

Paul, the Law, Grace and ... “Cheap Grace”?

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Prominent thinkers' views are often questioned or challenged, and at times seriously misunderstood, especially when they offer ideas that run counter to those that are widely held.¹ The apostle Paul appeared to join their ranks when he began to preach his Christ-centered gospel.² Pondering over Paul's soteriology³ and how it was sometimes misunderstood during and after his lifetime, one may wonder what arguments Paul would set forth in his own defense against the serious charges of apparently teaching an easy way of salvation, or perhaps what looks like the abuse of God's goodness.

The task of the present paper is to seek answers to the following questions: Was Paul accused of teaching an antinomian doctrine that might be called “cheap grace”?⁴ What happened in the first century AD that gave rise to such an accusation? If Paul was so accused, what answers, both direct and implied, did he give? And, finally, what pattern of thought could the apostle equip us with today in order for us to respond appropriately to extremes that

¹ It is assumed that Paul's *euangelion* in certain respects contravened the religious views of his world, which brought about various accusations. See Don H. Howell, “Pauline Thought in the History of Interpretation” in *BSac* 150:599 (1993): 303-27.

² Dunn says Paul's gospel was in many ways new because of its Christ-centeredness. J. D. G. Dunn, “How New Was Paul's Gospel?” in *Gospel in Paul* (ed. L. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 387-88.

³ Modern trends on Paul's soteriology will be surveyed in section 2.

⁴ A Jewish writer says that the teaching of the apostle Paul had manifest *antinomian* consequences in the first century AD, and then, concerning Paul's epistles, puts the matter straight and clear: “Either the theology of the Rabbis must be wrong, its conception of God debasing,... or the Apostle to the Gentiles is quite unintelligible.” S. Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 5, 18.

may unfortunately be confused with the genuine biblical teaching on grace?

As I attempt to formulate Paul's perception of and response to the charge of supposedly teaching "cheap grace," I will focus mainly on what the Epistle to the Romans contains concerning the issue. I will argue that in Romans Paul is partly concerned with Jewish charges of abusing God's goodness and spreading antinomian perversions, and that he refutes both by the proper presentation of the law and propounding the distinct saving features of his gospel's concepts of grace and righteousness. The procedure of this study is (1) to extract from Romans and review what appears to be the charge (addressed to Paul) of teaching "cheap grace" or antinomianism; (2) to briefly assess the clash of competing views on Paul and his opponents to determine the background of the charge; and (3) to suggest a coherent response to the charge based on Romans consisting of reviews of key theological ideas in sequence, so as to have them lead to a conclusion refuting the charges.

1. Charges in antinomianism

1.1. Paul's awareness of Jewish charges

Käsemann believes that, for example, in Ro 3:8, "Paul is reproducing an *actual criticism* against him on the part of, most probably, Jewish Christians"⁵ (emphasis mine). Others argue with greater certainty that 3:8 is specifically a Judaizing accusation, while 6:1 reflects a Gentile antinomian misinterpretation.⁶ Yet others suggest that in 3:8 it was some Gentiles who mistakenly attributed their antinomianism to Paul.⁷ However, it seems more natural to see indignant (or perhaps bewildered) Jews or Judaizers⁸ getting into a debate of this kind (e.g. around the law)⁹ with the apostle in Romans 3 (and 7), while chapter six may be addressing an antinomian misinterpretation of the Christian walk.

1.1.1. Romans 3:7-8:

God's greatness approves evil?

Apparently, Paul faced serious opposition of a specific kind: he was accused of teaching that people can do

⁵ E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 78. Dunn sees in 3:8 "a hint of explicit opposition." J. Dunn, n.p., *Romans 1-8* on CD-ROM (Version 2.1g, 1995-1999) on 3:8.

⁶ Isaac Canales, "Paul's Accusers in Romans 3:8 and 6:1," *EQ* 57 (1985): 237-45.

⁷ Canales, 237-38. Cf. his reference to W. S. Campbell, "Romans 3 as the Structural Centre of the Letter," *Novum Testamentum*, 23 (1981), 31; (note 3).

⁸ Gathercole insists that in general it was a certain wing of Judaism opposing Paul. (Cf. *Where Is Boasting?* esp. 26, 197-98); Dunn allows both Jews and Judaizers on the opposing side; *Romans 1-8*, n.p., on 3:8. Fitzmyer says it was mainly Jewish Christians alarmed by Paul's

gospel; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; Doubleday: The Anchor Bible, 1993), 79.

⁹ Relevant is Dunn's thesis that "the Christian groups in Rome emerged from within the Jewish community itself, made up, at least initially, of Jews and God-worshipping Gentiles who found themselves attracted to faith in Messiah Jesus, and whose meetings in each others' homes would probably not, in the first instance, be thought of as opposed to the life and worship of the wider Jewish community" (Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, n.p., § 2.2.2).

¹⁰ As to diatribe-style questions Paul has to deal with in vv. 1 and 3, Käsemann says that no specific controversy is in mind (Käsemann, *Romans*, 78).

evil since good will result from it. Romans 3:7-8: “But if through my falsehood God’s truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we say), ‘Let us do evil so that good may come’? Their condemnation is deserved!” (NRSV)

What exactly was the charge is hard to say¹⁰ for we know little about the opposition to which Paul refers in this particular situation. Were the “some people” (3:8) in Rome or some other place?¹¹ What conditioned their grievance?

The driving force behind the accusation and its content can be inferred from the context. The point Paul made in Ro 2 is that external religious factors (circumcision, possession of the law, etc., 2:12.25) will not deliver unrighteous Jews from God’s judgment (2:3-5); the important note is that “some” have not kept God’s commandments (3:3 [τί γάρ; εἰ ἠπίστησάν τινας], cf. 2:22-23) and are liable to condemnation.¹² Paul, leaning on normative logic and perhaps wanting to outpace a brewing question from his imaginary Jewish interlocutor, asks: “What, then, is so

extraordinary in being a Jew?”¹³ (3:1). There is no advantage¹⁴ according to Ro 2, but is there still something they possess that the Gentiles do not? In addition, is there any benefit from circumcision? To the first half of the question the answer is clear: yes, the oracles of God were entrusted to the Jews. The benefit of circumcision, in turn, is very limited for those who, in fact, do not keep the law (cf. 2:25): it remains merely a sign of belonging to the chosen ethnos.

Then Paul points out that many chose not to believe (ἀπιστέω; 3:3), although their unfaithfulness by no means abolishes God’s faithfulness. The following verses (4-6) set forth God’s righteousness (rightful and correct judicial dealing) in judging man. By this point the interlocutor supposedly has agreed with Paul’s sentence, “Jews are as guilty as Gentiles,” but perhaps not wanting to concede, attempts a different maneuver, saying in effect: “You, Paul, seem to imply that we may go ahead and do evil because it will only result in some sort of good and elevate God’s truthfulness?” (3:7-8). Thus, the accusation of allowing sinful living for a good cause seems to have been

¹¹ Paul faced opposition in several places; in Romans he seems to have a misgiving as to his journey to Jerusalem and asks believers to pray for his deliverance from “unbelievers in Judea” (15:31), probably Jews who opposed his gospel. Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green & Marianne Meye Thompson. *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001), 301.

¹² Achtemeier calls it a ‘relentless logic’ in *Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 54.

¹³ Translation mine, of τί οὖν τὸ περισσὸν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου. NRSV: “Then what advantage has the Jew?” Rendering περισσός as ‘advantage’ or ‘benefit’ (NJB) is not satisfying. The term de-

notes ‘that which is above’ or ‘extra’ or even ‘superfluous’ (see T. Brandt, *περισσοεύω*, NIDNTT 1:728-30; BAG). So the question, in effect, really goes like this: “What is there to Jews that Gentiles do not have?” The answer: “Oracles of God.” This would more clearly imply *responsibility* rather than merely a *privileged position*.

¹⁴ As beneficial factor, favorable position, gain, superiority (*Webster’s Dictionary*). Moo says (italics mine): “...Whatever historical privileges the Jews may have these do not place Jews in superior position *in God’s judgment*.” Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 200-01.

articulated clearly, were it said to Paul face to face or diffused “behind his back.” It demands a reply that will be suggested in section 3.

1.1.2. Romans 3:31 and 7:7, 13: *Offending the law?*

Another of Paul’s statements may have been formulated with reference to Jewish accusers: “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” Again, the argumentation in the context helps our comprehension of the accusation Paul apparently had to withstand. Having said that all people are equally guilty and lawfully condemned,¹⁵ he then points out that the law is designed to make humans aware of their sinfulness (3:20). Within these gloomy contours God makes manifest His righteousness (3:21)¹⁶ in solving their plight: through redemption by Christ (3:24.25) He makes sinners righteous

(3:24.26.30).¹⁷ Paul reemphasizes in vv. 26-28.30 that it is on the condition of faith (πίστεϊ ἐκ πίστεως), independently of the law, that any man is made righteous. And again, as if to outrun his opponents, Paul asks the main question and gives a doubt-demolishing reply in v. 31.

In the course of the argumentation the law, which Paul says he upholds, was set in its proper place and its role clarified. This *nomos* appears to be Moses’ law and also “the whole system of religious thought based upon this revelation.”¹⁸ There is a tie back to v. 21b in which the law is said to be “witness to the righteousness of faith.”¹⁹ What more does Paul have to say to rebut his possible accusers who would charge him with disparagement of the law and thus teaching antinomianism: if a man becomes pleasing to God apart from observing the law, then why keep it at all? Paul’s answer will be constructed in section 3.1 on the law.

¹⁵ 3:19: ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ. “So that the whole world may be accountable to, liable to prosecution (ὑποδικος, hapax legomena) before God.”

¹⁶ δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (3:21, 22). Here it is not “a God-kind of righteousness,” as if that is what will be given to men (as with A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures* (Nashville: Broadman, 1931), 346), nor is it the misleading “righteousness from God” which *comes*, as the NIV renders it. Rather, *πεφανερωται* applies to v. 22 as well as to say that what is made known is “God’s righteousness, that is, his method of bringing men into right relation to himself, is “apart from law,” which is agreeable to the declaration that the law operates in quite another sphere – viz., to make those who live under it conscious of their sin (v. 20).” N.a., “Romans,” n.p., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* on CD-ROM. Version 2.5.1. 1989-1997, on 3:21-22).

¹⁷ The question of δικαιοῦω (“to justify” or “to

make righteous”) will be discussed in section 3.3. I will argue that God pronounces sinners righteous (justifies forensically) as well as makes righteous (ethically). I use the term “to be made righteous” referring to δικαιοῦω, because it is flexible and inclusive, and can denote either or both ideas.

¹⁸ Barrett says it is the religion of Judaism. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (BNTC; London: Adam & Charles Black Ltd., 1957), 84. Possibly along with this religion officiously came cultural and religious “ex-crescencies” that often became requirements in order for one’s life to be considered pious.

¹⁹ Käsemann, 105; he adds: “Paul does not have merely the judicial function of the law in mind,” but also more generally as the OT statement of the will of God. “The OT will of God can be manifested only when the *nomos* comes to an end as a principle of achievement. Hence the law does not contradict the righteousness of faith; it summons us to it.”

In such a debatable passage as Ro 7:7.13 the Judaizers again seem to appear within Paul's range of sight as he discusses the sin-revealing and death-bringing capacity of the law (vv. 9-11). A heavily prejudiced Jewish mind might inquire of Paul: Does the law drive one to commit sins? Did the commandments God gave become the cause of sin and death?

1.2. Paul's awareness of (possible) antinomian sophistication

Perhaps having this same charge in mind, Paul had to articulate a similar question (which was rhetorical to him) in the context of the discussion of the Christian walk, and then give an unambiguous answer.²⁰ In Ro 6:1-2 he asks: "What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound?" And in 6:15: "What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" These two questions, with the specific verbs used (ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ and ἁμαρτήσωμεν), may cover different modes of allowance to sin (sinful lifestyle and occasional sins) although pressing the distinction too far is risky.²¹ After all, the matter with these deliberative-rhetorical subjunctive verbs "is not whether one will continue to sin but whether it is morally acceptable to continue in sin."²²

²⁰ See Neil Elliot, *The Rhetoric of Romans* (JSNT-Sup. 44; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 235-36.

²¹ See Moo, *Romans*, 397.

²² See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 467.

In this section of Romans (chapters 5-8) Paul stresses holy living on the basis of God's gracious provision. He differentiates between being slaves to sin and slaves to righteousness, and invites believers to choose the latter (cf. 6:8-23). This would have much more significance for Gentiles who once were slaves to sin of which they now can only be ashamed (6:20-21) rather than for Jews who never needed to be talked into not sinning.

Therefore, the issue is how the all-sin-covering grace does not allow, promote, and/or neglect sinful living. Or, to put it another way, can it be demonstrated that the opinion that Christians may allow sinful behavior because God's grace covers all is false, and finds no basis with Paul? If 6:1 and 6:15 do represent irresponsible antinomian speculations, it certainly does not mean that Judaizers would not scoff in chorus and slander Paul as though the apostle himself approved the propensity of Gentiles to sinful gratification. This critique behind the scenes would very probably have arisen in some significantly biased minds after hearing Paul say that "law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied," and, "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Ro 5:20). This abuse of Paul's implications also demands a response, which will be suggested in section 3.2.

1.3. Evaluation and summary of the opposition

It has been said that "the better we understand these opponents of Paul the more fully we will comprehend the

apostle himself.”²³ In the Pauline corpus the opposition activists (“false brothers” and “false teachers,” as they are called) are referred to with very strong rebukes (Gal 5:10.12; 6:13; Php 2:21; 3:2; 1Ti 1:6-7; Tit 1:10-11) and their “gospel”²⁴ is criticized (Gal 1:6-9).

Martyn puts it quite leniently, saying that Paul’s opponents were “greatly concerned to correct what they saw as the Law-less evangelism of Paul.”²⁵ However, what can be discerned in some of the Jews is really an unintelligent oversimplification and mocking²⁶ that came from a challenged, and thus offended, national conscience, and perhaps personal pride. Supposed debasing of the law was only a pretext. Paul could be accused at times of breaking some national traditions but never of immoral living.

It may be mentioned that Paul the Jew loved the Jews and believed that there is a future for Israel (Ro 9-11); what he fought against was the Jewish/Judaizers’ (see section 2.2) influence that distorted the gospel (cf. Php 3:2; Gal 2:4) and other Jewish misinterpretations of his proclamation (Ro 3:7-8, 31).

2. Historical-theological assessment of the fact of the charge

In addition to what we have seen in Romans, the Book of Acts, now as a historical record, testifies to the fact of opposition to and disagreements with Paul (23:1-15; 24; 25:1-3; 26; 28:17-19; 22-29). From these texts it is seen that in most cases it was Jews opposing Paul, and mainly over matters of the law and the way to righteousness. When it was needed, Paul demonstrated his fidelity to the religious heritage of his ancestors (e.g. Ac 16:1-3; 24:14), yet there was something in his radical decision to follow Christ and in his teaching that made many Jews hostile to him, even to the point of commitment to kill him.²⁷ What was the reason for such a hostile reaction and what aspects of Paul’s teaching caused it?

2.1. The revision of Paul, the Law and his Jewish accusers

Scholars of recent decades have been divided in their opinion over Paul’s view of the law in relation to righteousness and how and whether his views corresponded to the Judaism of his

²³ J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1997), 4-5, note 4.

²⁴ “...He [Paul] knows that the Teachers are in fact referring to their message as ‘the gospel.’ It follows that, no less than the Apostle himself, the Teachers are in the proper sense evangelists, probably finding their basic identity not as persons who struggle against Paul, but rather as those who preach ‘the good news of God’s Messiah.’ They are then Jews who have come ... proclaiming what they call the gospel...” (Martyn, *Theological Issues*, 13).

²⁵ Martyn, *Theological Issues*, 14.

²⁶ Dunn says: “Clearly Paul’s teaching on God’s righteousness was coming under attack as being in effect an encouragement to sin, and ... Paul ... describes it as slander, a deliberate turning of white into black...” (*Romans 1-8*, 143).

²⁷ As Rosenblatt puts it, “Paul is not an outsider to Judaism.... He did not invent a new teaching about the Law, nor ignored the Law...”, yet “part of Paul’s opposition arises from internal theological battles within Judaism.” (Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, *Paul the Accused* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 70-72).

day.²⁸ As F. Thielman has shown,²⁹ C. Montefiore pioneered the rethinking of the traditional perception; he ascribing the origin of Paul's views to the Jewish Diaspora (as distinct from Palestinian Judaism). Hellenistic Judaism was more pessimistic about the world and the law, and had a legalistic attitude toward the law. Paul's contention, then, was against that particular legalism, not against the whole of allegedly legalistic Judaism. (Thielman has, though briefly, demonstrated the artificiality of the distinction between Palestinian Judaism and the Diaspora Judaism made by Montefiore and some other authors who argued along similar lines [Schoeps, Davies]).³⁰

E. P. Sanders offered a new outlook, rejecting the idea of Judaism as works-righteousness religion altogether and suggesting that Paul held to an "exclusivist soteriology," reasoning from solution to plight. According to him, Paul believed that all solutions are wrong except for Christ, while Judaism was no legalistic religion and Christ need not be set up in opposition

to it.³¹ The radical H. Raisanen insisted that Paul misinterpreted the role of the law in Judaism, that Jews believed totally in salvation by grace and saw the law as regulating the conduct of God's covenant people—hence Paul's contradictory and disorganized statements on the law.³² J. D. G. Dunn, in turn, focuses on the social function of the law within first century Judaism. According to Dunn, Paul argued merely against the Jewish abuse of the law as "the boundary marker," "the badge of national privilege," that is, a wrong discrimination that placed only Israel within the realm of salvation, thus excluding Gentiles.³³

Some of these recent alternative perspectives on Paul and the law do not seem to account fully for why Paul was criticized by his contemporaries concerning his treatment of the law, nor provide for understanding of what we have seen to be charges against the apostle of debasing or abusing the law. Paul's Christ-obsession alone,³⁴ his new understanding of mission to the Gentiles,³⁵ or his rejection of the law

²⁸ See F. Thielman "Law," *DPL* 529-42, and S. J. Hafemann, "Paul and His Interpreters," *DPL* 666-679; comprehensive summary by Howell, "Pauline Thought" and Dunn's presentation in *Romans 1-8*, "Introduction" §5; also relevant are reviews of views and methodologies by Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Paul* (NovTSup 62; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 39-68; Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?* 10-34.

²⁹ F. Thielman, *Paul and the Law* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 27-31, and "Law," *DPL*, 530-32. See also Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 34-46.

³⁰ Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 33; Also, Hafemann, "Paul and His Interpreters," 671-73.

³¹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM, 1977), 543-44.

³² See a summary by Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 38.

³³ See Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, explanation of Ro 2:12, 25; Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 42; Silva, "The Law and Christianity," *WTJ* 53:2 (1991): 339-354.

³⁴ Cf. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 544, 550.

³⁵ Cf. survey of Sanders' approach to Paul as missionary by W. P. Bowers, "Mission," *DPL*, 608-19, 614. S. Kim critically assesses J. Dunn's hypothesis that Paul's view of the law (defending the Gentiles' right to belong to the people of God) developed much later after his Damascus road conversion-call to take the gospel to the nations; see Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 2ff).

as the boundary-maker³⁶ will not quite do. That Judaism was a grace-and-faith religion and that Paul's teaching was about dethroning the law are merely unwarranted assumptions by scholars in favor of a new perspective. My conviction is that these issues are not completely "black-and-white." In spite of references to reliance on God's mercy, Judaism was legalistic to a significant extent³⁷ (see 2.2.); moreover, Paul did not dethrone the law, and certainly did not interpret it in an antinomian way (see section 3.1).

2.2. The more traditional revision of the revision

In keeping with more traditional lines, other scholars have made suggestions that are of interest to this study. Hafemann refers to C. E. Cranfield who redefined "the focus of Paul's criticism of the Law in terms of a criticism of its *perversion* into legalism, this perversion being represented by the unique Pauline phrase 'works of the law.'"³⁸ Thus, Paul opposed not the law, but its legalistic perversion. S. Westerholm, while not regarding Judaism as completely legalistic, did see in it a mix-

ture of law on the one hand, and grace, faith, and promise on the other, which, as such, is not unintelligible even to the Christian theologian. It is this mixture, including the "works of the law" as the works demanded by the law for one's welfare, that one can speak against while contending for pure grace-and-faith gospel.³⁹ Thielman points out that though the OT Scriptures proclaim God's gracious initiative, "some Jews of Paul's time" misread them to express the idea of final salvation depending on man's choice to do good.⁴⁰ A number of other authors who express themselves in a similar way include T. Schreiner,⁴¹ D. Moo,⁴² and M. Silva.⁴³

Gathercole has offered a study of Judaism straightening up what he calls the one-sidedness of Sanders.⁴⁴ He considers the factor of "boasting," reemphasizes the eschatological dimension of Jewish soteriology (vs. the earthly covenantal nomism, based on the principle of "how to remain within the people of the covenant") with greater precision, and considers the term "legalism," showing the lack of complete adequacy of the new perspective. Then

³⁶ Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, "Introduction" § 5.4.

³⁷ Though it is not my task to examine first-century Judaism (and here I rely on the work done by others, primarily Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?*), some passages from Second Temple Judaism writings (available at hand) can be mentioned to support my conviction: Tb 4:10-11; 12:9; Sir 11:26; 17:23; 44:10-13; Bar 4:1.

³⁸ Hafemann's ("Paul and His Interpreters," 671-72) refers to Cranfield's "St. Paul and the Law" (*SJT* 17 (1964): 43-68) and "'The Works of the Law' in the Epistle to the Romans," *JSNT* 43 (1991): 89-101.

³⁹ Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, 143-50, 165-69, 172. See also Howell,

"Pauline Thought," 324; Dennis E. Johnson, review of S. Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, *JETS* 34:4 (1991): 523-526.

⁴⁰ Thielman, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, 64-68.

⁴¹ T. Schreiner, "Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders," *WTJ* 47:2 (1985): 245-278. "Paul's View of the Law in Romans 10:4-5" *WTJ* 55:1 (1993): 121-35.

⁴² D. Moo, "Law," "Works of the Law," and Legalism in Paul," *WTJ* 45:1 (1983): 73-100.

⁴³ Silva, "The Law and Christianity," *WTJ* 53:2 (1991): 339-353.

⁴⁴ See Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?* pp. 10-34.

Gathercole presents the “role of obedience in final vindication at the *eschaton*,” and the “wide variety of ways in which the theme of final salvation according to deeds is treated,”⁴⁵ thus exposing deeds-and-merits tendencies in the Judaism of the period. He very cautiously and correctly defines such features as the character of a religion centered on religious practice vs. the inner disposition of its participants, and the question of “getting in” to a religion. The term “self- and works-righteousness” he lays aside as ill-defined.⁴⁶

These scholars refer to many passages in Second Temple Jewish writings (e.g., PS 9:4-5; Jub 20:2; Sir 15:15-17; 26:28; Tb 12:9; 14:9.11; WS 2:22, etc., plus 4Ezr which Sanders rejects altogether as too legalistic to represent the Judaism of the period, and characteristic Dead Sea Scroll texts). These references present an understanding of wages and rewards for human achievements, that “salvation from God’s wrath depends at least to some extent on the human choice to do good and human success at doing it,”⁴⁷ and of “Law as the means to righteousness and life.”⁴⁸

S. Kim exposes the frequent apparent arbitrariness of the Paul/law reconstruction by J. Dunn.⁴⁹ The call to the Gentile mission, he insists, and the conversion to Christology and “new” soteriology (including his view of the law) happened simultaneously on

the road to Damascus and developed as Paul reflected on these matters immediately after his experience. The message for Gentiles had, logically, to be the same as for Jews from the very outset⁵⁰ — justification through faith in Christ (as relevant for all) and therefore without works of the law (as relevant initially specifically to Jews). That is to say that the Judaism of Saul the Pharisee did need to be reformed, needed true salvation by grace just as did the Gentiles. Kim insists that there had to be continuity between the Judaism of Saul and Judaism as Paul the apostle perceived it. He observes the tendency (in groups like the Pharisees and the Qumran community) to strive for a righteousness that is greater than mere “staying in” (as obvious in the Rule of Community [1QS 5:1-10, 20-26; 8:20-9:6, PS]); failure to keep the law perfectly did not cause them to give up, but rather prompted “more pious Jews” to greater efforts in spite of atonement provided in the law.⁵¹

C. Talbert lists the four ways in which Paul has been recently understood in relation to Judaism: (1) Judaism was legalistic and Paul opposed it; (2) Judaism was not legalistic and either Paul’s interpreters were wrong or Paul was wrong and inconsistent in opposing it; (3) Hellenistic Jews were legalistic, but not the Palestinians, and Paul fought against the former. Talbert contends that (4) what Paul opposed was “Middle Judaism,” which

⁴⁵ Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?* 37, chapters 1-5.

Cf. Thielman, *Paul and the Law*, 68.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁴⁷ Thielman, *Paul & the Law*, 66.

⁴⁸ Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?* 41, discussion

on Baruch.

⁴⁹ S. Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective*, chapter 1, esp. pp. 7-35.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 144-52.

represented a diversity of views including (a) legalistic exclusivism toward Gentiles and (b) synergism (remaining in the covenant and “getting in” the Age to Come based on performance); however (c) “Middle Judaism” did not exclude some Jews professing a grace-and-faith religion. Thus Paul “criticized (4a) and (4b) in the name of (4c).”⁵²

These other theologians do seem to provide a background accounting for the Jewish charges of abolishing or/and abusing the law referred to in Romans. It would make sense for Jews with at least some legalistic interpretation of the law and reliance on religious customs in order either to “get in” or “stay in” to attack Paul’s grace-and-faith-oriented treatment of the law. Besides, “the diversity of non-Christian Judaic ideas about the role of the Law was reflected in early Christian Judaism as well,”⁵³ and Paul therefore had to withstand Judaizers.

3. Back to the basics: what Paul has to say in response to the charge

If Paul was accused of teaching “cheap grace,” then everything would have centered around his uncompromising

adherence to the gospel,⁵⁴ a religion⁵⁵ that consists of living before God with full reliance on His salvific accomplishment in His Son; one that in a particular sense is “apart from the law” (3:21). Such existence, Paul believed, must necessarily be accompanied by practice that is ethically scrupulous.⁵⁶

Paul’s “version of the gospel” differed from the Jewish-Christian sophisticated “gospel,” and was opposed to any expression of leniency to sinful behavior allegedly excused by belief in grace. In this section several key concepts will be discussed with the purpose of showing that an accusation of teaching lawlessness, if addressed to Paul, is completely irrelevant. The emphasis will fall on the concept of the law, since we are dealing with the possibility of antinomianism; other subjects intentionally will be discussed more briefly.

3.1. The Law

If the role of Moses’ law, as Paul presented it, is misunderstood, then the grounds for false accusations (of teaching depraved antinomianism) appear. Some scholars say that Paul never presented his own systematic

⁵² Charles H. Talbert, “Paul, Judaism and the Revisionists,” *CBQ* 63:1 (January 2001):1-2. Cited 11 November 2002. Online: <http://proquest.umi.com/qdweb?Did=00000079014991&Fmt=3&Deli=1&Mtd=1&Idx=13&Sid=2&RQT=309>, is concerned largely with the same issues as in this essay: Was Paul accurately addressing a real situation when polemicizing against “works of the law”? If so, what did he find wrong with it? And how did he understand divine enablement (grace) to work after “joining” the people of God?
⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Paul refers to his proclamation as “my gospel” or “our gospel” (Ro 2:16; 16:25; 2Co 4:3, etc.), thus possibly distinguishing it from “another gospel which is in fact no gospel at all” (Gal 1:7).

⁵⁵ Sanders speaks of “patterns of religion,” that of the Jews, that of Paul, and in general, that of any other religion (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 16-18).

⁵⁶ “A major feature of Paul’s theology is his vigorous ethical concern. As a pastor as well as a theologian, Paul was inevitably concerned

understanding of the law;⁵⁷ while that may be true, he definitely had a coherent view of it.⁵⁸

The dynamics of God's law, in the framework of history, theology, and ethics—according to Paul (as in Romans)—may be presented as follows:

(1) The law leads to grace which it foreshadowed (in the following aspects); first, by showing human hopelessness:

- a) the law was to reveal and increase sin (3:20; 5:20; 7:7-9);
- b) the law condemns (2:12; 3:19)⁵⁹ and brings God's wrath upon the sinner (4:15);
- c) the law testified to God's righteousness to come (3:21b)

(2) The law was weakened, impotent (8:3)

- a) keeping the law, the essence of which is love (13:8.10), would justify

a man (hypothetically, 2:13; 10:5)⁶⁰; b) no natural man (flesh) can be made righteous by doing (some) works of the law (3:20)⁶¹ ;

c) possessing the law brings no advantage. (In fact, privileges—such as being heirs, promises, approval—come apart from the law, on a different principle: 2:25-27; 4:13.14.16);

d) it is thus futile to rely upon the law itself⁶² and boast in God as though one perfectly keeps it (2:17; cf. 2:21-22; 9:31).

3) Therefore, God's righteous dealing with man is apart from the law.

a) a sinner is made righteous independently of his relationship to the law (3:21.28);

b) believers in Christ are not under the obligation of keeping the law with regards to being righteous (justified) (7:4.6);

with the outworking of his gospel – not only in terms of the beginning and process of salvation and of communal worship and ministry but also in terms of how believers should live" (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 626).

⁵⁷ "He [Paul] did not have one single theology of the Law" (Sanders, *Paul* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 84). Some say that Paul was confused and inconsistent. See Raisanen, *Paul and the Law* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1987), xiv-xvi. See also summary by Thielman, *Paul & the Law*, 10-11; conclusion in Thielman, "Law," *Dictionary of Paul*, 542. Howell ("Pauline Thought," 303) quotes Meeks: "The real Paul is to be found precisely in the dialectic of his apparent inconsistencies" (Wayne A. Meeks, ed., *The Writings of St. Paul* (New York: Norton, 1972), 438).

⁵⁸ Sanders (*Paul*, 84) says that Paul wrote on the law different things "about it, depending on circumstances.... It does not mean that Paul had no organizing principles or that his statement were simply random. Each thing that he said

about the law was consistent with one of his major principles."

⁵⁹ Cf. Ro 4:15. In connection with Gal 3:19 see Daniel B. Wallace, "Galatians 3:19-20," *WTJ* 52:2 (1990): 236.

⁶⁰ See summation of interpretations and analysis of Ro 10:5 in Schreiner, "Paul's View of the Law," 124-135.

⁶¹ "Works of the law," the performance of which (e.g. rite of circumcision) is discussed in Ro 2, is what the Jews relied to be (remain) the covenant people (cf. 2:17; see Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, explanation on Ro 3:20). Actually, the Jews broke the law, preferring the external form of religion over the essence of the law, which is love.

⁶² Romans 2:17: Εἰ δὲ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπινομάζῃ καὶ ἐπαναπαύῃ νόμῳ.... Relying on the law is a distorted use of the law to which Paul referred in v. 13: to be a hearer of the law gains no advantage (see Murray, *Romans*, 81). It is right to observe the law, as long as one first of all trusts in the Lord (see Schreiner, *Romans* [BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 129).

c) Christ is the end of man's attempts to gain righteousness through the law (10:4; 9:30-10:4).

5) Yet, the law in some sense is still to be established and fulfilled

a) established as to its true meaning and purpose (see point 1, above; 3:31);

b) fulfilled as to its moral requirements (8:4);

c) since the law is from God and is good (7:12.14).

God's law was a covenant ordinance for Israel.⁶³ The Law of Moses was not given to make or keep anyone righteous;⁶⁴ it has served well to mark a specific nation's identity, and to reveal God as well as the lamentable state of humanity.⁶⁵ In addition, since eth-

nic and religious identity and heritage do not matter, and the law is not able to resolve the human plight,⁶⁶ there is a need for a greater provision.⁶⁷ Yet, along with that, it is not the law itself but rather men's wrong-headed efforts and use of the law that Paul criticizes.⁶⁸ The law was to be understood in terms of righteousness by faith, that is, the righteousness it demands should have been pursued by faith, not "ascended to" by doing certain works,⁶⁹ since Christ was the end or goal of the law.⁷⁰

In Ro 10:4 "the end" (τέλος) may be interpreted as "completion," "fulfillment";⁷¹ that is, the law did what it was supposed to in leading people to true righteousness. For Paul τέλος νόμου is not "cessation of the law"⁷² (let alone

⁶³ H. H. Esser, *Nomos, NIDNTT*, 442.

⁶⁴ Or obtain blessing (or privilege); see Ro 4:13-14. "...Being the people of God does not depend on having or keeping the Law" (J. A. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* [TPINTC; Philadelphia: Trinity, 1989], 130).

⁶⁵ To which Paul refers as ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν ("under sin", Ro 3:9) and ὑπὸ νόμον ("under law" that is, condemned, Ro 6:14-15). "Under sin" is to be a helpless captive to sin's power; cf. "slave to sin" (6:17) (Moo, *Romans*, 201).

⁶⁶ Unlike an incorrect statement in "Law," *DBI*, n.p. (italics mine): "The law expresses God's expectations for the moral and spiritual conduct of Israel, the guidelines God has given to Israel to enable them to live life as he created it to be lived."

⁶⁷ "When the holy and spiritual law is faced with the overwhelming and malignant power of Sin it proves to be impotent to bring sin under control (Rom. 8:3). That controlling task is accomplished by God's sending of His Son, not by the law.... Paul sees that the law, being impotent, has fallen into the hands of Sin and Sin has been able to use the Law to kill human beings (Rom 7:7-11)" (Martyn, *Theological Issues*, 43).

⁶⁸ Westerholm would disagree with this formulation, for he insists that Paul abolished

the law completely, its validity is not abiding, and Christians are not obliged to adhere to its precept, etc. (*Israel's Law*, 199-218). I can see why Westerholm contends for this, but in the end it is hard to see why one would scrupulously look for the contrast and push the matter so vigorously if one still believes Paul meant for the law's precepts to be followed by Christians (p. 199).

⁶⁹ Romans 9:31. Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης εἰς νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν See Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 639-40; Thielman, *Paul & the Law*, 205-06.

⁷⁰ R. N. Longenecker (*Paul, Apostle of Liberty* [New York: Harper & Row, 1964], 147-52) speaks of "abrogation" of the law as "the end of nomism."

⁷¹ In Paul's writings, *telos* is used to denote "end result" (cf. Ro 6:21.22; Php 3:19) in most cases; "cessation" is more suitable only in 2Co 3:13.

⁷² Cf. *NEB*; G. Delling (τελός, *TDNT* 8:54-55) says the meaning in 10:4 is "cessation." Schreiner ("Paul's View of the Law") understands the term as ceasing to use the law for establishing one's own righteousness. Cf. Elliot, *The Rhetoric of Romans*, 243-44; Dunn (*Romans 9-16* on 10:4) discusses the ambiguity of τέλος and generally continues to favor "fulfillment," "outcome."

its “abrogation”⁷³), though the lexical meaning of the term may imply that. Since the law’s function was not to establish man’s righteousness (and thus need not be abrogated, while human misconceptions regarding the law do⁷⁴), but reveal his weakness and lead him to supernatural righteousness, there is no grounds for any suspicion that Paul is attempting to abolish the law as a whole and/or its moral demands, thus supposedly promoting “cheap grace.” In other words, an unbiased reading of Ro 10:3-4 should not evoke the troubling question, “Why, then, should people continue to observe the morals of the Mosaic Law if its significance has ceased?” The concluding part of this defective question represents the erroneous inference of Paul’s critics. Instead, the (rhetorical) question should take a different direction: “Hasn’t the law been brought to the completion of its historic role?” or “Has what the law pointed to happened in the coming and accomplishments of Jesus Christ?” The answer is “Yes!” and it in no way threatens or nullifies the law. If it is necessary to expand this idea, then the morals of the law are always required and useful for Christian living; the ceremonial part of the law (even including the dietetic, hygienic, etc. requirements) still effectively explains OT theology in types and sym-

bols, and assists in understanding what has been unveiled in the NT to later generations.

The law is to be fulfilled in the Christian’s life (Ro 8:4). Since the law is holy (Ro 7), its requirement⁷⁵ is righteous and it is to be fulfilled. However, “...Πληρωθῆ is not to be taken to imply that the faithful fulfill the law’s requirement perfectly.... They fulfill it in the sense that they have a real faith in God, ... that their lives are turned in the direction of obedience...”⁷⁶ Westerholm insists that Paul’s statements about fulfilling the law by Christians is an inadequate basis for arguing that Christians are obliged to fulfill its precepts (since the law was only a covenant obligation for Israel and not God’s will for all people at all times),⁷⁷ but why would one even argue about it? If the law is operative in the whole world, making it accountable before God (3:19-20), then why would all people not be invited to cling to its moral demands (correctly interpreted and applied, of course)? For example, love as the essence of the law is definitely prescribed for all. (It can be reinforced that Paul in his “negative” statements never spoke against the law but merely placed it properly in the order of things). I suggest that the tension is not whether Christians, who are under grace, ought to adhere to the law’s pre-

⁷³ Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (II, XI, 4) on CD-ROM. Version 1.0. 1998.

⁷⁴ Cf. Roger D. Congdon, “Did Jesus Sustain the Law in Matthew 5?” *BSac* 135:538 (1978): 117-25, 125.

⁷⁵ Cranfield emphasizes the use of the singular (τὸ δίκαιωμα); it means that “the law’s requirements are essentially a unity ... a recognizable and intelligible whole” (C. E. B. Cranfield, *A*

Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), I:384). Martin suggests that this one requirement is in essence “the love commandment” since, according to Ro 13:8-10, “love is the fulfillment and summation of the law” (*Christ and the Law in Paul*, 152)

⁷⁶ Cranfield, *Romans* I:384.

⁷⁷ Cf. Westerholm, *Israel’s Law*, 199-218.

cepts or not, but rather for what purpose they do it (to obtain justification or because of having been justified), and by what means (flesh or the Spirit) they ought to do it.

3.2. Grace, not licens to sin

As shown above, the law pointed to God's redeeming provision which Paul calls grace. For Paul it is a free, unmerited gift⁷⁸ of right standing before God and ethical transformation of the sinner (3:24; 4:4; 5:15.17); along with it comes glorious hope for the believer (5:2) and the "reign in life" (5:17.21), the "true life" that is from God and therefore distances one from evil.⁷⁹ (It is on the principal of grace that God includes *all* people in His redemptive aspirations [4:16], otherwise He would have to discriminate between groups of people. It is radically different from any approach based on merit or works [11:6]). Grace abounds to cover sin, not in the sense that it carelessly "waves its hand" at it, but because it is simply more overwhelming for the believer than his transgression as a sinner (5:20).

For Paul, grace is not an attitude of negligence to sin. In Ro 3:7-8 Paul

pronounces what seems to be condemnation⁸⁰ to those falsely accusing him because "the presence of grace does not make sin less odious."⁸¹ In fact, grace came to make man righteous—in standing and in practice. "Believers continue to experience this grace in the ongoing work of sanctification in their lives."⁸² God has accomplished in Jesus and offered to us a sufficient gracious provision to bring about moral transformation: those who are under grace are dead to sin and alive to righteousness (6:6-7.11-22).

Again, in chapter 5 Paul draws a contrast between Adam and Christ⁸³ and, concerning grace, emphasizes its ability to solve the human plight, namely the reality of sin, in whose "oppressive and inescapable grip" Paul portrays humanity to be.⁸⁴ Grace is not indulgence,⁸⁵ but is powerful to do what the law could not⁸⁶ (Ro 8:3-4). It neutralizes the effect of sin (condemnation, death, spiritual folly) and offers all that pertains to a full and healthy existence. Therefore the logic of, "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" alluded to in Ro 6:1.15 simply is not relevant, and is passionately refuted by Paul.

⁷⁸ The linguistic starting point is the sense of "making glad by gifts" (H. Conzelmann, *χάρις*, *TDNT* 9:393-4).

⁷⁹ See Bultmann, "The Concept of Life in the NT," *TDNT*, 2:861f.

⁸⁰ Achtemeier draws quite an interesting and plausible conclusion: the final phrase may be understood, "not as a kind of vindictive curse on those who misunderstand Paul, but rather to understand it as the reason why God's overcoming grace does not legitimate playing fast and loose with this eschatological justice. Understood this way, namely, that the presence of grace does not make sin less odious, Paul's subsequent argument (3:9-20) makes good sense:

he is now emphasizing that very fact, i.e. that everyone is guilty of sin despite the goodness of a gracious and faithful God" (P. Achtemeier, "Romans 3:1-8: Structure and Argument," *ATRSup* 11 (1990): 86).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² A. B. Luter, "Grace," *DPL* 372-74.

⁸³ See Cranfield, *Romans*, 284

⁸⁴ See Eastman, *The Significance of Grace*, 129.

⁸⁵ Although it is, indeed, a kind of clemency, a condescension which God undertakes to reach out to fallen man.

⁸⁶ Ziesler notes that "the law can point the way but cannot enable people to follow it" (*Romans*, 203).

3.3. Righteousness and new life

Righteousness⁸⁷ for Paul is the legal standing of a former sinner who is now justified before God (3:26; 4:3.5-6.9), as well as an ethical qualification, and transformation of practice and life. The term itself makes sense when the actual observation of righteousness and transformation conform to a given standard.⁸⁸ Sanders is wrong in saying that “righteous” and “righteousness” are not used by Paul to refer to Christian experience, that is, continuing behavior, although he is correct in stating that Paul “...never refers to being righteous when speaking of the correct behavior that keeps one ‘in.’”⁸⁹ In Ziesler’s words, “...being made righteous and being acknowledged righteous are logically distinct, but in practice simultaneous.”⁹⁰ And yes, δικαιοσύνη, as used in Romans, clearly stands as a description of ethical daily living (esp. Ro 6:13.18-20). The verb, too, in some contexts, signifies just that, especially in 6:7 where a believer has been “righteoused,” as Kasemann puts it, or freed from sin.⁹¹ The

believer’s body members are to be instruments of righteousness (6:13), which refers to nothing else but upright behavior. Likewise in 6:16, to be a slave of obedience unto righteousness is to be morally worthy.

Was righteousness a virtue to be “gained by” or “readily available to be done for” a godly man in Jewish thinking? If so,⁹² then the provoking difference offered by Paul was that righteousness was a gift one receives by means of faith (5:17; 9:30). Instead of “gaining” righteousness through subjection to the law (including out of gratitude) Paul speaks of “having” righteousness in Christ.⁹³ If one were to suggest a reason as to why a believer should be devoted to “nomism,” one would have to refute Paul’s teaching on Christ’s gift of righteousness as standing and provision for moral and holy living (in accordance with the law); one would have to assert that all Paul’s ideas are mere fantasy and nonsense. In 8:10 Paul says that although the body is dead though sin,⁹⁴ Christ’s presence in the believer gives assurance that the human spirit is alive through righteousness (which brings

⁸⁷ The term s used over thirty times in Romans, six times designating God’s righteousness dealing with man and the rest referring to a legal and moral characteristic of humans.

⁸⁸ David K. Lowery, “A Theology of Paul’s Missionary Epistles” in *A Biblical Theology of NT* (ed. R. Zuck; Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 246.

⁸⁹ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 544.

⁹⁰ Ziesler (*The Meaning of Righteousness* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972], 5) makes a reference to V. Taylor (*Forgiveness and Reconciliation* [London, 1941]) “who argues that God declares man righteous in Christ, though at the time of the declaration the righteousness is a matter of will and intention rather than achievement.”

⁹¹ ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμαρτίας. Cf. Kasemann, *Romans* on 6:7. The term is also used by Sanders, (*Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* [London: SCM, 1983], 10, 26). Schreiner says “righteoused” is an awkward term and, faithful to his tradition, prefers “justified” (“Paul and Perfect Obedience,” 245, note 3).

⁹² See e.g. Tb 12:8-9; 14:11; WS 1:1; 5:15; Bar 4:13; Sir 26:28; esp. Sir 27:8: “If thou followest righteousness, thou shalt obtain her, and put her on.” Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* on 3:10; Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?* 32, 60.

⁹³ See Longenecker, *Paul*, 161.

⁹⁴ See discussion in Dunn, *Romans 1-8* on 8:10 and Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 490-91.

positive ethical consequences). Therefore, if God's provision for practical righteousness is not overlooked, then there is no ground for searching for some "cheap grace," or leniency, or antinomianism in Paul's treatment of the worship of Yahweh.

Paul stresses that the believer identified with Christ ought to live a holy life, and, being justified, is also called to live by the Spirit's power, so that τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου be fulfilled, or met, in him (8:4).⁹⁵ This is the "newness of life" (καινότητι ζωῆς, 6:4), not simply "new life" (NIV), in which Paul calls a Christian "to walk"; the phrase ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν being "untypical of Greek thought but characteristically Jewish."⁹⁶ Paul's use of Jewish figurative speech may have been on purpose—to convince the skeptical Jews of the real depth of Christian moral and God-revering devotion (see 5:10). Besides, eternal life is closely related to holiness and spiritual mindedness (6:22; 8:6). To sum up, Paul's gospel with such a view of righteousness as this eliminates any possibility of lawlessness.

What Paul seems to stand against is primitive religious ways (over against true righteousness), as Marrow defines it: "...Persistent quest for the tangible in religious life, the compulsive need for the reassurance of a prescribed course of action—both ritual and moral, and the restless urge to discover at every moment just how they stood in relation to God."⁹⁷ Paul's great task was asserting the idea of "getting

in (to the religion of Yahweh)" for Gentiles, and that explains his emphasis on justification as a gift; but then he also talks about righteous behavior for which everything necessary is provided through the Spirit. It is incorrect to look for confusion in Paul's views. Disagreement and confusion, as well as mistaken charges addressed to Paul in the first century, necessarily emerge only from those who "share his (Paul's) concern for moral living but lack his optimism about the sufficient power of the Spirit to produce it."⁹⁸

Conclusion

I formulate my thesis as follows: Paul's gospel was about God's gracious provision for both initial justification (righteousness) and further ethical (righteous) living, which in itself elevated God's law and also left no room for vicious attempts to do evil presumably excused by references to grace. Thus, charges of teaching "cheap grace" were false, mistaken, and fictitious. Paul could not be looked at as a proponent of "cheap grace" religion. By challenging his contemporaries' religion he reestablished the law in its proper place, never abusing God's goodness nor teaching Christians to abuse it. His message was that of fulfilled hope promised in the law of Judaism, not one of debasing the law. His teaching on law, grace, righteousness, and new life with its divine enablement for worthy living do not allow for any charge of teaching "cheap grace" or antinomianism.

⁹⁵ Cf. Lowery, "A Theology of Paul's Missionary Epistles," 257.

⁹⁶ Dunn, *Romans 1-8* n.p.

⁹⁷ Stanley B. Marrow, *Paul: His Letters and His Theology* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1986), 105.

⁹⁸ Westerholm, *Israel's Law*, 198.

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