



RESURGENCE

The New Perspective(s) on Paul

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CHANCES ARE MOST EVANGELICALS HAVE NEVER HEARD OF NPP.

Compared to the *Da Vinci Code*, it's not exactly on everyone's lips.

Don't wait for a Ron Howard movie!

But among those involved in serious biblical studies, it has been a major controversy for the last 3 decades.

In reality there is no "New Perspective" (singular); rather, New Perspectives.

What ties them altogether is the core conviction that we've been misreading 1st c. Palestinian Judaism,

Viewing it in a totally unfair, inaccurate way, since at least Luther v. Catholic Church, maybe since Augustine v. Pelagius,
And certainly in modern NT scholarship

So, in reality, NPP is 1st and foremost a new perspective on the Judaism of Paul's time and world (and of Jesus for that matter).

NPP started in 1977, w/ a book entitled *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (E. P. Sanders)

E. P. Sanders: *Ed Parish Sanders (born 1947) is a leading New Testament theologian and historian, and is one of the principal proponents of the New Perspective on Paul. He has been Arts and Sciences Professor of Religion at Duke University, North Carolina, since 1990. [Wikipedia]*

The basic thesis of book:

If you go back and study 1st c. Palestinian Judaism (the Judaism of Jesus and Paul), on its own terms in its own context, you discover that it was emphatically not a religion of works righteousness as is commonly assumed in NT exegesis.

What you find instead is what Sanders termed "covenantal nomism."

- ◆ God chose Israel to be His unique people and entered into covenant relationship with them totally on the basis of grace.
- ◆ The Law was given to delineate Israel's required response to God's gracious covenant
- ◆ God also provided for atonement for sin via the sacrificial system

- ◆ Obedience to the Law not how you get into the covenant, but how you live as a member of the covenant community

Covenantal nomism: "the view that one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression." (Paul and Pal. Jud., p. 75)

Obedience maintains one's position in the covenant, but it does not earn God's grace as such (p. 420)

The basic idea of covenantal nomism shouldn't be strange to us,

Virtually all evangelicals would agree that salvation has never been by works, not even in the OT.

Paul, in fact, argues this in Romans, etc.

Chapter 4 - where he argues that Abraham was justified by faith, not works and cites Gen. 15:6 to prove it.

Also quotes Ps 32:1,2 from David

And, in the NT, we have always stressed that faith without works is dead, that works demonstrate the reality of our new life in Christ,

Such passages as

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

James 2:14

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

James 2:19

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

James 2:26

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him:

1 John 2:3-5

Like most things, there were precursors to Sanders who had raised this protest against the negative view of the Pharisees etc. but the idea never caught on among biblical scholars until Sanders.

Sander's book the 1st to address the subject since the Nazi holocaust.

Written in a time when anti-Judaism was a much more sensitive subject, it had a far greater appeal than before.

Desire to purge NT studies of their anti-Semitism

As Donald Hagner puts it, "it was a point whose time had come."

Fast-forwarding to today, postmodern tolerance and perspectivism make this all the more attractive, even to otherwise Bible Christians.

One has the sense that more and more, people who are happy to be biblical and Christian, also want somehow to have their cake and eat it too

(Jesus as Lord and Savior, but some kind of soft universalism to go with it.)

Cool with, 14:6a but not so much with Jn 14:6b

Not saying all evangelicals who hold some form of NPP do so for this reason.

Even those who might not want to approve of all religions,

such as Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., may want to blur the distinctions between otherwise Bible-oriented people, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jew, etc.

If Catholics and Protestants can both see that they have both been somewhat wrong on justification,

and that Paul's real position is here in the middle, then ...

Or for Jews and Christians, same God, same Bible –

2 covenant approach – covenantal nomism was God's way of salvation for the Jews, the law-free Gospel God's way of salvation for the Gentiles.

(Remember, I'm not saying that all NPP's hold this view. which is that the covenant with Israel is God's way of salvation for the Jews, while Paul's Gospel of

SO, PROPERLY SPEAKING, NPP IS 1st AND FOREMOST A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON 1st CENTURY JUDAISM.

If this assessment of 1st century Judaism is correct, we obviously have a problem.

Either

Paul was wrong about Judaism

Paul at the very least inconsistent or confused re: role the Law in our lives today,

Or,

we've been wrong about Paul.

We're not going to spend time on those who think Paul was wrong or inconsistent.

Going to assume Paul - being a 1st c Jew, who was trained by a leading Rabbi (Gamaliel), and who described himself in Gal. as one who

persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

Galations 1:13

And

was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

Galations 1:14

- knew what he was talking about.

C. K. Barrett: *He is a bold man who supposes that he understands first-century Judaism better than Paul did.* (Paul: An Introduction to His Thought, John Knox, p. 78)

We are still left with the question

Have we, along with the likes of Augustine, Luther and Calvin, have in some way misread Paul and in so doing, perhaps even messed up or distorted the Gospel and what it means to be saved?

NPP IS A HUGE TOPIC

Really a topic for a series of lectures

E.g.,

- ◆ Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis – 4-part faculty lecture series (available free on-line)
- ◆ Master's Seminary – 5-part lecture series in chapel (available free on-line)
- ◆ D. A. Carson did 3 lectures (available free on-line - in each of the lectures he remarked that the topic was far too big to be dealt with in a few hours.)

Illustrate from 2 volumes *Of Justification And Variegated Nomism*

600 pp. each

Vol. 1 – 1st C. Pal. Jud.

Vol. 2 – Paul's Theology

- ◆ Paul and the Law
- ◆ "Works of the law"
- ◆ Justification
- ◆ The righteousness of God (*a la* Rm. 1:16, 17)

For further info

Do internet search for "New Perspective on Paul"

Pro-NPP website, but one giving tons of material on both sides - "The Paul Page"
<http://www.thepaulpage.com/index.html>

3 excellent lectures by D. A. Carson http://www.theopedia.com/New_Perspectivism

An absolute flood of stuff written on the subject.

LEADING PROPONENTS OF NPP

3 leading figures:

E. P. Sanders

James D. G. Dunn – British NT scholar

N. T. Wright – also British – Bishop of Durham, 3rd highest position in the Anglican church – brilliant scholar, etc.

In fact, you have people all across the theological spectrum –

from non-evangelicals who hold a more relativistic and pluralistic view of religion, to evangelicals who insist on Scripture as the sole authority, hold one version or another of this.

The common denominator

You agree that 1st century Judaism was not a works religion, but "covenantal nomism," and so Paul needs to be reread.

The differences lie in just what exactly you may conclude about Paul.

SANDERS

Paul was not in some agonized search for salvation (cf. Phil. 3 and persecution of Christians in Acts, indeed on the road to Damascus)

Paul came to believe in Jesus as Messiah (Damascus Road, whether taken historical or not).

So, for Paul, Jesus, rather than Judaism came to be seen as the way of salvation.

Reasoned backwards from solution to answer: if Jesus is the answer, what's the question?

If salvation comes to all – Jews and Gentiles alike – through Christ, then it cannot come through the Law.

For Sanders, Paul underwent a fundamental change of religion.

Paul's religion was not, as we would say, the fulfillment of the OT, but was a fundamentally different system.

Dunn, (Rm. Vol. 1, excursus on NPP, 5.2): *Unfortunately Sanders did not follow through this insight far enough or with sufficient consistency. Instead of setting Paul more fully against and within this context of Judaism so understood, he advanced the thesis that Paul had jumped in arbitrary fashion (as a result of his Damascus road encounter) from one system (covenantal nomism) to another (Christianity), leaving his theology, particularly in reference to the law, incoherent and contradictory.*

DUNN

Agrees with Sanders re: Judaism, but feels Sanders has failed to really come to grips with what Paul was about.

His basic criticism is that Sanders has "*failed to take the opportunity his own mould-breaking work offered*" (*Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p. 186).

2 main points:

1. Justification for Paul not about our relationship with God, but with the relationship of Jews and Gentiles as the new people of God in Christ.
2. Works of the Law not works or good works in general, but specifically circumcision, food laws and Sabbath keeping –
 - those particular observances that distinguished the Jews as Jews – identity markers or badges of covenant membership.

With Jesus, the time of fulfillment has arrived and God's covenant is not being set aside or rejected, but broadened to include Gentiles.

So what Paul is saying essentially is that the identity markers are no longer required for membership in God's covenant.

One is acknowledged by God to be a member of His covenant people, not by the boundary markers of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul was opposing, was not covenantal nomism, but rather the Jewish Christian (Judaizers) idea that for Gentiles to be included in the covenant people of God, they must adopt the identity markers or badges of the covenant.

WRIGHT

A very interesting and engaging scholar.

He, too agrees with Sanders assessment of 1st c. Pal Judaism

But insists, in his own defense, that he was moving in this direction because of his own exegetical studies of Romans and Galatians, not because he shared in "the post-Holocaust re-evaluation of Jewish-Christian relations and the implicit relativism which that engendered." (paper given at Edinburgh Dogmatics Conf., 2003, p. 2)

He complains, "Many conservative writers, having discovered themselves in possession of the Pauline field after the liberals got tired of it, have look around for new enemies. Here is something called the New Perspective; it seems to be denying some of the things we have been normally taught; very well, let us demonize it, lump it proponents together and nuke them from a great height."

"What I find frustrating is the refusal of the traditionalists to do three things: first to differentiate the quite separate types of the New Perspective; second, to engage in the exegetical debates upon which the whole thing turns, instead of just repeating a Lutheran or similar line as though that settled matters; and third, to recognize that some of us at least are brothers in Christ who have come to the positions we hold not because of some liberal, modernist or relativist agenda but as a result of prayerful and humble study of the text which is and remains our sole authority."

In these general sentiments, I totally agree with Wright.

Agrees with Dunn on "works of the law"

But feels that Dunn, like Sanders, has not "got to the heart of Paul."

In particular, he feels Dunn has missed the covenantal framework fundamental to Paul's theology (Edinburgh, p. 3)

What I miss entirely in the Old Perspective, but find so powerfully in some modern Pauline scholarship, is Paul's sense of an underlying narrative, the story of God and Israel, God and Abraham, God and the covenant people, and the way in which that story came to its climax, as he says, 'when the time had fully come' with the coming of Jesus the Messiah. [same page]

Another way Wright puts this is "End of Exile"

Paul's problem with the Jews

- not that they were seeking to earn their salvation, but rather that they were trusting in their identity markers, and not turning to Jesus as their Messiah.

Another key element in Wright's "fresh perspectives on Paul" is his reassessment of justification.

Defines it as God the judge acknowledging you as (declaring you to be) a member of the covenant community.

It is forensic – the verdict of the Judge - not transformative.

It does result in a legal status – "righteous" or "in the right"

But it does not involve imputation of the judge's won righteousness.

Wright further reassesses justification as post-conversion, not conversion.

Distinguishes between calling and justification – *ordo salutis* (Rm. 8:29, 30)

Not entrance into the community as traditionally understood.

One other element in Wright's view of justification

Fusion of forensic and eschatological (final verdict)

Final verdict will be based on works, but not works understood legalistically, but as the evidence of genuine faith

He would point in particular to Rom. 2

Wright doesn't say so, but it sounds to me that he means this in much the same way James means that Abraham was justified by works.

A GENERAL SUMMATION OF NPP

1. 1st century Judaism was not about being saved by works of the Law.
2. What Paul really opposed was not Judaism as such, but the Judaizers who were trying to impose circumcision and the food laws and Sabbath keeping on the Gentiles.

Those who were saying, yes, believe in Jesus, but you must also convert to Judaism or to covenant membership.
3. Justification was not **the** or **even a** central thrust of Paul's theology, but more of a secondary pragmatic issue in response to this Judaizing effort on the part of some.

ASSESSING NPP

WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT IT?

1. A fairer, more balanced, nuanced understanding of 1st c. Pal. Jud.

One regular complaint of NPP re: OPP is that it assumed a kind of advanced systematic legalism of works righteousness or merit theology back into 1st c Pal. Jud.

Carson and others fully acknowledge that yes, NT scholars were reading 4th c. rabbinic ideas into the 1st century.

He says that would be like trying to understand our American founding fathers by reading the New York Times today.

2. Also, forced us to go back and look at Paul again.

Take a closer look at what he was really saying on the subjects of justification, righteousness, the Gospel, the Law, etc.

It has led to some better understanding of Paul in his own times and more carefully nuanced reading of his theology.

3. I appreciate NT Wright re: missing the broader, biblical scope –

seeing Paul's Gospel in the great sweep of God's redemptive story, Israel's story.

4. I also appreciate the corrective re: the extreme individualism with which we tend to read the NT

The Gospel can become little more than my private spirituality.

I agree that the Gospel is not 1st and foremost about my personal connection with God, and my personal religious/spiritual experiences – though those can certainly be ancillary.

It is 1st and foremost, God's great redemptive work of restoring His creation, of remaking this fallen and broken world, of new creation, of establishing His Kingdom or reign on the earth, of bringing all things together under one head - Christ.

5. Also appreciate the challenge re: reading too much guilt and introspection into Paul.

The Gospel isn't just a kind of moral antacid to relief us of our guilt so we can get on with a happier life.

Or, just my private therapy.

Relief from personal guilt, psychological healing, etc.

This, too, may be part of what God accomplishes in us, but it is not the heart of the Gospel.

Paul's conversion in Acts 9 in no way suggests a man plagued with guilt and the need for assurance of salvation.

Nor does Phil 3

This "anti-guilt" argument is valid, but can be overdone – Rom. 7 is still there.

Despite some efforts to say otherwise, I still take that as reflecting something in Paul's experience and as something paradigmatic for all of us.

[Interesting question: when Paul may have come to the Rom 7 take on things, given the portrait we find in Acts 9 and Phil 3, one reasonable suggestion is that he did indeed realize some of this post-conversion (solution to plight), perhaps during the 3 years immediately after his conversion during which he says he consulted no man,

Imagine the trauma of having your entire view of God and truth turned on its head!]

WHAT'S PROBLEMATIC WITH NPP?

1. RE: THE CENTRAL NPP THESIS THAT JUDAISM NOT A RELIGION OF WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The 1st, and in many ways most important, question is whether the basic premise is really valid.

Yes, some good and necessary correctives – virtually everyone acknowledges this.

But, as D. A. Carson says, NPP's central thesis rejects one reductionism – saying all Judaism was works righteousness – for another – all of it was covenantal nomism.

Hence *Justification and **Variegated** Nomism*.

And while N. T. Wright may say that he considers Sanders' thesis settled (paper from Edinburgh Dogmatics conf., 2003)

Many scholars (including some names I think you would be familiar with – D. A. Carson, Moises Silva, Douglas Moo, Donald Hagner, Robert Gundry, and many others not so well known) argue that Sanders has been selective in his reading of the evidence.

Hagner (in Stuhlmacher, p. 85) "There are [NB italics] plenty of legalistic-sounding statements in the rabbinic literature. Klyne Snodgrass gently points this out when he writes, 'There is an emphasis on weighing good deeds against bad in some writings and on the keeping of ledger books in others, and this cannot be dismissed as easily as Sanders would like.'"

Moo in Rm. (pp. 215): It "should also be considered that Palestinian Judaism was more 'legalistic' than Sanders allows, and that Paul is also responding to Jews who did, in some sense, think to be justified by doing the law. Even in Sanders' proposal, works play such a prominent role that it is fair to speak of 'synergism' of faith and works that elevates works to a crucial salvific role."

Moo goes on to argue that Sanders' downplays or dismisses passages that in the rabbinic literature that certainly have a legalistic tone to them.

Having a place for grace in your theology is not the same thing as a clear message of salvation by grace apart from works.

Carson offers the example of Josephus.

Traces his use of *cavri* - turns out that Josephus himself raises the question is this grace poured out on those who deserve it or those who do not deserve it?

Obviously on those who deserve it. Otherwise, God would be unjust.

Carson: No way you are going to convince me that that is roughly the same theology as Paul's – let's just call it all covenantal nomism.

It is perfectly possible to talk about grace, even in Christianity, and still devolve consciously or unconsciously into a theology of merit salvation.

Dunn says in his *Rm.* – "the problem with the Old Perspective is that it assumed that the Judaism of Paul's day was "coldly legalistic".

I would argue that it is perfectly possible to be warmly legalistic.

But ultimately be relying on something in addition to Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone.

- ◆ Not everyone who has an official theology of grace understands grace in radical opposition to works.

And I would argue that this is precisely what set Paul apart from the Judaism and Judaizers of his day.

They may have had a place for grace in their understanding of being God's covenant people, but Paul insists that for grace to truly be grace in salvation, it must totally exclude works of any kind.—and this is where I think the basic premise of NPP breaks down.

NB *Rm. 11:6* *If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.*

Rm. 4:4 (lit.) To the one who works, the wage is not reckoned (that is, calculated) according to grace, but according to debt.

No one would ever deny Eph 2:10 (following 8,9) and all the many ways Paul talks about evidence of grace in our lives (e.g., *work of faith* 1 Th. 1:3) - let alone other major non-Pauline NT passages like James 2 or 1 Jn 2:3f

Yet Paul is vehement that grace and works as pathways to acceptance with God cannot in any way, not even the slightest, microscopic, hairline crack in the dam, be allowed to mix or bleed into each other.

[Again, Josephus perfectly capable of talking about grace being deserved]

- ◆ Covenantal nomism in its purist form is hard to object to

But this is precisely the question: Can the delicate balance between grace and law as proposed in covenantal nomism be maintained in practice for any length of time?

I seriously doubt it.

Official theology, carefully-nuanced doctrine and popular perception are 2 different animals.

Moo, Rm, p. 216 "We must also reckon with the possibility that many "lay" Jews were more legalistic than the surviving literary remains of Judaism would suggest."

Even in Christianity, post-Paul, it has proven exceedingly difficult to maintain the pure Gospel of Eph. 2:8-10.

I've checked this many times with former Catholic friends, "As a Catholic, what did you think it took to be saved? Official Church teaching may be one thing, but the mindset of the masses is another.

Even in evangelical ministries, were we have beaten the Eph, 2:8,9 drum to death, it can be incredibly difficult it for some of the people we serve to keep this clear in their minds.

Illustrate from circumcision (cf., baptism for "Xns")

You can say all day and all night until you're blue in the face that circumcision doesn't make you a member of God's covenant; it is the sign that you are in the covenant.

Still, sooner or later, people are going to say, "You have to be circumcised in order to be saved."

In fact, that's precisely what we find in Acts 15.

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

Acts 15:1

Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³ And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. ⁴ You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace

Galations 5:2

Cf. the story of Joan and her teenage boys (Simi Valley)

When asked why they wanted to be baptized: "To be sure we will go to heaven."

◆ Merit religion is the natural religion of the human heart, the default assumption of our moral nature, the human conscience.

We, as humans, are intrinsically moral creatures – it is our nature.

When Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

Romans 2:14

We know we are not as good as we should be

If and when we concern ourselves with God, the basic, intuitive religious impulse of our hearts is that we must do something, we must do better, we must clean up our act if we hope to gain His favor, blessing, help, even His mercy.

◆ Think more carefully about covenantal nomism – Even granting that there is a sense in which 1st c. Pal. Jud. did believe in salvation by grace, this had to do more with the formation of the covenant in Dt.

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Deut 7:7

than with how individuals at any point along the way themselves come to be right with God.

This is a far cry from what we read in Paul.

It was more a sense that we as Israel may have been chosen to be God's people by grace, we may, as descendants of Abraham, be God's covenant people as a result, but for us to be considered righteous and to find favor with God, we must keep the Law.

If we don't we are doomed.

In other words, is it more likely that Paul's fellow Jews were depending on God's grace or that they were depending on their physical birthright and keeping of Torah?

◆ This brings me to my final comment on assessing the central thesis of NPP:

Even if we assume that covenantal nomism represents the bulk of 1st c. Pal. Jud.,

And even if we accept that what Paul was opposing was in fact, dependence on covenant (Jewish) boundary/identity markers.

(NB "dependence on", not mere "imposition of")

Paul's issue w/ Judaism and the Judaizers would still be exactly the same as we have usually understood them.

A distinction without difference.

Peter's speech in Acts very insightful here

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

² And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. ³ Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. ⁴ When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵ But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

⁶ The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. ⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; ⁹ and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹ **"But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."**

Acts 15:1

Cf. also what we have already said about circumcision/baptism

Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³ And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. ⁴ You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Galatians 5:2-4

So, the fundamental thesis of NPP – while it contains some necessary correctives – is not nearly as clear-cut and airtight as some would make it sound.

The result should be obvious – some nuancing of our understanding of Paul, so more precise exegesis of some of passages perhaps, but hardly a whole new take on Paul and the Law, justification, etc.

OTHER PROBLEMS WITH NPP

- ◆ Already suggested that it misses Paul’s radical assessment of the human condition

I argue this not on the basis of systematic theology (namely, total depravity), but on Paul’s own words.

You can start in Romans 1, with they knew God, but they did not glorify Him as God, nor were they thankful, etc.

Chapter 2a with the moral and or religious person who cannot keep his own standards

Chapter 2b, 3 Jews who have the Law and boast in it, but violate it nonetheless.

But I am really thinking of what comes later.

Paul’s assessment of the situation of people under the Law

Chapter 7a – unfruitful

Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ⁵ **For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.** ⁶ But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

Romans 7:4-6

Chapter 7b – rather than producing righteousness, actually stirs up sin within us

Chapter 7c – much debated.

I don’t think it matters who this is. Paul’s point is that this is always the case when we face ourselves in the light of the Law.

NB conclusion of Chapter 7

But then look at Chapter 8a

Verse 3 - What the Law could not do. Why?

The mindset of the flesh – hostility to God

NO TIME TO DEAL WITH OTHER POINTS IN DETAIL

Some brief observations

WHAT ABOUT WORKS OF THE LAW?

Can they really be limited to boundary/identity markers?

I say with others, no.

I wouldn't exclude boundary/identity markers, but it is simply not possible to maintain exegetically that works of the law refers only to boundary/ identity markers – that is, to Jewish ethnic exclusivity.

Passages that speak of works v. grace, where works are not limited and Jewish boundary/identity markers are nowhere in sight.

Eph. 2:8-10

NB Uses the more all inclusive term "saved"

NB works in Verse 10 cannot be boundary/identity markers

And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. ⁴ You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Galations 5:3

NB, he id's receiving circumcision (in the sense of Acts 15:1, not the mere physical/medical choice for our sons today), with seeking to be justified by law.

And to say it one more time, with falling away from grace.

Phil 3:2-9f

Very difficult to see how Paul has anything less than his own moral condition in view, despite his "blamelessness" so far as the righteousness required in the Law is concerned

Romans 3:19, 20

The Law has the effect of rendering the Jews (those under the Law) without any claim to salvation before God.

Jus the opposite – renders them accountable to Him, rather than justified.

In verse 20, - how can works of the law be limited to identity markers, in light of the 2nd half of the verse.

WHAT WAS PAUL'S PROBLEM WITH JUDAISM?

Several takes on this in NPP and this is one of the more controversial aspects of the whole discussion.

Romans 9:30-10:1ff

- ◆ 10:1 - He doesn't consider them saved,

Hard to see 2-covenant approach or teaching-the-same- thing

Cf. Paul getting in Peter's face in Gal. 2

- ◆ He acknowledges their zeal for God, but clearly indicates that zeal alone is not enough.

Would we not have to say the thing about a good Christian who is very devout, but who is pursuing their relationship on the basis of works?

- ◆ Now, backing up to 9:30-33

The key here is verse 31 – Israel was pursuing a "law of righteousness"

We expect Paul to say they are pursuing a righteousness based on the law, but he says a law of righteousness.

What does he mean?

He puts the Law first to emphasize that they were pursuing law – and a law of a particular kind. – a law of righteousness.

What is a law of righteousness?

A law which has as its goal righteousness.

A law which sets forth the standard of righteousness and which shows us how to live righteous lives.

Now comes the clincher –

The Jews were pursuing this law, but they didn't make it to the righteousness this law had in view?

Why not?

Verse 32

NB the contrast is not between faith and some specific limited list of works, such as circumcision, food and Sabbath laws, but just "works" – any and all works.

Drop down to 10:3, 4

Verse 3 - Whatever you do with "righteousness of God" here, it is clear that the Jews were seeking to establish their own righteousness, rather than go God's way.

Verse 4 - Whether end = goal or termination, it is still the same.
I take it as "The law points (or drives to use the image in Gal.) to Christ as the means of righteousness – that is the law's end or goal.

For whom? For believers (as opposed to those seeking to establish their own righteousness by works)

Verse 5, 6 contrasting law-based approach to righteousness with faith-based righteousness.

NB, vv. 10-13 – interchangeable use of righteousness and being saved

Verse 10 - ESV "and is justified" lit. "unto righteousness"

CONCLUSION

Barely scratched the surface!