

Good without God? Paul's view of the Law as a response to Moral relativism

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ABSTRACT

The idea that morality without God is possible is so prevalent in today's secular society. The Christian view on this topic is based on the fact that objective moral values cannot exist without being grounded in God. These two opposing views reflect the conflict between secular moral relativism and the theistic view of reality that advocates, from an anthropological point of view, that human existence cannot be analyzed without a moral framework. Without the moral dimension, the concept of the rule of law is not more than a utopia that cannot be applied in practice. This paper analyses the issue of morality from a biblical point of view in light of Paul's use of the Law. As a Pharisee, Paul used the Law as the foundation for moral living. This view was completely changed as Paul was transformed by God's grace. The aim of this study is to examine both the positive and negative aspects of the Law as man draws closer to God, but also the way in which Paul relates to the Law in terms of morality. Today's society debates the theme of good without God, while the first century society had in mind the theme of good for God. This paper argues that just as good without God is utopian, so, in Paul's understanding of the Law, good done for God cannot be used as a soteriological foundation.

KEY WORDS: Good without God; morality; Paul's use of Law (or Law); relativism; soteriology; legalism; lawlessness.

In his New York Times best seller book "Good Without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe", Greg Epstein,

the president of the Harvard Chaplains Organization and Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University, argues that Humanism provide sufficient arguments for morality without an appeal to a higher being.² Right from the title of the book, Epstein wants to credit the idea that morality without God is possible, and the argument is the simple fact that a billion non-religious people believe in this concept. This logical fallacy, using *argumentum ad populum*, projects from the

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² Greg M. Epstein, *Good without God: What a Billion Nonreligious People Do Believe* (New York: William Morrow, 2009).

very beginning a reality in which truth is defined not by objective criteria but by community support.

This concept is not essentially new. Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical creation in the famous writing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* is the *Übermensch*, a Superhuman that is meant to replace God who was considered dead. Historically speaking, the utopia of this dream, in which man became the measure of all things, did not materialize in an idyllic society but in the horrors and atrocities of the world wars and many other conflicts that uniquely marked the 20th century.

The issue of good without God has been debated from many angles using theology, philosophy, sociology, etc. William Lane Craig has argued from a rational perspective against the idea that objective moral values can exist without being grounded in God. He reasoned against Atheistic Moral Platonists that lack any adequate foundation for moral values and correctly noted that “[m]oral values seem to exist as properties of persons, not as mere abstractions.”³ Glenn Tinder has written extensively on the problem of good through a cultural and political filter.⁴ Analysis as these emphasize the conflict between secular moral relativism and the view that moral dimension is an axiom that cannot be explained in a world that is limited to physical reality.

THE NECESSITY OF GOOD

At the level of inter-human relations, we are forced to raise questions not only of human existence but also of morality. Human existence cannot be analyzed without a moral framework. Following the paradigm of evolution, we could argue that the principle of the 'survival of the fittest' is a principle that humans are guided by. In one of his comments on Sodom, Moses Rosen, Chief Rabbi of the Mosaic Cult in Romania and President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, pointed out that even the city of iniquity had laws. “Embezzlement, robbery, murder are also required to be legislated.” He correctly stated that from Sodom to Hitler it has been proven that in a society that despises morality, the absurd triumphs against logic and common sense. In all ages, the warning of Sodom remains valid. “Justice and morality must be confounded.”⁵ Rosen correctly linked the rule of Law with the necessity of a

³ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd edition (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2008), 178.

⁴ The initial essay was published in the Atlantic Magazine. Glenn Tinder, “Can We Be Good Without God?,” *The Atlantic*, December 1, 1989, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1989/12/can-we-be-good-without-god/306721/>. This analysis was later published as Glenn Tinder, *Can We Be Good without God? On the Political Meaning of Christianity* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Publishing, 2007).

⁵ Moses Rosen, *Eseuri Iudaice* (București: n.p., 1988), 17.

moral dimension. Without the moral dimension, law becomes nothing more than a utopia that cannot be applied in practice.

An analysis of the crimes of the communist atheist system and the Nazi religious system provides insight into the necessity of morality. Without the existence of God all atrocities produced outside an absolute moral framework are perfectly justified, yet wholly unjust. Hitler tried to create a perfect society considering that all actions were for the good of mankind. Hitler considered himself a good man, and in his speeches, he invoked his belief in the “Almighty”. We can debate whether Hitler was really referring to a higher being or merely invoking such a reality as a facade. However, his philosophy was based on a morality of its own that was founded in a belief in a supreme being and applied to the good of society

This article analyses the issue of morality from a biblical point of view in light of Paul’s use of the law. First century Jewish society was a religious society. The difference between that society and the society of the 21st century is that the existence of God was a fundamental reality, whereas today this reality is questioned. With the law as the foundation for moral living, the Apostle Paul, as a former Pharisee, in his New Testament writings considers both the positive and negative aspects of the law to draw closer to God. This article does not aim to analyze the theme of covenantal nomism postulated by E. P. Sanders, but merely outlines how Paul relates to the law in terms of morality.

If today's society debates the theme of good without God, the first century society had in mind the theme of good for God. This article argues that just as good without God is utopian, so, in Paul's understanding of the law, good done for God cannot be used as a soteriological foundation.

THE PAULINE PERSPECTIVE ON *NOMOS*

The Pauline views of the law are manifold. This concept is debated by Paul because of its implications. A misinterpretation of this concept will cause changes in soteriology, eschatology, ecclesiology. The law is a major theme in Romans. Between Romans 2:12 and 8:7 the term appears no less than 66 times.⁶ Galatians was written to clearly draw the line between salvation through acts of the law and salvation through grace.

Paul uses the concept of law in different ways: (1) the whole OT (Rom. 2:17-27; 3:19), (2) part of the OT (Rom. 3:21), (3) the Mosaic law (Rom. 4:16, 5:13, 20; 1 Cor. 9. 20; Galatians 3.17-23, 4.4-5, 21; Ephesians 2.15), (4). the will of God (Romans 3.20; 4.15; 7.2, 5, 7, 8-9, 12, 16, 22; 8.3-4, 7; 13.8, 10; 1 Corinthians 15.56; Galatians 3.13; 1 Timothy 1.8).

⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 131.

In Pauline theology there is an apparent discontinuity in the teaching on *nomos*. Paul affirms both positive and negative things about the law. The discontinuity in Pauline nomism lies only in the different functions it performs. Ultimately Paul sees the law as both the way we come to the knowledge of sin and the way we come to the understanding and acceptance of God's saving grace.

Positive aspects of the Law

1. the law is not of human authority (1 Cor. 9:8)
2. the law is divine in nature (Romans 7:22, 25; 8:7, 9:4; 1 Corinthians 9:9; 14:21, 14:34; Galatians 3:19)
3. the law contains the will of God (Romans 2:17-18),
4. the law testifies to God's righteousness (Romans 3:21)
5. the law is holy, good and of the Spirit (Romans 7:12, 14, 16)
6. the essence of the law is love (Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14),
7. the law is the synthesis of knowledge and truth (Romans 2:20).
8. the law is strengthened by faith (Romans 3:31).
9. the law is fulfilled by the one who walks according to the law of the Spirit (Romans 8:4).
10. the law draws attention to the Messiah and the need for God (Romans 3:21)
11. the law is a caretaker until Messiah comes (Galatians 3:24)

Negative aspects of the Law

1. the law brings the curse (Galatians 3:3), wrath (Romans 4:15), sin (Romans 7:7-8) and death (Romans 5:12-13, 7:9-11; 2 Corinthians 3:6-7).
2. the law brings sin to life (Romans 7:8, 11)
3. the law gives power to sin (1 Corinthians 15:56),
4. the law implicitly leads to law-breaking (Romans 4:15; cf. Galatians 3:19),
5. the law multiplies sin (Romans 5:20),
6. the law leads to bondage (Galatians 3:23; 4:5, 21-31; Romans 6:14-15; 7:4-6, 23-25)
7. the law brings condemnation to death (2 Corinthians 3:9; Romans 2:12; cf. Romans 8:1, 3; Col 2:14).

8. the law is the root of sin and death (Romans 7:23, 25; 8:7).

The Law - a teacher to Christ - Galatians 3.24

The idea of the law fulfilling the role of a παιδαγωγός (*paidagōgos*) is really the idea of a guardian who not only teaches students things but also keeps them from doing certain things.⁷ The purpose of the law is therefore to keep people “in the classroom” until they discover true righteousness. With the coming of Christ, the “lesson” is over, and so is the role of the teacher. In the Greco-Roman world, but also in the Jewish context, the teacher was more a disciplinarian and caretaker than a teacher.⁸ The term is formed by joining two terms παῖς (*pais*) ‘child’ and the verb ἄγω (*agō*) ‘to bring’.

Josephus Flavius (37-110 A.D.) uses the term several times to emphasize the status of the teacher: a slave, a eunuch whose role was to direct the child, to help him.⁹ In canonical Jewish literature there is no reference to the law as a pedagogue. However, in the Talmud there are a few references to Moses' role as tutor to Israel. In 4 Maccabees 1:17; 5:34 the teaching role of the law is described, but without a clear statement that the law is a teacher.

In the writings of Paul, the term παιδαγωγός (*paidagōgos*) has different nuances than the term διδάσκαλος (*didaskalos*). Longenecker states that the purpose of this analogy is not to point out that the law was in fact a preparation for the coming of Christ, but to show the inferior status of one who was under the guidance of a teacher, but also the temporary nature of such a situation.¹⁰ We must point out, however, that the analogy Paul appeals to is not only to emphasize the temporary aspect of the law, but also to point out that the law was also a teacher about Christ.

The parallel to which Paul later appeals in Galatians 4:1-4 is meant to explain what he said in 3:24. The terms ἐπίτροπος (*epitropos*) and οἰκονόμος (*oikonomos*) are terms that show the influence of Greco-Roman thought on Paul. He uses these legal terms, familiar both to him and to his readers. The terms of this analogy clearly underline the implications of the analogy in chapter 3: the son is kept under supervision in the period before maturity, the purpose is to help the child mature, maturity brings with it release, the decision about the time of release belongs to the father.¹¹ What we must add, however, is that once the child reaches the age and stage of maturity, the role of the teacher ceases.

⁷ Richard N. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature Of The Law In Galatians 3:19-4:7,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 1 (1982): 61.

⁸ Longenecker, 61.

⁹ e.g. *Ant.* 1.56; 9.125; 10.186; 18.212; 20.183.

¹⁰ Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature Of The Law In Galatians 3,” 57.

¹¹ Longenecker, 57.

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

A much-disputed issue is Romans 10:4, where we are told that Christ is the *τέλος* (*telos*) of the law, the end or the goal/the purpose of the law. The interpretation of *telos* is different depending on which aspects are emphasized. When the positive aspects of the law are emphasized, *telos* is interpreted as the purpose of the law, and when the negative aspects are emphasized, *telos* is understood as the end of the law.¹²

Cranfield,¹³ Howard¹⁴ and Kaiser¹⁵ are of the opinion that *telos* has the meaning of end, while Bruce,¹⁶ Barrett,¹⁷ Drane,¹⁸ are of the opinion that *telos* has the meaning of end and purpose. These two divergent views differ on the manner in which the concept *telos* is interpreted. Charles Lee Irons realized a succinct taxonomy of interpretation on this matter in which *telos* is interpreted temporally or teleologically.¹⁹ He concludes that Christ has performed the object of the law, that is righteousness.

Christ ushered in the Messianic era, long awaited by the Jews. Some claim that this ended the law. Some have argued that by these verses Paul means to affirm that with the coming of Christ the ceremonial law was abolished. However, in this context no differentiation is made between the different types of law, so we must interpret the concept as a whole.

Paul's intended meaning in this statement is that Christ is the end of using the law for personal justification. The context of the verse, especially v.3, reinforces this interpretation. The law has been given and can no longer be annulled or ended. It continues to exist, however, without providing a genuine means of justification. Paul wishes to combat the attempt at justification by the works of

¹² Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1996), 636–51.

¹³ C. E. B. Cranfield, “St. Paul and the Law,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17, no. 1 (1964): 42–68; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Commentary on Romans IX–XVI and Essays*, vol. 2, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

¹⁴ George E. Howard, “Christ the End of the Law: The Meaning of Romans 10:4 Ff.,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88, no. 3 (1969): 331–37.

¹⁵ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 14 (1971): 18–28.

¹⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1985), 190; F. F. Bruce, “Paul and the Law of Moses,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 57 (1975): 59–79.

¹⁷ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 137–38.

¹⁸ John William Drane, *Paul, Libertine or Legalist?: A Study in the Theology of the Major Pauline Epistles* (London: S.P.C.K, 1975), 133.

¹⁹ Charles Lee Irons, “The Object of the Law Is Realized in Christ: Romans 10:4 and Paul’s Justification Teaching,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 6, no. 1 (2016): 33–54.

the law. Christ abrogated the law of Moses (Romans 10:46; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18)

With the coming of Christ, the law was fulfilled. Christians are no longer under the law because of identification with Christ who has fulfilled the whole law (1 Corinthians 9:20). The believer had died by right, through identification with Christ, to pay for sins done by breaking the law. The curse of the law is death for those who break the law, those who do not fulfill God's requirements. By this identification with Christ, the believer has actually died to the law. Christ's resurrection has brought him to a new life, a living on another, higher level under Christ's law (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2),

The law is not to be seen primarily as a tool of sin. Paul very carefully emphasizes that the law is spiritual. Without this remark and without this aspect, the law can be seen as only a negative thing. Ultimately, the law is rooted in God. The law itself is not sin but only the breaking of the law. The law encapsulates the need for God's grace.

Paul discusses the Mosaic law and any other use of this concept, pointing out that we cannot speak of a soteriological nomism. He emphasizes that no one can be saved by fulfilling the law and that Jews must also come to faith in Christ. The law is in fact the testimony of salvation which is received through Christ.

THE OUTCOME OF THE LAW

It is vital to emphasize that *de facto* the law is good. The law has made sin known, but with it also grace, because where sin multiplies, grace multiplies. The law brings to light the fact that man is a sinner.²⁰ The real dichotomy is not between law and gospel but between sin and grace. The law does not produce sin but only the breaking of the law. The law was given to identify the problem: sin.

Israel's heritage has become the best evidence of our need for God's grace. This grace transcends the national identity of the people of Israel in favor of all humanity. The law was not a hindrance to man, but to sin.

In Galatians 3.19 Paul raises the question of the role of the law: Why then the law? (Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος;). He raises this issue after arguing that righteousness is received on the basis of faith not the law (Galatians 3.11). The inferiority of the Mosaic law to the law of Christ is emphasized in Galatians 3:19 by the fact that "it was added because of transgressions;" had a role only "until the Seed should come;" and was not given directly by God but through intermediaries. The law became the ally of the power of sin and death. In itself is not a cosmic power

²⁰ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 237–68.

but God's tool to punish sin. The triumph of the law is precisely that God will transform the final judgment of the sinner into the complete destruction of sin itself.

MORALITY AND SOTEROLOGY

The problem of legalism

When Paul speaks of “the works of the law” he cancels out any attempt to apply the Mosaic law to new Christian converts from among the Gentiles. Furthermore, Paul emphasizes not only that Gentiles who wish to come to the salvation found in Christ do not have to obey the requirements of the law, but that even Jews no longer have to obey the law. Dunn states that the law labels all as sinners, both Gentiles and Jews. The Jewish people, however, regarded the law as a matter of national pride - they are the people to whom God gave the law.²¹

Judaism is called a religion of the law. The deeds of the law were only a sign of identity not salvation. Salvation and righteousness was received through faith in God. During the Old Testament history this salvation was associated with Jewish identity, but after the sacrifice of Christ the status of a saved man is no longer conditioned by any national identity (Romans 2:17-29).

God gave the law to His people so that all mankind could see that no one can attain righteousness by keeping the law, precisely because it is impossible to keep the law. The law is the stumbling block of the people of Israel (Romans 9:32-10:3). The people of Israel sought a righteousness that can be obtained through the law, through works. Paul redefines Jewish identity: who was saved in the Old Testament period, the sons of Abraham or the disciples of Moses? Sons of Abraham, those who had faith in God!

First century Judaism was not “legalistic” in the pejorative sense of the word. Law-keeping was seen as something positive (Romans 10:2), which is why Paul points out that the Jews had a zeal for the law but no understanding. The sin of the people of Israel takes the form of national pride.

The only way one can acquire righteousness is by God's grace. The law is very important because it defines the identity of the believer. In the presentation of Pauline soteriology, the issue of the law is dealt with because this issue is closely related to the Jewish national identity. The annulment of the law means the annulment of the central element of Jewish soteriology: the law. E. P Sanders

²¹ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 526–27.

argued that Palestinian Judaism at the time of the apostle Paul was characterized by covenantal nomism.²²

Israel's boastful pride was cancelled with the coming of Christ (Romans 3:27). Attempting to keep the law, in the context of Christ's work at the cross, is actually the sin of self-righteousness. The good news for the Gentiles becomes a stumbling block for the Jews since God is interested in the whole world not just Israel.

“Under the law” appears eight times in the corpus of Pauline writings (Galatians 3:23; 4:4-5, 21; 5:18; Romans 6:14-15; 1 Corinthians 9:20). Paul criticizes Israel's failure to recognize the eschatological change of the ages. The contrast between the ages (Moses and Christ; Adam and Christ; Sarai and Hagar; Abraham and Moses)²³ often described in Paul's writings precisely emphasizes the superiority of Christ in relation to the status of the law.

Dunn correctly noted that just as sin turns desire into pleasure, so it turns the law into grammar for Israel.²⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:6-7 states that while the Spirit gives life, the letter of the law kills. Through the law, Israel became a slave to the natural approach to relationship with God. Paul points out the inability of Israel to read the writings of Moses regarding the temporary status of the law and the revelation of righteousness that is received through faith in God.

So in the context of Christian soteriology, legalism is unnecessary. The weakness of the law is that it cannot stop sin, it only condemns or forbids it. Brice Martin correctly argued that “[t]o live *en nomos* (Galatians 3:11; 5:4), *ek (tou) nomou* (Romans 4:14, 16; 10:5; Galatians 3:18, 21; Philippians 3:9), *dia nomou* (Romans 3:20; 4:13; Galatians 2:21) or *hupo nomon* (Romans 6:14-15; Galatians 4:21; 5:18) is fatal.²⁵

In Galatians 3:23 the person of the verb is changed to emphasize that Paul was also under the law until Christ came. Paul states that he is free, delivered from the law, from the Mosaic law, but he is not free from the law of God, because he is only under the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21 ἔννομος Χριστοῦ). Paul emphasizes the rejection of the law not only from the soteriological but also from the ethical context. He writes against an ethical nomism. The ceremonial stipulations of the Mosaic law, which have an effect on the moral law, are

²² E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977). See also James D. G. Dunn, “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3.10–14),” *New Testament Studies* 31, no. 4 (October 1985): 526.

²³ Romans 5.12-21; 2 Corinthians 3.1-18; Galatians 4.21-31

²⁴ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 161.

²⁵ Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Paul* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2001), 19.

nullified in the annulment of the law by Christ. Paul argues that an ethos based on *nomos* brings out the danger of becoming half Judaizers.

The problem of lawlessness

Those who have sinned without having a law are also condemned in sin, because the only solution to receive justification is faith. It is in this context that the importance of the law and the primacy of the Jews is seen, for the law, while not bringing justification, was a guide to Christ, while those without the law do not even have this guide. Lawlessness (*ἀνομῶς anomōs*) as presented in Romans 2:12 cannot be used as an excuse for sin.

A Jew who keeps the law is in the same position before God as a non-Jew who does good works, and a Jew who breaks the law is in the same position as a non-Jew who does bad works. With the coming of Christ, the only way of justification is by faith in Christ.

The law is like a two-sided coin. One side of the coin is what Paul points out that the law brings sin; through the law people became sinners. The law has not made anyone righteous and no one can claim to live by it (Romans 10:5) because no one has fulfilled its stipulations. The other side of the coin is that the impossibility of keeping the law is a sign of God's love. The law is a guide to Christ. It is through sin brought into being by the law that we come to understand our need for God. The “deeds of the law” are an authentication of the fact that no one can be saved by the “deeds of the law” because no one can fulfill all the deeds of the law.

The solution given by Paul is a law of the Spirit of life (Romans 8:2); or the law of faith (Romans 3:27). The hermeneutical key to the interpretation of this completed work with eschatological implications is the transition from the Jewish law to the law of the Spirit.

Christian moral perceptions are not nullified with the abolishment of the law. For Paul, the ethical life of Christians is an expression of the new identity found in Christ.

Some, however, believe that Christ has not freed us from the law in the sense of its moral, ethical but only soteriological stipulations. True sanctification is manifested in the continuous observance of God's law and the continuous effort to live in obedience to it as a rule of life. The freedom of the Christian is not a freedom without moral duty.

Christians are freed from the requirements of the Mosaic law. This does not mean that Christian life does not have a moral dimension. The moral law is not tributary to the Mosaic law. The moral law existed before the Mosaic law and will continue to exist. We note in the book of Genesis that before the Mosaic

law was given, people had the moral law in them. In addition to all the cases where we see how the patriarchs lived by a law (Genesis 26:5) doing what is pleasing before God, there are cases where even Pharaoh (Genesis 12:18) or Abimelech (Genesis 20:9-11) are led by a moral law. In Romans 1.18-20 this very idea of God's moral law being ingrained in people's lives without requiring a special decree is emphasised.

As Roy Aldrich correctly noted, much of the confusion about law and grace is due to the failure to distinguish between moral law and Mosaic law.²⁶ The Decalogue is not just the moral part of the Mosaic law. We must make clear the distinction between the moral law, the Mosaic law and the Christian law. Failure to distinguish between the Mosaic law and the moral law leads to legalism. We have been redeemed not only from the curse of the law, but also from under the law itself (Galatians 4:5). It was not the Mosaic law that produced the moral law, yet it includes it in its stipulations. The moral law existed before the Mosaic law and was not annulled with the breaking of the law through the work of Christ.²⁷ Christ is the end of the law, but the end of the Mosaic law not the moral law. The moral law transcends the Mosaic law – a law that was given only for a certain period of time.

The law of Christ, the law of the spirit of life and the law of faith, is a law superior to the law of retaliation in which the Christian loves not only his neighbor but even his enemy. Christianity is a religion of divine ethics, a personal and social ethics manifested in the law of love (Romans 7.14, 21, 22, 8.2), but this ethics is a product, a consequence of the salvation achieved through Christ and the acceptance of this salvation by faith not by the works of the law. Salvation is possible not by the law of works but by the law of faith, and the ethos is determined by the act of salvation not by the works of the law but by the works given by the law of Christ (Romans 3.27-28; Galatians 6.2, Philippians 3.9).

CONCLUSION

The denial of God will eventually lead not to a moral utopia, but also to the denial of man. The human ideal that is not grounded in truth will ultimately produce the exact opposite of what it intends. Although the secular or humanist approach tries hard to argue that morality can exist without being rooted in absolute truth, the historical reality of the times since man became the measure of all things reflects man's failure rather than his excellence.

²⁶ Roy L. Aldrich, "Causes for Confusion of Law and Grace," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 116, no. 463 (1959): 226.

²⁷ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 379.

The Apostle Paul argues against those who were wrongly approaching the Mosaic law by trying to be good for God. Today's world is attempting a somewhat reversed approach: good without God. In departing from the moral law of God, modern man is left without the necessary foundation for understanding God.

The Apostle Paul argues that man's goodness has value only insofar as goodness springs from God. For Paul it is the law through which people find the problem of humanity and also the solution: Christ. The work of Christ grants a new identity to those who believe, and this determines the whole Christian ethos. The Christian ethic is superior to any other ethic because it is based on a higher law: the law of Christ. The law makes us aware of our need for God, and faith in Him brings a new identity and a new ethic.

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