

ROMANS 3:20-5:11 | THE CASE FULFILLED: A GOSPEL FOR ALL

ROMANS 3:31-4:25 | ADDRESSING THE SHOCK

Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 20

ROMANS 3:31-4:8 | THE LAW DOES NOT PROHIBIT A FAITH PROMISE

Supplemental Resource, Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 24

VERSE 3:31 – BLACK

Note: v. 31 also included on session 9

The habitual error in interpretation of this passage is taking the pronoun **we** to be “all of us who are saved by faith.” But in the book of Romans, the default interpretation of **we** is *those of the Apostolic order* (see note on Romans 1:5). Are the Apostles who, along with Paul accepted this revelation of justification by faith making **void the law**? Paul answers with a firm **God forbid**.

In fact, Paul says, that **we establish the law**. Clearly the word is not used in a *creative* way (for the Law was established on Mt. Sinai), but rather an *affirmative* manner, setting the law *beyond dispute*.

Let’s consider the Law as taught by “standard evangelicals,” by whom it is taught simply as a teacher of right and wrong, and an instrument that could not justify. Instead, justification was always *by faith* (according to the common thinking). But what does this do to the law? It *weakens* it. Paul says that by separating law from grace the Apostles **establish the law**, giving it its separate identity.

Dispensationalism *should* do this same thing, for it recognizes a dispensation of Law and another of Grace. Doing so establishes real meaning to **the law**. Sadly, modern dispensationalism has largely lost the distinction (and is dispensational in name only).

This verse, then, becomes an affirmation of the reality of the law for its time and place. In the verses that follow, Paul will argue that law did not have its place in the Abrahamic covenant, and to put Abraham under Law would *weaken* the Law rather than establish it.

Paul has done a similar thing in Romans 1:16 where he testifies his confidence in **the gospel of Christ** (which, as we interpreted, was the prophetic Gospel of the Messianic reign). He began his treatise with this affirmation of the Messianic Gospel as a way of saying, “the new does not invalidate the old.”

I believe we should honor the distinct position of each dispensation (even in soteriology) or simply quit calling ourselves *dispensational*.

VERSE 4:1-3 – BLACK

The dispensation of the Law, being given a clear standing by Paul’s position that Grace is an altogether different dispensation, leads naturally to Abraham, who lived prior to the dispensation of the Law. The natural response to verse 31 is **What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?** (v. 1). In verse 2, it is implied that one of the answers might be a justification **by works** (v. 2), but Paul quickly dismisses that idea and affirms that **Abraham believed God** (v. 3) and this was **counted unto him for righteousness** (v. 3).

Unlike the standard evangelical answer, we should not equate this with salvation. If (as Paul makes clear in Ephesians 2), the offer of individual salvation is part of the *mystery*, then Abraham was not offered this salvation. It is only *now* that such an offer is made. Abraham was certainly considered righteous by belief, but his judgment awaits the resurrection. But the point of verses 1-3 is that Abraham found righteousness *outside the Law* and today individual finds righteousness *outside the Law* and thus the boundaries of the Law are clearly established. The dispensation of Law had a beginning point and an end point.

VERSES 4-5 – BLACK

The word **now** (v. 4) is not a time word and so should not be taken dispensationally. Rather, Paul is making a general statement of reality: *the worker is owed a reward, and that reward is not a gift of grace*. Once again, this separates Law from Grace, which is Paul's main point in this segment.

In Christianity as a whole, one of the major problems of theology has been *mixing Law and Grace* rather than taking Paul's testimony to **establish the law** (v. 3:31) through giving it boundaries.

VERSES 6-8 – BLACK

Adding to his point that *grace* cannot be of *works*, Paul reminds his readers of David's declaration, quoted in verses 7-8 and found originally in Psalm 32:1-2, speaking of the blessing of those **whose iniquities are forgiven** and to whom **the Lord will not impute sin**. This Psalm is given prophetically of the days of the tribulation and judgment, days in which Israel is invited to come to the Lord in a repentant manner and experience forgiveness.

It is important to recognize that Paul is *not* teaching that David or those in his day were saved *by grace through faith*. Rather, Paul is giving a second example to show that the Law has its boundaries, and thus **through faith** (v. 3:31) as a dispensational change, **we establish the law** (v. 3:31).

ROMANS 4:9-22 | DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE ABRAHAMIC EXAMPLE

Supplemental Resource: The Bible Graphically Presented, pg. 25.

VERSE 9 – BLACK

An interpretive question must be made with verse 9. No verb is given in the Greek, so one must be supplied in English. The KJV supplies **cometh**, using the present tense. If this assumption is correct (and I believe it is), then Paul is asking about **this blessedness** in the current dispensation of grace. If one assumed a past tense, then the question would be tied to verses 6-8 and refer to David's time. If one assumed a future tense, then the question would refer to the last days.

Paul is testifying to the Roman Jews that God has initiated a new dispensation which is distinctly different from the Law, as different as God's requirements to Abraham or God's commands to His people in the last days. Does this new dispensation come **upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?**

In my opinion, the verse break (between 9 and 10) should have happened after the question, making the second half part of verse 10 (if verse breaks are necessary at all).

VERSE 10 – BLACK

Abraham's **faith was reckoned...for righteousness** (v. 9) was done while Abraham was **in uncircumcision**. As previously, this stands as an example that *prior to the Law, God operated differently than during the Law*, and thus it is not unprecedented for Him to operate differently in today's dispensation.

VERSE 11 – BLACK

Abraham was first counted righteous, and then **he received the sign of circumcision** later. Had this order been reversed then he could not have been considered **the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised**.

VERSE 12 – BLACK

Only Abraham could be considered the **father** of both the Jewish faith and the Christian faith. He is the father of the Jews through the promised covenant shown in circumcision, and the father of Gentile believers through the faith he had in God separated from works.