

Romans: Covenant Continued, Part 6b

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EXPOSITION: 9:30–10:21

Understanding Israel's Plight: Christ – The Climax Of The Covenant

As we step into the next section, v. 30 is a more natural break than 10:1, with, “What shall we say, then?”, marking a transition in the apostle’s argument, as it does elsewhere in Romans (4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14). It serves to focus on the main thrust of the chapter, the calling of the Gentiles (9:6-13, 24-29). Unlike its surrounding passages (9:1-29; 11:1-26), Paul will utilise in this one (9:30–10:21) the words “righteousness” and “faith” (9:30, 32, 33; 10:4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17), so as to rightly understand the cause of the Jewish predicament, excluded in unbelief, while the Gentiles are included and coming to faith.

9:30–10:13—Israel, the Gentiles, and the Righteousness of God

9:30-33—The Righteousness of God and Faith

30 *What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”*

Verse 30 poses the question, “What shall we say, then?”, in response to Paul’s main line of argument in the chapter, encapsulated in vv. 6 and 24, which redefine the true Israel away from the Jewish prerequisite of natural descent, so as to include both Jews and Gentiles who are sovereignly called of God. Once “not a people”, Gentiles who had no interest to “pursue righteousness have attained it...by faith”, whereas, in v. 31 “Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law”. By “righteousness” Paul here refers to the forensic righteousness of covenant status, that of ch. 1:17 in contrast to the moral righteousness of chs. 6 and 8. Although, as we shall see, the Jewish problem is a confusion and conflation of the two. This Pauline contrast is at the heart of the passage (9:30–10:21):

1. “a righteousness that is by faith” (9:30) versus “a law that would lead to righteousness” (9:31);
2. “the righteousness of God” versus “their own [righteousness]” (10:3);
3. “the righteousness that is based on the law” versus “the righteousness based on faith” (10:5-6).

Herein lies the Jew’s great dilemma. Despite their exclusive privileges as markers of covenant status, especially the law (vv. 4-5), they have been seemingly superseded by the inclusion of the Gentiles (v. 24). This new section (9:30–10:21) is, therefore, somewhat of an excursus to explain their predicament.

While the main thrust of ch. 9 shows that it is the sovereignty of God that saves, the apostle now shows, on the other hand, that it is the autonomy of man that damns (see comments vv. 17-18 on Pharaoh; Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.12-17; *Westminster Confession*, 33.2). Gentile inclusion is through God’s sovereign grace, whereas the Jew’s exclusion is entirely their own fault. To this point there is no opportunity in the chapter for pitting human responsibility and divine sovereignty against each other. So, Paul is now bringing it to the fore. Even when Paul’s rhetorical interlocutor objects to God’s sovereignty in v. 19, “Why does he still find fault?”, Paul merely reasserts divine sovereignty (vv. 20-24). And so, he now addresses the issue of human responsibility.

Because the Jews have chosen to reject Christ and his saving work *they* have sealed their own destiny, not only eternally but also temporally. The covenant sanctions upon disobedience, in both of these categories, will be applied. They will not only meet God’s final judgement in eternity but also his intermediate judgements in history. Man can choose to obey or to disobey the covenant, but he cannot choose its consequences. The cosmic *personalism* of a universe created by the Triune God is inescapable. By virtue of God’s clear revelation to man, both general and special, when he disobeys he rejects God’s *personal* appeal to respond to him in love and obedience (see 1:18-20). This is especially so for the Jew, who is the

recipient and repository of special revelation, the oracles of God (3:1-2; 9:4-5; Acts 7:38; Matt. 23:37-39). To whom much is given, much will be required. The negative sanctions of the covenant (see comments v. 3), therefore, are not the cosmic *impersonalism* of the mystic's *karma* nor of the materialist's cause and effect, or for that matter the Deist's. The God of the covenant has been rejected personally, and his sanctions are, likewise, administered personally.

The wrath of God is not, therefore, impersonal (see v. 22 and comments on the wrath of God at 1:16-19, 32; 2:5-13; 3:5, 20, 25; 5:9). Hence, Paul's heart-felt desire, knowing the wrath of God, to bear the covenant curses on behalf of his kinsmen, if perchance it were possible (vv. 2-3). Paul is not, therefore, unaware of the reality of human responsibility, having established in ch. 1 that God's revelation is so universally and directly apprehended by every individual so that "they are without excuse" (1:20; 2:1, 6-13; see also comments on v. 15; 1:20; 8:15 for the direct apprehension of God). Under the covenant lawsuit, man (Jew and Gentile) has been indicted and found guilty. And yet, despite Paul's awareness of human culpability, he has spent virtually the entire chapter asserting the sovereignty of God in election. But in v. 32 he now asserts that the only reason the Jews have not attained the righteousness they so strenuously sought is "Because they did not pursue it by faith".

Some accuse Paul, at this juncture, of contradiction and inconsistency (e.g., C. H. Dodd, William Barclay, et al.): on one hand, divine sovereignty, but on the other, human freewill, which is it? According to their reading of v. 32, contra to sovereign election of vv. 6-29, one can freely choose to have faith. The problems of which are several: *first*, the claim of inconsistency is itself inconsistent with Paul's previous assertion of human responsibility, as already mentioned, it is not a new thought (see 1:20; 2:1, 6-13); *second*, nor is the teaching of divine sovereignty unprecedented in this epistle—having postured the whole tome in the form of an imperial epistle, he has established Christ's sovereignty over Caesar from the outset (see comments 1:1-2); *third*, accusing Paul of inconsistency (especially within one tightly reasoned chapter) is not credible in view of his demonstrated genius in the close argument and logic of the whole epistle, nor is it credible in view of his rabbinical training; *fourth*, and most importantly, to claim that the sacred text contradicts itself is to deny the orthodox doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:15-16).

So how do we handle these seemingly contradictory assertions: on one hand, divine sovereignty, but on the other, human responsibility? By taking note of Paul's apologetic method commented on at vv. 14-15, 19-20. He does not presume to put God in the dock by standing in judgement over his ways. Accordingly he submits himself to the Creator/creature distinction and, hence, to the *finite* limits of reason. He, instead, trusts the *infinite* counsels of God. Because of our creatureliness these are only revealed in part, sufficient for our salvation (Deut. 29:29; Job 15:8 NASB; Ps. 25:14 KJV; Amos 3:7 NASB; Acts 1:7; Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 1:21; 2:6-16; 13:9, 12; Eph. 3:5; 2 Tim. 3:15). Although, salvation is cosmic in its scope. It is comprehensive of man's existence in the cosmos, both eternal and temporal (see comments 1:17). Hence, Scripture's sufficiency for the flourishing of man's total life, including economic, political, ethical, legal, educational, and so on.

We are, therefore, not privy to the infinite workings of God's will, of his wisdom and ways, except for what is necessary for man's salvation and flourishing in his creation task. If he was to possess exhaustive knowledge about God and the cosmos he would then be equal to God. God's omnipotence and omniscience are hand-in-glove. In other words, man by being all-knowing is also all-powerful—hence, the old aphorism, "Knowledge is power." Which, by the way, explains the messianic power-state's lust for information of its citizenry, often disregarding civil rights and liberties; hence, for example: the population census; national id cards and computer chips; omnipresent cctv surveillance; data gathering and sharing across government departments, including personal medical and financial details, and so on. If the predestinating state is to save us, it must, by necessity, be all-powerful and all-knowing—as God walking on earth (Hegel). By standing in judgement over partial revelation we deny our creatureliness and, thus, demand exhaustive knowledge and infinite power.

Consequently, seemingly opposing truths, that are revealed, must be held as a paradox. God is totally sovereign, and man is totally responsible. Both are equally and fully true; one is not inconsistent with the other. Therefore what is revealed (i.e., the biblical data) from both sides of the equation is held in balanced tension. The Scripture reveals the *fact* of interaction between the two but not *how* the interaction works, for example: "As many as were *ordained* to eternal life *believed*" (Acts 13:48 KJV, author's emphasis). Although, it must be remembered that the biblical data teaching God's sovereignty (e.g., vv. 6-24) is such that man's salvation and damnation are foreordained, but without violation of man's free moral agency nor imputing evil to God's account (see comments vv.10-13). Moreover, salvation is totally *monergistic not synergistic*; that is to say, not an equal cooperative effort of both man and God (see comments on 2:13 and 3:20, 21-31 under *The New Perspective on Paul – Justification Reinterpreted*). Therefore, man is not responsible for his salvation, but he is for his damnation. As a free moral agent he has made his decisions.

In v. 32, flowing from v. 31's statement that Israel did not attain to righteousness (i.e., covenant status; see comments 1:17), despite their possession of the external markers of that status, including the law (vv. 4-5), was "Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works." Paul has previously established in 3:27-4:25 the utter necessity of faith to righteously stand before God, appealing to Abraham as the archetype. Despite scholarly debate over the rendering and meaning of v. 31's phrase "the law of righteousness" (paraphrased as "a law that would lead to righteousness" by the ESV), which can equally be rendered "the righteousness of the law", Paul has previously taken pains to establish the Jewish misuse of the law as a means of covenant status (see 2:12-13, 17-21, 23, 25, 28-29; 3:20-24, 27-29). Whatever the rendering, the meaning is the same. The context must always be the governing factor of interpretation. Throughout the epistle Paul never promotes a negative view of the law. But he is negative about the Jew's handling of it; it was never intended as the basis for works-righteousness (see comments 3:31; 7:7-8, 13-14). The problem is not the law but rather the human condition—sin. Jewish rebellion has wrested the law of God from God as a means of autonomous righteousness—for their own justification, which Paul picks up in 10:3, interpreting what he means by "the law of righteousness" of v. 31 (he will also clarify the purpose of the law at 10:5).

Therefore it is Gentile faith and Jewish unbelief that explain their contrasted status with God. Man is responsible and accountable for his dealings with him. And the fulcrum upon which faith or unbelief pivots is now and forever Christ—in the climax of redemptive history he alone is the tipping point for each person's destiny. How we respond to him determines our standing before God in time and eternity. And so, the Jews "have stumbled over the stumbling stone" (v. 32), but, as Peter observes, for the Gentiles, "the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" (1 Pet. 2:7, citing Ps. 118:22). Furthermore, in v. 33, citing Isaiah 28:16, Paul claims that, to the Jews, Christ has become "a rock of offence". While Christ's birth and humble origins were certainly an offence to the Jewish expectation of a political and military Messiah, the real offence was the requirement of saving faith. To rely upon Christ's atoning work, instead of their own, was to lose their autonomy. Their prideful independence from God and rebellion against him were thus exposed.

In 10:1-4 Paul will expand on the Jew's quest for autonomous righteousness for their claim to covenant status. This was rooted in their misconstrual of the law and, therefore, the same of the relationship between the Law and the Gospel, expanded in 10:5-13.

10:1-4—The Righteousness of God and Human Autonomy

1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. **2** For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. **3** For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. **4** For Christ is the end [telos] of the law for [eis] righteousness to everyone who believes.

In vv. 1-2 Paul reaffirms the Jews and his heart for them (cf. 3:1-2 and 9:1-5), that they might be saved, with vv. 5-13 then explaining the way of salvation. But he must also first restate the futility of works-righteousness, which he does in vv. 3 and 4.

As v. 2 states, they have a zeal for God, which is certainly commendable, but without knowledge. Verse 3 then explains their lack—they are "ignorant", not fully and accurately apprised, of God's righteousness (*dikaïosunē*). As the theme of the epistle and as the revelation of the Gospel (1:16-17), the "righteousness of God" is the sticking point for the Jews. They have stumbled over the fact that it is by faith *only* that man stands justified before God (9:32). Righteousness in this sense refers to covenant standing before God that is sourced in God himself (Godet; Murray; Cranfield). As we saw in ch. 4, Abraham is the archetype – the father of *all* those who believe – in both the OT and NT, thus opening the door to the Gentiles (4:11, 12, 16, 17, 18). Instead of relying on natural descent and works of the law, faith makes salvation universally accessible.

Moreover, their knowledge of God's righteousness is deficient because they have wilfully ignored the grace of God in the regenerating power of his Spirit—the renewal of the heart that enables saving faith. This heart renewal is epitomised in David's psalm, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10). And first set forth in the *shema* that Israel was to love the LORD God with *all their heart*:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

Deuteronomy 6:4–6 (cited Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27)

This explains Jesus' claim that "... unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). The outward act must follow from an inward attitude. These words of Jesus trail his warning that he had not come to "abolish the Law or the Prophets" and that the person who "...relaxes one of the least of these commandments...will be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (vv. 17, 19). Because the Jews had gone astray in their hearts they had gone astray in their obedience to God (see Heb. 3:7-10). They were, therefore, not taking the covenant law as a whole, but rather cherry-picking the commandments they would obey. For example, on the heels of these warnings, Jesus immediately corrects their focus on the outward acts of murder and adultery rather than the inward motives of anger and lust (vv. 21-30). Hence, the wisdom of God in the tenth commandment's prohibition of covetousness (Ex. 20:17). Of all the commandments it is this one that is totalising because it addresses, not so much the act but the heart. The law, thus, exposes the need for the regeneration of the heart and explains Paul's use of the tenth commandment in 7:7-8 to assert the universal sin-exposing and sin-enlivening effect of the law. And hence the wisdom-writer's admonition, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23). Nevertheless, the Jews hardened their hearts against God and his law, focussing on the outward,

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

Matthew 23:25–26

Jesus thus excoriates the Jews for an outward show of righteousness, doing "all their deeds to be seen by others" (Matt. 23:5; see also Mark 12:38-40). They accordingly skewed the word of God to their own advantage, Jesus rebuking them:

But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it.

Luke 11:42–44

And so, they absolutized the Scriptures, arduously studying them, believing that, in their possession, they also owned covenant status and eternal life. In this way they divorced the Scriptures – the Law and the Prophets – from the true knowledge of God. Thus prejudicing their reception of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. If they had believed Moses – that is, the Law – they would now be believing Jesus:

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people. But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?

John 5:39–47

Verse 3 now interprets what Paul meant by "the law of righteousness" back in 9:31 (KJV). The ESV translators, straying from a literal translation (i.e., instead of rendering its meaning as merely the righteous law of God), have paraphrased 9:31 as "a law that would lead to righteousness". They have, therefore, not only interpreted the phrase from the immediate context (i.e., Israel's misuse of the law for works-righteousness) but also either imported the thought of a "law of works" from 3:27 (cf. 9:32) or from their own theological presupposition of a "covenant of works" (and/or a dispensational disjunction between law and grace). They have, hence, functioned as interpreters instead of translators.

This begs the question as to the purpose of the law revealed to Moses? Was it a reiteration of the Adamic arrangement according to a “covenant of works” (see next para), or was the law, in fact, God’s righteous standard for living? If the former, how can it but not lead to works-righteousness and legalism? In this case there would then be no ground for Christ or Paul to excoriate the Jews for their misuse of it. Nevertheless, many still hold to a law/grace dichotomy between old and new covenants. Herein lies the source of much confusion among scholars and commentators, not to mention the larger church, especially when it comes to interpreting v. 4 concerning Christ as the “end of the law”, which we will clarify momentarily.

The ESV’s paraphrase of v. 31 implies that the law was given as a means of meritorious righteousness (i.e., covenant status). This notion is consolidated by the idea of a “covenant of works”, that, in the Garden, man was promised life conditional upon full and perfect obedience to the law, and taught confessionally by the Protestant Reformed tradition (for a confessional statement of the covenant of works, see *Westminster Confession* 7.2, 3; 19.1; *Westminster Larger Catechism* 30). This then cannot help but inform one’s understanding of the Mosaic law and provokes the question as to its *unfulfillability*. See my comments on 2:13 for an assessment of the *unfulfillability* of the law where we argue that the law is both unfulfillable *and* fulfillable, the former because of sin and the latter because of grace (see also 2:13 for my assessment of the “covenant of works” and below for that of Rushdoony).

Nevertheless, with due respect to that tradition (which I consider to be the most accurate approximation to the biblical revelation in regard to the doctrines of grace that we have), whether under Adam or Moses, the law was *not* given as a means that would *lead to righteousness*, to meritorious *justification*, but rather, as we shall see in v. 5, as God’s righteous standard for *sanctification*. Also, in considering v. 5, we will uncover the reason for our confusion over the law’s original and primary function as a charter for life.

Contesting the “covenant of works”, Rushdoony states,

The idea that *any* covenant God makes with man can be anything other than a covenant of grace is wrong and deadly wrong. *First*, any covenant between God and man must be initiated and executed by God. It is thus an act of grace as well as of law; it requires works, but the works are the response of gratitude for the grace of law, for the grace of God’s covenant. No covenant between God and man can side-step the fact that there is a radical difference between the two parties. Indeed man is totally God’s creation and creature; he can make no claim on God. ... Man’s works of law are a legal *requirement* of the covenant, not a *condition* of it; that is, the works do not make the covenant, but they are required by the covenant. God’s grace requires the response of faith, obedience, love, works, and more. Thus, the works of law, i.e., the obedience of faith, is a response, together with love, thanksgiving, and praise, to the covenant grace. ... The motive of God’s covenant is grace. It is thus never a covenant of works. The law of that gracious covenant always requires works of us, but the covenant is an act of grace, and all the blessings thereof are grace.

Second, this covenant of grace, because it is entirely made on God’s initiative, and before man’s very existence (Acts 15:18), is an act of predestination. Every aspect of the covenant, man’s fall, reprobation, and redemption, is a part of God’s eternal decree. To make the covenant at any time a covenant of works is to undermine God’s sovereignty and predestination.

The key text used by the Westminster Assembly to present this concept of a covenant of works was Galatians 3:12, “And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.” Paul here cites Leviticus 18:5: “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord.” But this text is addressed to God’s covenant people, His chosen people, the elect of grace. It is prefaced with the words, “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the LORD *your* God” (Lev. 18:2). The covenant name, LORD, Jehovah, or Yahweh, is used; the LORD declares to Israel, “I am *your* God,” i.e.; your covenant God. They are told in Leviticus 26:1-46 (and Deut. 28), that God’s *blessing* and *curses* follow *obedience* and *disobedience*. To live in terms of *blessing* and *curses* is very different than living in terms of *works*. As workers, we are *paid* for our works; God *blesses* and *rewards*, or He *curses*, a very different kind of thing than a salary. It is absurd and morally wrong to equate this aspect of God’s covenant with works.

Third, the Confession, in speaking of the covenant of works, says that “man by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant,” the Lord gave him a second covenant, a covenant of grace. (Chapt. 7.3). This is again a serious error. Man’s incapacity in relationship to God did not come into being through the Fall. Neither in the state of innocence, nor the Fall, nor of grace, nor of glory, does man have any capacity to render anything to God in the way of

works, or accrued benefit. Moreover, the life of Adam and Eve in Eden was God's grace, not a product of their obedience prior to the Fall. We too often overlook a key phrase in 1 Peter 3:7, "The grace of life." Life itself is a gift of God's grace, whether to the redeemed or to the reprobate. Leviticus 18:5 and Galatians 3:12 tell us that, when we walk in terms of covenant faithfulness, we are spared God's judgment, and we receive God's blessings. If we do not obey the Lord, the very fact of life, a gift of grace, becomes for us a curse.

Fourth, Galatians 3:12 tells us, "The man that doeth them shall live in them," not by them. Sanday's comment is to the point: "His life shall spring out of them and be nourished by them, just as a tree strikes its roots into the earth." It is a serious error to detach God's law, justice, judgment, or any other attribute from Him, and to naturalize them. Blessings and cursings are not like gravity or karma, with a natural and automatic consequence. ... Thus, Adam's "breach" of the covenant was not a breach of a covenant of works or Nature, but a breach of God's grace. It was a personal affront and revolt against the grace of the person of God. ... What we call "natural law" is not personal; if I put my hand, accidentally or intentionally, into fire...I am burned... God's curse for the violation of His covenant is personal and specific; it affects all creation, and all men, but each in a different way. ... The covenant is always and only instituted by God's grace. It is always a covenant of law, because covenants are a form of law, and therefore it always requires works. This, however, does not make it a covenant of works." (Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, pp. 376-79).

Therefore, the notion of a covenant works misrepresents God's covenant with man, first with Adam and then with Moses. Neither were on a meritorious basis; both were gracious.

So v. 3 – "For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their *own*, they did not submit [*hupotasso*] to God's righteousness" – interprets what Paul meant by the "righteousness of the law" in 9:31 (which can equally be rendered the "law of righteousness" [KJV], the two alternative renderings weighting the emphasis either on "righteousness" or on "law", but not materially altering the meaning, either way it remains the law of God; both renderings are acceptable).

Israel's pursuit of a "law of righteousness" (9:31) was, in fact, rebellious and independent, "seeking to establish their *own*". And this they sought to do either by mere *possession* or by *performance* of the Torah. The apostle, as a Pharisee, had been guilty of this very thing: "having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law" (Phil. 3:9). This is not a problem of the law but rather a problem of man's handling of the law, of his sinfulness (7:7-23). Rather than the supposed legitimate *use* of the law as a "covenant of works" (meritorious covenant standing) it is instead the law's *misuse* as a means of *autonomous* righteousness. So as to pursue his autonomy, man abstracts the *law of God* from the *God of the law* as "bare law", the basis of a legalistic system in which he self-justifies; in other words, he arrests the law of God for the purpose of works-righteousness and thereby develops a false doctrine of righteousness (see comments 2:13 for a foundational definition and explanation of legalism, autonomy, and abstraction). We will return to the abstraction of the law and the covenant of works in v. 5.

Commenting on v. 3, Rushdoony shows how Israel's false doctrine of righteousness leads from legalism to humanism:

Paul is accusing Israel of also having a false doctrine of righteousness. Israel's view of righteousness was *not* an abstraction as with the Greeks. It was, in fact, very concrete. According to Lewis Jacobs, in the Jewish faith, "Righteousness (is) the fulfilment of all legal and moral obligations. Righteousness is not an abstract notion but rather consists in doing what is just and right in all relationship." As Jacobs points out, the Biblical doctrine of righteousness "bears a distinctly legal character". Later in Maimonides, righteousness came to "embrace the Greek ideal of harmony and balance in choosing the middle way." In all of this the Torah remained as the governing law. There was, however, a subtle shift from righteousness as the revelation of God's nature and His requirement for all creation to a stress on human relationships. God's law was a resource for man's community life, which was true enough, but the focus was now on man's life and man's choice of good and evil. According to the rabbinic commentary, *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, it is not God's providence and predestination which sustain the world but rather man's lawkeeping.

Whereas, as Rushdoony continues,

Paul stresses man's responsibility but also the divine decree and ultimacy. Saadia Gaon, however, limited God to foreknowledge: "He knew that they would choose to obey and not disobey Him." This means that ultimate decision-

making is in man's hands. ...

Whereas the Greek view of righteousness or justice was an abstraction or an abstract universal, the Jewish view was and is, while abstracted from God, made a concrete universal only in man. Judaism thus has had a remarkable affinity to humanism from the days of the Pharisees and Sadducees to the present. God's law becomes a resource for man, and the essence of justice is social; in Jacob's words, it "consists in doing what is just and right in all relationship." ...

Paul was on sure ground when he said that Israel was "ignorant of God's righteousness." They had created another doctrine of justice. Today, of course, the churches, by relying on and being content with state law in the place of God's law, are also "ignorant of God's righteousness." (Rushdoony, *Romans and Galatians*, pp.190-91).

So, *God's justice* (the Torah) is subverted and reduced to a humanistic doctrine of *social justice*. This is precisely what has occurred through the *two kingdom* doctrine as promoted by David Van Druen in his two books, *Living in Two Kingdoms* and *A Biblical Case for Natural Law* (see previous comments under ch. 6, *Law and Culture*). The *two kingdom* dogma – one kingdom for the church and the other for the world (a sacred/secular dualism and its oft subliminal concomitant spirit/matter dualism) – isolates God's law, as commandments, from the world. They are only to be obeyed by Christians. It then relegates the world to "natural law" as the source of its legal and civil codes. To do so, it misreads Scripture in regard to general revelation and common grace, so as to christen a humanistic notion of social justice that is, in fact, rooted in autonomous man. It fails to do business with man's rebellious suppression of the clear knowledge of God, which Paul highlights in 1:18-20 (see my comments on *natural law*), and, above all, the *sufficiency* of Scripture (Frame, *Review of David Van Druen's 'A Biblical Case for Natural Law'*).

The rebellious nature of Israel's rejection of the righteousness of faith is demonstrated by their refusal to "submit" to it. The Greek *hupatasso* is a compound word comprised of *hupo*– under, and *tasso*– to assign or set; hence, to subject oneself, to obey. In other words, Israel has disobeyed because they have refused God's assigned place under his authority. Instead, like Adam in the original trespass, they have stepped out from the creature's assigned place under the Creator, standing over him in judgement of his verbal communication—his law-word (see comments 5:15-20). Presuming to be God, he has trespassed upon God's exclusive prerogative as the Sovereign. He can thus be rightly defined as *autonomous* man, pursuing, independently of God, his own righteousness and covenantal status. This is the mainspring of all humanistic education, enterprise, and government. And it is a religious one. Hence, Israel's rebellion and failure is declared by Paul in the next chapter (11:12) as "their trespass". The Jews, though privileged with the oracles of God, are thus as guilty as the Gentiles, which Paul has argued in chs 2 and 3.

Paul, by proscribing Israel's rebellion in seeking their "own righteousness" (cf. v.3; Phil. 3:4-9), is echoing Moses' rebuke of Deuteronomy 9:4-6:

Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of **my righteousness** that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. Not because of **your righteousness** or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of **your righteousness**, for you are a stubborn people.

Moses then provides the solution to their rebellion in the next chapter—the circumcision of their heart:

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.

Deuteronomy 10:16–17

And this, Paul has previously established in 2:28-29—that circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit.

So, there are no meritorious works that can obligate God: he “is not partial and takes no bribe”. It is by grace through faith, plus nothing. As Paul poses in 11:35, “Who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” God is no man’s debtor—no bargaining chips, nor advantage over him. He is the Creator, we are the creature!

Obedience to the law of God, therefore, was never meant to be the meritorious basis of covenantal standing and eternal life. As Rushdoony points out, the law was instead given as an act of grace out of the covenant that was already in place. Therefore, obedience to the law is one of gratitude and joy because of God’s initiative in the covenant of grace. This, Paul shows is the Romans own experience, that they have obeyed from the heart the objective commands of Scripture:

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become *obedient from the heart* to the standard of teaching to which you were committed

Romans 6:17

God’s righteousness is thus, in contrast to *man’s*, always by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8), never works. (See comments on ch. 3:27-31 for the cultural and political implications of justification by the law of *autonomous man*).

Verse 4 is strategic for the apostle’s mission to the Gentiles. Depending on one’s interpretation, it spells the difference between the truncated gospel of contemporary evangelicalism, on the one hand, and the full-blooded Gospel of the Kingdom of God, on the other. It was this Gospel that, through Paul, not only evangelised Europe but also built it as a Christian civilisation. The verse’s misinterpretation, in fact, robs the Church of the Gospel’s power toward the comprehensive salvation of man in the cosmos (see 1:17). Misinterpret v. 4, and you misinterpret vv. 5 and 6; resulting in the denial of Christ’s crown rights and the rule of his law over every aspect of life, from the personal to the cultural. Get *this* verse wrong and you get the Gospel wrong.

Commenting on v. 4, the confusion among commentators concerning the law under the OT economy is exemplified by Meyer when he claims that through Christ “the divine dispensation of salvation has been introduced, in which the procuring of salvation *is no longer, as in the old theocracy, the Mosaic nomos*, but faith, whereby the law has therefore ceased to be *the regulative principle for the attainment of righteousness*” (author’s emphasis; Meyer, p. 173). In other words, according to Meyer, the older covenant arrangement was one of righteousness attained through lawkeeping; implying that the law is, therefore, now no longer applicable in the newer covenant. This again betrays a presupposed “covenant of works” (discussed in v. 3 above and in 2:13), demonstrating the damage it does to covenant continuity (see comments 1:17; 3:21; 6:14; 9:25-26; 10:5 for *covenant continuity*).

Also commenting on v. 4, Charles Hodge evidences the same error, claiming that by fulfilling the law Christ has abolished it, along with the presupposed covenant of works:

[Christ] has abolished the law as a rule of justification, or covenant of works, and the whole Mosaic economy having met its completion in him, has by him been brought to an end,

Hodge continues, concluding that we are no longer under the authority of the law,

His [Christ’s] coming and work have put an end to its authority, we are no longer under the law, but under grace, Rom. vi:14; we are no longer under the system which says, Do this and live; but under that which says, Believe, and thou shalt be saved. ... The law is abolished by Christ, not as a rule of life, but as a covenant prescribing the conditions of life. (Hodge, *Romans*, p. 336)

We will address Paul’s citation of Leviticus 18:5, “Do this and live”, in the next verse; accurately understood, it is crucial to Paul’s whole project.

Contra to Hodge, the law was never “a rule of justification”. By his advocacy of the covenant of works, Hodge is forced into the severe position that “the law is abolished by Christ”. While he qualifies this with the rider that the law still stands as “a rule for life”, it, nevertheless, sends out an equivocal message concerning the law. Paul is perceived as offering conflicting messages as concerns the law, which are difficult to reconcile. This produces a dissonance in the mind of the Christian in regard to the law, sowing a sense that the law is, in some way, less than the apostle’s high praise of it—as not only holy, righteous, and good (7:12) but also spiritual (7:14).

Rather, what was abolished was not the law, but the *condemnation of the law*. Christ’s propitiatory and substitutionary death, once-and-for-all, satisfying the righteous demands of God, has done away with the law’s condemnation of the sinner to death (see Rom. 2–3). To this, Calvin, Hodge, Murray, and Cranfield all agree when interpreting 6:14, which states that the Christian is no longer “under law but under grace”. Nevertheless, Hodge, for example, along with most Reformed commentators, misreads 6:14 as an absolute antithesis between law and grace and, hence, as two competing systems of salvation: *works* versus *faith*, playing out as OT *law* versus NT *gospel*. Commenting on 6:14, he says,

The antithesis between law and grace shows that more than the law of Moses is here intended. . . . To be under the law is to be under the obligation to fulfil the law of God as a rule of duty, as the condition of salvation. Whosoever is under the law in this sense, is under the curse; for the law says. “Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them”. As no man is free from sin, as no man can perfectly keep the commandments of God, every man who rests upon his personal conformity to the law, as the ground of his acceptance with God, must be condemned. We are not under the law in this sense, but under grace; that is under a system of gratuitous justification. (Hodge, p. 205-6).

Having read 6:14 as a law/grace antithesis, he reads it into 10:4; as referring to two opposing systems: the *covenant of works* (based on merit) versus *the covenant of grace* (based on faith). Christ is thus the end of the law as a covenant of works.

Despite their qualifications, their position that the OT and NT are two competing systems of salvation, renders biblical law as suspect; assuming their notion of the covenant of works is true, law is a category of that covenant, which, although instituted by God, is inferior and, in fact, has failed, and is now abrogated. In fact, this system was intended to fail, as articulated by its doctrine of the *unfulfillability of the law* (see comments 2:13). It begs the question as to why a component – the law – of a failed system would be imported into a new and better one. Moreover, the absolute antithesis between law and grace entrenches the presupposition of the law’s discontinuity between Old and New Testaments, with its corollary that only those laws which the NT stipulates are reinstated. This is in stark contrast to the corollary of continuity, that every law continues unless otherwise rescinded by the NT.

Moo, commenting on v. 4, provides a vivid example of double-mindedness about the law that results from a discontinuity paradigm:

... Paul wants to stress the discontinuity between Christ and the law. ... Christ has brought an end to the law and to the era of which it was the center. This is the same point that Paul made in Rom. 3:21: God’s righteousness has been made manifest “apart from the law.” Indeed the salvation-historical disjunction between the era of the law and the era of Christ is one that is basic to Paul’s teaching in Romans (see also 6:14, 15; 7:1-6). ... he consistently emphasizes the discontinuity between Christ and the law (9:30-32a; 10:3; 10:5-8). ... Paul is thinking in this verse in his usual category of salvation history. ... The believer’s relationship to God is mediated in and through Christ, and the Mosaic law is no longer basic to that relationship. But Paul is not saying that Christ has ended all “law”; the believer remains bound to God’s law as it is now mediated in and through Christ Our relationship with God is now found in Christ, not through the law; and our day-to-day behavior is to be guided primarily by the teaching of Christ and his apostles rather than by the law. (Moo, pp. 640-43).

So, through his position on discontinuity, Moo has set up *God’s law* in opposition to *Moses’ law*, as if Moses’ law was not from God. And furthermore, he has set up *Christ* in opposition to the *law*, as centre-points of each system; Christ, in some sense, which he does not elucidate, then replaces the law. In both cases, he has set up a false antithesis; *first*, God’s law is Moses’ law, and, *second*, the person of God is the centre-point of both eras, exemplified in the old by tabernacle and temple and authenticated by covenant obedience in every aspect of life. While the law provided the terms of God’s covenant, the

centre-point was the covenant God himself. Finally, to add insult to injury, he has set up the teachings of Christ and his apostles – the NT – in opposition to the law – the OT. How do these positions not come under the rubrics of Antinomianism and Marcionism?

To conclude, Christ is not only the end of the condemnation of the law but also of its Jewish abuse, as we shall now see.

Verse 4 – “For [*gar*] Christ is the end [*telos*] of the law for [*eis*] righteousness to everyone who believes” – despite the confusion of commentators (and even translators), based on the foregoing exegesis, concerning the Jewish handling of the law (9:31–10:3), its meaning is now clear. While Christ is unquestionably the *telos*, or the “goal”, of the law in a redemptive-historical sense (*cf.* Gal. 3:24), “fulfilling” the Law and the Prophets and all the demands of God’s righteousness, he is, nevertheless, in the context of this verse, the *telos*, or the end – the “terminal point” – of the law as a means of *autonomous* righteousness. And this is only the case for those who surrender their autonomy and *believe*; unbelieving autonomous man is, by nature, a legalist—he inevitably resorts to the misuse of law to self-justify, as v. 3 indicates. This has implications for society. Law is an inescapable category, created by God. Both the misuse and outright rejection of God’s law results in autonomy, in humanistic law and tyranny. The choice is simple: God’s law or man’s law—autonomy or theonomy. There is no neutral ground between them. All law is consequently religious, an expression of one’s ultimate reference point. This explains the sympathy that so often exists between Judaism and humanism. Christ is, therefore, the end of autonomous man—of his rebellious self-law. This reading of *telos* is proven by the opening word of the verse – *gar* (“for”) – indicating that v. 4 serves to explain and substantiate the argument of v. 3 that the Jews, in refusing to submit to God’s righteousness, are pursuing God’s law to establish their own righteousness by works (i.e., through meritorious obedience; see 9:31-32 for the context of vv. 3 and 4). They are thus rejecting Christ’s atoning work for their own, opting for works instead of faith. If, on the other hand, they chose faith, Christ would, indeed, become to them “the end of the law for righteousness”—that is, as a means of *autonomous* righteousness. In other words, the law itself has not ceased, as will be explained momentarily.

This proposal covers the three major views of *telos*, that Christ is either the *goal*, the *fulfilment*, or the *termination* of the law, or a combined permutation (see Cranfield, vol. 2, pp. 516-20 for an overview of these positions from the church Fathers to the present). However, my construction comes with a marked difference to the usual approach. The third option – *termination*—although often combined with the others, is usually read through a dichotomous law/grace lens. To them law and grace cannot coexist in the one dispensation, they are, rather, mutually exclusive categories, and are set in antithesis. This results in both radical law/gospel and OT/NT discontinuities, inevitably falling under the pejorative rubrics of Antinomianism and Marcionism. The law was OT under Moses and the Gospel is NT under Christ. The law of Moses – that is, the commandments of God – are no longer binding in the Christian era. This is far from historic orthodoxy, and is yet the dominant theology of contemporary evangelicalism. Even those who reject the radical *termination* view of the law/gospel relationship, opting instead for *fulfilment* or *goal* are caught inevitably in the web of law/gospel discontinuity, at least in some measure.

There is not only debate among commentators as to the import of *telos* but also as to how the assertion that “Christ is the end of the law” connects via the preposition “for” (*eis* being a preposition signifying *to* or *into*) to its following prepositional phrase. The ESV, in my estimation, has correctly followed the tradition of the KJV and NASB in rendering the prepositional phrase – “for righteousness to everyone who believes” – as connected to the word “law”, giving *telos* the import of “end” as *termination* rather than *goal* or *result*. This then carries the thought that Christ is the end of the Jew’s misuse of the law as a means to their own righteousness. Even so, the ESV provides an alternative marginal rendering for the prepositional phrase: “end of the law, that everyone who believes may be justified”; similar to the NIV: “end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes”. The ESV marginal gloss and the NIV, along with most modern English translations, opt to render the prepositional phrase as one of function or result, rather than terminal point, giving *telos* the significance, therefore, of *goal* or *end result* (see Moo, who favours goal/purpose or result; also Cranfield, Calvin, and many others). In other words, once the goal is reached – Christ’s provision of righteousness – the law ceases, having produced its end result. This syntax thus also connotes discontinuity between law and faith, and, hence, between older and newer covenant, Law and Gospel (see comments 1:17; 3:21; 6:14; 9:25-26 for *covenant continuity*).

Nevertheless, context must always determine the various syntactical or lexical alternatives in interpreting and, indeed, even translating the sacred text. Verse 3 has asserted Israel’s ignorance of God’s righteousness by their refusal to submit to it and, instead, seeking their own. Furthermore, 9:30-33 has just underlined their failure, due to their reliance on works, to arrive at the righteousness of faith as have the Gentiles, while the larger passage of 9:30–10:21 serves to indict Israel for their own predicament, in unbelief and under God’s judgement, of which Roman occupation is indicative, and while not stated by Paul, would not be lost on any Jew steeped in the covenant.

Furthermore, as already stated, Christ is *not* the end of the law per se, as binding commandments. Contra Moo, the relationship between vv. 3 and 4 – embedded in its larger context – emphasises not the discontinuity of the law but rather the discontinuity of its *misuse* by the Jews. The binding authority of the law continues with full moral and legal force, as Jesus taught in Matthew 5 and Paul categorically asserts in Romans 3:31 that “we uphold the law” (*cf.* 7:12, 14), and, thus, implicitly asserts, not discontinuity but continuity between covenants (see comments 1:17; 3:21; 6:14; 9:25-26 for *covenant continuity*). Jesus categorically declares that he has not come to “abolish” the law but to “fulfil” it (Matt. 5:17), to now *incarnate* what is also *inscripturate*. The law, therefore, flows from the older covenant to the newer with even greater force, being now inscribed not on tables of stone but on the heart (Heb. 8:10). The only discontinuity between the older and newer covenant is then one of administration: the law under the older is administered by the *letter* (on tables of stone), which condemns to death; but under the newer by the *Spirit* (on the fleshly table of the heart), which gives life (7:6; 2 Cor. 3:2-6). See my comments on 8:2 for the relationship of law and Spirit. Additionally, the older priesthood was administered through the Aaronic order, but in the newer through the order of Melchizedek (see Heb. 6:20–7:28). With the only discontinuity being one of administration, the substance of the covenant remains unchanged; it has always been gracious and lawful, never positing conflict between law and grace, as promoted by the Antinomians and Dispensationalists. Rather, the two major iterations of the covenant in Moses and Christ, in fact, reflect the continuity of God’s gracious character and his righteous law. Both law and grace, promise and commandment, operate through both administrations, flowing from God’s arrangement first with Adam and then Abraham. He has spoken of old through the prophets and patriarchs, offering both promise and commandment, but has now spoken finally in his Son (see Heb. 1:1-2).

Verse 4 thus reiterates the thesis of the first three chapters:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested *apart from the law*, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:

Romans 3:21–22

“Apart from the law” (3:21) and the “end of the law” (10:4) both refer to the Jew’s misuse of the law for works-righteousness (now terminally disempowered by faith-righteousness in Christ), not to the law of God as binding commandments. See my comments on 3:21 and 6:14 (“you are not under law but under grace”, which is also notoriously misinterpreted) where I show there is no suggestion in Paul’s argument of Antinomianism, nor of radical discontinuity between older and new economies. Rather, “the Law and the Prophets”, as Paul declares in 3:21, “bear witness [legal testimony] to...the righteousness of God through faith”. This is precisely what Paul does in vv. 6-13 by citing from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Joel – the Law and the Prophets – as a witness to his faith-righteousness project; clearly the OT flows into the NT. Furthermore, without the inscripturated law there is no objective definition of God’s righteousness for man, whether under the old or new administrations. How else is the reign of Christ to be objectively defined and manifested? The alternative is subjectivism. Moo, by claiming that Christ “has brought the law to its climax and thereby ended its reign” also, with it, ends the reign of Christ (Moo, p. 642). Moses and Jesus speak with one voice. As Jesus said, “if you believed Moses, you would believe me” (John 5:46). What other way does a king rule except by his law? There is thus no radical discontinuity between Law and Gospel, they are co-laborers, working together continuously under both economies (see comments on 2:13 for more background). Verses 5 and 6 will make this plain when read from this perspective.

10:5-13—Law and Gospel

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. **6** But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) **7** “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). **8** But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); **9** because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. **11** For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” **12** For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. **13** For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

We must not forget the context of these verses, flowing, first, from 9:30-31 posing the dilemma of *Jewish unbelief* in contrast

to *Gentile faith*, and, second, from 10:1, Paul's heart desire and prayer that *the Jews might be saved*. The next four verses (vv. 2, 3, 4, 5) all open with the conjunction "for" (*gar*), signifying a logical and progressive argument; *gar* serving as a particle of affirmation and conclusion, denoting "therefore", which not only affirms the foregoing statement but also deduces the argument's conclusion. The progressive argument of these four verses must then be integral to not only the salvation of the Jews but also the inclusion of the Gentiles. Its coherency has cosmic implications.

Structurally, vv. 5-8 by way of comparison, establish the two simultaneous kinds of righteousness in the one covenant: *law*-righteousness and *faith*-righteousness. Verses 9-10 are transitional, underscoring that faith-righteousness is activated by believing and confessing the word of God. Verses 11-13 conclude that the coherence of obedience (*law*) and faith (*gospel*) renders salvation as universal, for Jew and Gentile alike.

The misinterpretation of v. 4, as outlined above, therefore, plays out in the misinterpretation of vv. 5 and 6. Having first misread 6:14 (*we are not under law but under grace*) as a law/grace antithesis, it is then read into 10:4 (*Christ is the end of the law*), playing out in the presumed contrast between vv. 5 and 6, hence, producing a law/gospel disjunction. Grammatically this pivots on the conjunction, "But", opening v. 6, purportedly introducing the contrast. According to this scheme vv. 5 and 6 then posit two antithetical kinds of righteousness: v. 5 – "the person who does the commandments shall live by them" – represents *works-righteousness* based on law; while v.6f. represents *faith-righteousness* based on grace.

There are serious problems with this interpretation. *First*, in v.5 the apostle is citing Moses who in turn cites the voice of God (cf. Lev. 18:1; 18:5). As Rushdoony poses in this regard, "Can we quote God against God?" In other words, can the voice of God *through* Moses be quoted by Paul as the voice of God *against* Moses? Clearly then, "the righteousness that is based on the law" is a valid divine assertion and category. *Second*, v. 6 asserts another category, "the righteousness based on faith", by citing Moses from Deuteronomy 30:12-13, followed by Deuteronomy 30:14 in v.8; then the prophets in v. 11 from Isaiah 28:16; 49:23; Jeremiah 17:7; cf. Romans 9:33. As Rushdoony again poses, "If there is a break between the Old and New Testaments on salvation, why is Paul using the Old Testament, and the law in particular to substantiate faith righteousness?" (Rushdoony, *Romans and Galatians*, p. 193). Surely, if the OT and NT represent two antithetical systems of salvation – works-righteousness versus faith-righteousness – the OT scriptures, especially the law, should not apply in the NT. As we have argued throughout this commentary, the biblical flow is one of covenant continuity not discontinuity (see comments 1:17; 3:21; 6:14; 9:25-26; 10:4). God's law is not abstracted law but *covenant* law, couched in God's covenant purpose. This is revealed in God calling out a people to himself, with whom he makes covenant and to whom he promises, "And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people" (Lev. 26:12). He is our God so that we might be his people. His covenant law is, therefore, his gracious gift to us that we might truly be his people, living in terms of the covenant and bringing pleasure to him. He both graciously initiates and sustains the relationship. Law and grace are therefore not antithetical—they are complementary elements of the same thesis, of God's covenant revelation to man.

The two kinds of righteousness of vv. 5 and 6 are, hence, not a *dispensational contrast* but a *functional comparison*—both principles, law and faith, apply simultaneously in both dispensations of the one covenant. Otherwise Paul would not have cited the Law and the Prophets to establish *faith*-righteousness. The righteousness of faith was grounded in Abraham and flowed down through Moses to Christ. Thus Paul could claim, "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets" (Acts 24:14). There is nothing novel in Paul's teaching—nothing revealed in the New that is not first concealed in the Old. There is only one system of salvation!—through grace by faith.

Therefore, rather than the taxonomy of "*works-righteousness*", we should now be thinking in terms of "*law-righteousness*". The former, a pejorative term, describing the Jew's misuse of the law for *justification* through its mere possession or performance, while the latter describes the counterpoint to *faith*-righteousness, active obedience to God's law-word for *sanctification*. So, as James teaches, "Faith without works is dead" (2:14). True faith will always be accompanied by its fruit of obedience to "the righteous requirement of God's law" (8:4, 7).

Nor, contra to the doctrine of the covenant of works, should we think that "*works-righteousness*" was ever a legitimate, divinely ordained means of meritorious justification. It was an aberration for the Jews, as it would have been for Adam (see comments v. 3 and 2:13 for an assessment of the *covenant of works*).

Returning to our text, vv. 5 and 6 can now be seen for what they are: an elucidation of the proper functioning of the law in view of the Jewish ignorance of such (i.e., of God's righteousness) described in v. 3. According to Paul there is a legitimate

“righteousness that is based on the law” (v. 5) that complements “the righteousness based on faith” (v. 6).

This is confirmed by an alternative rendering of the conjunction, “But”, that joins the two verses. As it stands, in the majority view, “But” clearly serves as a particle of contrast, namely between “works-righteousness” (v. 5) and “faith-righteousness” (v.6)—as two competing systems of salvation. Nevertheless, as Rushdoony points out,

This [i.e., “but”] is a possible translation, as is “and”. Robert Young, the compiler of the concordance, in his *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*, renders it as “and”, which gives it a very different meaning. It then becomes, not a contrast, but a unity. This is not all. It can mean, truly, in truth, verily, i.e., to strengthen or confirm something said. In Romans 3:31, Paul says that he does not make “void the law through faith” but, rather, “we establish the law”. In this present context, he is linking law and faith, and using Moses to verify law-righteousness (or sanctifying works) and faith-righteousness or God’s grace unto salvation. (Rushdoony, p. 194).

Therefore, if the Greek conjunction *de* is rendered as “and” instead of “but” (see also Strong, Thayer), the whole meaning of vv. 5 and 6 is turned on its head. Rather than a contrast of two antithetical systems of salvation, it is now a comparison of two complementary kinds of righteousness: law-righteousness unto *sanctification* (v. 5) and faith-righteousness unto *justification* (v.6).

Having clarified the function of vv. 5 and 6, let us now look at each more closely. Verse 5’s introductory “for” (*gar*) connects it as a clarifying and consequential argument of the previous assertion from v. 4, that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes”. So as to forestall any antinomian antithesis between law and faith righteousness, precipitated by that verse, he immediately cites Leviticus 18:5, “the person who does the commandments shall live by them”. Contra to Lloyd-Jones, this is not an assertion of the *unfulfillability of the law*, of its impossible demand of complete and perfect obedience, as per the doctrine of the covenant of works, so as to lead us to Christ (i.e., the traditional first use of the law). Lloyd-Jones mistakenly reads into the phrase, “shall live by them”, the more colloquial sense of “live up to them” or “abide by them”. In this way he reads the verse, not as a *promise* that he who “does them shall live”, but as a *command*, as the requirement of the law for total and exact obedience. Hence, his appeal at this point to James 2:10-11 and Galatians 3:10, “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’”

Nevertheless, Galatians 3:10-12, including the citation of Leviticus 18:5 in v. 12, serves, like Romans 10:5-6, to distinguish between the two complementary, and equally legitimate kinds of righteousness: *law*-righteousness and *faith*-righteousness. In Galatians 3:10 Paul cites Deuteronomy 27:26, addressing God’s people, already in covenant with him, to confront the Galatian problem—rebellious “works of the law”, as autonomous acts of righteousness. Commenting on Galatians 3:10, Rushdoony again provides exegetical lucidity:

Paul like Moses is writing to a people who are also outwardly in the covenant. Like Israel before Jordan, they are told of the curses on unfaithfulness. Their salvation from Egypt had been by God’s sovereign grace and saving act. Their response of gratitude meant covenant faithfulness, lawkeeping, not lawbreaking. Their sin in the wilderness had delayed their entrance into Canaan because they had sought autonomy, not theonomy, man’s law and way, not God’s. ... To attach oneself to the works of the law was to attempt a false obedience. Israel refused to enter Canaan when God required it (Numbers 13:1–14:10), and then tried to enter, claiming to be obedient, when God forbade it (Num. 14:40–45). “Works of the law” has reference to man’s lawless attempts to serve God, not to the obedience of faith. The obedience of faith is God’s work of grace in us. The curse pronounced in Deuteronomy 27:26 and cited by Paul in Galatians 3:10 is upon lawlessness. To walk outside of God’s grace, in autonomy, is a form of lawlessness. To put oneself outside of grace, and to attempt to walk by works, whether it be by man’s law or God’s law, is to assert autonomy from God. (Rushdoony, *Romans and Galatians*, p. 346).

Therefore, Galatians 3:10 and Leviticus 18:5 have nothing to do with the *unfulfillability* thesis, but everything to do with the rebellious quest for autonomous righteousness through lawkeeping—the crux of the Galatian problem. Independence from God, even in an attempt to obey the law, is itself lawless and comes under its curse (*cf.* Matt. 7:21–23). The law, though, was never given for the purpose of justification. And so, the *unfulfillability* thesis (including the covenant of works doctrine) is an abstraction of the law from its covenant context, an exercise of pure law. As argued in our comments on 2:13, any abstraction – separation of something from its larger context – taken as the real state of affairs, distorts one’s perception of the thing being

abstracted. Law abstracted from the covenant results in legalism; it is reduced to mere currency to purchase covenant status from God. The context of Paul's citation of Deuteronomy 27:26, however, as Rushdoony points out above, is the covenant. Moses' preamble in vv. 9 and 10 sets the scene for v. 26 and the covenant sanctions of chapters 27 and 28—it serves to establish Israel's covenant relation to the LORD:

Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, "Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the LORD your God. You shall therefore obey the voice of the LORD your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes, which I command you today."

Deuteronomy 27:9–10

Moses addresses them as "the people of the LORD *your* God", commanding them to be silent, so as to hear the voice of the "LORD *your* God". This is not only personal but also communal. Moreover, it is attitudinal and covenantal. Moses speaks on behalf of the LORD; the English rendering of the tetragrammaton, the covenant name of God, revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14, transliterated in the four letters, YHWH, and articulated as Yahweh. This Yahweh revealed himself to Moses as "I AM WHO I AM". In other words, he is uncreated and self-existent. He is, therefore, also transcendent and sovereign God, ruling over *all* created things. As his people, we are called to hear and obey his voice, to keep his commandments communally. But this demands an attitudinal and personal response, one of absolute obeisance to him—to his covenant love, to his might, wonder, and majesty. This can all be summed up in the mighty operations of God's grace and Spirit within us—it is all of him. Far from the impotent law of the *unfulfillability* thesis, rooted in the legalism of the so-called works covenant, as held by the Reformed tradition, this is spiritually potent. Rather than abstracted from the living God, the law can now be seen, not as a tool for propitiating a deity, but as a tool for dominion, for man's prosperity and blessing. The Torah is the intimate, and yet commanding, voice of the LORD God to his elect, who declares, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Ex. 33:19). Before him, we prostrate fall!

So, no legalism here. When law is viewed as *covenant* law it radically changes the equation. In a covenant of grace, there is no ground for merit. Man's heart is broken and bowed in gratitude, and cannot help but obey. Rather than a means to justification, the law fulfils its purpose as a charter for *life*, providing God's standards of righteousness by which we live and, thus, give an account. Yet, while God is certainly a Judge, he is *not* a legalist.

Returning to Romans 10:5, Rushdoony comments on its citation of Leviticus 18:5,

Leviticus 18 gives us a catalogue of sexual sins. Is Moses saying that men are saved by avoiding incest, or avoiding women during menstruation, or by avoiding adultery, Molech worship and sacrifice, homosexuality and bestiality? If we say that Paul cites Leviticus 18:5 as salvation by law, he thereby declared that the Jewish plan of salvation was by avoiding these specific sexual sins. Neither the rabbis nor Paul ever said so. The idea is nonsense. (Rushdoony, p. 194).

Law abstracted from the covenant is always a nonsense.

Consequently Paul's citations of Leviticus 18:5 in Romans and Galatians are designed not to rebuke lawkeeping, as the fruit of the "obedience of faith" (1:5; 16:26), but to rebuke rebellious lawkeeping toward autonomous righteousness. And Leviticus 18:5, misinterpreted by the Jews (and the Reformed tradition) as meritorious eternal life, is rather, in view of the Jews' ignorance of the righteousness of God (v. 3), a clarification of the simultaneous functions of law *and* faith. In other words they are not an absolute antithesis, but rather two factors of the same covenant equation.

It is also worth noting that the interpretation of Leviticus 18:5, through a covenant of works lens, teaching that lawkeeping merits eternal life, is, in fact, rooted in rabbinical exegesis (see my comments 2:13; also Dunson, n.17; Moo, p. 648, n. 15; Kellogg, pp. 380-81). To appeal to rabbinical authority is to entrust the hen-house to a fox. Jesus' and Paul's excoriation of the Pharisees for placing the "traditions of men" (i.e., rabbinical commentary on the law) over the "commandment of God" itself (Mark 7:8) should be more than adequate to convince that this lens, of meritorious righteousness, is erroneous from beginning to end. It comports well with Judaistic legalism. It is not only in error theologically but also in error exegetically; it is not what this verse is about, as we have already argued above. For Paul, it is rather, a clarification of two kinds of

righteousness that function simultaneously in the one covenant, in this case, law-righteousness unto sanctification, not justification. Rushdoony yet again, forcefully drives home the exegetical point when he comments on Paul's citation of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,

In v. 12, again Paul cites the Old Testament, "The man that doeth them shall live in them". ... In Leviticus 18:1-5, we have the prologue to a variety of sexual sins: incest, sexual intercourse during menstruation, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and the like. Can anyone imagine for a moment that Paul believes these laws are abolished? Rather, what Paul says is that justification is through the atonement of Jesus Christ, not the works of the law. In Romans 3:9-31, Paul tells us that the *works* of Jews and Gentiles "are all under sin", and that none are righteous through their own works. To *live* by the law as our justification is to pass under the *sentence* of the law, for "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10).

The law is a "curse", a sentence of death, to all of us, but "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (being our substitute, accepting the death penalty for us): for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth upon a tree" (v. 13). The man whom God's law sentences to death is accursed, and so too are all who seek justification by means of the law, for they imagine a vain thing (Ps. 2:1). (Rushdoony, pp. 346-7).

So, all works of autonomous man, Jewish and Gentile, are under the curse of God. The notion of earning God's covenant approbation through lawkeeping is thoroughly fallen in its conception. It was not born of God.

Having settled what Leviticus 18:5 does not teach, let us now settle what it does. As Rushdoony has just shown, the verse is situated in a chapter proscribing unlawful sexual relations. The chapter in turn lies within the larger Holiness Code of chapters 17-22 that prescribe ethical standards, ranging across: love for one's neighbour, judicial impartiality, care for the disabled and poor, hygiene and food laws, respect for the elderly, protection of aliens; also proscribing theft, slander, oppression, and so forth. Surely, if Leviticus 18:5 was key to a system of salvation, as posited by the covenant of works doctrine and discontinuity pundits, it would be situated in those chapters of Leviticus dealing with Israel's cultus, with priesthood and sacrifice? Conversely, and surprisingly for them, it is significantly embedded within five chapters that provide a charter for ethical living. So, Paul, despite his rabbinical training and knowledge of the law has selected a wrong verse? Certainly not! This would be to deny inspiration and inerrancy. Why then, did the apostle choose this particular verse? Because, as argued above, he is not asserting a contrast, in vv. 5 and 6, between two competing systems of salvation, but rather a comparison between two complementary covenant principles: law *and* faith. But not law as a meritorious means unto justification, rather, as a gracious means unto *sanctification*. The law is, therefore, not abrogated by Christ, but rather renewed in the newer covenant as the unchanging standard for holy living (see Matt. 5-7). The Jews, rather than obeying the ethical statutes of the law, considered its mere possession, or hearing without heeding it, as the basis of their justification. By placing the rabbinical commentaries on the law ("the traditions of men") above the law they robbed the word of God of its binding authority. They were, therefore, in this way, according to Paul, "ignorant of the righteousness of God" (v. 3). The apostle is now correcting that deficit.

Contra to the received Reformed and Lutheran traditions, Leviticus 18:5, as mentioned above, is not a promise of eternal life, but rather, of *temporal* life. As just shown, it concerns one's day-to-day ethical relations with neighbours, and so on. Israel's ethical code was to mark them off from their neighbouring pagan nations—from their cruelties, immoralities, occultism, and idolatry (Lev. 18:1-5). When God commanded Moses' second giving of the law to Israel, prior to entering the land, he also gave some of its rationale:

And now, *O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you. Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal-peor, for the LORD your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Baal of Peor. But you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today. See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'* For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments, and he

wrote them on two tablets of stone. *And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess.*

Deuteronomy 4:1–8, 13–14

Echoing Leviticus 18:5, obedience to the covenant, to its statutes and judgements, was so that they might *live* and prosper in the land (Deut. 4:40; 5:33; 6:1-3; 7:12-16; 8:1). It was a promise that they may flourish there, in the land, and multiply as a renewal of Adam's original Creation Mandate to fill the earth and subdue it as God's vice-regent (see Gen. 1:26-28). Not only so, it was additionally the promise, subsequent to Adam's tragic and epochal fall, that the seed of the woman would crush the serpents head, thus, conquering sin and death, and restoring the earth as the Garden of the Lord, as God's cosmic temple. This is vividly displayed not only through the garden imagery but also the sacrificial cultus of both tabernacle and temple. So, like Eden, the land was merely a down-payment on the entire earth. Israel was to first possess and settle Canaan, cultivate it and multiply in it, and then, as God's missionary nation, export God's reign and prosperity to the nations. This was in fulfilment of the promise not only to Adam but also to Abraham that his seed would bless and inherit the earth (see Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-27; Ex. 19:5-6). Christ and his Church are then the final and full consummation of this promise and mandate (see 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:16; Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Ps. 110; Matt. 28:18-20).

This Gospel, therefore, demands an eschatology of victory. All thought of defeat before the demonic hordes of pagan darkness, and their worldly acolytes – the god-kings of the humanistic power-state, the supra-national global elites, the cultural Marxists, and the high-priests of scientism – is now cast out. There is no room for the spirits of unbelief and deception that parade as doctrines of the “end times”, but are, in fact, “doctrines of demons”—of imminent Raptures, of a failed and impotent church, of Antichrists, of cataclysms and terminal judgements, of a world delivered to the ravages of Satan and his hell-hounds, to autonomous man, decreeing his own reality and remaking the world in his own image.

This then demands, not only an eschatology of victory but also a strategy for dominion—for one body, under one Lord and in one Spirit to come together city-by-city to declare the crown rights of King Jesus over the totality of created existence. In the unity of the Spirit and of the faith once delivered to the saints, they will stand as one in the advance of the Gospel and Christ's Kingdom throughout the entire globe. Moving in the power of the Spirit this one body will display the diverse wisdom of God before men and angels—to spiritual forces of evil, to principalities and powers; to kings, prime ministers and presidents, who will again become the defenders of the faith and protectors of the church. God's blueprints for the prosperity and peace of mankind will prevail centre-stage in the counsels of men.

But not without the church first repenting of her unbelief. This will demand eschewing the traditions of men for the word of God. Turning from her theological golden calves that, in God's name, have been raised up against his knowledge and the manifestation of his purposes for the earth—from every belief system that robs Christ of his crown-rights *in* the Christian era, that postpones them for another age. And thus, while holding to orthodoxy, denies in practice that, from this time-space world, a Man ascended to the Majesty on high who has been enthroned over history and is now actively governing it as the anointed King, and who has been commanded to rule *until* every enemy is subdued under his feet. Only after destroying *every* rule, authority, and power will he come to deliver up the kingdom to the Father. Then, at his coming, the last enemy – death – will be destroyed in the resurrection. The “last enemy”, signifies that there is a first, a second, a third, and so on, before the last—a progressive increase of God's victorious reign over men and angels before the end.

If this is not the Christian era what is it? There are no enemies in the age to come, in the new heavens and the new earth. But there are here and now, in *this present* evil age! Christ was raised, ascended, and enthroned at the beginning of the intersection of the ages. The *age to come* invaded *this present evil age* when, two-thousand years ago, the Holy Spirit overshadowed that young Hebrew girl, Mary, and gave birth to Emmanuel, *God with us*, who, after his sinless life and death at the hands of godless men, rose from the dead, conquering death and hell, ascending to the Father from whom he had come, and, having made atonement for many, sat at his right hand, and poured forth that which we now see and hear, the Holy Spirit, who has been sent by the Father and the Son to gather in the elect, Christ's corporate body on earth, a new humanity, ordained to rule as his king-priests over the earth. How does Christ rule from heaven but by his Spirit through his body in the earth! And how are his enemies subdued under his feet, in history, except through his body of which he is now the head! This means that *we* are his feet, under which his enemies are subdued. And just as God promised Joshua that the land on which his feet trod was an inheritance to him, our feet must also tread upon our land, our inheritance as God's king-priests. And this inheritance is not just one nation, Canaan, but all the nations and the peoples of the earth, for all the families of the earth shall worship him.

But like Joshua, to put our feet upon our land is also to place them upon the neck of our enemies. Similar to the cultural challenge of the twenty-first century, the land, however, was a land that devoured its inhabitants, was full of giants and occupied by pagan peoples, whose cities were fortified and large. This demanded a different spirit, one of faith, which so filled Caleb and Joshua that they gave a different report, saying, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it”. The Church that Christ is building is an overcoming one, against which the gates of hell cannot stand, they have no defence – no coherent argument, no spiritual power – against God’s power in his Gospel and the wisdom of his laws. His Church is not cowering for fear of giants, but is on the march, arrayed in divine order in their tribes and under their banners, moving as one, as God’s army under God’s authority, under his word and his ministers, bringing down every proud imagination raised up against the knowledge of God.

Verses 6-8, like the previous verse, also quote from the OT law (Deut. 30:12-14), but this time to validate “the righteousness based on faith”, showing that the function of both law *and* faith are rooted in the OT. In other words, law and faith are equal partners, simultaneously functioning in the one covenant, throughout its various iterations. Why else would Paul cite from the law to substantiate faith?

Verses 6-10 thus deal with saving faith, showing the ease with which it functions. Paul’s citation of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 is bookended by two statements from vv. 11 and 14: “For this commandment...is not *too hard for you*” and “... the word is very near you. ... so that *you can do it*”. This is the scandal of faith, the “rock of offence” that has stumbled the Jews (9:33). This citation neutralises the human quest for salvation, for autonomous righteousness. To ascend (v. 6) or descend (v. 7) in that quest is to void the work of Christ in his vicarious death, resurrection and ascension. “The word of faith” (v. 8) puts pay to all human works; works to either ascend through *legalism* or descend through *mysticism*; in Protestant holiness terms, to ascend to the so-called “Higher Life” or descend to the so-called “Deeper Life”. Whether Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant, works constitute the building of one’s house upon sand, they are changeable, and not the solid foundation of Christ. To come to saving faith, demands that reliance on the restless resources of human works must cease. Even “co-crucifixion” with Christ through mystical experiences or death to “self” do not lead the soul in an ascent to God. Sanctification and justification are distinct categories. To be justified or saved by being sanctified is a chimera, a delusion. Justification by any means other than by grace through faith, faith in Christ’s vicarious and finished work, is a vain thing. This includes *fideism*—faith in faith – which the Keswick and “Word of Faith” movements are so prone. It also includes misplaced faith in the doctrine *about* Christ, in contrast to the doctrine *of* Christ, that is, Christ himself. Even the demons believe and tremble; intellectual assent is not saving faith. True belief is, instead, the heart’s response – moved by God’s Spirit – to the word of faith, issuing in the confession of the mouth (vv. 8-9), “for with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (v. 10).

Verse 9 enumerates the two basic elements of saving faith: 1) “Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord”, and 2) “Believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead”: the Resurrection and the Lordship of Christ. These were the two dominant emphases of the apostolic proclamation; throughout Acts the apostles gave witness to the resurrection (Acts 1:22; 2:24, 31, 32; 3:15; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17:18, 31, 32; 23:6, 8; 24:15, 21; 26:8; also 1 Cor. 15:1-4) and proclaimed Christ as Lord (Acts 2:36; 4:24, 26, 29; 4:33; 9:28; 10:36; 11:20; 13:44, 48; 14:3; 15:35, 36; 16:32; 17:24; 19:10; 19:20; 28:31).

To confess Christ as Lord in the Roman world was a political offence. When Peter declared that, “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), he was co-opting terminology from the Caesar cult that declared Caesar Augustus as Saviour of the world. To proclaim Christ as Lord and Saviour was politically subversive, injecting into history for the first time the notion of limited government. There is One more ultimate than Caesar. As Lord of the universe, all authority devolves from him and is, therefore, *limited*, as ch. 13 will later explain.

Verses 11-13 show the universality of saving faith. Because justification and salvation are not by virtue of natural birth or works, it renders salvation available to “everyone who believes” (v. 11). “The same Lord is Lord over all” (v. 12) – Jew and Greek – which removes all other competing categories for ultimacy: political, religious, racial—they all find their coherence in the one who is Lord. Salvation is, therefore, certain for *everyone* who calls on his name (v. 13). Christianity and the Gospel have, therefore, provided the world’s only source of true freedom and equality—“where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17).

This section brings to a climax the question posed in 9:30-32, concerning the Gentile's and Israel's differing situation over the "righteousness that is by faith".

It now drives home the full culpability of Israel due to the clear revelation of God to them, through both special and general means: the preaching of the Word and Creation itself. While the Gentiles have responded in faith, Israel continues in unbelief. Even so, Paul is also partly addressing the situation of mankind in general.

14 *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*—Verses 14-15 deal with the *general call* of the Gospel, whereas vv.16-17 deal with its *effectual call*, the enabling of some to believe. Flowing from v. 13 – “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” – Paul now deals with the logistics of calling on the Lord. Verses 14-18 would seem to be addressing the universal situation of man, Jew and Gentile, although, in v. 19-21 he switches gears, addressing the Jews specifically for the first time in v. 19, tackling their lack of response and the Gentile's inclusion by faith. Working backwards, in v. 14, he poses several logical conundrums: how can they call if they have not believed, how can they believe without hearing, how can they hear without a preacher, and finally v. 15, how can they preach without being sent? **15** *And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”*—Paul now advances the normal means of saving faith by quoting Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15. This is through the “preaching” (*kerusso*) of the Gospel by those sent of God, his servants; *kerusso* meaning “to proclaim after the manner of a herald; always with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed” (Thayer). The prophecy is a Messianic one, Israel's release from captivity and exile serving as the type of Christ's salvation—as one of salvation from divine judgement for covenant-breakers. These sent ones are in contrast to those who are not—those who are sent by men or by themselves, self-appointed prophets and teachers who are false:

And the LORD said to me: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. I have not sent them, declares the LORD, but they are prophesying falsely in my name, with the result that I will drive you out and you will perish, you and the prophets who are prophesying to you.

Jeremiah 14:14; 23:21; 27:15

Throughout redemptive history God's people have been tested by false teachers.

But *false prophets* also arose among the people, just as there will be *false teachers* among you, *who will secretly bring in destructive heresies*, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed *they will exploit you with false words*. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, speaking loud boasts of folly, *they entice by sensual passions of the flesh* those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. *They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption*. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. *For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first*. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

2 Peter 2:1–3, 17–21

These are not usually obvious, but are wolves in sheep's clothing. They may even wear vestments, and some, Amani business suits and Gucci shoes. They appeal to man's fallen nature, to the sensate, promising freedom, while they themselves are “slaves of corruption”. They may be prosperity preachers, or they may be seminary professors, but, in fact, they are false teachers, who slyly bring in heresies, false gospels, designed by his satanic majesty to destroy the people of God. They exploit God's people for their own gain through devious words. Their assignment is to lead them back to the world, to its values and

thought forms, away from the commandments of God. Nonetheless, their judgment will be just and swift. See my comments on *False Gospels* at 1:18-32 and 3:21-31.

It, therefore, behoves the Church to discern the truth and those who speak it. Our assignment in this commentary has been to help her toward that discernment and, indeed, recovery of the Pauline Gospel. A true “preacher” is one who is sent of God; he does not speak on his own authority, but on behalf of another (see Matt. 10:40; John 1:6; 3:34; 4:34; 5:23, 24, 30, 36-38; 6:38; 7:16-18; 8:26, 42; 9:4; 12:45, 49; 13:20). This, in turn, requires a high view of the word of God, under which we tremble. And will play out in careful treatment of the sacred text in the Church’s expository preaching and teaching. It will rid her of motivational talks and “sermonettes for Christianettes”!

Recovery of church and culture must begin in the recovery of preaching. And, therefore, like Paul, in those ministers supernaturally apprehended by the ascended Christ and sent to the nations as true heralds of the King. Without these divine encounters and dealings the church, like Israel, will be “without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law” (2 Chron. 15:3). This is not to deny the corporate witness of the church to the genuineness of the call of God on an individual. Nor is it deny the sending agency of the redeemed community in the thrusting out of God’s servants. But it is to underline the sovereign and supernatural nature of the call of God. God’s purpose is contingent upon the sovereign calling and formation of his servants. This is God’s department, ours is to receive those whom he sends. Spirit anointed preaching and teaching of God’s Gospel and law is *the* catalyst for Kingdom increase (Matt. 28:18-20).

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” **17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. **18** But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” **19** But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.” **20** Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.” **21** But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”—Verses 16-19 introduce the problem that not all who hear the Gospel obey it. Paul is harkening back to 3:3, where he first poses the question of the Jews’ unbelief. Although, in this passage, it is not until v. 19 that he names them specifically, so he is possibly still thinking of mankind in general at this point. This is reinforced by the quote from Isaiah 53:1 – “Lord who has believed what he has heard from us?” – the chapter representing Messiah as the Suffering Servant who, like a lamb is led to slaughter, making an offering for guilt (vv. 7, 10). His atonement and Gospel call is universal, providing salvation for Jew and Gentile. Its use by the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 is especially suggestive. The *general call* of the Gospel has gone out in vv. 14-15 but now v. 16 poses a dilemma: they have heard but not all have believed.

Responding to this dilemma, that not all believe, v. 17, therefore, asserts that faith comes from hearing and hearing through “the word [*rhema*] of Christ”. This now deals with the *effectual call* of the Gospel; the flip-side of those that have not believed is that many have believed. “Hearing” is a covenant category. Paul, steeped in the *shema* of Deuteronomy 6, “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one*” (v. 4), understands it as a covenant command to hear and obey, to forsake one’s autonomy and bow to the sovereignty of Yahweh. Jesus speaks into this covenant category in the Parables of the Sower and of the Candle when he warns, “Therefore take heed *how* you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him” (Luke 8:18 NKJV; see also Matt. 13:10-23). Jesus is foreshadowing the imminent reckoning that was merely forty years hence, Jerusalem’s fall and the Temple’s destruction. The Jews were hearing but not hearing, seeing but not seeing; some only heard words, but others heard God.

His word, “the *word* of Christ”, is a *rhema*, connoting a spoken and living word. This implies that not only is it the preached word of those who are sent but also, and more importantly, through them, the living word of the ascended Christ who has sent them. It is not merely the word *about* Christ but the living word *of* Christ. There are not only two kinds of hearers but also two kinds of preachers. This is why two preachers can speak the same words but have vastly different effects. One is alive and spiritually powerful transforming lives, the other falls to the ground and is of no effect. It may momentarily titillate or inspire, affecting the emotions, but no transaction has occurred between God and the hearer. Their mind nor their will has changed. Only those sent by God have God’s backing by his confirming of the word with signs following, of which transformed lives is one (see Mark 16:20).

These verses, therefore, establish the primacy of preaching for the promulgation of the Gospel (see v. 14-15). In contrast to the world’s wisdom, articulated by the scribe and debater of this age, God has been pleased to save those who believe through the “foolishness of preaching [*kerygma*]” (1 Cor. 1:20-21 KJV). The word *kerygma* marks off the preaching of the Gospel from the

“debater of this age” as an authoritative declaration, indeed, a proclamation; *kerygma* meaning “that which is promulgated by a herald or public crier, a proclamation by herald” (Thayer). This is not to say that Paul never employed dialogue and reason, which he did (see Acts 13:5; 17:2-3, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8-10), but it is to say that the Gospel is an assertion of divine authority, a “thus saith the Lord”. Reason is not his ultimate commitment. Unlike the philosophies and ideologies of this age, the Word of God was received by revelation (Gal. 1:11–2:7) and is transmitted as authoritative (1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 15:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:2). It is not the product of human observation or reason. These are limited to merely inducing the possibility, or at best the probability, for example, that the sun *might* rise tomorrow. In a naturalistic closed system there is no certainty of any physical law, only probability based on the last observation. If this is the case for the knowledge of God’s world, how much more for the knowledge of God! It is only the open system of Christian theism that allows input from outside, revelation, providing not only certainty for science but also for knowing God. This revelation in the Gospel is, therefore, proclaimed with certainty and backed by the authority and power of the One who has called and sent the herald.

Verse 18, by quoting Psalm 19:4, asserts that not only has “the word of Christ” gone out through the Gospel – by *special* revelation – but also through creation – in *general* revelation – to man universally. The heavens – sun, moon, and stars – declare God’s glory throughout the entirety of the world and of history. No one has escaped their witness. The apostle has previously established that the revelation of God through both *creation* and *conscience* is so clear that man is without excuse (see my comments 1:18-20; 2:14-15). So Paul is now building on this and amplifying it by asserting that general revelation also proclaims the Gospel. In other words, if the revelation of God through creation is sufficient for damnation (1:20), it is also sufficient for salvation (see my comments on 2:7 for further argumentation and testimony from the Reformers). Based on his argument of sovereign election in the previous chapter, Paul is now stating that the Gospel *has* gone out universally through both special and general revelation, with the effect that some believe, and some do not. While human agency is involved, God’s election is at play. God is well able to infuse the elect with faith as they gaze upon the majesty of God in creation, even if they have not heard the preaching of his ministers. On the other hand, those who do not believe actively suppress the knowledge of God and worship the creature instead of the Creator, deifying, for example, the sun, moon, and stars, the very instruments of God’s speaking to them (1:18-25). This answers the age-old question concerning the multitudes who lived before Christ or who have never heard the Gospel. They too *have* heard the Gospel – albeit in attenuated form, but nonetheless “clearly perceived” (1:20) – and been offered the choice of belief or unbelief. Throughout human history, regardless of their measure of light, whether through special or general revelation, God has been harvesting his elect. The Spirit of God reveals God, whether it be mediated through the book of nature or the book of Scripture, and is at work saving the elect. So, regardless of whether that revelation is mediate (through Gospel preaching) or immediate (through creation/conscience), faith “comes”; it is the gift of God, as the heart is opened by God’s Spirit and hearing “the word of Christ” (v. 17). It is “the hearing of faith” of Galatians 3:2, 5 (KJV).

In vv. 19-20, Paul now hones in on the Jews’ unbelief and their relation to the Gentiles. He indicts them for refusing to submit to God’s righteousness, referenced in vv. 2-3. With both the witness of Scripture and creation, as asserted in v. 18, they stand guilty, as it were beyond any reasonable doubt. By quoting Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1 he begins to prophesy that the election of the Gentiles will now provoke Israel to jealousy, which he expands in the next chapter (11:11, 14). This begs the question as to what, exactly, will provoke them to jealousy. The answer lies in the covenant. Believing that they are the elect and exclusive beneficiaries of the covenant promises, they will see them, instead, manifest in the Gentile nations (Deut. 28:1-14). They will see that the Christian nations are the head and not the tail; as victorious over enemies, as prosperous, generous and secure—but above all, giving glory to God and obeying his law-word throughout their institutions, from the personal to the civil and cultural.

Then finally, by contrast, in v. 21 Paul indicts the Jews for their persistent unbelief and recalcitrance, despite their privileges and God’s longsuffering. He continues the quote from Isaiah 65 but this time v. 2: “But of Israel he says, ‘All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.’” While God’s covenant mercies are constant, Israel is, nevertheless, responsible for the judgements that have and are yet to befall her. She has apostatised from the living God and is under the covenant curse.

[Part 6: Introduction—Disobedience & Dispossession: Covenant Administered](#)

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Part 6b: Chapter 9:30-10:21—Covenant Continued

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