

Chapter 10

Commentary

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

Who does Paul address here by the opening “brethren”? Clearly he desires to speak to his readers on a “pastoral” level, and uses the more intimate “brethren” to draw them into the conversation. He wishes to open his heart to them, and expects them to understand his perspective as those who likewise espouse the same Messiah. He speaks to them as to those who would understand and empathize with him, and who should have the same perspective.

The Greek text includes the opening *μὲν, men* which usually has the corresponding *δέ, de*, giving the sense “on the one hand . . . on the other hand.” But here there is no corresponding *δέ* and we should therefore understand Paul to be saying “so far as it depends on my desire” That is, if Paul could change the status of unbelieving Israel, he would, and he would do whatever he could to secure their salvation.

The fact that Paul continued to have a heartfelt desire for Israel’s salvation, and that he prayed to God for their salvation, is proof that Paul did not consider their rejection of Yeshua to be final and closed. Paul did not consider for a moment that God had cast away His people—this was unthinkable for Paul for the very reason that such a position goes counter to the very words of Scripture.

Paul writes that his prayer is “for their salvation.” Make no mistake, Paul considers the nation vulnerable to the wrath of God and His judgment. Nonetheless, Paul believed that their salvation was possible, indeed, inevitable according to the will and mercy of God and the fulfillment of His promises.

A note from Cranfield is challenging at this point:

In this prayer for Israel’s salvation he has set an example for the Church to follow. A church which failed to pray for Israel’s salvation would be a church which did not know what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ.²⁸⁰

2-3 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

That Paul could bear them witness (*μαρτυρέω, martureo*) no doubt denotes a public, responsible, and solemn act. Paul wants no one to think that in his prayer for Israel, he is judging her with ulterior motives, or deceit. Israel has a genuine zeal for God, but one that is, by Paul’s estimation, wrongly directed. Indeed, nothing has characterized orthodox Judaism throughout its history, and even to the present, more than a zeal for God. It is not an empty ideology, nor a pagan, heathen fanaticism: Israel is absolutely right in the object of its zeal.

Indeed, orthodox Judaism puts much that passes for Christianity, and even much true Christianity, to shame both in respect of the seriousness of its zeal and by the fact that its zeal is really zeal for God.²⁸¹

The difficulty, of course, is that her zeal is “not according to knowledge.” Even though her zeal is genuine, and has the correct object (God), there is a fatal flaw—Israel’s zeal is deficient in one area of knowledge. This should not be taken to mean that she is entirely mistaken in all her

knowledge, for she does truly know God and does truly possess His revelation. Yet she does not know God in that full covenant sense, and as such her knowledge of Him is deficient, because the final and ultimate ratification of the covenant rests upon the shoulders of Messiah, through Whom the covenant is mediated. Israel sees indeed, but does not perceive; she hears indeed, but does not understand (Mark 4:12). Thus, though Israel longs to obey, there is, in the very midst of her obedience, a heart of disobedience, for she has failed to receive her Messiah.

For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own ... – Once again, the phrase “righteousness of God” should be understood to mean “the manner in which God declares a sinner righteous.” Paul has here provided a carefully worded and balanced sentence to describe their lack of knowledge. He gives two aspects of their lack of knowledge, and then describes the subsequent disobedience.

The two aspects in which they lack knowledge are, as it were, two sides of the same coin. They lack knowledge of God's means of declaring a person righteous (“the righteousness of God”) and they hold to a means of a righteous status (their people-group status as Israelites, and their subsequent keeping of Torah to maintain this status) which, in the end, God will reject. The subsequent act of disobedience is Israel's lack of willingness to submit to God's revelation of Himself as a merciful God, and One Who willingly gifts His children with righteousness, to receive the status of righteousness as an undeserved gift of grace. As long as Israel believes that she has attracted God's righteousness through her national identity maintained through her life of Torah, she is unable to receive God's method of declaring a sinner righteous, namely, to be reckoned righteous on the basis of Messiah's work and His work alone. Israel's sin is thus summed up by Paul as their refusal to let grace be grace—the refusal to give God alone the glory. Israel refuses to humble herself to accept God's righteousness as an undeserved gift.

It should be remarked that this view, held by the nation, was not something gleaned from the Tanach, nor given to her by the Prophets whom God sent. Thus, Israel's failure to see the Messiah as the embodiment of God's grace was not due to a deficiency of revelation about the Messiah, nor a result of a “religion” devoid of truth. Israel's disobedience, summed up in her arrogance and unwillingness to humble herself as one in need of God's grace, was manifested in her development of her own means of gaining righteousness. This she manufactured—she did not get it from God's revelation nor from the Prophets He had sent. Her ethnic and religious pride was entirely self-conceived and self-made.

4 For Messiah is the end of the Torah for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Paul begins this sentence with the connective “For” (*γὰρ, gar*), alerting us to the fact that he wishes, by this statement, to support what he has just said about Israel's ignorance and sin. Her ignorance of the means by which God declares a person righteous, and her manufacturing of her own means, is the result of missing a crucial fact about the Torah, namely, that Messiah is the focus of the Torah, or to say it another way, the Torah points to Messiah.

Though this verse has been strongly debated throughout the history of the church and the interpretation of Paul's epistles, no one denies that it is central to Paul's theology. Here, in a short, terse sentence, Paul outlines for us a crucial element of his understanding of Messiah's relationship to the Torah.

One minor controversy exists over whether the word “law” (*νόμος*) in this verse refers to the Tanach or to the idea of “rule” or “law” in general. While some noted commentators opt for the second meaning, most, including the majority of early church fathers, take the word to refer to the Tanach as the Torah, and this is a common use of the Greek word *νόμος* in the Apostolic Scriptures.

The crux in the verse, however, rests upon the word “end” (*τέλος, telos*) and how it is to be understood in this verse. If, as some have suggested, the word indicates a “cessation” or a

“stopping,” as in the English “put an end to this or that,” then Paul is saying that Messiah “put an end to the Torah” or “caused the Torah to cease” as it pertains to righteousness. If, however, the word “end” means “goal” or “purpose”, as in the English “the end of all of NASA’s work is the putting of a man on the moon,” then the sentence takes on an entirely different meaning.

The word *τέλος*, *telos* (from which we derive such terms as “telescope,” “telephone,” because these devices have to do with “distance” or “going all the way to the end”) was widely used in the ancient world and gained a wide variety of meanings. In the Apostolic Scriptures, however, the word’s means may be narrowed to 1) fulfilment; 2) goal, and 3) termination. Most of the early church fathers adopted a combination of 1 and 2, seeing Yeshua as the final goal to which the Torah spoke, and of His coming in “fulfilling” the expectations of the Torah. Matthew 5:17ff played an important role in determining their interpretation of Rom 10:4. Even Luther interpreted this verse as teaching that every word in the entire Bible points to Messiah. Calvin wrote:

This remarkable passage declares that the law in all its parts has reference to Christ, and therefore no one will be able to understand it correctly who does not constantly strive to attain this mark.²⁸²

Modern commentators, however, have gravitated more and more to the sense of “termination” for the meaning of “end” (*telos*). For example, after saying that “the word “end” (*τέλος*) means not only “termination”, but also “purpose”, or “intention”, Barrett writes:

He puts an end to the law, not by destroying all that the law stood for but by realizing it.²⁸³

Interestingly, the Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament uses the Hebrew word *סוף*, *soph*, “end” (without the sense of “goal” or “completion”) to translate *τέλος*, but the Modern Hebrew New Testament uses *תכלית*, *tachlit*, “end,” “purpose,” “goal,” a word much more fitting to convey the wider possibilities of *τέλος*.

But in light of all we have already seen regarding Paul’s view of the Torah, as well as his overarching message of righteousness that comes as the inevitable fruit of faith in Messiah, I can see no other meaning for the term “end” here than #2 above, i.e., “goal.”

Paul has declared that the Torah is holy, righteous, and good (7:12) as well as spiritual (7:14). He has taught us that the righteous requirements of the Torah are being worked out in our lives as we walk by the Spirit (8:4) and in 13:8-10 he will quote from the Ten Words, indicating they are directly applicable to his readers. Moreover, in 3:31 he has made it amply clear that by the exercise of faith in the Messiah the Torah is not nullified but established. Paul intends his readers to understand that when the life of Messiah is properly lived out by His disciples, the Torah is established, not nullified.

It would therefore be absolutely contrary to his other teachings if he were, in this passage, to say that the Torah has been terminated. Furthermore, that he goes on in the subsequent verses to quote from the Torah as substantiation of what he has just taught makes it clear that he considers the Torah the living and abiding word of God, and something that governs the life of every believer.

By stating that the word “end” (*telos*) means “goal” here, I mean that Yeshua is the aim or intention of the Torah, and that the full meaning and function of the Torah cannot be realized apart from Him. I do not mean by this that those who have studied and written on the Torah but who have denied Him as the Messiah have entirely and in every way missed the meaning of the Torah. Surely the Sages of old have often given keen insights into the text, and have understood its basic meaning in a very real sense. But what I do mean by this is that when it comes to a proper application of the words and truths of Torah, those Sages who have rejected Yeshua

miss the most important aspects of the Torah. Indeed, while the motives for constructing and teaching the Oral Torah may have most often been sincere and honorable, the fact of the matter is that the rulings of the Sages often attempted to make the Torah manageable to the point that one who was diligent could consider himself "blameless" in regard to the regulations of the Torah. But the genius of the Torah is not only in the wisdom that it provides for daily life both within and without the community of faith, but also its divine ability to constantly show us our weaknesses and inadequacies and to therefore drive us to God, seeking His mercy and grace for that which we have unwittingly and without malice neglected or transgressed. Furthermore, the Torah also brings upon us a sense of guilt for the times that, through wicked and selfish motives, we have transgressed the commands of God in favor of our own pleasures and desires.

But the Torah functions in this way only as it has its focus upon the Messiah Yeshua. For in that instance where, through the additional rulings of men, the Torah is made manageable (or made to seem manageable), the need for self-inspection and remorse, for contrition that drives the child of God to seek His mercy and grace—the need for these kinds of things is lost, and in fact, the personal need for the Messiah is also diminished. Indeed, in the modern Jewish community today, the longing for Messiah is almost entirely corporate and not individual. As far as the individual goes, there is no need for Messiah to appear. His coming will only affect a worldwide reformation which the individual cannot. So the modern, religious Jew, having so carefully and thoroughly examined the Torah, but having missed the goal of the Torah which is Yeshua, is very much content with the Torah as he sees it and as he interprets it.

But the one who, seeing in the Torah the coming, suffering Messiah, realizes that his sin is far greater than he had previously considered. That the Messiah, foreshadowed in the slaughter of the perfect sacrificial animal, should have to undergo the agony of death to expunge my sins, that He should need to carry the weight of my guilt because I could not carry it myself—in this the Torah brings me to my knees in repentance, seeking the grace and mercy of God without which I have no hope.

The same is true for the community of the faithful living after the coming of the Messiah, and even after the destruction of the Temple. For in the Torah the holiness of God is revealed, and His requirement that we should be holy as He is holy. In attempting to obey God by keeping His commandments, I find a joy in life which comes through righteous living, but I also see the perfections of the Almighty, and thus my own shortcomings. The Torah therefore drives me to seek the mercy and grace of God, which He gives in His Messiah, Yeshua. In either case, the living out of the commandments of God has both a rewarding as well as convicting ministry in one's life. And constantly, therefore, I am pointed to the Messiah as I listen to and live out the teachings of God (=Torah).

There is an additional reason that the word "end" should be understood as "goal" in our verse, and it is the attachment of the explanatory phrase, ". . . for righteousness to everyone that believes." (Literally, "unto righteousness for everyone who believes"). Those who take "end" to mean termination usually explain this final phrase to mean that Messiah has ended the Torah as a means of righteousness. But this interpretation has an obvious and fatal flaw: the Torah never was a means of righteousness, and therefore it is impossible for Yeshua to put an end to something that never existed! To say that Messiah is the termination of the Torah as regards righteousness to all who believe could well be taken to mean that Paul saw two ways of righteousness: one through the Torah, and the other through Yeshua. We know, of course, that this is contrary to his entire message. For Paul, there is only one way of righteousness, whether for Jew or non-Jew, and this way is via faith in the Messiah Yeshua. He therefore cannot be teaching here that, while the Torah was a way of righteousness in times past, since the coming of Yeshua this way has been terminated, and now faith in Messiah is the avenue for righteousness.

So what does he mean by this added phrase ". . . unto righteousness for everyone that believes?" The word translated "for" (I've written "unto") is the Greek *eis* (*eis*) which generally

means “unto” or “into,” but in resultative clauses means “resulting in” or “with a goal toward.” Thus, what Paul is teaching here is that since Messiah is revealed in the Torah—since the Torah points to Him—it follows that all who come to faith as a result of the Torah’s message obtain a righteous status. This explanation fits the context perfectly: Paul has pointed to the nation of Israel who, seeking to obtain a righteous status, stumbled over the very Cornerstone through Whom righteousness is made available. Had the nation honestly received the very teaching of the Torah, and seen the manner in which it focused its divine light upon the coming Messiah and His work, they could have obtained righteous status before God, because they would have exercised faith in the Messiah the same way that Abraham did.

It was therefore not the fault of the Torah, nor the message of the Torah, that resulted in Israel seeking to obtain her own righteousness through a status of something other than “in Messiah.” The fault existed in the nation itself, who, though given the complete message and revelation of God’s righteousness (i.e., the means by which He declares a person righteous), stumbled over the very Cornerstone to which the Torah was constantly pointing. The cause was Israel’s unbelief, not the deficiencies of the Torah.

One other thing should be emphasized in this verse: Paul speaks of “every one” or “each one” believing (the Greek παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, “to each one who believes” is singular), even though he has in mind the corporate entity called “Israel.” It is true that the nation as a national entity has rejected Yeshua, but the means by which anyone comes to have a righteous status before the Almighty is through the exercise of personal faith, not by membership in an earthly, corporate group. The nation of Israel will, one day, come to faith as a nation, but this will be accomplished through the individual exercise of faith in Messiah Yeshua. Thus, the larger group, envisioned as the object of revival in the *eschaton*, will come the same way the remnant has come in every generation: one at a time via personal faith in the Messiah.

5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on Torah shall live by that righteousness.

Several preliminary remarks may be made about this verse as it relates to the immediate context. First, that the verse begins with “For” would indicate that it stands to substantiate something that has already been stated. Most agree that Paul is here (and in the next few verses) giving support for his statement of verse 4, that Yeshua is the goal of the Torah and thus anyone who believes may have righteous standing before God. Our task will be to see how this verse supports that claim in v. 4

Secondly, v. 6 begins with the Greek δέ, *de*, which when paired with γάρ, *gar*, “for,” is sometimes contrastive, and most (including Cranfield) take it to be so here. Thus, the normal interpretation of v. 5 is that it presents a contrast to v. 6, namely, that v. 5 states the impossible tenants of the Torah, leaving man in a hopeless quest after righteousness that he could never attain via works, and vv. 6-8 give the contrast, which is justification by faith.

Cranfield, feeling the tension that such an interpretation brings, suggests that Paul has Yeshua in mind as the only Man who could ever attain righteous status through doing what is righteous because He did it perfectly:

It is possible to understand Paul to be applying the words of Lev 18:5, not to the impossible, hopeless task which men set themselves when they think to earn a righteous status before God by their own works, but to the achievement of the one Man who has done the righteousness which is of the law in His life and, above all, in His death, in the sense of fulfilling the law’s requirements perfectly and so earning as His right a righteous status before God.²⁸⁴

But I find such an interpretation to interrupt the flow of Paul’s argument, and to be far-

fetched in terms of Paul's basic thrust in this passage. There is no doubt that Yeshua figures into this passage as the central theme and object of true faith. But Paul is not contrasting the life that Yeshua lived with the lives of those who are attempting to have righteousness on the basis of their Jewish identity, secured through their keeping of Torah. He rather is contrasting those who maintain they have right-standing before God because of their people-group status, and those who claim the same status through their faith in Yeshua. Cranfield's explanation, in my opinion, fails to answer the primary question, which is "does Paul consider Leviticus 18:5 to be an indication of the hopeless nature of the quest after righteous status before God on the basis of works"?

Excursus: Leviticus 18:5

| Lev 18:5 MT | Lev 18:5 Lxx |
|---|---|
| <p>וְשִׁמְרוּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֲתֶם הָאָדָם וְחִי בָהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה</p> <p>And you shall keep My statutes and My judgments and you shall do them. The man who does, surely he will live by them. I am the Lord your God.</p> | <p>καὶ φυλάξεσθε πάντα τὰ προστάγματα μου καὶ πάντα τὰ κρίματά μου καὶ ποιήσετε αὐτά ἃ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν</p> <p>And you shall keep all my statutes and my judgments and you shall do them. The man who does them shall live by them. I am the Lord GOD.</p> |

The context of Lev 18 is the exhortation to Israel not to copy the ways of the pagan nations in the Land that they were to possess. Rather than adopting the pagan ways, Israel was to guard and keep God's ways (as revealed by His statutes, judgments, commandments—i.e., the Torah which was given to Israel by the hand of Moses). Thus, v. 5 is a summary of the opening statement. What follows v. 5, then, are exhortations relating to the specific area of sexual relations, those which are permitted, and those which are not. The prohibited relations are referred to as an "abomination" (תועבה, *to'avah*) in God's eyes.

Lev 18:5 is quoted in Ezek 20:11, 13, 21 *verbatim*. In the Apostolic Scriptures, it is quoted by Paul in two places: Rom 10:5 and Gal 3:12, and in both cases it is quoted loosely to fit Paul's need, though the quote accurately reflects both the Lxx and the Hebrew text.

The Ezekiel passage is a recounting of the history of Israel in her rebellion against God, and her subsequent exile out of the Land. It is a historical recounting of what took place after Lev 18 was given to the nation. Rather than heeding the words of God, Israel did just as she was told not to do, and thus fell under the punishment that God had promised. Thus three times the prophet reiterates that statutes, ordinances, and judgments were given to Israel, "by which if a man does them he shall live." The way to sustain life in the Land was given, but Israel did not heed it. Rather, she disobeyed and practiced the abominations of the surrounding nations.

Paul's use of Lev 18:5 in Rom 10 and Gal 3 have been notoriously interpreted by modern evangelicals as proving that the "Law" was given to show Israel that she could not keep it, and as such, to drive her to the Messiah. Indeed, when the Leviticus text is quoted in Gal 3:10, it appears to be put as the opposite of faith:

However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them."

How are we to reconcile this with other, clear statements of Paul regarding the Torah? In Romans 3 Paul asks the straightforward question and gives a clear answer: "Do we then nullify the Torah through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Torah." Why would Paul

want the Torah established if it is contrary to faith, and was only given to point out how impossible it is for mankind to please God?

The fundamental error that has been committed in the understanding of Paul's use of Lev 18:5 is a hermeneutical one. First, the original context of Lev 18 has been ignored, and secondly, the meaning of the word "live" has been presumed from a theological context rather than a historical, linguistic one.

The context of Lev 18 is, as I have said above, the exhortation of God to His people regarding their entering the Land. If we were to consider Israel as an illustration of the believer, then, these exhortations come after redemption, not as a means to redemption. Israel has already been redeemed from the land of Egypt. She has already stood at Sinai and received the Torah—the covenant by which she was bound to her Maker and Redeemer.

Note these obvious things about the Torah which Israel is given to keep:

1. The statutes of God are put in opposition to the pagan ways of the nations, ways which are labelled "abominations."
2. While the ways of the pagan lead to lusts and abominations, "Israel's happy privilege of keeping God's laws only perpetuated a life already begun by faith."
3. Lev 18 begins and ends (vv, 1, 30) with the theological setting of "I am the Lord your God." Thus Torah-keeping is Israel's sanctification, the grand evidence that the Lord was indeed their God already.
4. "Doing them" includes the whole sacrificial, Tabernacle/Temple rituals, which, if done in faith, constantly pointed the worshipper to the object of his faith, the Messiah.²⁸⁵

Should we presume that Paul took the Lev 18:5 text out of context, and that he simply applied his own meaning to it? If not, then we must presume that he understood it in its historical, literary sense, and that he is using it according to this sense in his argument, both in Rom 10 and Gal 3.

Fairbairn makes this interesting observation:

Neither Moses nor Ezekiel, it is obvious, meant that the life spoken of, which comprehends whatever is really excellent and good, was to be acquired by means of such conformity to the enactments of heaven; for life in that sense already was theirs Doing these things, they live in them; because life thus had its due exercise and nourishment and was in a condition to enjoy the manifold privileges and blessings secured in the covenant. And the very same may be said of the precepts and ordinances of the gospel: a man lives after the higher life of faith only insofar as he walks in conformity with these; for though he gets life by a simple act of faith in Christ, he cannot exercise, maintain and enjoy it but in connection with the institutions and requirements of the gospel.²⁸⁶

The application of Lev 18:5, then, to Rom 10 and Gal 3 is clear: Paul wants to emphasize the very thing Moses did, namely, that living according to God's righteous ways is the inevitable result of a true faith, not the means of gaining right-standing before God.

Paul, in Rom 10, is showing that there is a divine order in the "righteousness of God" (i.e., the method by which God declares a sinner righteous). This order of events begins with God's election, then comes the exercise of faith in the Messiah, and then comes the living of righteousness. This is exactly what Moses is saying to Israel in Lev 18: since they belong to God as His redeemed people, Israel now has the happy privilege to obey Him and by this obedience, to experience the life of the covenant that is rightfully theirs. But to change this order, to think that

one could have redemption by keeping the Torah, this is not the message of Moses. He did not tell Israel to keep the Torah and then they would become God's people. He told them to kill the Lamb and put the blood on the doorpost. It was this symbolic act of faith that secured their redemption out of Egypt, and the Torah was thus given to them as the consequence of their faith, not as a means to gaining righteousness. Thus, Paul's quote of Lev 18:5 makes perfect sense in Rom 10 as Paul continues to explain that Israel sought the righteous Torah (9:31) but did so with the wrong method: they missed the issue of faith in the Messiah Who is the very central message of the Torah.

That this explanation of Leviticus 18:5 makes perfect sense in Romans 10 is further supported by the fact that Paul goes on to quote Deuteronomy as indicating the proper method of pursuing the righteous Torah. Is Moses in Lev 18 wrong, but Moses in Deut (8:17; 9:4; 30:12-14) right about how one attains right-standing before God? Kaiser writes:

The Moses of Leviticus and the Moses of Deuteronomy are the same yet Paul refers the righteousness of Leviticus to the law and that in Deuteronomy to faith. Do we then have two kinds of righteousness and two kinds of life after all the above work? Not if both verses 5 and 6-7 have their final aim in Christ. Christ witnesses to the fact that the inward principle was the focal point for both passages. The alleged antithesis then is only in the misconception of Paul's generation of Jews.²⁸⁷

In fact, a look at the Deut 30 passage is most interesting. In it, one should note that the promise of a "circumcised heart" which issues in "loving God with all one's heart and soul" (v. 6) precedes the phrase "that you may live." The prosperity of God's blessings comes to the those of circumcised hearts, because they obey the statutes of God, which are not too difficult (v. 11ff). The reason that they are not too difficult is because they are near the one who has believed—in the mouth and in the heart. They are not unattainable (in heaven or below the earth) in some mystical or "chance" situation.

Thus, when Paul goes on to quote the Deuteronomy passage, he does so in order to emphasize that the order of events that issues in right-standing before God is the message of the Torah, not manmade regulations by which the Judaisms of Paul's day thought they could maintain a righteous status, nor the passive existence as a member of Israel by which many believed they automatically had a right-standing before God. The doing of the *mitzvot* as a happy duty to God is the mark of a circumcised heart, and such a heart is the product of faith in God.

The Gal 3 passage (which also contains the Leviticus quote) is parallel in thought. Notice that in the very context of this text Paul has carefully distinguished the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant. The one which came 430 years later did not nullify the previous covenant. Paul is explicitly telling us that we must keep in mind the order in which God gave the covenants, for only in their proper order is their function properly understood. The Abrahamic covenant contains the gospel (v. 8), that is, the message of how one gains right-standing with God. The Mosaic covenant did not teach the people how to become the people of God—they already were the people of God when it was given. Rather, the Mosaic covenant taught the people of God how to live as His children.

The immediate context of v. 12 is clear: Paul is paralleling the Abrahamic covenant with the initial exercise of faith in Messiah, and the Mosaic covenant with the ongoing walk of sanctification that the believer experiences. Thus, when Paul says that the Torah is "not of faith," (ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, literally, "not out of faith"), he simply means that obeying the Torah was not the means by which a person initially received genuine, saving faith to accept God and His Messiah, and willingly submit to Him as Savior and King. No, it was not through the keeping of the Torah that such faith came, but through the sovereign and gracious act of God toward the sinner. Thus Paul contrasts Hab 2:4 (which speaks of "justification") and Lev 18:5 (which speaks of sanctification). Only when the original contexts of these passages are allowed to bear

their full weight upon Paul's quoting of them, are they rightly understood in the context of Romans.

6-8 But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Messiah down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead)." But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,

It is clear from the opening of this verse that what Paul is contrasting is a right-standing with God that some of his readers must have thought was based on their status as Jews (maintained through observance of the Torah) and a right-standing with God that was based upon faith in the Messiah. The quote from Lev 18:5 has proven that the doing of the Torah is the result of faith, not the source of it.

Here, then, Paul quotes yet another Torah text to prove his point. By utilizing these two quotes, then, Paul proves to us that in his mind the Torah taught the message he is giving: Lev 18:5 teaches that the keeping of the statutes of the Torah are the result of faith, while the quotes from Deuteronomy prove that faith in the Messiah is the starting point for obtaining right-standing with God. It is impossible that Paul could be teaching us that Moses was "wrong" in Leviticus, but "right" in Deuteronomy! In fact, what he is saying is that justification by faith is taught in Deuteronomy, and sanctification through obedience is taught in Leviticus.

The quotes are "piece-meal," taking the opening phrase of Deut 8:17 or 9:4 (both read exactly the same in the Lxx) and then essentially quoting 30:12-14 with a great deal of freedom. It is important to understand, however, why Paul would have utilized the opening phrase of 8:17 or 9:4—both of these contexts are warnings against self-complacent, presumptuous boasting in one's own merit, and thus are in line with the teaching of "justification by faith." Paul has these in mind as he introduces the primary quote in 30:12-14.

Paul is using a kind of *midrash* or semi-*pesher* style here as he personifies "righteousness by faith" (making this faith speak), and interjects his own interpretations into the quote of the Torah passage.

The Deuteronomy passage is speaking of the commandments that God gave to Israel, and admonishing her to keep and obey them. Moses' point here is that the Torah, given to Israel by God, is not something that is too difficult for them, as though they had to climb up to heaven to attain it—to discover exactly what God wanted them to do.

...for He has graciously shown them what is good by His law, and that law is simple and clear. They do not have to inquire after the will of a harsh or capricious tyrant. They have received the revelation of the merciful will of the God whose prior grace is the presupposition of all He requires. Essentially what He asks is that they should give Him their hearts in humble gratitude for His goodness to them in generous loyalty to their fellows.²⁸⁸

Paul is emphasizing the gracious nature of God in His direct revelation to Israel, a revelation contained in the inspired writings of the Scriptures. And he is using the *pesher* style, which interjects commentary or interpretation within the citations of Scripture.²⁸⁹ For Paul, the signal that he is giving his interpretation is the use of "that is," found three times in this text.

Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Messiah down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead)."
But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,