If God has forgiven me of certain behaviors and I go back and repeat those behaviors, I invalidate the act of God's grace to forgive me for them in the first place. That is what Peter was doing. In principle, it was what he did when he failed Jesus. According to Luke 22:54-55, after Jesus was arrested and led away to the high priest, *Peter was following at a distance*. In other words, he *withdrew and held himself aloof*. In the withdrawal process, to where did he resort? Luke says *Peter was sitting among them*. Among who? The wrong crowd - those who shouted, “Crucify Him!” It was in that setting that Peter denied the very Jesus he said he would never deny. Now, he was doing the same thing again. He was turning his back on his fellow Gentile believers and hanging with the wrong crowd – their Jewish contenders.

What caused Peter to be so inconsistent? Fear! He denied Jesus because he feared what the crowd would do to him if they found out he was one of the twelve disciples. He turned his back on his Gentile friends because he feared what the Jewish leaders would think of him to see him being so chummy. Fear will always cause us to move away from God and the commitments we have made to Him, and will usually drive us toward people and activities that violate our spiritual values and convictions. Unfortunately, we often influence others to do the same in the process, *and the rest of the Jews joined him (Peter) in (his) hypocrisy* (2:13).

The answer to the dilemma of this Peter Principle is contained in Paul's profound words in 2:20 – *“The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith...”* In this sense, life is always a choice. We either live it by faith, or we live it by fear. Living by faith will always help us to do the right thing, in the right way, at the right time and with the right people. Fear will always expose our inconsistencies and incompetency. We cannot please God by living in fear. God is pleased only when we live by faith.

Has the Peter Principle caught up in some way with you? Do you find yourself withdrawing from your fellow Christian friends whenever your worldly friends are around, because you fear what they might think about you? Do you associate with the wrong crowd in career circles because you fear you might be passed over for advancement if they knew you were a follower of Christ? Paul declares, *Christ lives in (you)* (2:20), and if you are living in any way other than what is reflective of that inner nature, you are living at a level of your spiritual incompetency.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.

© Copyright 2009 – All Rights Reserved – Renewal Resource Services, PLLC