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The Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12: A Redemptive-Historical Reassessment

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Abstract: Paul cites Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12 in order to support that “no one is justified before God by the law” (Gal 3:11). Leviticus 18:5 portrays the principle of “doing” in order to attain life that characterized the Mosaic law-covenant, and when this principle met human inability, the law became an enslaving guardian until Christ (3:21–26) and identified how “all who rely on works of the law are under a curse” (3:10). To say “the law is not of faith” (3:12) means that the era of the law-covenant was not characterized by faith leading to life but by rebellion leading to death.

Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” (Gal 3:11–12 ESV)

You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD. (Lev 18:5 ESV)

In Galatians 3:6–14, the apostle Paul draws on a number of OT texts to show how salvation history culminates in Christ.¹ He appropriates Leviticus 18:5 to substantiate his assertions that “no one is justified before God by the law” (Gal 3:11) and that “the law is not of faith” (3:12; cf. Rom 10:5). Is the apostle actually viewing Habakkuk’s claim that “the righteous shall live by faith” (Hab 2:4) as counter to Moses’s declaration, and did not Moses himself celebrate the life of faith (Gen 15:6) and grieve over Israel’s lack of it (Num 14:11; Deut 1:32; 9:23)? What should the interpreter make of Paul’s use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12? Silva asserts that this question is part of what is perhaps “the most difficult

¹ Galatians 3:6 cites Genesis 15:6; Galatians 3:8 cites Genesis 12:3 with 18:18/22:18; Galatians 3:10 cites Deuteronomy 10:26; Galatians 3:11 cites Habakkuk 2:4; Galatians 3:12 cites Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:13 cites Deuteronomy 21:23.

problem ... in the whole Pauline corpus.”²

Recently, Etienne Jodar has attempted to bolster the positive readings of Howard, Kaiser, and others that Paul does *not* pit Leviticus 18:5 against Habakkuk 2:4.³ Jodar argues that Paul’s point in claiming, “the law is not of faith,” is indeed to say, “faith is from law,” which he believes is the meaning of Leviticus 18:5.⁴ Conversely, this study draws significantly on the OT background of Paul’s thought and argues that in Galatians 3:11–12 he treats Leviticus 18:5 as part of a contrast between redemptive-historical ages. The apostle associates Leviticus 18:5 with the old covenant period when faithlessness and inability dominated, and this stands in contrast to the new covenant age of faith secured in Christ. While there has always been a remnant of true believers, the old covenant community as a whole was never characterized by believing, from the days of Moses to the end the OT (e.g., Num 14:11; Deut 1:32; 9:23–24; 29:4[3]; 2 Kgs 17:14). The old covenant called people to glorify God by fearing him, loving him wholeheartedly, and obeying his voice (e.g., Deut 6:4–5; 10:12–13), yet the covenant itself included no power to awaken such realities (cf. Deut 29:4[3] with Rom 11:7–8). As such, Moses himself anticipated both that the old covenant would end in Israel’s destruction (Deut 4:25–29; 31:16–18; 27–29) and that it would be superseded by a new work of God (4:30–31; 18:15–19; 30:1–14). This aligns with Paul’s statements about the law’s ministry of death and condemnation (2 Cor 3:7, 9), which stood against the new covenant’s ministry of righteousness and age of faith (Gal 3:24–26; cf. 3:12–14).⁵ An antithetical reading of Galatians 3:11–12 fits best within Paul’s redemptive-historical argument. I will evaluate how Paul uses the OT by employing G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson’s methodology.⁶

1. *The Literary and Pauline Context of Galatians 3:12*

The initial step in this study is to establish the context of Galatians 3:12. While many will quibble with certain aspects of this overview, it should effectively identify how I understand Paul’s argument within Galatians 3. Earlier Paul declares, “We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal 2:16). The apostle sees two possible means by which God will declare people right: “works of law” and “faith in Jesus Christ.” The former relates to doing what the Mosaic

² Moisés Silva, “Galatians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 800. For a history of interpretation, see, most recently, Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul*, WUNT 2/241 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 142–51, 168–70.

³ Etienne Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith: A Positive Reassessment of Paul’s View of the Law,” *Themelios* 45 (2020): 43–57. Cf. George E. Howard, “Christ the End of the Law: The Meaning of Romans 10:4 ff.,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 331–37; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14 (1971): 19–28.

⁴ See especially Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 52–56.

⁵ See Jason S. DeRouchie, “From Condemnation to Righteousness: A Christian Reading of Deuteronomy,” *SBJT* 18.3 (2014): 87–118.

⁶ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, “Introduction,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), xxiii–xxviii; cf. G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 41–54.

law-covenant requires—actions by which Paul says a mere human “is not justified” (2:16; cf. 3:11).⁷ In contrast, the latter is the only means for a sinful person to enjoy right standing with God (2:16) and is linked to “believing” (2:16), “life” (2:19–20), “grace” (2:21), “the Spirit” (3:2–3), and “hearing with faith” (3:2, 5).⁸ In Galatians 3, it is also only by faith in Jesus that one can become a “child” of Abraham (3:1–6; cf. 3:26, 29).

In Galatians 3:7–29 Paul builds on this understanding of justification and identity to clarify how only those who believe in Christ receive God’s declaration of righteousness and inherit all the Abrahamic promises. Having stressed positively that all people of faith, including Gentiles, are blessed with Abraham (3:7–9), the apostle now emphasizes negatively in 3:10–14 that those who relate to God by works of law are cursed. I will provide a general overview of Paul’s thought-flow and then develop two significant features of the text.

Galatians 3:10 opens with γάρ (“for”) in order to identify that what follows provides an argument for why “those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham” (3:9). 3:10 itself notes that reliance on keeping the law brings curse to all mere humans, because, as Deuteronomy 27:26 declares, God curses everyone who does not fully heed the law. 3:11–12 then develop the argument (using δέ) by clarifying why doing works of law fails to secure justification but results in curse. Paul first cites Habakkuk 2:4 (“The righteous shall live by faith”) in Galatians 3:11 to stress that mere humans enjoy life only by believing. In 3:12 he then contrasts this fact (using δέ) by asserting, “But the law is not of faith,” and then quoting Leviticus 18:5 (“The one who does them shall live by them”).⁹ Here he highlights how “doing” characterizes the call of the Mosaic covenant, which redemptive history has shown resulted in Israel’s disobeying the law, experiencing death in exile, and deeply needing God to save and restore them through Messiah Jesus. Opening with an asyndetic construction, 3:13–14 then synthesize the implications of Paul’s argument, concluding how faith alone in Christ’s obedient, substitutionary, curse-bearing work secures the Abrahamic blessing of justification and the resulting seal of God’s Spirit.

Two features in the context of Galatians 3:10–14 place focus on Christ rather than the Mosaic-law as the answer to humanity’s right standing with God: *First*, throughout this chapter Paul is contrasting two redemptive-historical eras: (a) the age of enslavement, where the law served as an imprisoning guardian, and (b) the age of faith, where Christ frees believers and secures justification and sonship (Gal 3:23–25; cf. 4:3–9; 5:1).¹⁰ The apostle appears to associate Leviticus 18:5 with the earlier era (3:12),

⁷ For this understanding of the phrase “works of law” (ἔργα νόμου) in Romans 3:20, 28 and Galatians 2:16 [3x]; 3:2, 5, 10, see Thomas R. Schreiner, “Works of the Law,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 974–78; Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 41–45; cf. Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 158–60.

⁸ For this understanding of the phrase “faith of Christ” (πίστις Χριστοῦ), see Moisés Silva, “Faith Versus Works of Law in Galatians,” in *The Paradoxes of Paul. Vol. 2 of Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, WUNT 2/181 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 217–48; Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 133–38; cf. Moo, *Galatians*, 38–48.

⁹ Jodar claims that “with the Leviticus 18:5 quotation Paul has moved on in his argument; he is no longer proving that those who rely on the works of the law are cursed.” Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 52. However, Galatians 3:13 is still addressing the theme of “curse,” which Jesus himself bears in our stead, thus curbing the death-dealing nature of the Mosaic law.

¹⁰ For more on Paul’s contrast of two redemptive-historical eras, see Ardel Caneday, “Redeemed from the Curse of the Law’: The Use of Deut 21:22–23 in Gal 3:13,” *TJ* 10 (1989): 185–209; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 141–48; James M. Scott, “For

which includes failed attempts at “works of law” that resulted not in Israel’s justification (2:16; 3:11) but in their cursed exilic death (3:10). In contrast, the age of faith is linked with Habakkuk 2:4 (3:11) and the coming of Christ (3:24). For all who are by faith “in Christ” (3:14, 26, 28), his substitutionary death has now “redeemed us from the curse of the law” (Gal 3:13; cf. 3:24–26; 2 Cor 5:21) and secured “the blessing of Abraham” and “the promised Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:14), adoptive “sonship” (3:26, 29; 4:5), and rights to the full Abrahamic inheritance (3:18, 29).

Second, Paul seems convinced of both the inability of the law to grant life and the inability of mere humans to gain life by it.¹¹ “If a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Gal 3:21–22; cf. Rom 10:4). With respect to the law’s inability to grant life, Paul is clear: “By works of the law no one will be justified” (Gal 2:16), and “it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law” (3:11).¹² While “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom 7:12), “the very commandment that promised life proved to be death” to Paul and Israel as a whole (7:10; cf. Deut 8:1).¹³ The *revealed principle* that guided the Mosaic law was “the one who does them shall live by them” (Gal 3:12; cf. Lev 18:5). Nevertheless, God’s *sovereign purpose* for the law-covenant was never that it “give life” or secure “righteousness” to the many (Gal 3:21). Instead, it bore a “ministry of death” and a “ministry of condemnation,” all so that, in Christ and the new covenant, God might work a “ministry of righteousness” with greater glory and grace (2 Cor 3:7, 9; cf. John 1:16–17).¹⁴ Through the Son, God did “what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not

as Many as Are of Works of the Law Are Under a Curse’ (Galatians 3:10),” in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Don Garlington, “Role Reversal and Paul’s Use of Scripture in Galatians 3.10–13,” *JSNT* 65 (1997): 103–8; Joel Willitts, “Context Matters: Paul’s Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” *TynBul* 54 (2003): 105–22.

¹¹ The wording of this sentence is adapted from Sprinkle, though he thinks Paul’s focus is primarily on the law’s inability. Preston M. Sprinkle, “Why Can’t ‘The One Who Does These Things Live by Them’? The Use of Leviticus 18.5 in Galatians 3.12,” in *Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality: Volume 2: Exegetical Studies*, ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, LNTS 392 (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 129.

¹² Seifrid correctly asserts, “When Paul rejects the saving value of the ‘works of the law’ in Galatians and Romans, he does so with full recognition that he is dealing not merely with a misreading of the law, but with the law itself. The law is a ‘law of works,’ which demands deeds of obedience in order to obtain the offer of life (Rom. 3:27; cf. 10:5; Gal. 3:12).” Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul’s Theology of Justification*, NSBT 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 105.

¹³ For the centrality of the Mosaic law in Romans 7 and for Paul’s first-person speech expressing his own past as representative of Israel’s, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 354–67; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 448–65.

¹⁴ Meyer helpfully identifies how God disclosed grace in both the days of Moses and Christ that “the nature of grace differs between the Sinai (extrinsic grace) and new (intrinsic grace) covenants. God did not give [through Moses] a covenant that could change the heart of Israel. He demanded fidelity to the covenant, but He did not give any intrinsic provisions that would create or cause Israel’s fidelity to the covenant.” Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 6 n. 19. In contrast, the new covenant in Christ transforms all who are a part (Jer 31:33–34; cf. Heb 10:12–18).

do” (Rom 8:3; cf. Gal 3:21). Representing Israel and humanity, Jesus’s perfect statute-keeping fulfills the law’s demands and secures for us by declaration the righteousness leading to life (Rom 5:18–19; 8:4).¹⁵

As for mankind’s inability, Israel’s cursed state (3:10) arose because they had attempted by means of “works of law” to be “perfected by the flesh” rather than by the Spirit (3:3). They failed to identify their need and, like Abraham, believe God with respect to the promised seed, who is Christ (3:6–7, 16; cf. Gen 15:6 with 22:18).¹⁶ As Paul emphasizes elsewhere, “Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (Rom 9:31–32; cf. 11:7–8).¹⁷ The Mosaic law “obligated [everyone] to keep the whole law” (Gal 5:3), and a sinful human’s inability to do this provides the best explanation for why “all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them’” (3:10; cf. Deut 27:26).¹⁸ Under the sphere of law, “the one who *does* them shall live by them” (3:12), and Paul’s stress on mankind’s failure

¹⁵ With Moo and against Schreiner and McFadden, I see Romans 8:4 addressing Christ’s imputed righteousness—with God crediting Christ’s perfect statute-keeping (δικαίωμα, singular) to the accounts of all who are in him (cf. Rom 5:18). Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 504–8; Schreiner, *Romans*, 400–3; Kevin W. McFadden, “The Fulfillment of the Law’s *Dikaiōma*: Another Look at Romans 8:1–4,” *JETS* 52 (2009): 483–97. Nevertheless, with Gathercole, Caneday, Schreiner, and McFadden and against Moo, I believe that the keeping of statutes (δικαίωματα, plural) in Romans 2:12–29 and the fulfilling of the law in 13:8–10 is addressing Christians who actually keep the law (of Christ) and through loving others fulfill the law. Simon J. Gathercole, “A Law unto Themselves: The Gentiles in Romans 2.14–15 Revisited,” *JSNT* 85 (2002): 27–49; A. B. Caneday, “Judgment, Behavior, and Justification According to Paul’s Gospel in Romans 2,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 1 (2011): 153–92; Schreiner, *Romans*, 126–54. As McFadden notes, imperfectly loving others today truly fulfills the law but only because the Spirit’s liberating work will become completed at the resurrection, at which time we will fulfill the law’s righteous requirements completely.

¹⁶ See C. John Collins, “Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?,” *TynBul* 54 (2003): 75–86; Jason S. DeRouchie and Jason C. Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise? An Evaluation of N. T. Wright on Galatians 3:16,” *SBJT* 14.3 (2010): 36–48.

¹⁷ In the old covenant, righteousness shown in character and deeds was the *goal* (Deut 6:25; 16:20) and means to life (4:1; 8:1), and the majority of Israel never reached it because, in their hardness, they sought it by works of law and not by faith in Christ (Rom 9:30–31; 10:4; 11:7–10; cf. Deut 9:4–6). In the new covenant, righteousness is both the ground and goal, the ground being secured through the perfect righteousness of Christ declared over us (Rom 3:24; 5:9, 18–19; 8:4; 10:10; cf. 2 Cor 5:21) and the goal being reached by our new position and Spirit-wrought power producing the fruit of righteousness, whose end is eternal life (Rom 2:7, 13; 6:23; 8:13).

¹⁸ Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, “Is Perfect Obedience to the Law Possible? A Re-Examination of Galatians 3:10,” *JETS* 27 (1984): 151–60; Thomas R. Schreiner, “Paul and Perfect Obedience to the Law: An Evaluation of the View of E. P. Sanders,” *WTJ* 47 (1985): 245–78; cf. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 53–58. Moo writes, “The Mosaic law holds out the promise of life for those who do it. But no one can ever achieve life through the law, because it is impossible to do it.” Douglas J. Moo, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View,” in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 333. Similarly, Westerholm states, “God’s law promised righteousness to those who did its commands ([Rom] 10:5; cf. 2:13), though righteousness was in fact never achieved that way.” Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 329. I disagree with Watson that an assumption that “human action that leads to salvation of ‘life’ must be perfect or sinless ... is irrelevant to Paul’s argument, and contradicts Leviticus itself.” Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 326; cf. Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 47.

to do and keep all the law highlights why “by works of the law no one will be justified” (2:16) and why the law “imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed”—that is, “until Christ came” (3:23–24).¹⁹

<i>The Age of the Mosaic Law</i>	<i>The Age of Faith in Christ</i>
<p>The law-covenant called for perfect obedience to all the law in order to secure righteousness unto life (Gal 3:10, 12; 5:3).</p> <p><i>Gal 3:10 (cf. Deut 27:26).</i> “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”</p> <p><i>Gal 3:12 (cf. Lev 18:5).</i> “The one who does them shall live by them.”</p> <p><i>Gal 5:3.</i> “I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.”</p>	<p>Mere humans are justified unto life solely by faith in Christ (Gal 2:16; 3:11).</p> <p><i>Gal 2:16.</i> “We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.”</p> <p><i>Gal 3:11 (cf. Hab 2:4).</i> “The righteous shall live by faith.”</p>
<p>Sinful humanity’s inability to keep the Mosaic law meant that the law brought no justification but only curse (Gal 2:16; 3:10–11).</p> <p><i>Gal 2:16.</i> “By works of the law no one will be justified” (2:16).</p> <p><i>Gal 3:10 (cf. Deut 27:26).</i> “All who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’”</p> <p><i>Gal 3:11 (cf. Hab 2:4).</i> Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”</p>	<p>Christ’s curse-bearing work redeems those once cursed and secures blessing, the Spirit, sonship, and inheritance through faith (Gal 3:13–14 [cf. Deut 21:23]; 3:26, 29).</p> <p><i>Gal 3:13–14.</i> “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us ... so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.”</p> <p><i>Gal 3:26, 29.</i> “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.... And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”</p>

¹⁹ Jodar asserts, “Many interpreters come to the Leviticus 18:5 quotation of Galatians 3:12 with the presupposition that sinless perfect is required to have the life that God promises. They, then, usually read the implicit impossibility premise of Galatians 3:10—the fact that no one can abide by all things written in the Law—into Galatians 3:12. One result is that the negativity of Galatians 3:10 is superimposed on Leviticus 18:5, thus not letting this Old Testament text make its own contribution in Paul’s argument.” Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 52–53. In contrast, I do not believe Jodar accounts enough for the redemptive-historical *contrasts* between the ages of law and faith that are evident Paul’s argument (see esp. Gal 3:23–26), for which the distinct principles of “doing” (Lev 18:5) and “believing” (Hab 2:4) provide exhibit A.

<p>God's sovereign purpose for the law was never for it to give life or to secure righteousness but for it to multiply transgression and to be an enslaving guardian until Christ came (Gal 3:19, 21–22, 23–24; cf. 4:1, 3, 8–9).</p> <p><i>Gal 3:19. "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made."</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:21–22. "If a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:23–24. "Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came."</i></p>	<p>God intended that Christ would free us from the law's enslaving guardianship and make us sons of God through faith (Gal 3:22, 24–26; cf. 4:5, 7).</p> <p><i>Gal 3:22. "But the Scriptures imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."</i></p> <p><i>Gal 3:24–26. "The law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no long under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith."</i></p>
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Figure 1. Paul's Contrasts in Galatians 3 of the Age of Law vs. the Age of Faith

In sum, Paul is contrasting two eras of salvation-history and seeing in them opposite means for pursuing justification. The era of the Mosaic law results in death, condemnation, and curse, whereas the age of faith in Jesus Christ results in life, sonship, and blessing. We will now consider how Leviticus 18:5 supports these conclusions within its own context.

2. The Pentateuchal Context of Leviticus 18:5

Leviticus 11–26 clarifies how Israel was to pursue holiness as a means for living in light of Yahweh's holy presence. Chapters 11–15 address ritual purity, chapter 16 celebrates the Day of Atonement, chapters 17–24 address relational purity, and chapters 25–26 call the people to heed God's Sabbath-establishing purposes. Leviticus 18:1–5 signals a minor shift in focus within the book away from proper worship at the tabernacle to inter-personal relationships and life within the promised land (chs. 18–24).²⁰ The unit includes a speech of Yahweh in two parts. The first is framed by the phrase "I am the LORD your God" in 18:2 and 4, which appears to operate as an unmarked ground for the series of directives in 18:3–4. 18:5 then reemphasizes the main charge, adds a motivation, and then reiterates the earlier assertion "I am the LORD."

Leviticus 18:1–5 also portrays Israel on a journey between two realities: God had redeemed them from slavery in "the land of Egypt," and now he was leading them into "the land of Canaan" (18:3). Such past and future grace supplies the context for pursuing holiness and fulfilling both prohibition and

²⁰ Leviticus 1–7 details the sacrifices; chs. 8–10 overview the consecration of the priests and first sacrifice; chs. 11–15 confront impurity that could defile the sanctuary; ch. 16 addresses the cleansing of the tabernacle on the day of atonement; ch. 17 lays out the guidelines for laity offering sacrifices at the tabernacle.

command. In light of their deliverance and future hopes, God urges them with a twice-repeated “you *shall not do*” to not follow the pagan, corrupt practices of either the Egyptians or Canaanites (18:3), which the context identifies as sins like sexual immorality (18:6–20, 22–23) and idolatry through child sacrifice (18:21). He then immediately follows this by clarifying what they *should do*: “You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes” (18:4). 18:5 then reads, “You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.”

When we consider Leviticus 18:5 within the framework of the Pentateuch, three observations are pertinent here. *First*, God intended that the Mosaic covenant’s principle of retribution motivate holy living in the present. What people hope for or fear tomorrow should change who they are today (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). Thus, Moses frequently conditions life and blessing/good (Lev 26:3–13; Deut 28:1–14), death and curse/evil (Lev 26:14–39; Deut 27:11–26; 28:15–68), on a perfect keeping of *all* the law (Deut 11:26–28; 30:15–19; cf. e.g., 5:29; 6:25; 8:1; 11:32; 26:18) with *all* one’s heart and soul (4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; cf. 30:2, 6, 10).²¹ By their pursuing God’s standard of “righteousness” (רְדִיפָה, 16:20) and by their keeping his whole commandment manifest in the various statutes and rules, the Lord would preserve their lives (6:24), they would enjoy the status of “righteousness” (רְדִיפָה, 6:25; cf. Ps 106:30–31), and they would secure lasting “life” (Deut 8:1; 16:20; 30:16).

In light of the above, the prepositional phrase in the clause “they shall live *by them*” in Leviticus 18:5 most likely includes a sense of instrumentality (i.e., “by means of the statutes”) and not just locality (i.e., “in the sphere of the statutes”). The community needed God to preserve their present lives (cf. Deut 4:4; 5:3; 6:24), and the blessings they sought included temporal provision and protection (see esp. Lev 26:3–13; Deut 28:1–14). Nevertheless, in a very real sense the “life” Moses was promising also included a soteriological and eschatological escalation beyond their present state—one that he could contrast with being “cut off from among their people” (Lev 18:29).²² That is, the earthly existence that Israel would enjoy in the land typified the greater hope of lasting inheritance that the judgment against the serpent (Gen 3:15) and the promises given to the patriarchs (e.g., 17:4–6; 22:17–18; 26:3–4; cf. Rom 4:13; Heb 11:13–16) already anticipated, all of which were contingent on Abraham’s representative being a blessing and obeying the Lord. Just as Yahweh commanded the patriarch, “And be a blessing

²¹ Deuteronomy stresses the need to keep *all* (כָּל) the law (Deut 5:29, 31, 33; 6:2, 24–25; 8:1; 10:12; 11:8, 22, 32; 12:13, 28, 32; 13:18; 15:5; 17:10, 19; 19:9; 26:14, 18; 27:1; 28:1, 14, 15, 58; 30:8; 31:5, 12; 32:46).

²² So too Moo, *Galatians*, 208 n. 14. Wenham, Milgrom, Sprinkle, and Moo all identify the preposition בְּ to be instrumental. Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 253; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 1522–23; Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 28–34; Moo, *Galatians*, 208. In contrast, Kaiser, following Buswell, takes the locative rendering (i.e., “in the sphere of them”), believing that Moses is not treating law keeping as the means to gain eternal life but as the sphere in which people ought to live on the earth. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 80 n. 19; cf. James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 313.” Similarly, Sklar treats the phrase to mean “living in the sphere of [God’s] favor.” He adds, “His commands are like the borders of his kingdom, and those who stay within those borders proclaim their allegiance to him as King and remain within the sphere of his blessing.” Jay Sklar, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 229. Evans, too, states, “This blessing is not portrayed as a reward for keeping the law; it rests on God’s promise and is an automatic consequence of being in relationship with him.” Mary J. Evans, “Blessing/Curse,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 398. As I will show, this perspective does not go far enough.

so that I may bless those who bless you ... with the ultimate result that in you all the families of the ground will be blessed” (Gen 12:2–3, author’s translation). And again, “I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him” (18:19; cf. 22:18; 26:5). Thus, Yahweh’s pledge to make his dwelling among his people and to walk among them *if* they perfectly obeyed was promising something greater than they were already enjoying (Lev 26:11–12; cf. 2 Cor 6:16).²³ Furthermore, the Lord’s commitment to circumcise the remnant’s hearts upon his restoring them following exile would be “for the sake of your life” (Deut 30:6, author’s translation), which from a whole-Bible perspective points beyond mere temporal blessing (cf. Rom 2:6–7 with 2:14–15, 26–29; 6:22–23; 7:10; 8:13).

Second, while Yahweh stood as Israel’s God in the sense that he had redeemed them through the exodus and uniquely claimed them as his own through covenant (cf. Deut 4:32–35), the broader portrait of Scripture identifies the ruinous state and fate of the majority. While Yahweh would have regarded perfect obedience as “righteousness” (צְדָקָה, 6:25), the people were far from such status; indeed, their own wickedness resembled that of the nations whom the Lord was calling them to dispossess (9:4–7; cf. 9:27). By Leviticus 18, the narrator has highlighted how the people have tested God seven times since leaving Egypt, and by the time the ten spies fail to believe the Lord, the total testings would be ten (Num 14:21–23).²⁴ Thus, Moses rightly labels them “stubborn” (Exod 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27), “unbelieving” (Num 14:11; Deut 1:32; 9:23; cf. 28:66), and “rebellious” (Num 20:10, 24; 27:14; Deut 9:7, 24; 31:27; cf. 1:26, 43; 9:23). He also promises that their insolence would only increase in the promised land (Deut 31:16) and would result in curses climaxing in the death associated with exile (31:17, 29; cf. 28:15–68). With a vision to the future, Moses proclaimed how Israel would lose their special place in relation to God: “They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are crooked and twisted generation” (32:5; cf. Isa 1:4; Hos 1:8–9; Acts 2:40; Phil 2:15). While the Lord redeemed the nation from Egypt, he did not regenerate the majority, and while he gave them the law on tablets of stone, they remained spiritually disabled with sin etched on their hearts (see Deut 29:4[3]; Jer 17:1).²⁵

Kaiser, therefore, overshoots when he asserts that the “law-keeping here [in Lev 18:5] is Israel’s sanctification, the grand evidence that the Lord was indeed their God already.”²⁶ Schreiner, too, blurs matters when he does not distinguish the “salvation” Israel enjoyed with the spiritual rebirth we now have in Christ: “Israel had been redeemed from Egypt and liberated by God’s grace. Therefore, in context the verse should not be construed as legalistic or as offering salvation on the basis of works.”²⁷

The cry, “Do this law so that you may live!” came to a primarily *unregenerated* community. Yahweh was Israel’s God in a distinct way: “To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of

²³ Jason S. DeRouchie, “Is Every Promise ‘Yes’? Old Testament Promises and the Christian,” *Themelios* 42 (2017): 24–26, 39–42.

²⁴ For the ten testings, see: (1) Exod 14:11–12; (2) 15:24; (3) 16:2–3; (4) 16:20; (5) 16:27; (6) 17:1–2; (7) 32:1–6; (8) Num 11:1; (9) 11:4; (10) 14:1–4.

²⁵ Cf. Meyer, *End of the Law*, 6 n. 19.

²⁶ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 14 (1971): 24; cf. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 79–80.

²⁷ Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 59.

the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” (Rom 9:4–5). Nevertheless, the Lord was *not* the majority’s spiritual sovereign, savior, or satisfier; they had other masters and other delights. The Mosaic covenant, therefore, in many ways mirrored God’s covenant with creation through Adam (Isa 24:4–6; Hos 6:7), with Yahweh’s relationship with Israel supplying a microcosmic picture of the larger relationship he has over all humanity. Indeed, the noun phrase “the man” (אָדָם) in Leviticus 18:5 may be an allusion to the first man (אָדָם) in the garden, who himself foreshadowed Israel’s existence.²⁸ God created the first man in the wilderness (Gen 2:7), moved him into paradise (2:8, 15), and gave him commands (2:16–17), the keeping of which would have resulted in his lasting life (2:17; cf. 3:24). Then, upon the man’s disobedience (3:6), God justly exiled him from paradise, resulting his ultimate death (3:23–24; cf. 3:19). This too becomes Israel’s story: God birthed them in Egypt and the wilderness, gave them commands to keep in order to enjoy life, moved them into the promised land where they continued to rebel, and then exiled them from the land under the curse of death.

The majority of Israelites in the old covenant were not eternally saved, and the covenant they were in bore a ministry that would only multiply sin (Rom 3:20; 5:20; Gal 3:19) and lead to their death and condemnation (2 Cor 3:7, 9; cf. 2 Kgs 17:13–18; Heb 3:16–19). The law itself truly foreshadowed the substance that is Christ (Col 2:16–17). Nevertheless, elements like the law-covenant’s grounding in deliverance (Exod 19:4–6), its portrayal of penal substitution (Lev 17:11), its expression of God’s righteousness through its moral ideals (Deut 16:20) served as means of grace only for a remnant few. As Paul elsewhere asserts,

Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.” And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.” (Rom 11:7–10; cf. Deut 29:4[3]; Isa 29:10–11)

Third, the upshot of the above observation is that the era of the Mosaic law-covenant was not one characterized by either faith or forgiveness. As for the former, Moses in the old covenant never explicitly called for faith (cf. 2 Chr 20:20), though it required it for any of its sinful members to enjoy the declaration of righteousness (cf. Gen 15:6 with 26:5). Instead what we hear is the repeated ring in various tones: “You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes.... If the person *does* them, he shall live by them” (Lev 18:5). “And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes ... that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do *all* this commandment before the LORD” (Deut 6:24–25). “The *whole* commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in a possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers” (8:1; cf. 11:32; 26:18; 28:1). We can affirm that Moses elevated Abraham’s believing (Gen 15:6) and the obedience that flowed from it (e.g., 22:16–18; 26:3–5)—even treating the patriarch as a model Israelite and covenant keeper before the law (26:3–5).²⁹ The old covenant mediator also celebrated

²⁸ I thank Brian Verrett for pushing me to develop this point.

²⁹ R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 144–45; cf. John H. Sailhamer, “The Mosaic Law and the Theology of the Pentateuch,” *WTJ* 53 (1991): 241–61.

Israel's temporary faith in both him and Yahweh through the exodus (Exod 15:31). Nevertheless, he grieved deeply his own and Israel's lack of faith in God while in the wilderness (Num 14:11; 20:12; Deut 1:32; 9:23), the results of which were tragic (cf. Heb 3:16–19). And the very faithlessness of the exodus generation continued as the dominant motif throughout the people's tenure in the promised land into the exile. Thus, we read, "The LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer.... But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God.... Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah" (2 Kgs 17:13–14, 18). And again, citing Leviticus 18:5, "And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which *if a person does them, he shall live by them*.... Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands" (Neh 9:29–30). Rather than enjoying life, Israel experienced death, due in part to their lack of faith.

Jeremiah highlights the substantial lack of saving forgiveness in the era of the Mosaic law-covenant when he contrasts the old covenant with the new and better one that would include a democratized knowledge of God only *because* "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more" (Jer 31:34). Nehemiah highlights the sustained mercy of God throughout their history in pardoning his people (Neh 9:17, 19, 27–28, 31). Nevertheless, their hearts remained cold, and the death of exile became their lot. Recognizing that life was conditioned on a perfect obedience they could not attain should have pushed them to feel guilt, confess their sin, and trust in God's provision of a substitute by which they could be atoned (Lev 5:5–6; Num 5:6–7), counted for what they were not—righteous (Isa 53:11; cf. Gen 15:6). Seeing their own inability to "be holy" (Lev 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7), to "do" the law (18:5), and to "love" neighbor (19:18), should have driven them to the God who alone sanctifies (20:8; 22:32) and pushed them to trust in the past grace of substitution (Lev 1–7) and to hope in the future grace of blessing and curse (Lev 26). The perfect obedience demanded by laws like Leviticus 18:5 would have been a God-dependent obedience, but the fact that no one could remain perfectly dependent meant that if life was to be enjoyed by any, it would only be by Yahweh declaring them right by faith when in fact they were not (cf. Gen 15:6; Isa 53:11; Rom 4:5).³⁰ The life that the law promised is ultimately secured only by Jesus's own perfect obedience, whose "one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men" (Rom 5:18). Yet the majority of the Israelite community did not live in the context of spiritual reconciliation with God; they were covenant partners outwardly but inwardly they remained rebels.

Kaiser asserts that, because "one of the ways of 'doing' the law was to recognize the imperfection of one's life and thus to make a sacrifice for the atonement of one's sins," Leviticus 18:5 "is not referring to any offer of eternal life as a reward for perfect law-keeping."³¹ In contrast, what the law demanded was complete fear, whole-hearted love, and absolute obedience in order to be declared right (Deut 6:5; 10:12–13) and to enjoy lasting life (4:1; 8:1; 16:20; 30:16). When one recognized that he failed and could not meet this demand, trusting God's substitutionary sacrifice was a means for reconciliation. But we must not lower the law's demand for total and perfect surrender, for this alone provides the very context for Jesus Christ's faultless obedience that secures "justification of life" for the many (Rom

³⁰ See Jason S. DeRouchie, "Lifting the Veil: Reading and Preaching Jesus' Bible through Christ and for Christ," SBJT 22.3 (2018): 167–77.

³¹ Kaiser, "Leviticus 18:5 and Paul," 25; cf. Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 80.

5:18–19; cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9).³² If, as I have argued, most original recipients of Moses’s words were unregenerate, a call to “do in order to live” would have resulted in nothing less than a type of legalism for the majority, as the “gracious character of the Levitical system” would be inoperative without the feeling of guilt, confession, and trust (Lev 5:5–6; Num 5:6–7).³³ Thus Paul, with an allusion to Moses’s charge in Deuteronomy 16:20, “Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue, so that you may live,” asserted: “Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but *as if it were based on works*” (Rom 9:31–32). “Christ,” therefore, “is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (10:4). His arrival signals a transition from an age of death associated with the Mosaic covenant to an age of life enjoyed by a righteousness that comes by faith.

3. Relevant Uses of Leviticus 18:5 in the Rest of the Old Testament, Early Extrabiblical Jewish Literature, and Other New Testament Texts³⁴

Before directly wrestling with Paul’s hermeneutical and theological use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12, we must account for other uses of Leviticus 18:5 in the OT, extrabiblical Jewish literature, and other NT texts. There are some very significant references that affirm the interpretation this study is proposing.

3.1. Ezekiel, an Exilic Prophet

Ezekiel was a Yahweh prophet who ministered in the midst of Judah’s Babylonian exile. His teaching graphically contrasts the failure of human “doing” in the Mosaic covenant with the divine and human “doing” of the future everlasting (new) covenant.

First, with allusions to Leviticus 18:5, he stresses that the one who “walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the LORD God” (Ezek 18:9). And again, “If a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live” (18:21–22). The prophet was convinced that those in his audience who turned from wickedness back to Yahweh with full devotion would live (18:5, 9, 13, 17, 19, 21–24, 27–28, 32; cf. Amos 5:4). And in this sense, the directives God gave his people were “right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments” (Neh 9:13; cf. Rom 2:20; 7:12), for they guided the way to life. However, the challenge was that within the old covenant framework, Yahweh simply charged his people, “Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!” (Ezek 18:31). This is similar to how Moses had commanded, “Circumcise therefore the

³² See Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 777–82.

³³ The brief quote is taken from Hamilton, whose own view equally misses the point I am making. James M. Hamilton Jr., “The One Who Does Them Shall Live by Them: Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12,” *Gospel Witness* (2005): 10.

³⁴ For more on how extra-biblical Jewish literature appropriates Leviticus 18:5, see esp. Sprinkle, *Law and Life*, 1–130; Simon J. Gathercole, “Torah, Life, and Salvation: Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and the New Testament,” in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. Craig A. Evans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 126–45.

foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn” (Deut 10:16), and to how Isaiah had urged, “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes” (Isa 1:16). What Israel needed was for the Lord to do for them what they were unable to do on their own. And this he would do, but only under a new covenant structure in a new era of restoration where he would enable what he commanded by his Spirit and in relation to a new Davidic king: “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ezek 36:26–27). And again, “I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live” (37:14; cf. 37:22–28).³⁵

Second, in Ezekiel 20 Yahweh cites Leviticus 18:5 a number of times when describing the era of the Mosaic covenant: “I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, *if a person does them, he shall live by them*.... But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, *if a person does them, he shall live by them*” (Ezek 20:11, 13).³⁶ The prophet next repeats the same indictment against the post-exodus generation (Ezek 20:21), and then he asserts, “Moreover, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them from the countries” (20:23; cf. Leviticus 26:33; Deut 4:27; 28:64). Here Ezekiel portrays the exile as the opposite of the life promised for obedience; disobedience would bring the curse of death, evidenced in the scattering of the people away from God’s presence. This is why Ezekiel stresses that the Lord “gave them statutes that were *not* good and rules by which they could *not* have life” (Ezek 20:25; cf. Gal 3:21).³⁷ That is, Yahweh’s sovereign purpose for the very good law (cf. Neh 9:13; Rom 2:20; 7:12) was to condemn Israel and by this identify the need for a better covenant and better mediator to save the world (cf. Rom 3:19–22; 2 Cor 3:7, 9). As Ezekiel’s own exilic context testified, Israel had failed to “do” and therefore experienced curse not blessing, death not life. They had become like the dried skeletons of a defeated army in a valley (Ezek 37:1); this was where the Mosaic law-covenant had brought them, bearing as it did a “ministry of death” and “ministry of condemnation” (2 Cor 3:7, 9). In Paul’s words, “The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me” (Rom 7:10).

Yet into this setting Yahweh declares, “And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ezek 36:27; cf. 11:19–20). And again, “And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live” (37:14). Out of the valley of death would come resurrection, and what was not “done” in the age of the law-covenant would now be enabled by the power of God’s presence. We, therefore, read of this resurrected people: “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes” (37:24). Sprinkle rightly notes, “What was previously held out as a conditional possibility [in the Mosaic law-covenant in general and Lev 18:5 in particular] is here fulfilled by Yahweh himself in his program of

³⁵ Moses was the first to highlight Yahweh’s new creational enablement. Countering the command in Deuteronomy 10:16, the prophet declared, “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (Deut 30:6). Similarly, as an answer to his earlier charge in Isaiah 1:16, Isaiah foretold, “And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning” (Isa 4:3–4).

³⁶ See esp. Preston M. Sprinkle, “Law and Life: Leviticus 18:5 in the Literary Framework of Ezekiel,” *JSOT* 31 (2007): 275–93.

³⁷ So too Michael B. Shepherd, *The Textual World of the Bible*, StBibLit 156 (New York: Lang, 2013), 39.

restoration.”³⁸ Thus already in the OT, there is the explicit contrast of the old covenant as a failed, human deeds-based covenant and the coming better covenant as a divine-enablement covenant, ultimately by faith (cf. Hab 2:4).³⁹

3.2. Nehemiah and Malachi, Post-Exilic Biblical Voices

As already noted, during Israel’s initial restoration from exile, Nehemiah recalled Leviticus 18:5 when pleading for mercy and when speaking of the way Yahweh pursued his people in the past: “And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which *if a person does them, he shall live by them....* Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands” (Neh 9:29–30). Rather than enjoying life by remaining loyal to God, Israel rebelled and experienced a justified death at the hands of God’s agents of covenant curse.

While not echoing Leviticus 18:5 directly, Malachi, the last of the OT prophets, spoke on Yahweh’s behalf declaring, “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel” (Mal 4:1). Thus, until the prophet like Moses arose to mediate a new covenant (Deut 18:15–18; 34:10–12), the cry for Israel remained, “You shall ... keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them” (Lev 18:5). The anticipated shift in redemptive history had not yet come, and the age of death continued.

3.3. Early Extrabiblical Jewish Texts

The Jews of the Qumran community (ca. 250 BC–AD 135) recognized that curse awaited all who failed to keep the law and that life was promised for those who obey and who are redeemed. As it states in the Damascus Document: “His righteous laws, his reliable ways. The desires of his will, which man should carry out and so have life in them” (CD 3:15–16). And again, “You have chosen our fathers; you have given to their descendants the statutes of your truth, and the judgments of your holiness, which, if humankind shall do, they shall have life; and boundaries you have made for us, and they that transgress them you have cursed; but we are your redeemed people, and the sheep of your pasture” (4Q266 f11:11–13).

Reflecting on Yahweh’s promise in Leviticus 18:5, the Psalms of Solomon (ca. 2nd–1st century BC) stresses that the “life” promised is eternal:

Faithful is the Lord to those who love him in truth, to those who endure his discipline, to those who walk in the righteousness of his ordinances, in the law which he commanded us that we might live. The devout of the Lord shall live by it forever; the orchard of the Lord, the trees of life, are his devout. Their planting is rooted forever; they shall not be pulled up all the days of heaven; for the portion and the inheritance of God is Israel. (Pss Sol. 14:1–5)

³⁸ Sprinkle, “Law and Life,” 290.

³⁹ Why did God give the majority of Israel “a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day” (Rom 11:8; cf. Deut 29:4[3]; Isa 29:10–11)? Paul answers: “God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy” (Rom 9:22–23).

Similarly, the translation of Leviticus 18:5 in Targum Onqelos, the official targum on the Pentateuch (ca. AD 35–120), is equally explicit that the “life” promised is eschatological and eternal: “And you shall keep my covenants and my legal rulings that if a person does them, he shall live in eternal life through them. I am the Lord” (Tg. Onq. Lev 18:5). Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (1st century AD) is similar but then adds at the end, “His portion shall be with the righteous” (Tg. Ps-J. Lev 18:5). This latter addition identifies that at least some Jews in Paul’s day would not have contrasted Leviticus 18:5 with the claim in Habakkuk 2:4 that “the righteous shall live by his faith.”⁴⁰

3.4. Jesus in Luke 10:28

These statements set a context for Jesus’s allusion to Leviticus 18:5 in Luke 10:25–29, where we read:

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put [Jesus] to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; *do this, and you will live.*” But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus’s response to the man’s answer makes clear that knowledge is not enough to “inherit eternal life”; one must “do this” in order to “live.” Nevertheless, for sinful humans, the quest for self-justification will always end in condemnation. We must ultimately look beyond ourselves to Jesus Christ, “the righteous,” who is “the propitiation for our sins, and ... for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1–2).

3.5. Paul in Romans 10:5

The final NT citation of Leviticus 18:5 is in Rom 10:5, where Paul is engaged in a very similar argument regarding the means for justification. Throughout 9:30–10:13 Paul continually pits “doing” and “believing” as two opposing means for enjoying righteous status, but he also identifies that for fallen humans believing is the only real option. Verses 5–8 contrast the fruitless attempt to gain righteousness “from the law” (10:5) with trusting Christ for righteousness (10:6–8), and this antithesis provides the reason why “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (10:4; cf. Phil 3:9).⁴¹ That is, the goal and end of the law is believing in Christ *because* the law-covenant required an impossible perfect obedience to enjoy righteousness and life (cf. Lev 18:5), whereas trusting Christ supplies by faith what is impossible otherwise (cf. Deut 30:11–14). Paul’s ability to contrast Moses against Moses is most likely due to the fact that Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:11–14 address two different eras in salvation-history: Leviticus 18:5 relates to the “doing” era of the Mosaic law covenant, while Deuteronomy 30:1–14 predicts the “believing” era of the new covenant.⁴²

⁴⁰ Thus, after citing Habakkuk 2:4, the pesher from Qumran reads, “This refers to all those who obey the Law among the Jews” (1QpHab 8:1).

⁴¹ Schreiner, *Romans*, 535.

⁴² Jodar does not even consider the possibility that Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:11–14 are addressing two different eras of redemptive history. Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 47 n. 19, 48, 51. Nevertheless, in contrast to contemporary English translations, the verbless clauses in Deuteronomy 30:11–14 are most naturally read as futures, continuing the *future* predictions begun in 30:1, the whole of which anticipates that what Moses is commanding “today” will have lasting relevance in the new covenant age after God overcomes

4. Textual Issues

While there is minimal variation in wording, no substantial differences exist in meaning between the Hebrew and Greek treatments of Leviticus 18:5 and Paul's citation in Galatians 3:12.⁴³ The Hebrew text reads, "You shall keep my statutes and my rules, which, the man will do them and live by them" (author's translation). In contrast, the Septuagint translates, "As for the things a person does, he shall live by them." Paul's statement and citation reads, "But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them" (Gal 3:12). Because the apostle is citing only part of the overall sentence, he changes the Septuagint's relative plural pronoun (αὐτά, "the things") to an independent pronoun (αὐτά, "them") after the participle. Also, having omitted the relative pronoun, he is forced to alter the construction, and he adds an article to the participle (ὁ ποιήσας, "the one who does"), thus making the word "man/person" unnecessary. The LXX citations of Leviticus 18:5 in Ezekiel 20:11, 13, 21 and Nehemiah 9:29 are so closely aligned to the LXX of Leviticus 18:5 that there is no reason to think Paul was citing those texts instead of Moses's words.

the curse with restoration blessing (30:2, 8, 11). Deuteronomy 30:11–14 begins with the subordinate conjunction וְ ("for, because") and provides the logical reason why the people will turn to Yahweh in the latter days (30:10). Paul is, therefore, identifying the fulfillment of this prediction being realized in Christ. On this reading, see, for example, J. Gary Millar, *Now Choose Life: Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy*, NSBT 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 94, 174–75; Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 118–21; Patrick A. Barker, *The Triumph of Grace in Deuteronomy: Faithless Israel, Faithful Yahweh in Deuteronomy* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 182–98; Steven R. Coxhead, "Deuteronomy 30:11–14 as a Prophecy of the New Covenant in Christ," *WTJ* 68 (2006): 305–20; Bryan D. Estelle, "Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 30:1–14 in Biblical Theological Development: Entitlement to Heaven Foreclosed and Proffered," in *The Law Is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*, ed. Bryan D. Estelle, J. V. Fesko, and David VanDrunen (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 127–37; DeRouchie, "From Condemnation to Righteousness," 117–18; Colin James Smothers, "In Your Mouth and in Your Heart: A Study of Deuteronomy 30:12–14 in Paul's Letter to the Romans in Canonical Context" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018). Faithful Yahweh in Deuteronomy} (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004 For a detailed alternative reading of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 and Paul's use in Rom 10:6–8, see Douglas Moo, "Paul's Reading of Deuteronomy: Law and Grace," in *For Our Good Always: Studies on the Message and Influence of Deuteronomy in Honor of Daniel I. Block*, ed. Jason S. DeRouchie, Jason Gile, and Kenneth J. Turner (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 389–412. Critiquing Moo's understanding of Paul's use of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 is beyond the scope of this essay, but the sources cited above do this effectively. It is significant that Moo admits that he "reluctantly ... must reject this option" and that my interpretation of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 "would, indeed, considerably diminish the apparent dissonance between this text and Paul's application" ("Paul's Reading of Deuteronomy," 408).

⁴³ See Silva, "Galatians," 802–3; Moo, *Galatians*, 220–21.

<i>Lev 18:5 in MT and ESV</i>	
וְשָׁמְרֵם אֶת־חֻקֵּי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּם הָאֱלֹהִים וְחַי בָּהֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה:	You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.
<i>Lev 18:5 in LXX and NETS</i>	
καὶ φυλάξεσθε πάντα τὰ προστάγματά μου καὶ πάντα τὰ κρίματά μου καὶ ποιήσετε αὐτά, ἃ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν.	And you shall keep all my ordinances and all my judgments, and you shall do them; as for the things a person does, he shall live by them; I am the Lord your God.
<i>Gal 3:12 in NA²⁸ and ESV</i>	
ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.	But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”
<i>Ezek 20:11, 13, 21 in LXX and NETS</i>	
καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτοῖς τὰ προστάγματά μου καὶ τὰ δικαιώματά μου ἐγνώρισα αὐτοῖς, ὅσα ποιήσει αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.... καὶ οὐκ ἐπορεύθησαν καὶ τὰ δικαιώματά μου ἀπώσαντο, ἃ ποιήσει αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.... ἐν τοῖς προστάγμασί μου οὐκ ἐπορεύθησαν, καὶ τὰ δικαιώματά μου οὐκ ἐφυλάξαντο τοῦ ποιεῖν αὐτά, ἃ ποιήσει ἄνθρωπος καὶ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.	And I gave them my ordinances, and I made known to them my statutes, those that a person shall perform, and by them he shall live.... And they did not walk, and they rejected my statutes, those that a person shall perform and shall live by them.... They did not walk by my ordinances, and they did not keep my statutes so as to perform them, that a person shall perform and live by them.
<i>Neh 9:29 in LXX and NETS</i>	
καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσαν, ἀλλὰ ἐν ταῖς ἐντολαῖς σου καὶ ἐν τοῖς κρίμασί σου ἡμάρτοσαν, ἃ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.	And they did not listen but sinned against your commandments and judgments by the doing of which a person shall live by them.

Figure 2. Lev 18:5 Textual Comparison

5. Paul's Textual and Hermeneutical Warrant for Using Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12

In Galatians 3:12 Paul appears to employ Leviticus 18:5 in order to contrast the pattern for enjoying life and justification that the Mosaic law-covenant set forth from the pattern that must characterize all who are in Christ in the new covenant era.⁴⁴ More specifically, in Galatians 3:11–12 Paul is noting how the respective periods in salvation history testify to two different possible ways to enjoy right standing before God: “doing leads to life” (Lev 18:5) vs. “believing leads to life” (Hab 2:4).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ This is an example of an analogical use of Scripture, which Beale explains this way: “A NT writer will take something from the OT and compare it to something in the new covenant age in order to illustrate or draw an analogy (or perhaps a contrast) between the two.” Beale, *Handbook on the NT Use of the OT*, 67.

⁴⁵ For sound arguments that Habakkuk 2:4 intentionally echoes Genesis 15:6 (“And [Abram] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness”) and that the Hebrew noun **הֵימוּנָא** (= Greek πίστις) in Habakkuk 2:4 is indeed best rendered “faith” rather than “faithfulness” with an allusion back to the verb “believe”

The “doing” that the law in Leviticus 18:5 called for was a complete conformity to God’s definition of right order: “Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue, that you may live” (Deut 16:20; cf. Rom 9:30–31). However, “No one is justified before God by the law” because no person born in Adam was able to keep it and because the Mosaic law itself could only declare what ought to happen; it could not make it happen, weakened as it was by human sinfulness (Rom 8:3; Gal 3:10, 21). Thus, when God gave his holy law to sinful people without overcoming their resistance (Deut 29:4[3]), the law brought death and condemned (Rom 7:10; 11:7–10; 2 Cor 3:7, 9). In Paul’s day, for the Jews to require “works of law” as the means of justification was to go back to a death-dealing era in salvation history—an era that Christ’s own curse-bearing, perfect obedience alone overcame and destroyed (Gal 3:13–14).⁴⁶

When Paul asserts, “But the law is not of faith” (ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, Gal 3:12), he is not denying that there was a remnant of believers in the old covenant (see Rom 4:6; 11:7), nor is he denying that the charge to keep *all* the commandments should have pushed people out of self-reliance and works unto righteousness to believe in Yahweh like Abraham believed (Gen 15:6; cf. 2 Chr 20:20). The law rightly appropriated should have driven people to look outside themselves and to trust God’s provision of a substitute by which they could be atoned and empowered to pursue holiness. But this did not happen, at least for most. When Paul claimed that “the law is not of faith,” he likely meant that the age of the law-covenant was not marked by belief in God (in the majority) and thus resulted in curse climaxing in death—a death Christ ultimately bears on behalf of his elect.⁴⁷ As a whole, the Israelite community was faithless in the days of Moses after the exodus (Num 14:11; 20:12; Deut 1:32; 9:23), and the majority continued to not believe in Yahweh through their tenure in the land, thus bringing their destruction (2 Kgs 17:14, 18; cf. Deut 31:27, 29).

Paul is reading Leviticus 18:5 in light of the evident death-dealing nature of the Mosaic law-covenant. God’s *revealed will* within his holy law was that people should exalt him through lives of surrender and by this enjoy the blessings that come with delighting in his presence (“do in order to live”). Nevertheless, these revealed purposes (i.e., what Israel *ought* to have done) stood in contrast to the Lord’s more *sovereign purposes* for the law, namely, to multiply Israel’s sin (Rom 3:20; 5:20; Gal 3:19) so as to condemn them (2 Cor 3:9), and by this to point them and the rest of the world to Christ as the only means for right standing with God (Rom 10:4; cf. 3:19–22). Jesus alone fulfills the demands of the law

(Hiphil of נָמַן) in Habakkuk 1:5, see Michael B. Shepherd, *The Text in the Middle*, StBibLit 162 (New York: Lang, 2014), 32–36; E. Ray Clendenen, “Salvation by Faith or by Faithfulness in the Book of Habakkuk?,” *BBR* 24 (2014): 505–13; cf. Silva, “Galatians,” 802.

⁴⁶ Westerholm rightly understands that “his opponents’ error is their clinging to this path which, indeed announced by Moses, has proven unable to lead to righteousness ... a path which, moreover, has now and forever been set aside.” Stephen Westerholm, “Law, Grace, and the ‘Soteriology’ of Judaism,” in *Law in Religious Communities in the Roman Period: The Debate over Torah and Nomos in Post-Biblical Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Peter Richardson and Stephen Westerholm (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991), 69. Similarly, Rosner writes, “For Paul, the essence of the law as law-covenant or legal code is its call for something to be done in order to find life, and this path has failed, due to the universal sinfulness of humanity, and instead the law has led to death.” Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, NTBT 31 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 72.

⁴⁷ This view fits Paul’s redemptive-historical argument and, to me, seems much more likely than Jodar’s proposal that Paul in Galatians 3:12 uses Leviticus 18:5 “in a metonymical fashion for expressing the thought ‘faith is from/of the law,’ probably meaning that faith comes from the law.” Jodar, “Leviticus 18:5 and the Law’s Call to Faith,” 55. Jodar sees continuity where Paul sees contrasts between the Mosaic law’s temporary enslaving guardianship and the freedom gained by faith in Christ (Gal 3:23–5:1).

and by this secures the promised justification unto life for all who believe (Rom 5:18; 8:4). Leviticus 18:5 falls within the redemptive-historical context of death (i.e., imperfect human doing apart from imputed righteousness brings destruction), and therefore it stands in contrast with the life of faith. Blessing and curse, life and death were the options before the community (Deut 11:26–28; 30:15–20).

In light of the above, while I affirm that Paul in Galatians 3:12 is speaking from a redemptive-historical perspective, I disagree with Hamilton's view that the Mosaic era *was* one of faith but now is not considered so because of the coming of Christ.⁴⁸ Instead, Paul is indeed identifying that, because God gave the Mosaic law-covenant to a hard-hearted people, his call to “do this and live” became an impossible and, therefore, legalistic way of gaining justification. The inability to keep the law perfectly should have pushed the Israelites to recognize Christ as “the end of the law for righteousness” (Rom 10:4). It should have moved them to join Abraham in hoping in the coming offspring (Gen 15:1–6; 22:17–18; cf. John 8:56; Rom 4:18–25) and to see the tabernacle, priests, and substitutionary animal sacrifices as mere pointers (Exod 25:9; Zech 3:8–9; Heb 9:8–10; 10:1–10) to God's future saving provision through his suffering servant, who would triumph through tribulation (Isa 50:8–9; 53:11; cf. Gen 3:15; Zech 13:7–9). But instead, rather than attaining righteous status by faith (like many Gentiles in Paul's day were), Israel pursued righteousness not “by faith, but as if it were based on works,” thus incurring shame (9:32; cf. 2:26–29; 9:30–33). The sacrifices in the old covenant provided a temporary and insufficient provision for sinners who believed, and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ nullifies the need for any more sacrifices (Heb 9:11–12, 25–28; 10:10, 14–18).⁴⁹ Nevertheless, when Paul asserts in Galatians 5:3 that “I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law,” he is not asserting that this is only the case now that Christ has nullified the old covenant sacrifices.⁵⁰ No, he is asserting that the old covenant has *always* been associated with the need to keep the whole law (cf. Gal 2:21), and one must either trust in Jesus who alone fulfilled the law completely or be condemned in light of human inability and the historical failure of the Mosaic law-covenant.

Similar to my reading of Leviticus 18:5 and to the reception of this text in Ezekiel 20 (see above), Moses consistently urges Israel throughout Deuteronomy “do this so that you may live” (e.g., Deut 4:1; 5:33; 8:1; 11:8–9; 16:20; 22:7; 30:19; 31:13; cf. Rom 7:10). What is striking is that the only place in the book where he speaks differently is when predicting the new covenant era. There we read, “The LORD

⁴⁸ Hamilton, “The One Who Does Them Shall Live By Them,” 10–12. Hamilton writes, “Before faith came’ Leviticus 18:5 meant that the one who *by faith* kept the Mosaic Covenant would live. Now that ‘faith has come,’ the Mosaic covenant is no longer in force, it has served its redemptive-historical purpose, with the result that anyone who seeks to live by it must keep all of its regulations flawlessly since its sacrifices are now abolished” (cf. Gal 5:3). Hamilton, “The One Who Does Them Shall Live By Them,” 12. For similar interpretations to Hamilton, see Meyer, *End of the Law*, 155–57; Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 62–63.

⁴⁹ Carson writes, “It is not at all clear that Paul would have admitted to any life-giving or salvific capacity in the Mosaic covenant: the law-covenant had quite different functions in the stream of redemptive history (Gal. 3). By the same token, judging by such passages as 1 Corinthians 5:7; 11:23–25; Romans 3:24–25; 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Paul would not have admitted to the atoning efficacy of the old covenant's sacrifices: sin's solution is the work of Christ. In other words, the center of gravity in Paul's thought is Christ, and the antecedent revelation points decisively to him and all that he brings.” D. A. Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and New,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 2:434.

⁵⁰ Against Hamilton, “The One Who Does Them Shall Live By Them,” 12; cf. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law*, 62.

will circumcise your heart ... to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul *for the sake of your life*" (Deut 30:6, author's translation). Paul saw this text being fulfilled in the church age (Rom 2:29; cf. Phil 3:3), and it is in this era alone that God would work in his people "for the sake of their life," securing for them what they could not secure on their own.

6. Paul's Theological and Rhetorical Use of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12

When Paul cites Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12, he is identifying how the Mosaic law-covenant, characterized as it was by "works of law" and not believing, brought death to all and that, therefore, "the law is not of faith." The call to "do in order to live" set a context for Christ's complete, whole-life obedience, even to the point of death (Rom 5:18–19; Phil 2:8), but that same call should have pushed sinful people to turn away from "doing" as a means to righteousness and life (see Lev 18:5; Deut 6:25; 16:20) and to start "believing" in the provision of right standing and empowerment God supplied through substitutionary atonement (see Rom 9:30–31; cf. 10:4). The Mosaic law-covenant bore a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Cor 3:7, 9), characterized as it was by a hard-hearted, faithless people pursuing righteousness apart from faith. All those in Christ must turn away from "works of law" to faith in Christ, because "it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law" (Gal 3:11; cf. 2:16).

7. Summary

In order to support his claim in Galatians 3:11 that "no one is justified before God by the law," Paul contrasts his citation of Habakkuk 2:4 ("the righteous shall live by faith") with his claim in Galatians 3:12 that includes his quotation of Leviticus 18:5: "But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does them shall live by them.'" Far from Jodar's assertion that Paul has "moved on in his argument" and is "no longer proving that those who rely on the works of the law are cursed,"⁵¹ Paul's point is that the era of the Mosaic law-covenant was, as a whole, characterized by faithlessness among the majority and has now been superseded in Christ by an era of faith. And the failure to "abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them" resulted in "a curse" (Gal 3:10). Therefore, redemptive history has proven that justification comes only by faith in Christ, whose perfect obedience climaxing in the curse-bearing cross-event secured life and righteousness for all who believe, "so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles" (3:13–14).

Paul's understanding of the redemptive-historical contrast between the age of imprisonment under law and the age of freedom through faith in Jesus is what drives his entire argument in Galatians 3 (see esp. Gal 3:23–26). For Paul, to elevate the Mosaic law is to minimize the significance of the person and work of Christ. Attempts like the recent one by Jodar to see continuity where there is contrast fail to account enough for Paul's argument and for the way he exalts Christ as the one whose first coming decisively transforms redemptive-history.⁵²

⁵¹ Jodar, "Leviticus 18:5 and the Law's Call to Faith," 52.

⁵² *Author's Note:* I thank my doctoral students Nicholas Majors, Brian Verrett, and Beau Landers for carefully reading through this manuscript and offering valuable suggestions with respect to both copyediting and content. The whole is better due to their help.