

Session 6

Paul and the Law

Series: Living The Torah | Dr. Randy White

Did Paul Teach the Law Didn't Work?

- Popular claim: **Galatians 2:21** suggests the Law never produced righteousness.
- Additional passages often cited: **Romans 3:20**, **Romans 3:28**, **Romans 4:15**, **Romans 8:3**.
- These passages, when read hastily, appear to deny the Law's effectiveness.
- Closer examination:
 - Paul consistently affirms the Law as *holy, just, and good*.
 - The Law was a real covenantal structure with real provisions.
 - Paul never says the Law was an impossible burden.
 - Justification in the current dispensation is by “the faith of Christ.”
 - The Law has been set aside because the administration changed—not because the Law failed.

The Law Was God–Given, Holy, and Operative

Paul upheld the goodness of the Law

- Paul does not treat the Law as failed or flawed.
- **Romans 7:12** – “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”
- The Law reflected God's character and functioned as intended.

The Law was not hidden or unreachable

- **Deuteronomy 30:11–14** – the commandments were “very nigh.”
- Israel could hear, understand, and perform the Law.
- The Law was openly revealed and integrated into Israel's covenantal life.

Law–based righteousness was real

- **Deuteronomy 6:25** – “it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do...”

- **Luke 1:6** – Zacharias and Elisabeth described as “blameless.”
- **Romans 10:5** – “the man which doeth those things shall live by them.”
- **Philippians 3:6** – Paul was “blameless” under the Law.
- Righteousness in the Law was a real covenantal category.
- Paul’s argument is about present justification, not Law failure.

Paul’s Warnings About the Law Are Contextual, Not Condemnations

- Paul’s “negative-sounding” Law statements are contextual.
- They concern jurisdiction, timing, and covenant, not Law deficiency.

Romans 3:20–21

- **Romans 3:20–21** quoted and discussed.
- “No flesh justified” = no *living* person receives final justification under the Law.
- Paul addresses Jews under the Law’s jurisdiction.
- Clear parallel to **Psalms 143:2** – “no man living be justified.”
- **Romans 2:13** – “the doers of the law shall be justified” (future).
- Judgment under the Law comes after resurrection (**Romans 2:16**).
- **Romans 3:19** – the Law speaks to those under it (Israel).
- Problem is not Law deficiency but timing and dispensation.
- “*But now*” (**Romans 3:21**) marks a new administration.

Romans 4:15

- **Romans 4:15** – “the law worketh wrath.”
- Wrath arises because law defines transgression.
- This is a legal reality, not a moral indictment.
- **Romans 5:13** clarifies: sin is not imputed where there is no law.
- The Law included built-in remedies: sacrifice, atonement, forgiveness.
- The verse points to clarity of guilt, not Law failure.

Romans 8:3

- **Romans 8:3** – “what the law could not do...”
- Not a claim of Law defect; Paul has affirmed its goodness in **Romans 7:12**.
- The Law provided righteousness and life (**Leviticus 18:5**, quoted in **Romans 10:5**).
- What the Law could not do: render the *final* verdict upon sin “in the flesh” during mortal life.
- Same principle as **Psalms 143:2** and **Romans 3:20**.
- **Romans 8:2** – freedom from sin’s final verdict comes through Christ.
- Christ condemned sin in the flesh by taking on flesh and completing the judgment.

- Those in Christ possess the completed verdict now (**Colossians 2:10**).

Justification in the Present Dispensation: Paul's New Revelation

- Paul is not redefining Israel's past; he is revealing a new administration.
- Present justification = immediate, complete, apart from the Law.
- **Galatians 2:16**
 - “a man *is* not justified...” – present tense reality.
 - “faith of Christ” refers to Paul's revealed grace message.
 - “no flesh” justified = no living person receives final verdict via Law.
- **Galatians 2:21**
 - Christ's death opened a new way.
 - The current administration no longer uses the Law for justification.
- **Galatians 3:10–11**
 - Law demands continuance to the end.
 - “no man *is* justified” – present tense.
 - “the just shall live by faith” – ultimate vindication.
 - “the law is not of faith” – it is a “do them” arrangement.
 - Paul does not say the Law was useless; it promises “life” to the doer.
- **Galatians 3:21**
 - The Law is not against the promises – therefore it served them.
 - Promises refer to Abrahamic covenantal promises.
 - The Law was a mediator until the Seed came.
 - If a law could give *present* justification, grace would not be needed.

Conclusion

- Paul never claims the Law failed.
- He affirms its righteousness, utility, and attainability.
- The Law worked perfectly within its dispensation.
- The new dispensation grants immediate justification through the faith of Christ.
- **2 Corinthians 3:7** – the Law had glory, but a new system now governs the Body of Christ.
- Justification today is apart from the Law and grounded solely in Christ's completed work.