

# Today's Debates on How to Read St. Paul

Romans 3:21-31

21 Nuni. de. cwri.j no,mou dikaiosu,nh qeou/pefane,rwtai  
marturoume,nh u`po. tou/ no,mou kai. tw/n profhtw/n( 22  
dikaiosu,nh de. qeou/ dia. pi,stewj vIhsou/ Cristou/ eivj  
pa,ntaj tou.j pisteu,ontaj) ouv ga,r evstin diastolh,( 23  
pa,ntej ga,r h[marton kai. u`sterountai th/j do,xhj tou/ qeou/  
24 dikaiau,menoi dwrea.n th/| auvtou/ ca,riti dia. th/j  
avpolutrw,sewj th/j evn Cristw/| vIhsou/\ 25 o[n proe,qeto o`  
qeo.j i`lasth,rion dia. th/j pi,stewj evn tw/| auvtou/ ai[mati  
eivj e;ndeixin th/j dikaiosu,nhj auvtou/ dia. th.n pa,resin tw/n  
progegono,twna`marthmatwn 26 evn th/| avnoch/| tou/ qeou/(  
pro. j th.n e;ndeixin th/j dikaiosu,nhj auvtou/ evn tw/| nu/n  
kairw/|( eivj to. ei=nai auvto.n di,kaion kai dikaiau/nta to.n  
evk pi,stewj vIhsou/) 27 Pou/ ou=n h` kau,xhsij\* evxeklei,sqh)  
dia. poi.ou no,mou\* tw/n e;rgwn\* ouvci,( avlla. dia. no,mou  
pi,stewj) 28 logizo,meqa ga.r dikaiau/sqai pi,stei a;nqrwpon  
cwrij e;rgwn no,mou) 29 h' vIoudai,wn o` qeo.j mo,non\* ouvci.  
kai evqnw/n\* nai. kai. evqnw/n( 30 ei;per ei-j o" qeo.j o[j  
dikaiw,sei peritomh.n evk pi,stewj kai. avkrobusti,an dia. th/j  
pi,stewj) 31 no,mon ou=n katargou/men dia. th/j pi,stewj\* mh.  
ge,noito\ avlla. no,mon i`sta,nomen)

Romans 3:21-31 (RSV)

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart  
from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it,  
22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for  
all who believe. For there is no distinction; 23 since all have  
sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 they are justified  
by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in

Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; 26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus. 27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. 28 For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

*The brief annotated bibliography below is obviously far from complete. Careful students of Paul who wish to engage the contemporary debate thoroughly will find this list merely to be a starting point. Reading the works below would provide a helpful primer on the major issues.*

Harink, Douglas. *Paul among the Postliberals*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003.

Of particular interest for the present context is Harink's first chapter, "Justification: Beyond Protestantism," wherein he chronicles the demise of the traditional Protestant reading of Paul in the latter decades of the 20th century, including such provocative subtitles as "'Faith in Jesus Christ': History of a Bad Translation" and "The Gospel without Justification by Faith: Paul's Call." Harink is a theologian by training more than an exegete, but his summary of the relevant research is helpful.

Hays, Richard. *The Faith of Jesus Christ: the Narrative*

*Substructure of Gal 3:1-4:11*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

The second edition of Hays's dissertation includes his forceful original work as well as appendices aimed specifically at expanding the debate about the translation of Paul's *pi,stij Cristou*/ phrases. The body of Hays's work is really much broader than an argument about the translation of those phrases, but his argument that Paul's letter to the Galatians rests on a story of Jesus' faithfulness unto cruciform death and alludes to that story by means of key phrases is consistent with the translation that he calls not just the "subjective genitive" interpretation but the Christological interpretation.

Sanders, E. P. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977.

In the first and much larger half of this pioneering work, Sanders lays out the reconstruction of 2nd Temple Judaism that caused such an important shift in subsequent Pauline scholarship, including his famous description of Jewish religion as "covenantal nomism." Sanders does *not* think that Paul was also a covenantal nomist. Sanders describes Paul's religion as "eschatological participationism."

Westerholm, Stephen. *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998

Westerholm engages the positions of the so-called new perspective and responds in ways that have been described as neo-Lutheran. See also now Westerholm's more recent *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

Wright, N. T. *Paul, in Fresh Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress,

2005.

This is Wright's most current and thorough treatment of Paul to date, pending the further volume in his *Christian Origins and the Question of God* series. Wright describes Paul's theology in terms of Christological redefinitions of the central Jewish doctrines of monotheism, election, and eschatology. Wright concludes with a short but important section relating his view of Jesus and Paul and explaining their coherence, against the frequent critical objections that Paul founded a new religion having only nominal connections with Jesus' own mission. See also Wright's *Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

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