

Righteousness by Faith, Not by the Law: Paul's Argument From Scripture in Romans 10:1-8

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Romans 9:30-10:13 contrasts two ways a person may try to gain righteousness before God: righteousness based on the Mosaic law or righteousness based on faith. The gospel calls people to faith in Christ to gain acceptance before God (10:9-13). Yet Paul says that many Israelites trusted in their own righteousness obtained through the Law, rather than the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ.

The apostle Paul quotes several passages from Scripture to support his claims. The citations of Leviticus and Deuteronomy in Rom 10:5-8 often perplex interpreters. How can Paul legitimately use passages from the Law to support his claim that salvation is gained by faith in Christ? If Paul interprets Deut 30:12-14 as a reference to the gospel rather than the Law, he appears to use the passage to teach the opposite of what it originally meant. Richard Hays begins his important book on the apostle Paul's citations of the Hebrew Bible (HB) with a discussion of "Paul as reader and misreader of Scripture."¹ Romans 10:6-8 is his prime example of how Paul changes the meaning of Scripture and extends the meaning in new directions.² Paul's interpretation of Deut 30:12-14 "looks on the face of it like a wild and disingenuous piece of exegesis."³ Similarly, Matthew Black says that Paul's interpretation "from the modern point of view,... [is] drastic and unwarrantable allegorizing."⁴ Yet if Paul twists the meaning of the

¹ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 1-5; cf. C. Thomas Rhyne, "Nomos Dikaïosynēs and the Meaning of Romans 10:4," *CBQ* 47 (1985): 496; H. W. Schmidt, *Der Brief Des Paulus an Die Römer*, Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1963), 176; C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 2nd ed. (London: Collins, 1959), 166. Dodd says "Paul's citation of Old Testament passages often strikes us as arbitrary, and his interpretation of them as fanciful" (p. 50).

³ Hays, *Echoes*, 74; cf. Morna D. Hooker, "The Authority of the Bible: A New Testament Perspective," *Ex auditu* 19 (2003): 59, who says "in a remarkable piece of hijacking, Deut 30:12-14 is discovered to refer, not to the law and to obedience to it, but to the gospel and to faith in Christ."

⁴ Matthew Black, "The Christological Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," *NTS* 18.1 (1971): 8-9.

Scripture passages that he cites, it is hard to see how he expected his argument to be persuasive to his opponents.

In order to understand Paul's interpretive methods in these verses, it is critical to see how these biblical citations fit into his overall argument. Since Rom 10:5 begins with γὰρ ("for"), the quotations from Leviticus and Deuteronomy in vv. 5-8 function to support Paul's claim in v. 4 that "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (NASB 1995).

Romans 10:4 is typically understood as a statement about salvation-history – either that the coming of Christ brought an end to the Law or that Christ was the embodiment of what the Law pointed to (the "goal" of the Law). However, both of these salvation-historical approaches make it difficult to understand how Paul's biblical quotations in vv. 5-8 support his argument.

A solution that is more consistent with the context is that Rom 10:4 describes the *subjective* change in how an individual approaches God when he comes to faith in Christ, rather than an *objective* change in salvation history. For "everyone who believes," placing faith in Christ means to cease using the Law for righteousness to become acceptable to God. The biblical quotations better fit Paul's argument if Rom 10:4 is understood in this way. These Scriptures describe two alternative ways in which a person may seek to gain righteousness and support Paul's argument that God's righteousness is gained by faith and not by keeping the Law.

The Main Argument of the Context (Romans 9:30-10:13)

A major theme of Romans 9-11 is an explanation about why the majority of Israelites do not believe in Jesus as Messiah. Their unbelief does not mean that God's promise to Israel ("the word of God," ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ) has failed (9:6). In 9:6-29, Paul focuses on the divine side of his explanation, which is election by God. God chose a remnant within Israel, just as he has throughout salvation-history. In 9:30-10:13, he focuses on the human side of his explanation, which is faith. The majority of Israelites failed to understand that God's righteousness is

obtained by faith and not by keeping the Law. Thus they trusted in their own righteousness obtained by works, rather than the righteousness that comes by faith in the Messiah.

Romans 9:30-10:13 is a sustained argument that shows that righteousness is obtained by faith and not by works in obedience to the Law. “Doing” and “believing” are two contrasting ways of gaining righteousness.⁵ All of the biblical quotations in this passage must be understood in light of this theme. Near the beginning (9:33) and end (10:11) of this section, Paul quotes from Isa. 28:16: “Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.” This creates a structural inclusion that stresses that faith is the only way to salvation.

“Righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) in this section refers to “justification,” i.e. right standing before God. This is shown by the similar use of δικαιοσύνη in Rom 3:21-4:25, which is another passage that contrasts faith and works of the Law as two ways to gain righteousness. God has always justified people on the basis of faith (e.g. 4:2-9). The statement in 3:28 that “a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law” corresponds to the contrast of faith and works as ways of gaining righteousness in 9:30-32. The phrase “the righteousness of God” is used in 3:22 in the same way as 10:3 and refers to God’s activity of justifying someone who has faith.⁶ Romans 4:5 uses the noun δικαιοσύνη and the verb δικαιόω to refer to justification: When God “justifies the ungodly” that person’s “faith is credited as righteousness” (cf. 4:11, where the noun is used in the sense of justification).

⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, “Paul’s View of the Law in Romans 10:4-5,” *WTJ* 55 (1993): 129.

⁶ “‘The righteousness of God’ here denotes the dynamic activity of God whereby he brings people into relationship with himself. This ‘justifying’ activity of God is manifested in Christ (3:21) and proclaimed in the gospel (1:17)... ‘The righteousness of God,’ in this sense ... embraces on one side God’s activity of ‘declaring right’ and on the other the status of ‘being right’ with God that people receive when they respond in faith to that activity.” Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 633; cf. J. A. Zeisler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

God considers Gentiles who believe in Jesus to be righteous and they are included in God's people (9:30). By contrast, much of Israel is not part of the true spiritual people of God (9:6), because they seek to obtain acceptance with God by works in obedience to the Law (9:31-32).⁷

The problem for Israel was not pursuing the Law, which is a good goal and was the proper expression of obedience for Israel under the Old Covenant. They made two fundamental mistakes: (1) They pursued righteousness in the wrong way: they did not seek to obtain righteousness by faith, but “as through it were by works” (9:32). (2) They rejected the Messiah, Jesus (9:32-33), because they did not understand the change in salvation-history and the start of the new covenant through Christ (cf. 10:6-8). “They stumbled over the stumbling stone” (9:33 citing Isa 28:16; 8:14), which Paul understands as a reference to Christ (10:9-11). Christ is the foundation stone of the new people of God (cf. Eph 2:20).⁸ If one does not believe in him, the stone that should become the foundation stone becomes a stone over which one trips and is destroyed.⁹

In Rom 10:1-3, Paul repeats the contrast between the two kinds of righteousness, focusing on the reasons for Israel's failure. Although the Jews have great zeal for God, their zeal is based on ignorance, since they do not know God's way of righteousness, which is by faith in Christ (10:2-3). Rather than submitting to God's righteousness, they seek to establish “their own righteousness” (10:3), which is equivalent to pursuing the Law “as from works” (*ὡς ἐξ ἔργων*, 9:32).

⁷ “Law of righteousness” (*νόμον δικαιοσύνης*, 9:31) is a descriptive genitive: a Law characterized by and prescribing righteousness.

⁸ Both Eph 2:20 and Rom 9:32-33 (merging Isa 28:16 and Isa 8:14) use stone imagery as a reference to Christ, although they use different Greek words: Eph 2:20 uses *ἀκρογωνιαίος* (“cornerstone”); Rom 9:32-33 use *λίθος* (“stone” in a general sense); and Rom 9:33 uses *πέτρα* (“rock” in a general sense, or perhaps “bedrock”). Other NT messianic stone citations include 1 Pet 2:6-8, which quotes Isa 28:16 and Isa 8:14, much like Rom 9:32-33; and Matt 21:42 (and parallels), along with Acts 4:11, which quote Ps 118:22.

⁹ Some first century Jews also saw the Messiah as the stone in the stumbling stone passages in Isaiah (e.g. 1QH 6:26-27; 1QS 8:7; Targum on Isa 28:16). 1 Pet. 2:6-8 also combines Isa. 8:14 and 28:16 and applies the stone imagery to Christ. Cf. Black, “Christological,” 1-14; Joachim Jeremias, “λίθος, λίθινος,” TDNT 4:272-273.

In Rom 10:4, Paul discusses how a person can break free from the wrong way of seeking righteousness. When a person believes in Christ, he ceases to use the Law as a means of gaining right standing before God. In light of the emphasis on two ways of righteousness in the context, this verse is best understood as a subjective end of the Law for an individual believer, rather than a statement about salvation-history.

The biblical quotations in 10:5-8 support Paul's teachings about the two contrasting types of righteousness. The nature of law is that one must do things to receive God's blessings (v. 5). By contrast, righteousness from faith trusts in what God has done in Christ (vv. 6-7). God's message is accessible (vv. 6-8) and one simply needs to believe the message about Jesus in order to be saved. God's righteousness has always come from faith and not doing the Law, but now that the Messiah has come, the divine message is about Jesus the Lord, not the Law (vv. 9-13). Paul's discussion of the gospel message that one must believe to be saved is interwoven with additional biblical quotations that show that believing in and calling upon the Lord is all that is necessary to be saved (vv. 11, 13).

In What Sense is Christ the End of the Law? (Romans 10:4)

“Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (10:4). This is one of the most important and controversial verses about the role of the Law in the New Covenant era. It is a central verse in this portion of Romans, since it is in the middle of a cluster of sentences that begin with *γάρ* (vv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Romans 10:4 gives a further explanation of Paul's argument about the two kinds of righteousness (begun in 9:30). The series of biblical quotations in vv. 5-8, which also begin with *γάρ* (v. 5), provide further support of the claim of the preceding paragraph.

Most scholars correctly believe that “law” (νόμος) here refers to the law of Moses, in light of the concern about Israel in the preceding verses.¹⁰ This is consistent with the use of νόμος in v. 5, which is linked by γάρ to v. 4. Although the context speaks about Israel’s misuse of the Law (e.g. 9:31), the word νόμος itself refers to the Law here, not legalism.¹¹ Israel misused the Law as a means of works as if that could enable them to attain right standing before God (e.g. 9:32; 10:3). Although νόμος itself does not refer to legalism, the phrase “law for righteousness” (νόμου ... εἰς δικαιοσύνην, 10:4) does refer to legalism and is equivalent to “their own righteousness” (τὴν ἰδίαν [δικαιοσύνην], 10:3) and “works” (ἔργων, 9:32).¹²

Many interpreters use Rom 10:4 as the measuring stick for other passages about the Law. Generally those who see a sharp discontinuity between the Law and the gospel believe that the verse states that Christ brought an end to the age of Law, so that salvation is no longer through the Law, but through faith in Christ. Those who focus on the continuity of God’s work in both the Law and the gospel generally say that Christ fulfilled the Law or that he is the goal toward which the Law is pointing. However, both of these salvation-historical approaches make it difficult to understand how Paul’s biblical quotations in vv. 5-8 support his argument about the two kinds of righteousness.

Since the previous verses (9:30-10:3) are primarily about the attempts of people to gain righteousness before God, it is better to understand Rom 10:4 as a description of the subjective change in how an individual approaches God when he comes to faith in Christ. For “everyone

¹⁰ So the majority of interpreters; e.g. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975), 2:516; Moo, *Romans*, 636; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 282; M. J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul: Épitre aux Romains* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1950), 254; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 197-98. However, Rudolf Karl Bultmann, “Christ the End of the Law,” in *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 54, argues that it means legalism.

¹¹ Contra C. F. D. Moule, “Obligation in the Ethic of Paul,” in *Christian History and Interpretation. Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule and R. R. Niehbuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 391-93. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary 38B (Dallas: Word, 1998), 590, reflects the “New Perspective on Paul,” when he says νόμος means “zeal for the law which fights to preserve Israel’s distinctiveness.... This is a misunderstanding of God’s purpose (v 2).”

¹² S. K. Williams, “The ‘Righteousness of God’ in Romans,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 284; Richard Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker, 1964), 146. Dunn, *Roman 9-16*, 590, says εἰς δικαιοσύνην should go with νόμου, due to the repeated association of νόμος and δικαιοσύνη in the context (9:31 and 10:5).

who believes” (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι), placing faith in Christ means that they cease attempting to attain righteousness by works of the Law. Verses 3b-4 could be paraphrased as follows to show that v. 4 continues the contrast between two ways of gaining righteousness: “The Israelites did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God, for when anyone has faith in Christ, the Law ceases to function as a means of righteousness for him.”

Much of the debate about this verse revolves around the meaning of τέλος. In most NT occurrences, the word means “end” in the sense of “termination.” There are a few instances, however, where the word can mean “goal.” This leads to several common interpretations of Rom 10:4:¹³

(1) **Objective termination of the Law.**¹⁴ When Christ came, the Law ended its role in salvation-history. Interpreters disagree about which role of the Law ceased, but at the very least, it no longer functions to bring salvation. In this view, εἰς δικαιοσύνην (“for righteousness”) reflects the new situation now that Christ has come. It indicates either purpose (“so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes”) or result (“resulting in righteousness for everyone who believes”).

(2) **Christ is the goal of the Law.**¹⁵ According to this view, Christ fulfilled the intention of the Law in his life, teachings and death. Jesus was a perfect embodiment of the righteousness

¹³ For an excellent summary of interpretations of τέλος in Rom 10:4, see Schreiner, “Paul’s View,” 113-24.

¹⁴ E.g. William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 5th ed. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902), 283-84; Heiki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1983), 54-55; Wilhelm C Linss, “Exegesis of Telos in Romans 10:4,” *Biblical Research* 33:5-12 1988 (1988): 6, 10-11; R. Aldrich, “Has the Mosaic Law Been Abolished?,” *BSac* 116 (1959): 322-35; F. Hahn, “Das Gesetzesverständnis Im Römer- Und Galaterbrief,” *ZNW* 57 (1976): 55; Käsemann, *Romans*, 282-83; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer, übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1955), 224-25; H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 171; Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, New American Commentary 27 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 207; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993); Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 381; G. Delling, “τέλος, TDNT 8:56.

¹⁵ E.g. Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenantal Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 1980), 84-85; Rhyne, 103-04; Hays, *Echoes*, 75-76; Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:519-20; N. T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection,” in vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 657; P. W. Meyer, “Romans 10:4 and the ‘End’ of the Law,” in *The Divine Helmsmen: Studies on God’s Control of Human Events, Presented to Lou H Silberman*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw and S. Sandmel (New York: Ktav, 1980), 65-68; George E. Howard, “Christ the End of the Law: The Meaning of Rom 10:4ff,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 333; W. S. Campbell, “Christ the End of the Law: Romans 10:4,” in *Studia*

which the Law demanded and thus he is the goal of the Law. In addition, his death on the cross brings righteousness to those who believe in him, thus fulfilling the intention of the Law, which was to make people righteous. In this view, εἰς δικαιοσύνην is result – “resulting in righteousness for everyone who believes.”

(3) **Christ is both the goal and the end of the Law.**¹⁶ Paul intends a double meaning based on the semantic ambiguity of τέλος. Since Christ met the demands of the Law and thus fulfilled it, the Law ceased to be the primary means of a relationship with God, although it still points to Christ.

With rare exceptions, in Paul’s letters τέλος normally means “end” in the sense of “termination.”¹⁷ There is only one clear instance where τέλος means “goal” in Paul’s letters (1 Tim 1:5) and Paul never uses the word to mean “fulfillment.”¹⁸ Thus all things being equal, unless the context demands otherwise, τέλος is more likely to mean “termination” than “goal.”¹⁹

Yet the objective termination view has some significant weaknesses: Paul has already shown through the example of Abraham and David that salvation has always been by faith (4:2-6). The Law was never intended to bring salvation. “By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight” (Rom 3:20; cf. Gal 2:21: “if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died

Biblica 1978: III. *Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors. Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies*, ed. E. A. Livingstone, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 74-77; J. Ziesler, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 257-58; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14 (1971): 26; Ragnar Bring, “Paul and the Old Testament: A Study of the Ideas of Election, Faith, and Law in Paul, with Special Reference to Rom. 9:30-10:13,” *ST* 25 (1971): 45-46.

¹⁶ E.g. Mark A. Seifrid, “Paul’s Approach to the Old Testament in Rom. 10:6-8,” *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985): 7-8; Franz J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1961), 266; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans. An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), 203; J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle. The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 91, 106-07; Barrett, *Romans*, 197-98; Dunn, *Roman 9-16*, 9-16; 589-590; Moo, *Romans*, 640-41.

¹⁷ 1 Cor 10:11; 15:24; 2 Cor 1:13; 3:13; 1 Thess 2:16 are clearly “termination.” The meaning is “outcome” or “final destiny” in Rom 6:21-22; 2 Cor 11:15; Phil 3:19. This sense is related to the idea of termination, as it is the final state of something. Although BDAG classifies these latter verses under “goal” (category 3), the sense is different than “fulfillment.”

¹⁸ Luke 22:37 is the only clear instance of “fulfillment” in the NT. Paul uses τελείωσις to mean “fulfillment.”

¹⁹ See the helpful survey of the range of meanings of τέλος in Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 545; cf. Dunn, *Roman 9-16*, 589; Moo, *Romans*, 638-40.

needlessly”; Rom 3:21: “if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would have been based on law.”). But even if the Law has been terminated in some sense, such as regulating the moral life, this does not fit Paul’s thought in the context. The passage is about righteousness that leads to salvation (e.g. 10:1, 9-10), not the life of one who is saved. Although Paul does say elsewhere that there has been a salvation-historical change of the human relationship to the Law,²⁰ the context of Rom 10:4 is not primarily about salvation-history.²¹

A view of *τέλος* in Rom 10:4 that is more consistent with the context is the **subjective termination of the Law**. When a person comes to faith in Christ, he abandons using the Law for salvation and receives God’s righteousness by faith.²² J. B. Phillips’ paraphrase of the verse captures this idea: “Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness-by-the-Law for everyone who believes in him.” In this view, the prepositional phrase “for righteousness” (*εἰς δικαιοσύνην*) is understood as referential. It limits the sphere or function of the Law that is view: Faith ceases the use of the law *in its connection with* righteousness.²³ The subjective termination view has several advantages:

(1) It recognizes that *τέλος* primarily means “termination” in Paul’s letters.

²⁰ Rom 6:15 and 7:4-6 say that the Law has been abolished for believers (cf. Eph. 2:15; 2 Cor. 3:6, 11-13; Gal. 3:23-25).. In other passages, Paul is negative about various functions of the Law (Rom 3:21; 5:20; 8:2-3; Gal 2:19; Phil 3:3, 9).

²¹ Certainly a change in salvation-history is in the background. Since the Messiah has come (10:6-7), faith should be focused on him (10:9-10; cf. 9:33). However, salvation-history is not the main issue in 9:30-10:3, so it is unlikely to be the point of 10:4.

²² Schreiner, “Paul’s View,” 135, nicely describes this viewpoint: “The purpose of Rom 10:4 is not to provide some global statement on the relationship between the Testaments! In the specific context Paul is simply asserting that those who put their faith in Christ cease to use the law as a means of establishing their own righteousness.” (cf. pp. 121-124). Bultmann, “Christ the End,” 54, argues that coming to Christ marks the end of a life which seeks to establish its own recognition before God through self-made righteousness and instead substitutes faith in Christ as the means of access to God. (cf. p. 64)

²³ Schreiner, “Paul’s View,” 121; Longenecker, *Paul*, 144; Albrecht Oepke, “εἰς,” TDNT 2:429; H. A. A. Kennedy, *The Theology of the Epistles* (London: Duckworth, 1923), 80; NEB margin. Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 43, acknowledges that the preposition *εἰς* can be used in this sense: “In the case of every believer, Christ is the end of law the viewed as a means of gaining [telic *εἰς*] righteousness [or, in its relation to righteousness, referential *εἰς*].” The other possible classification of *εἰς* in this verse is ecbatic (result), which generally goes with as *τέλος* as goal.

(2) Unlike the objective termination view, it avoids the erroneous idea that the Law was ever intended as a means of gaining righteousness for salvation.

(3) It better fits the context than the objective termination view. The preceding context is not primarily about salvation-history, but rather about the personal attempts of individual Israelites and Gentiles to gain righteousness before God.²⁴ As has been shown, this section of the letter contrasts two ways of righteousness – righteousness by faith and righteousness by works of the Law. God’s way of righteousness has always been through faith (cf. Romans 4). Since v. 4 begins with γάρ, the verse continues the contrast between the two kinds of righteousness and explains how a person becomes free from “seeking to establish their own righteousness” (τὴν ἰδίαν δικαιοσύνην ζητοῦντες στήσαι, v. 3).

(4) The verse itself contrasts the two ways of gaining righteousness: “everyone who believes” (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι) and “Law for righteousness” (νόμου ... εἰς δικαιοσύνην).

(5) The biblical quotations in the subsequent verses (vv. 5-8) illustrate the contrast between the two ways of gaining righteous standing before God. Verse 5 is about righteousness from the Law (corresponding to “Law for righteousness” in v. 4) and vv. 6-8 are about righteousness from faith (corresponding to “everyone who believes” in v. 4).

(6) The subjective termination view makes good sense of the limiting phrase “to everyone who believes” (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι). This phrase shows that Paul is not making an absolute statement about the Law either being abolished or fulfilled in Christ. Rather, he is speaking of the termination of the Law being used for righteousness only for those who believe in Christ.

(7) There is a close parallel in structure and content between this verse and Rom 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (NASB 1995) The striking similarities in word order and grammatical structure are highlighted in Table 1.

²⁴ Cf. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1949), 380.

10:4	τέλος γὰρ νόμου [] Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι
	a b c d e f g h i j
1:16	δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν [] εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι

Table 1: Sentence Structure of Romans 10:4 and 1:16

Both clauses begin with a predicate nominative (a),²⁵ followed an anarthrous genitive noun (c): “power of God” (δύναμις θεοῦ, 1:16); “end of the Law” (τέλος νόμου, 10:4). Both follow with a prepositional phrase with εἰς (f) and an anarthrous noun (g): “for salvation” (εἰς σωτηρίαν, 1:16); “for righteousness” (εἰς δικαιοσύνην, 10:4). The use of σωτηρία and δικαιοσύνη in this slot is significant, given how closely related salvation and righteousness are in Pauline thought. Finally, both end the clause with παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι following this prepositional phrase (h, i, j).

Since Rom 1:16 is clearer in its meaning and structure than Rom 10:4, the similarity between the two verses may help resolve some interpretive problems in 10:4. The parallel structure between the two verses suggests that εἰς δικαιοσύνην indicates the sense in which the Law has ended. Just as the gospel is not the power of God in an absolute sense, but in the realm of salvation for the believer (1:16), so faith in Christ means the end of using the Law as a means of bringing righteousness, not necessarily the termination of the Law in every sense (10:4). Thus in 10:4, εἰς δικαιοσύνην should be taken with νόμου (“Law”), rather than with the phrase τέλος νόμου (“end of the Law”).²⁶ This is also reinforced by the fact that whenever Paul mentions νόμος (“law”) in the context of 10:4, it is closely connected with δικαιοσύνη (“righteousness”; cf. 9:31; 10:5). The negative sense of “righteousness from the Law” (τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ τοῦ νόμου) in

²⁵ In Rom 1:16, the subject is implied in the verb ἐστὶν (d) and refers to τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, which was mentioned in the previous clause. Since there is only one clause in 10:4, the subject Χριστὸς (e) is specified.

²⁶ Williams, “Righteousness,” 284; Longenecker, *Paul*, 146; Dunn, *Roman 9-16*, 590. Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:519 n 2, objects that εἰς δικαιοσύνην should directly follow νόμου if it goes with νόμου. However, there are many NT examples of the separation of the prepositional phrase from the word or phrase it modifies (e.g. Rom 1:16: δύναμις ... εἰς σωτηρίαν; 13:4: διάκονός ... εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν; Eph. 1:14; Col. 2:2; cf. Matt 26:3; Mark. 14:41; Luke 2:4; 4:14; 8:23; 16:8; John 3:17; Acts 2:38; Rev. 16:1). Dunn, *Roman 9-16*, 590, observes the same syntax is in Rom 9:21 (“does not the potter have a right over the clay,” οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν ὁ κεραμεὺς τοῦ πηλοῦ), where “clay” (τοῦ πηλοῦ) goes with “right” (ἐξουσίαν), even though the words are separated by the subject “potter” (ὁ κεραμεὺς). Similarly, in Rom 10:4, the subject Χριστὸς is interposed between the related words. Schreiner, “Paul’s View,” 123, argues that Paul puts τέλος νόμου first for emphasis.

10:5 corresponds to “Law for righteousness” (νόμου ... εἰς δικαιοσύνην) in 10:4. Rom 1:16 says that the very essence of the gospel is that it brings salvation to “all who believe” (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι). Similarly, the same dative phrase (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι). in Rom 10:4 limits the end of the Law to those who believe in Christ.²⁷

It is true that Paul has an underlying salvation-historical presupposition here, as in all of his letters: Now that the Messiah has come, the proper way to exercise faith is in Christ, who is the risen Lord (10:6-7, 9-13; cf. 9:33). Romans 10:4 sets the stage for the explicit call to faith in Christ in 10:9-17. But the foreground topic in the preceding verses is how an individual can gain righteousness before God. Thus Rom 10:4 describes the subjective change in how an individual approaches God when he comes to faith in Christ. For “everyone who believes,” placing faith in Christ means ceasing the attempt to attain righteousness by works of the Law.

Scriptural Support for Two Ways of Righteousness (Romans 10:5-8)

The biblical quotations in Rom 10:5-8 show that faith has always been the way God expects his people to gain righteousness. The cited passages offer Scriptural support for the contrast between two ways of attaining righteousness. Verse 5 quotes Lev 18:5 to explain the nature of righteousness based on works and the Law. Verses 6-8 quote Deut 9:4 and Deut 30:12-14 to explain the nature of righteousness based on faith. The use of γάρ (“for”) at the start of v. 5, shows that these biblical quotations provide justification for his argument about the two contrasting kinds of righteousness. In vv. 1-13, the connective word γάρ (“for”) is used nine times, showing that the passage is a long chain of logical argumentation in which the biblical quotations support Paul’s major claim about two kinds of righteousness.

One key to understanding how Paul uses these biblical citations is to recognize that Rom 10:4 is about a personal approach to righteousness, not primarily about salvation-history. Thus,

²⁷ B. L. Martin, “Paul on Christ and the Law,” *JETS* 26 (1983): 279, notes that “those outside of Christ are still under the law, still enslaved to and condemned by the law.”; cf. Walter Gutbrod, “νόμος,” *TDNT* 4:1075.

even though Paul quotes from the Law in vv. 5-8, his interest is how these biblical passages illustrate a personal attempt to gain righteousness either based on Law (v. 5) or based on faith (vv. 6-8).

Some interpreters argue that there is continuity between the two quotations rather than contrast.²⁸ It is claimed that vv. 5-8 express one harmonious viewpoint, since it would be strange for Paul to pit one quotation from the Law against another.²⁹ In this view, the “righteousness based on the Law” is the same as the “righteousness based on faith.” The person who does the Law in the proper way does so by faith. This is usually associated with the idea that τέλος in v. 4 refers to “goal.”

It is true that δέ often means “and” rather than “but.” However, there are several reasons to see the biblical quotations here as illustrations of the two contrasting approaches to righteousness Paul has been discussing throughout the passage. (1) Paul quotes Lev 18:5 negatively in Gal 3:12 to argue that the Law is not “from faith” (ἐκ πίστεως). This contrast between Law and faith is similar to the contrast between righteousness “from Law” (ἐκ τοῦ νόμου) and righteousness “from faith” (ἐκ πίστεως) in Rom 10:5-6. (2) In Phil 3:6-9, Paul describes his own experience using a similar contrast of righteousness derived from the Law (v. 6: δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ; v. 9: ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου) with “righteousness from God on the basis of faith” (τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, v. 9). Since Phil 3:9 says that this faith-based righteousness comes “from God” (ἐκ θεοῦ), this supports the conclusion that “the righteousness from faith” (ἡ ... ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη) in Rom 10:6 is the same as “the righteousness of God” (τῇ δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ) in Rom 10:3. (3) Paul has contrasted two types of righteousness in 9:30-32 and most recently in 10:3, which leads to the expectation that the Scriptures quoted regarding

²⁸ E.g. Howard, 333-36; C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law,” *SJT* 17 (1964): 53, 57; Wright, “Romans,” 657; Hays, *Echoes*, 77; Nygren, *Romans*, 379-80; Walter Gutbrod, “νόμος,” *TDNT* 4:1075; cf. Phillips’ translation of Rom 10:4.

²⁹ Fuller, *Gospel and Law*, 67; Hays, *Echoes*, 126-27.

righteousness in vv. 5-8 will continue this pattern of contrast. There is a close verbal parallel between 10:5-6 and 9:30-32, where the two types of righteousness are contrasted (see Table 2).

	Romans 10:5-6	Romans 9:30-32
Righteousness from Law/Works	10:5: “the righteousness from the Law” (τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ τοῦ νόμου)	9:31-32: “pursuing a law of righteousness (διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης) ... as though from works” (ὡς ἐξ ἔργων)
Righteousness from Faith	10:6: “the righteousness from faith” (ἡ δὲ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη)	9:30: “righteousness from faith” (δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ πίστεως) cf. 9:32: ἐκ πίστεως; 9:33: ὁ πιστεύων

Table 2: Verbal Similiarities Between Rom 10:5-6 and 9:30-32

The repetition of “righteousness from faith” makes a clear connection between these two sections. The association of “law” and “works” in a negative sense for attaining righteousness has already been firmly established in Rom 3:20, 27-28 (cf. Gal 2:16). This pattern confirms that the biblical quotations continue to contrast righteousness by works and the Law with righteousness by faith.

Romans 10:5: Righteousness Based on the Law

The quotation in v. 5 is introduced with “for Moses writes,” where “Moses” substitutes for “the Law” by metonymy (cf. Rom 10:19). The reference to “Moses” suggests that this quotation describes the Law-based approach to righteousness, which is confirmed by the phrase “the righteousness from Law” (τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ τοῦ νόμου). “Righteousness” is an accusative of reference: “Moses writes *concerning* the righteousness that comes from the Law” (NRSV, my emphasis; cf. ESV: “Moses writes about ...”).³⁰ Righteousness from the Law means that right standing with God is based on the good works that a person does in obedience to the Law.

³⁰ BDAG, γράφω, category 2c, says the accusative with γράφω means to write about someone or something.

Paul weaves a quotation of Lev 18:5 into his statement, by making minor changes to the wording of the Septuagint (LXX) to better fit the flow of his sentence.³¹ He substitutes an article δ for the relative pronoun α and moves $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$, since he does not quote the verb $\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ that goes with $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$ in the previous clause (see Table 3).³² These minor grammatical changes do not affect the essential meaning of the quotation.

Lev 18:5 LXX	$\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$, α $\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\alpha\varsigma$ $\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$ $\zeta\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma$ a b c d e f g h	“You will do them; which having done <i>them</i> , a person will live by them.” ³³
Rom 10:5	δ $\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\alpha\varsigma$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$ $\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$ $\zeta\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$ $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma$ d b e f g h	“The person who does these things will live by them.” (my translation)

Table 3: Leviticus 18:5 in the LXX and Romans 10:5

In context, Lev 18:5 summons Israel to obedience to God’s commandments so that they may have the blessings that God promised to give them in the land. (Note that v. 3 contrasts how they lived in Egypt and the improper behavior that is currently being done by the inhabitants of the promised land.) There are several other places in the HB where the same “doing leads to blessing” formula occurs,³⁴ so Lev 18:5 is a good summary of how law functions.³⁵

³¹ Some have suggested this is not actually an biblical quotation, but just a summary of the nature of law (evidently RSV, NASB 1995). This would read $\delta\tau\iota$ as an introduction to indirect speech. But the wording is very close to Lev. 18:5 and Paul uses an introductory formula similar to other biblical quotations in Romans, where he refers to a book by the name of the presumed author (e.g. Rom 10:16 [“Isaiah says”]; 10:19 [“Moses says”]; 10:20 [“Isaiah . . . says”]; 11:9 [David says”]; 15:12 [“Isaiah says”]; cf. Rom 9:25 [“he says in Hosea”]). Thus $\delta\tau\iota$ introduces a direct quotation of Scripture. Cf. NRSV; NIV; Morris, *Romans*, 381. The position of $\delta\tau\iota$ varies among MSS. External evidence (p⁴⁶, κ , B, C, D^c, G, K, P, etc.) favors $\delta\tau\iota$ following $\nu\acute{o}\mu\omicron\upsilon$ rather than $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\phi\epsilon\iota$, which favors a direct quotation of Lev. 18:5, rather than a paraphrase. See the discussion of textual evidence in Seifrid, “Paul’s Approach,” 12-13.

³² It is certainly possible, of course, that Paul is quoting a different Greek text than in any extant MS of the LXX.

³³ Rick Brannan et al., eds., *The Lexham English Septuagint* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012).

³⁴ E.g. Deut 30:6, 16, 19; Neh 9:29; Ezek 18:9; 20:11.

³⁵ Although the immediate application in Leviticus 18 is forbidden sexual relations, the section concludes with a more general warning: “Do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them.” (Lev. 18:30). This shows that the sexual laws are part of a broader principle that Israel is not to emulate any of the immoral practices of the Canaanites. Thus Paul’s use of Lev. 18:5 is consistent with the intended principle of the biblical quotation, even if his application is different. Contra Seifrid, “Paul’s Approach,” 11-12.

Deuteronomy 30, which Paul quotes in part in Rom 10:6-8, also repeatedly states this formula and makes clear that “live” refers to God’s blessings in the land (e.g. Deut 30:6, 16, 19).

Leviticus 18:5 does not speak of a way of gaining salvation or eternal life through keeping the Law. How, then, is Paul’s usage of this verse legitimate? Leviticus 18:5 shows that the very nature of law is that “blessing is contingent on obedience.”³⁶ Law-based righteousness involves doing something to gain God’s blessing, in contrast to faith-based righteousness, which merely accepts God’s gift of righteousness. Law is about what a person does (ὁ ποιήσας, 10:5), which easily transfers to Paul’s concept of “works” (ἔξ ἔργων) as a way of pursuing righteousness (9:32).

Paul focuses on this principle about the nature of Law. Although Lev 18:5 is not about how to attain salvation, what it teaches about the nature of law is valid for people who seek to attain salvation through keeping the Law. In Paul’s time, Israel correctly understood that the nature of law is “doing leads to blessing.” But many Jewish people inappropriately extended this into the realm of salvation and thus they misused the Law as a means of gaining salvation and right standing before God (9:32).³⁷ Salvation has always been on the basis of faith not human works or any aspect of law-keeping, as Paul made clear in his discussion of Abraham and David in Romans 4.

³⁶ Moo, *Romans*, 649.

³⁷ Friedrich Avenmarie, *Tora und Leben: Untersuchgen sur Heilsbedeutung der Tora in der frühen rabbinischen Literatur*, Text und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 55 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 575-84, shows many examples from Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism where salvation is contingent upon obedience to the Law or good deeds. E.g. Bar 4:1 says concerning the Law in general, “...the law that is exists for eternity. All who hold her are destined for life, but those who forsake her will perish” (*Lexham English Septuagint*). Rabbinic interpreters often understood Lev 18:5 as a promise for the life to come as well as for the present life (e.g. Sipre Lev. 337a; Tg. Onq. Lev. 18:5; Tg. Ps.-J. Lev. 18:5; b. Mak. 23b; Midr. Exod. 30:22; cf. Str-B 3:278). Individuals would receive both eternal life (ʿAbot R. Nat. B 10) and deliverance from Hell (Midr. Deut 33:2; Lev. Rab. 1:11) as rewards for keeping the Law. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism. A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 33-428, offered an important corrective to the prevailing view in his time that all early Judaism was legalistic. However, early Judaism reflects a wider range of perspectives about the Law and salvation than Sanders allowed. Although there are many examples of “nomistic” Judaism, other early Jewish writers were indeed legalistic. Paul’s argument in Rom 9:30-10:17 – along with much of Romans – opposes this wrongheaded view of salvation. Cf. Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 15-17; D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien and Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001); Tim Chester, “Justification, Ecclesiology and the New Perspective,” *Themelios* 30.2 (2005): 11-12.

Thomas Schreiner argues that Paul’s assumption in quoting Lev 18:5 is that no one can attain righteousness or eternal life by obeying the Law since no one can obey sufficiently what the law demands. Israel pursued righteousness “as by works” (9:32), although that is impossible.³⁸ Certainly Paul makes clear in Romans 3 that no one can be justified by works of the Law (3:20, 27-28; cf. 7:5) and that all people fail to live up to God’s demands (3:9-20, 23). But the point of Paul’s citation of Lev 18:5 and indeed of his argument in Rom 9:30-10:13 is that **doing the Law as a way of gaining right standing before God is wrong headed, not that it is impossible.**³⁹ Israel sought to establish their own righteousness rather than to accept God’s righteousness (10:3) and they pursued righteousness as though it could be attained by works (9:32), even though it can only be attained by faith (9:30, 32; 10:4, 9-11).

Romans 10:6-8: Righteousness Based on Faith

Whereas v. 5 speaks of the “doing” method of gaining righteousness (*ὁ ποιήσας*), vv. 6-8 focus on faith (*ἐκ πίστεως*) as the way of gaining righteousness. Paul introduces a quotation from Deuteronomy with “the righteousness from faith speaks in this way” (*ἡ δὲ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη οὕτως λέγει*). “The righteousness from faith” is the same as “God’s righteousness” in v. 3, where it contrasts with “their own” (*τὴν ἰδίαν*) righteousness. Verses 6-8 blend selected phrases from Deut 9:4 and Deut 30:12-14 to teach about the nature of righteousness based on faith.⁴⁰

The first clause in the quotation uses the exact words from the beginning of Deut 9:4 in the LXX: “Do not say in your heart” (*μὴ εἶπῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου*). As C. H. Dodd demonstrated, when the NT quotes Scripture, frequently the writer **assumes that the reader is familiar with the biblical context**. Sometimes only the opening phrase in a passage is used as the equivalent of a

³⁸ Schreiner, “Paul’s View,” 128, 133.

³⁹ It is unlikely that Paul had in mind the impossibility of obeying the Law in this context, since Deuteronomy 30, which Paul quotes next (vv. 6-8), emphasizes the accessibility and achievability of the Law.

⁴⁰ This type of blended biblical quotation is common in the NT. In the immediate context, Rom 9:33 combines portions of Isa. 28:16 and Isa. 8:14.

modern Scripture reference, since there were no chapter and verse numbers in the ancient biblical texts.⁴¹ The point the NT author makes depends on the meaning of the whole passage, not just the biblical phrase quoted. In Deut 9:4, Moses warns the people of Israel that when they enter the promised land, they must not think God gave it to them because they earned it due to their righteousness. “Do not say in your heart when the Lord your God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land.’” God wanted the Israelites never to forget that even though they were stubborn and disobedient to God and had no righteousness that made them worthy of God’s blessing, God gave them the land because of his choice of them and because of his faithfulness to the promises he made to the Patriarchs (Deut 9:5-7). This biblical passage shows that God blesses his people due to his mercy and grace, not their righteousness, which perfectly fits Paul’s argument. Since Paul has just stated that Israel in his own time was “seeking to establish *their own righteousness*” (τὴν ἰδίαν δικαιοσύνην ζητοῦντες στήσαι, Rom 10:3), a reader familiar with Deuteronomy is likely to recall God’s warning that the ancient Israelites were not to think that they were given the land “because of *my righteousness*” (διὰ τὰς δικαιοσύνας μου, Deut 9:4, cf. 6). In Paul’s time, Israel failed to accept God’s righteousness by faith, because they were making the very mistake God had warned them about centuries earlier.⁴²

Next Paul paraphrases three clauses from Deut 30:12-14 to explain how the righteousness from faith functions. After each clause, he adds an interpretive comment introduced with “that is” (τοῦτ’ ἔστιν) that applies the text to the current situation in light of the coming of the Messiah:

⁶“who will ascend into heaven?”
– that is (τοῦτ’ ἔστιν), to bring Christ down,

⁴¹ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (James Nisbet: Digwells Place, 1952), 126-27. Paul makes a clear reference to Deut 9:4, since this is the only verse with this exact phrase in the LXX.

⁴² “Any reader who knows where the word comes from will surely smile in recognition of the point; most readers will miss the point altogether.” (Hays, *Echoes*, 79). Cf. Dunn, *Roman 9-16*, 602, who says the echo of the passage in 10:3 is deliberate.

⁷or “who will descend into the abyss?”

– that is (τοῦτ’ ἔστιν), to bring Christ up from the dead.

⁸but what does it say? “the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”

– that is (τοῦτ’ ἔστιν), the word of faith which we are preaching.

Deuteronomy 30:11, which is just prior to the passage Paul quotes, clarifies the original referent of ascending to heaven and descending into the sea (or the abyss): “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.” The commandments that God gave Israel are not too hard for them to understand or to follow. Ascending to heaven is a proverbial expression in the HB for something impossible for humans to do or something that might require an especially qualified person to explain.⁴³ Similarly in Ancient Near Eastern literature, crossing the sea was a proverbial expression for something impossible, such as when the Mesopotamian folk hero Gilgamesh had to go on a futile quest to find eternal life by crossing the sea.⁴⁴ The point of both proverbs is that God has done all of the work to make the Law clear and accessible to Israel, apart from any work on their part. They did not need to do anything difficult to obtain or understand the laws and they are realistic to obey.

Many interpreters have accused Paul of twisting the meaning of the text of Deut 30:11-14.⁴⁵ How can Paul take a text that clearly refers to the Law and apply it to Christ?

As is typical for Paul, **he reads Scripture in light of the fact that the Messiah has come** (10:4, 6-7, 9).⁴⁶ Paul takes the **principle** of the biblical passage and **argues by analogy** from the situation that was true under the Law to the situation under the gospel now that Christ has come. It is an **argument from lesser to greater**.⁴⁷ Since God’s nature is unchanging and his way of

⁴³ E.g. Isa. 14:13; Amos 9:2; Ps. 139:8; Prov. 30:4. P. C. Craigie, ed. R. K. Harrison, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 1976), 364-65; Moo, *Romans*, 654; J. Heller, “Himmel- Und Höllenfahrt Nach Römer 10, 6-7,” *EvT* 32 (1972): 481–82.

⁴⁴ Craigie, Deuteronomy, 365.

⁴⁵ E.g. Dodd, *Romans*, 166, says that Paul’s interpretation is “fanciful.” B. Byrne, *Reckoning with Romans* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1986), 196 says it is “most arbitrary.” Hays, *Echoes*, 78, says that since there is no reference to faith in Deuteronomy 30, Paul brings the idea in “through tinkering with the text.” Cf. Rhyne, 496; Hooker, “Authority,” 59.

⁴⁶ Cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 557.

⁴⁷ Seifrid, “Paul’s Approach,” 35-36, argues that it is a typological use of the passage, where Deut 30:11-14 foreshadows Christ and the events surrounding him. What is happening here is close to typology, but more of an

working is consistent, there are lessons to be learned from this biblical passage, even though now that the Messiah has come we are not living under the Law.

In Rom 10:6-7, Paul focuses on the principle that God gives grace in establishing his relationship with his people.⁴⁸ Deut 30:12-13 shows that the Israelites did not have to do anything to obtain the Law, since God did for them. This is why Paul quotes the proverbial expressions about things humans cannot do to obtain something from God – we don't need to ascend to heaven or descend into the depths. Thus, by analogy we do not have to do anything to gain righteousness, since God has done it all in Christ.

In v. 8, Paul focuses on the accessibility of God's message: As God brought his word "near" to Israel in the Law, so God has brought his word near to both Jews and Gentiles in Christ. "When God reveals his word, it is neither inaccessible nor unattainable. He makes it quite visible."⁴⁹ By the time of Paul, other Jewish interpreters had seen in Deut 30:12-14 general principles about divine wisdom, rather than simply a reference to the Mosaic law.⁵⁰

The principle of the accessibility of God's message is taken to a higher degree in Christ, since God himself has come to earth to reveal himself to humanity. Thus just as God brought the Law close to Israel so they could not plead as an excuse that they did not know God's will, so in Christ God has brought the gospel message clearly to all humanity. The unstated assumption is that Christ is God incarnate who came down from heaven (v. 6). Thus the gospel message has

analogy, since the biblical pattern is not replicated by Christ. The principle of the way that God works is still the same – God gives people good things as a gift, not as a reward for human effort. An alternative approach is taken by Steven R. Coxhead, "Deuteronomy 30:11-14 As a Prophecy of the New Covenant in Christ," *WTJ* 68 (2006): 305-20. He argues that Deut 30:11-14 is a direct prophecy of the New Covenant. Wright, "Romans," 658-63, and Coxhead, 311 n 17, claim that a few Jewish interpreters understood vv. 11-14 in this way. Coxhead argues that Deuteronomy 30:1-10 prophesies the eschatological restoration of Israel and vv. 11-14 continues this theme. The Hebrew verbs in vv. 1-14 could be translated as future tense (even though the LXX translated them in the Greek present tense). Against this view is the fact that Moses refers to "this commandment which I command you today" (v. 11a), which makes it likely that v. 11 shifts from a prophecy of return from exile (vv. 1-10) back to the Sinaitic covenant that he was ratifying with Israel at that time.

⁴⁸ Moo, *Romans*, 653.

⁴⁹ Darrell L. Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents: The New Testament's Legitimate, Accurate, and Multifaceted Use of the Old," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 136.

⁵⁰ E.g. Bar. 3:29-30; 4:1. Philo uses the passage to refer to "the good" (*Post.* 84–85; *Mut.* 236–37; *Praem.* 80).

even greater clarity and accessibility than the Law. This message is available to both Jews and Gentiles (10:12-13). As Duane Christensen notes, “salvation is not for the privileged few, based on some elaborate system of works. Salvation is for all who choose to believe ‘the word of faith.’”⁵¹

Paul sees both *continuity* and *discontinuity* with the situation under the Law. The *continuity* is that righteousness has always been from faith and has always been a gift from God (cf. Romans 4). The Israelites who turned the Law into a way of gaining righteousness misunderstood God’s way of righteousness and thought that it could be obtained by their works (9:31-32). But there is also *discontinuity* now that the Messiah has come. Now God’s message that must be believed is about Jesus the Christ and Lord, who has risen from the dead (10:9-10).

A difficult aspect of these verses is the use of interpretive references to Christ and the gospel, using “that is” (τοῦτ’ ἔστιν). Paul makes reference to Christ’s incarnation (“bring Christ down”, v. 6) Christ’s resurrection (“bring Christ up from the dead”, v. 7), and the gospel message about Jesus (“the word of faith which we are preaching”, v. 8). Paul reasons from the salvation-historical assumption that since the Messiah has come, salvation is now provided to those who have faith in him. The “word of faith” about Jesus is God’s message today, just as the law of Moses was God’s message in the Old Covenant period. Thus **principles that were true about the Law as the divine message can be applied to the new situation in Christ.**

Many interpreters note the formal similarity to *peshet* exegesis at Qumran, where biblical passages are interpreted in view of their eschatological fulfillment in the Qumran community.⁵² Certainly the form is similar to Qumran exegesis, which often introduces an interpretation with

⁵¹ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, Word Biblical Commentary 6B (Dallas: Word, 2002), 743.

⁵² E.g. Michel, 257; Käsemann, *Romans*, 284; Black, “Christological,” 2, 8-9. However, Hays, *Echoes*, 80-81, says that although the passage is formally similar to a Qumran *peshet* line by line commentary, it is materially different since for Paul Christ is the *telos* of the Law. Similarly, Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Studies in Paul’s Technique and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 208-09, sees Paul using a similar method to Qumran, but whereas Qumran viewed themselves as living in the penultimate age, Paul saw himself as standing in a salvation achieved. For an overview of the *peshet* method see Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 1975), 39-45.

“this is that” or פִּשְׂרוֹ (“its interpretation [is]”). But Seifrid shows that τοῦτ’ ἔστιν is widely used in Koine Greek to mean simply “that is to say,” so the presence of this phrase does not necessarily indicate that the *peshet* interpretive method is being used.⁵³ Douglas Moo is correct that Paul simply uses this phrase to indicate “a contemporary application of the significance of the Deuteronomy text in the light of the movement of salvation-history.”⁵⁴

Paul says that humans need do nothing to bring about salvation, since God has done it all in Christ, even as Israel did nothing to bring the Law because God had revealed it clearly and made it accessible. The application to Christ is even more profound: Humans need to do nothing to bring the Messiah or the salvation that he provides. There is no need to ascend to heaven to bring down the Messiah, since God has done this in the incarnation of Christ (v. 6).⁵⁵ Similarly, humans can do nothing to bring about the resurrection of Christ, since God did it (v. 7).⁵⁶ Paul may have in mind the Jewish idea that for the Messiah to come, Israel must prepare themselves through repentance and meticulous obedience to the Law.⁵⁷ Paul’s point is that we can do nothing to bring about the Messianic salvation. It is “God’s righteousness” (10:3) and God does it all. We only need to believe the message about Christ to receive God’s righteousness (9:30, 32; 10:3) and hence salvation (10:8-11). When a person believes in Christ he ceases using the Law for righteousness (10:4).

⁵³ Seifrid, “Paul’s Approach,” 27-35, finds numerous examples of τοῦτ’ ἔστιν outside Qumran, including in LXX, Philo, Josephus, literary Greek, non-literary papyri, and the NT. He concludes that the phrase simply means “that is to say” or “that means” and the form does not necessarily imply the Qumran *peshet* interpretive technique.

⁵⁴ Moo, *Romans*, 654-55.

⁵⁵ The language of “bringing down” has a similar idea to the language in the Gospel of John that Christ “came down” from heaven (e.g. John 3:13; cf. 6:62; 20:17). “Coming down” (v. 6) and “going up” (v. 7) reflect the biblical idea of Christ’s *kenosis* in his incarnation and his exaltation in his resurrection/ascension (e.g. Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Cor. 2:9).

⁵⁶ It is not particularly problematic that Paul changed “sea” (θάλασσα) to “abyss” (ἄβυσσος), since the “sea” and the “abyss” were often interchangeable in the LXX and Judaism. Some Aramaic Targums paraphrase Deut 30:13 in a similar way. The basic metaphor is unchanged, although this translation strengthens Paul’s application to Christ. The LXX usually uses ἄβυσσος to translate דְּהַיָּהוּ, the depths of the sea (33 of 36 times). In later Judaism this Hebrew word could be used for the depths of the earth as well as the place where evil spirits are confined. In the NT, the “abyss” is where evil spirits are confined (Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3). Although a different Hebrew word (דְּ) is used in Deut 30:13, this shows that the depths of the sea and the depths of the earth were overlapping semantic concepts in Jewish thought. Cf. Heller, 482; Joachim Jeremias, “ἄβυσσος,” TDNT 1:9.

⁵⁷ Cf. Barrett, *Romans*, 185. John the Baptist reflects the idea that Israel must prepare for the coming of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God by repentance and obedience to the Law Matt. 3:1-12).

On the surface it seems that Paul could hardly have picked a more difficult passage to show that righteousness comes as a gift from God by faith. Deuteronomy 30:11-14 was regularly used by Jewish teachers to show that people had the ability to do the Law.⁵⁸ It is possible that Paul's legalistic Jewish opponents used Deut 30:11-14 to argue that righteousness comes through doing the Law. Since Paul has just shown from Lev 18:5 that righteousness from the Law is based on the "doing leads to blessing" formula, Deut 30:11-14 readily comes to mind to show that the Law is indeed doable and thus, one could reason, salvation can come through keeping the Law. But Paul shows that even this quintessential Old Covenant passage has imbedded within it the principle that God always does what we need without our help. Even this passage has relevance for the New Covenant situation.⁵⁹ We don't have to do anything to bring about the salvation that God has provided in Christ. We simply need to acknowledge and believe the message about Christ that God has made so accessible to us (10:8-10). This is Paul's point in 10:4 – The person who realizes the new situation and believes in Christ, no longer uses the Law as a way of gaining righteousness before God. Thus Paul takes a biblical passage that might be used to refute his claim and turns it into support for his argument.

Summary of Paul's Interpretive Methods

Paul's method of using Scripture to support his argument is clarified when the biblical quotations in Rom 10:5-8 are seen in light of the context. The preceding verses (9:30-10:4) contrast two kinds of righteousness that a person may seek to achieve – righteousness from faith and righteousness from the Law. Romans 10:4 describes the subjective change in a person when

⁵⁸ E.g. Philo, *Rewards* 14 §79–80; *Chang. Nam.* 41 §236-37; *Virt.* 34 §183; *Post. Cain* 24 §84-85.

⁵⁹ Wright, "Romans," 658-63, argues that some Jewish interpreters around Paul's time saw Deut 30:11-14 as a prophecy of the eschatological restoration of Israel. He interprets the midrash of Deut 30 in 4QMMT to say that the Qumran community believed they were living in the time of fulfillment ("the end of days"). Wright argues that Paul similarly believes that the promised time of return from exile has come and the eschatological hopes of Deuteronomy 30 have been fulfilled in Christ. Although this sectarian understanding of Deut 30:11-14 is apparently a minority position within early Judaism, the existence of such texts shows that Paul's eschatological application of the passage would have been comprehensible to at least some Jewish readers in Paul's time.

he ceases seeking righteousness through the Law and receives God's righteousness through faith in Christ. The biblical quotations provide scriptural support for these two contrasting kinds of righteousness and show that even under the Law, God expected righteousness by faith (10:5-8). Now that the Messiah has come, the divine message is about faith in Christ (10:9-13).

Paul's primary method in these quotations is to relate a principle from a biblical passage to the current salvation-historical situation in light of the coming of Christ. The principle taught by Scripture is the same, but Paul applies it to the new situation in Christ. Biblical passages about the Law teach principles that are still relevant to the New Covenant people of God. He **relates them to the current situation by application or analogy.**

In v. 5, Paul quotes Lev 18:5 to show that the nature of law is "doing leads to blessing." This passage in the HB does not teach that salvation was ever achieved by keeping the Law, since it focuses on the blessings that Israel will experience in the land, if they are obedient to the covenant. But many Israelites of Paul's day misused this principle about the nature the Law and sought to attain right standing before God through works of the Law (cf. 9:31-32).

In vv. 6-7, Paul reasons from a principle taught in Deut 30:12-14. Although it is not the main idea in the original context, it is still a valid principle taught in the passage. Paul sees an analogy in the situation now that Christ has come and **argues from lesser to greater.** The Israelites did not have to do anything to obtain the Law, since God did for them. Similarly, we don't have to do anything to bring about the incarnation of Christ or to resurrect him from the dead, since God has done this for us.

In v. 8, Paul's quotation from Deut 30:14 is based on an analogy between the Law and the gospel, since both are God's message for their age. Just as God made his message accessible to Israel, he has made his word available to both Jews and Gentiles in Christ. In both quotations from Deut 30:12-14, Paul does not focus on the Law in its nature as *law*, but in its nature as a *divine message* and thus the principles of the biblical passage have relevance to the gospel.

Paul assumes that his readers were familiar with the context of the biblical quotation.

In Rom 10:6, Paul quotes the opening line of Deut 9:4 to refer to the broader biblical passage.

The context in the HB stresses that God was not giving Israel the promised land because of their righteousness. The principle is that God blesses his people due to his mercy and grace, not their righteousness. This perfectly fits Paul's argument about the nature of righteousness by faith.

Israel in Paul's day was making the very mistake that God warned Israel about in Moses' day – they assumed that God would accept them because of "their own righteousness" (10:3), which was based on their works (9:31-32). God has always dealt with his people with grace on the basis of faith.

Paul's use of quotations from Leviticus and Deuteronomy to support his teachings about the gospel may initially appear surprising. Yet because of his assumption that God's nature is unchanging and that Jesus is the Messiah, he can relate the principles taught in these biblical passages to the new situation now that the Messiah has come. Although we are not under the law of Moses, many principles taught in the HB are still valid for the people of God today.