

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 79

Don B. Garlington

Faith, Obedience and Perseverance



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zum Neuen Testament

Herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

79

Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance

Aspects of Paul's Letter
to the Romans

by

Don Garlington



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For Elizabeth, Robert, and Thomas

who have persevered with this book – and with me!

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römische Welt</i> , eds. Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini; 21 vols.; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974-.
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BAGD	W. Baur, W.F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur ZNW
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CJT</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>
CNT	Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CUOS	Columbia University Oriental Studies
Ebib	Études Bibliques
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ExA</i>	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literature des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GTA	Göttinger theologische Arbeiten
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harpers New Testament Commentary
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IDB</i>	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> , ed. G.A. Buttrick; 5 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1962.
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> , eds. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, et al.; 4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, ² 1979–88.

<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBR</i>	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament – Supplement Series
<i>JSPSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha – Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>KBANT</i>	Kommentare und Beiträge zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>LCC</i>	Library of Christian Classics
<i>LSJ</i>	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , Oxford: Clarendon, 1968.
<i>MeyerK</i>	H. A. W. Meyer, et al. eds., <i>Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament</i>
<i>MNTC</i>	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
<i>NCB</i>	New Century Bible
<i>NFTL</i>	New Foundations Theological Library
<i>NDT</i>	<i>New Dictionary of Theology</i> , eds. S. Ferguson and D. F. Wright; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1988.
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<i>NICNT</i>	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , ed. C. Brown; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975.
<i>NIGTC</i>	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NovTSup</i>	Novum Testamentum, Supplements
<i>NTAbh</i>	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
<i>NTC</i>	New Testament Commentary
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OTL</i>	Old Testament Library
<i>OTP</i>	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> , ed. J. H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985.
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RNT</i>	Regensburger Neues Testament
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SBLMS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>SBLSP</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
<i>SBT</i>	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SD</i>	Studies in Dogmatics
<i>SE</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SMB</i>	Serie Monografica di “Benedictina;” Sezione biblico-ecumenica
<i>SNTSMS</i>	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>SNTW</i>	Studies of the New Testament and Its World

Str-B	H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash</i> ; 6 vols.; Munich: C. H. Beck, 1924–28, 1956.
TBü	Theologische Bücherei
TCGNT	B. M. Metzger, <i>A Textual Commentary on The Greek New Testament</i> , United Bible Societies, 1971.
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , eds. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich; 10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76.
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , eds. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–.
Them	<i>Themelios</i>
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> , eds., G. Krause and G. Müller; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977–.
TrinJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TS	Theologische Studien
TTZ	<i>Trierer theologische Zeitschrift</i>
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WEC	Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Introduction

The present volume is the outgrowth of five articles on the interpretation of Paul's letter to the Romans which have appeared over the course of the past few years. Each has been extensively revised and, with the addition of the final chapter, is now presented as a monograph. The articles were originally published as: "ΙΕΡΟΣΥΛΕΙΝ and the Idolatry of Israel (Romans 2.22)," *NTS* 36 (1990), 142–51; "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans. Part I: The Meaning of ὑπακοή πίστεως," *WTJ* 52 (1990), 201–224; "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans. Part II: The Obedience of Faith and Judgment by Works," *WTJ* 53 (1991), 47–72; "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans. Part III: The Obedience of Christ and the Obedience of the Christian," *WTJ* 55 (1993), 87–112, 281–97; "Romans 7:14–25 and the Creation Theology of Paul," *TrinJ* ns 11 (1990), 197–235. Each is used with the kind permission of the respective periodicals.

The connecting thread of these studies is mirrored in its main title: *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance*. It is particularly the "Obedience of Faith" series in *WTJ*, now appearing as chapters 1, 3, and 4, which forms the core of this amalgamation of essays. In those pieces, an attempt was made, initially, to explore the significance of Paul's unique phrase "the obedience of faith." By an analysis of the phrase in its respective contexts, I drew the conclusion that it is designed to say more than one thing at the same time; that is, by this particular combination of words Paul gives voice to an obedience which consists in faith in Jesus the Son of God and is the outgrowth of faith's commitment to him. In other words, "the obedience of faith" addresses itself both to the inception of Christian existence and its continuation in the perseverance of the believer, the latter being defined as one's determination to remain faithful to Christ from conversion till death.

This basic conclusion concerning "the obedience of faith" led to an exploration of Rom 2:13, according to which only "the doers of the law" will be "justified" in eschatological judgment. At this stage of the investigation, an earlier impression was confirmed, viz., that the proposition contained in the verse is, in the apostle's perception, far from hypothetical. Quite the contrary, it gives voice to his vision of the realities of final judgment and of the urgency of seeking "glory, honor, and immortality" (2:7) as the precondition of eternal life. There is, in other words, in Paul the idea of a future justification of the people of God, which forms an analogue to their present justification. Attempting, then, to understand Rom 2:13 in light of "the obedience of faith," it was

concluded that the link between the two moments of justification is none other than the notion embedded in this phrase which sets the tone of the entire epistle (1:5; [16:26]).¹ Precisely how the link is forged will be the burden of the ensuing volume.

In the final installment of this series, attention was given to Romans 5 and its portrayal of Christ as the obedient last Adam, who ensures “the obedience of faith” of his people. As the following pages seek to establish, the peculiar character of the Christian’s obedience is derived from the obedience of Christ himself: he is the most vital link of all between present and future justification.

Chapters 2 and 5 respectively fall outside the “Obedience of Faith” articles proper but are, nonetheless, integrally related to them. Chapter 2 pauses between the contextual study of ὑπακοή πίστεως (chapter 1) and its application to Rom 2:13 (chapter 3) to reflect on Israel’s disobedience. Since Paul’s conception of (faith’s) obedience stands in rather stark relief to the (unbelieving) disobedience of his Jewish contemporaries, it is only against the backdrop of his indictment of Israel that aspects of his teaching emerge with tolerable clarity. Thus, attention is turned to Rom 2:22 in order to discern what is intended in the charge of “sacrilege” laid at the doorstep of the apostle’s contemporaries.

Chapter 5, an exposition of Rom 7:14–25, approaches “the obedience of faith” from the angle of the Christian’s personal, subjective experience, as he contends with the onslaught of the powers of this “present evil age” (Gal 1:4) which seek to reassert their influence over him. The ideals of “the age to come,” as set out in chapters 1–4, are thus seen to be tempered by the realism of life as it actually is during this period of overlapping aeons. This means that Rom 7:14–25 makes its direct impact on the one who, in his own person, is a microcosm of salvation history. He is the one who lives in two worlds at the same time and is, by virtue of that fact, simultaneously “flesh” and “spirit.” Hence, the relevance of this portion of Romans is that notwithstanding one’s many shortcomings (due to “indwelling sin”), there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). I should add that while this application of 7:14–25 to the Christian is traditional, the approach to the passage is not altogether so, at least to the degree that I have sought to place the text within the perimeters of a theology of creation, which, I believe, forms the substructure of Romans 5–8 as a whole.²

¹ On the textual problem of Rom 16:26, see n. 1 of chapter one.

² Throughout this study, it will be seen that in Romans Paul takes creation (rather than the Torah) as his point of theological departure. For him creation sets the outermost limits of biblical religion. Not least, this ideology of creation bears on his conception of “righteousness,” which, as argued effectively by Käsemann, is God’s commitment to his creation. Apart from the claim that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is a technical phrase taken over by Paul from Jewish Apocalyptic, underlying this exposition are the perspectives of Käsemann’s “Righteousness,” as reflected in his *Romans* (e.g., pp. 79–80, 154–58). See further de Boer, *Defeat*, 150–56; Beker, *Paul*, 262–64; Motyer, “Righteousness,” 53–54; Davies, *Faith*, 36–38.

So, this book is about *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance* in Romans. However, its subtitle, *Aspects of Paul's Letter to the Romans*, is designed to say something too. The purpose, in other words, is not to address the entirety of the triad of faith, obedience, and perseverance – even in Romans, let alone in Paul generally – but dimensions of the theme which, in my view, are sufficiently noteworthy to call forth a reexamination. Not unexpectedly, then, several of the passages treated are familiar, even well-worn; but they are explored, hopefully, in such a way as to fill some gaps and reinforce their significance for perseverance in Paul. It is because the approach is selective by definition that I have not attempted to construct anything like an overall systematic theology of perseverance. Consequently, apart from the splendid works of G.C. Berkouwer, this study basically bypasses the countless volumes of systematic and dogmatic theology.

Along with this disclaimer, it must be clarified that the book is not cast in terms of whether one can “lose” salvation, à la the historic (and contemporary) Calvinist/Arminian debate.³ Its intention, rather, is to argue that “*the obedience of faith*” in Romans is *perseverance in Christ (rather than perseverance in the Torah)*, a *perseverance requisite to eschatological salvation*. Scot McKnight’s conclusion respecting perseverance in Hebrews, in my view, is equally applicable to Romans. That is to say, Paul contemplates what McKnight calls the “phenomenological-true believer” (I prefer “confessing believer”): his warnings against apostasy and encouragements to fidelity are directed to people who genuinely believe but who will, nonetheless, forsake Christ, *if theirs is not a persevering faith*. As McKnight puts it, those who finally apostatize are believers in every observable sense; even so, they can stop believing and forfeit eternal salvation. Hence, what Christian theology calls “true” or “saving” faith is none other than *persevering faith*.⁴ Given that “salvation” (in Paul and Hebrews) is dominantly future-eschatological, it is best to speak not of “loosing” salvation but of failing to enter into the salvation which is yet to be.⁵ While on the surface this may appear troubling, we shall see in some detail, in agreement with McKnight, that the only sin which can separate “the confessing believer” from final salvation is apostasy.

Recent days have seen the appearance of two important works in English similar to this undertaking. One is Judith M. Gundry Volf’s study, *Paul and Perseverance: Staying In and Falling Away*. In light of her volume, it should be stated, again, that the present contribution proposes to fill certain noticeable gaps – to me anyway – in her treatment of passages in Paul relevant to perseverance, in particular Romans 2, 5, and 7. These, I think, are as crucial as any in Paul’s letters. Moreover, there are areas, the reader will discern, in which these two approaches to the same topic are in disagreement.

³ See McKnight, “Passages,” 21–22, nn. 1–2.

⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁵ Ibid., 58.

Another fresh publication, more akin to the present one, is that of Glenn N. Davies, *Faith and Obedience in Romans: A Study of Romans 1–4*. In major agreement, as I, with the “new view” of Paul and Judaism (see below), Davies asserts that there is a continuity in God’s way of dealing with mankind both before and after the coming of Christ. These two eras respectively can be termed “promise” and “fulfillment.” Yet, he says, within the framework of this promise/fulfillment schema, the appropriate response of men and women to God is always faith and obedience, which applies indiscriminately to Jew and Gentile. Hence, obedience as evidence of and expressive for Christian faith is not qualitatively different from that exhibited by believers under the old covenant, although the specific content of that obedience as it relates to the Torah requires some adjustment. Paul’s rejection of the Jew/Gentile distinction, therefore, is not temporally dependent on Christ’s coming. Rather, according to Davies:

The distinctions that Paul wishes to emphasize . . . are between the righteous and the wicked, believers and unbelievers, the obedient and the disobedient. These are the distinctions which constitute the contours of Paul’s gospel, that gospel of God’s righteousness with which he had been commissioned to bring about the obedience of faith for Christ’s sake among all nations.⁶

With certain qualifications to be voiced throughout, the following study is in accord with Davies’ fine work, so that in places I have opted simply to refer the reader to his discussions of various points. Nonetheless, I believe a kindred volume is justifiable for similar reasons as those pertaining to Gundry Volf’s monograph, because, in addition to treatments of chapters 5 and 7 of Romans, which do not appear in his book, more space is devoted herein to an exploration of the actual phrase ὑπακοή πίστεως and to the pivotal text Rom 2:13 than allotted by him.

It is to be acknowledged from the outset that some of the conclusions may prove to be controversial. Among the most hotly debatable issues, which have been placed on the agenda of Protestant/Roman Catholic dialogue from the Reformation onward, are two: (1) a future (eschatological) dimension of justification which takes into account “works;” (2) the relation of “justification” and “sanctification” as the two, in Reformed theology particularly, have been subsumed under an *ordo salutis*. In both cases, it has appeared to me that adjustments to the customary Protestant/Reformed scheme are in order. This is why, in the last chapter especially, I have sought to interact with modern Reformed scholarship.

In the face of potential criticism, I would plead that oversimplification in any direction is one of the most dangerous enemies of biblical research, to which I would add that the positions herein espoused are not without precedent among Protestants – including the Reformers – as will become evident enough. In any event, I am convinced that while the debate cannot be abstracted from an

⁶ Davies, *Faith*, 18–19 (quote from p. 19).

awareness of confessional standards, the exegete must be allowed to probe the biblical text, free to draw whatever conclusions are consonant with his/her exegesis. It is fully my conviction that the agenda of scholarship is not to be set by church-historical controversies, with the unspoken – if not spoken! – assumption that certain conclusions are to be avoided at all costs. We do well to listen to Berkouwer: “The way of dogmatic logicism is not that of faith, which always listens, listens, – to the Word.”⁷

This book follows upon my *‘The Obedience of Faith’: A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context* (WUNT 2/38), a revision of a Durham Ph.D. thesis supervised by my esteemed teacher and friend J. D. G. Dunn. The aim of the earlier publication was to develop an insight into Rom 1:5 picked up from Otto Michel, viz., when Paul coins his singular phrase ὑπακοὴ πίστεως, he does so antithetically to Judaism and the kind of Jewish Christianity represented by the “circumcision party.”⁸ Accordingly, I sought to set the phrase within its historical context in order to determine the nature of the controversy between Paul and his opponents as articulated by that peculiar combination of words. Whereas “the obedience of faith” in Paul’s day was commensurate with devotion to the law (“covenantal nomism”), for him a reversal has taken place. The phrase is his declaration that to be acceptable to God as a faithful covenant-keeper it is no longer necessary to become and then remain Jewish: the privileges entailed in Israel’s identity as the people of God can be had by virtue of faith alone in the risen Christ, the Seed of David and the powerful Son of God.⁹ Several conclusions were drawn by the previous investigation which set the presuppositional framework of this one.¹⁰

For one, it was Paul’s vision of the obedient people of God which most radically drew the line of demarcation between him and first-century Judaism. As intimated immediately above, “the obedience of faith” for Paul’s contemporaries was inseparable from the *whole Torah*, especially as emblemized by those aspects of it which came to serve as the boundary marking mechanisms of the chosen people: circumcision, dietary laws, purity regulations, sabbath, and cultus as concentrated in the temple-worship. It is thus the sum and total of the Torah’s requirements for covenant life, with the “boundary markers” most pointedly serving as the acid tests of loyalty to Judaism, which form the “works

⁷ Berkouwer, *Sanctification*, 66. Berkouwer says elsewhere: “Theology is relative to the Word of God. This relativity is decisive for the method and significance of theology. It means that theology is occupied in continuous attentive and obedient listening to the Word of God” (*Justification*, 9).

⁸ Michel, *Römer*, 76.

⁹ Garlington, *Obedience*, 247. That such associations are attached to ὑπακοὴ πίστεως is argued in detail in the final chapter. Some reviewers, I should say, have paid less attention to the book’s main thesis than to certain conclusions which were more secondary to its intent.

¹⁰ See in detail *ibid.*, 254–68.

of the law” required of all of Yahweh’s faithful.¹¹ These were to be embraced by all Israelites in response to Yahweh’s covenant with them.¹²

Second, Paul’s conception of faith’s obedience speaks to the heart of his controversy with Second Temple Judaism regarding the law. What was at stake was not “legalism” vs. “grace” in the heretofore conventional understanding of the terms but rather the on-going status of the Torah as defining the people of God. Israel, in its insistence that the law is eternal and unchangeable, demanded that all who would enter Yahweh’s covenant must submit to its entrance-rite, circumcision, and thereafter make a commitment to the law, Israel’s “constitution,”¹³ as the expression of God’s will for his people (cf. Jdt 14:10; Gal 5:3). Given such a scenario, “the obedience of faith” is Paul’s battle cry, his manifesto, that, by virtue of the Christ who has received “all” without distinction (Rom 1:5–7; 15:7–12, *passim*), people of varying descriptions can be reckoned among the faithful – quite apart from circumcision and the particulars of the Mosaic code. From one vantage point, then, the debate about the law can be reduced to Paul’s ethnic inclusiveness as opposed to the particularism of his Jewish kinsmen;¹⁴ from another, the dispute revolves around a basic question: What does one think of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ? Is it he or the Torah which forms the gateway to salvation?

In the third place, organically related to both these points, my earlier historical study of “the obedience of faith” seconded the basic findings of E. P. Sanders’ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, i. e., the phrase which best describes ancient Judaism as a religion and way of life is “covenantal nomism,” meaning that Israel’s striving to keep the law was but the outgrowth of a prior covenant relationship rooted in the electing grace of God. Since Sanders’ work is well-known by this time, no attempt will be made to summarize it as such. I simply take it for granted that the main lines of his approach to the sources are sufficiently familiar that scholars may now feel free to interact with them apart from the necessity of first expounding them.

In following this “covenantal nomism” model, it is not to be denied that in, most conspicuously, Rom 4:4–5 Paul challenges a works-principle in Judaism. Yet the ensuing context (vv. 9–12) supports the contention that Paul’s concern is not with a merit theology but with the works of covenant loyalty subsequent to circumcision (cf. Gal 5:3). That “the one who works” receives a “wage” (v. 4) is not a particular problem, because the “wage” in question is eternal life

¹¹ Frequently, scholars on the other side of the debate over the law have alleged that the view propounded here limits Paul’s complaint against Israel to an exaggerated emphasis on the “boundary markers.” However, precisely the contrary is stated in my *Obedience*, 261–62 (quoting Dunn). Moreover, I have affirmed that there was, in Paul’s view, an anthropological failure on Israel’s part, for which the law was insufficient (*ibid.*, 260–61).

¹² See Davies’ discussion of work(s) in Paul (*Faith*, 115–27).

¹³ Renaud, “Loi,” 56, 61; Arenhoevel, *Theokratie*, 15–16.

¹⁴ The expression “ethnic inclusiveness” rather than “universalism” is quite deliberate, because it is arguable that Paul propounds a “new particularism” in that salvation is available only in Christ. See my *Obedience*, 247, n. 68.

bestowed at the end of this age on those who remain faithful to Yahweh, whose will is enshrined in the Torah. Qualitatively, the Jewish position is no different than that embodied in the parable of Matt 20:1–16: the workers in the vineyard receive the wage of their labor, i.e., the eschatological kingdom of God as preached by Jesus.¹⁵ Hence, the works envisaged by Romans 4 (and other passages) are just those demanded by the Torah; they accompany faith and eventuate in the life of the age to come. To be sure, works *are* a condition of “staying in” the covenant. Yet “staying in” is not “getting in.” Israel’s works are but its response to Yahweh’s saving grace: they are tantamount to *perseverance*, not “works-righteousness legalism.” As we shall argue throughout, it is in the same sense that “good works” (= perseverance) in Paul’s own theology are a condition of “staying in” Christ.

It is in keeping with these perspectives that Paul’s opposition to Jewish covenantal nomism can be reduced to his insistence on *Christ-fidelity vs. Torah-fidelity*. The core issue in Romans (and Galatians) is an “either-or:” either *Christ* or *the Torah* as the embodiment of the righteousness of God and the way to salvation.¹⁶ To phrase it otherwise, Where is salvation to be found: in allegiance to Christ or to the law? For Paul the answer was obvious: Christ takes the place of the Torah, and henceforth any faith not directed to him is illegitimate by definition. His thought thus penetrates beyond the “boundary markers” of the covenant to the underlying mindset which came to focus in these boundary marking mechanisms, i.e., the conviction that the law of the Sinai covenant is eternal, unchangeable, and Yahweh’s sole provision for the welfare of his people. At the end of the day, from the apostle’s perspective, *one must decide between Christ and the Torah*.

Fourth, at the risk of some repetition, notwithstanding my considerable debt to Sanders, my *Obedience* disagrees with him in one important regard and sides with Dunn in his own continuing debate with Sanders. Assuming “covenantal

¹⁵ Cf. Bruegemann, *Genesis*, 141–42. Even the δαείλημα according to which the wage is reckoned does not pose an insurmountable barrier to a “covenantal nomism” (re)construction of Second Temple Judaism, just because “debt” does not *have* to mean anything more than God’s commitment to recompense the endeavors of his people, who zealously “will” and “run” to maintain the covenant (Rom 9:16; 10:2–3). One may wonder, then, What does Paul object to as he pens the words of Rom 4:4–5 (11:6)? For one thing, he takes exception to the proposition that adherence to *the law* ensures justification, because God’s grace has now been revealed definitively in *Christ*. Thus, he juxtaposes “grace” not to “legalism” but to grace’s preeschatological manifestation in the Sinai covenant: it is being in Christ which counts, not belonging to Israel (see my *Obedience*, 260). Therefore, Israel’s “works” are wrongheaded inasmuch as they proceed from the Torah, not from Christ. For another, these covenantal works, were they to be retained, would exclude Gentiles from Christ because of their nationalistically restrictive makeup (cf. Räisänen, *Paul*, 177; Mundle, *Glaubensbegriff*, 99–101). Consequently, given Paul’s convictions on both points, “the one who does not work” (v. 5) is the person who disregards the law as “the Jewish gateway to salvation” (Räisänen, *Paul*, 177–91) and simply trusts in Christ.

¹⁶ Cf. Gordon, “Problem;” Donaldson, “Zealot and Convert,” 679–80. Donaldson is quite right that in coming to Christ Paul underwent a “paradigm shift,” i.e., “a transfer from one set of world-structuring convictions to another” (ibid., 682).

nomism” as his avenue of approach to the Jewish materials, Dunn has repeatedly affirmed, in distinction to Sanders and others, that the picture of Judaism emerging from Paul is not a distortion or misrepresentation; rather, what is required is a readjustment of our conception of the precise bone of contention in the law-controversy. That is to say, what Paul opposed was the too narrowly nationalistic conception of God’s purposes in history. Dunn, therefore, in line with various precursors, has defined “works of the law” in Paul not as the compilation of good deeds for the purpose of earning God’s favor (“legalism”) but as Yahweh’s requirements for covenant fellowship with himself.¹⁷ And it was just in the sweep of Jewish history from Antiochus IV onward that these “works of the law” came to be encapsulated in the several “identity markers” of the nation’s distinctiveness, so that fidelity to the God of Israel, by Paul’s day, had become unthinkable apart from these “badges” of Yahweh’s ownership of his favored ones. This implies, among other things, that Israel’s “boasting” (Rom 2:17, 23; Gal 6:13; cf. Gal 6:14; Phil 3:3) pertains not to its efforts at self-salvation but to its privileges and possessions as the chosen people.¹⁸

In sum, the present undertaking proceeds along of the lines of “the Sanders-Dunn trajectory,”¹⁹ i. e., an assessment of Judaism in keeping with Sanders’ and an evaluation of the law in Paul consistent with Dunn’s findings.²⁰ Because such a foundation is already in place, the following book must presuppose what has gone before. Practical speaking, this means that at many points I have opted to defer to the first book, with the scholarly literature therein documented, rather than further clutter an already very busy looking collection of notes. For the same reason, the study touches base with only a cross section of the most

¹⁷ On the term “legalism,” see my *Obedience*, 127–28. As stated there, “nomism” is much to be preferred to “legalism” as a denomination of predestruction Judaism. Writing some years before Sanders, R. N. Longenecker chose to apply to this Judaism the phrase “reacting nomism,” i. e., “the molding of one’s life in all its varying relations according to the Law in response to the love and grace of God” (*Paul*, 78). “Reacting nomism,” for all intents and purposes, is the same as Sanders’ “covenantal nomism” (*Paul*, 236, *passim*). On the related issue of merit, see my *Obedience*, 120 (with literature); Beker, *Paul*, 268.

¹⁸ See further Davies, *Faith*, 127–35. In countering Israel’s “boasting,” Davies maintains, the apostle intends to exclude glorying without obedience. Once we have defined “obedience,” it will be seen that this conclusion is consonant with our own argument.

¹⁹ Silva, “Law,” 341.

²⁰ I would call especial attention to Dunn’s *Jesus, Paul*, chaps. 6–9; *Partings*, chaps. 2–7; and throughout *Romans*. Noteworthy as well is B. W. Longenecker’s *Eschatology*, a comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1–11, which takes advantage of the most recent research relating to Paul and Israel. The “new view” of Paul has been applied to Galatians in the excellent essays of Gordon (“Problem” and “ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ”). An adequate response cannot here be provided to dissenting reviews of Sanders on Judaism and Dunn on Paul, such as Hübner, “Proprium;” id., *Law*; id., “Werke,” Gundry, “Grace;” Silva, “Reconstruction;” id., “Law;” Westerholm, *Law*; Cranfield, “Works;” and the articles of Schreiner. For further literature, see Dunn, *Jesus, Paul*, 234, n. 41. I must qualify, however, that my endorsement of Dunn’s overall position does not imply an acceptance of his peculiar treatment of Gal 2:16; 3:10. This is to be conceded to Silva (“Law,” 346) and Cranfield (“Works,” 92).

relevant (in my view) of the vast and rapidly expanding body of literature devoted to the explication of Paul's letters, including, not least, the law and the ideas of faith, righteousness/justification, obedience, and perseverance in his theology. As though that were not enough, one's frustrations are further compounded by the attempt to set the Pauline epistles against their OT backdrop and within the context of predestruction Judaism. So, I have opted to interact in more depth with a restricted body of secondary sources rather than make only passing reference to a larger company of authors.

As a final word of clarification, this study attempts, in some measure at least, to press beyond scientific exegesis into the realm of pastoral theology. Assuming that scholarship can and ought to have practical consequences, I have endeavored to speak to the issues of faith, obedience, and perseverance as they come to concrete expression in the "in Christ" experience.²¹

To relate some technical matters: (1) documentation of scholarly literature appears only in shortened form in the footnotes, with full information provided in the bibliography; (2) abbreviations of primary sources conform to *JBL* 107/3 (1988), 583–87; (3) for the sake of a wider readership, all quotations from non-English secondary literature have been translated by me; (4) as a rule, English Bible translations are from the RSV.

Before commencing, it is only appropriate to convey once more my indebtedness to professors Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius and to Mr. Georg Siebeck for their kind acceptance of another work of mine into this series. Not least, an additional word of thanks must go to the staff of J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) for their skill and efficiency in turning the manuscript into a book. I think particularly of Mr. Rudolf Pflug, whose labor has been indispensable in the realization of two publications now.

²¹ A fine precedent has been set by Dunn in "Rom. 7,14–25;" *Jesus*, esp. 301–42; and the "Explanation" sections of *Romans*.