

THE DIVINE REMEDY IN RELATION TO THE LAW

3:21–4:25

If Romans 1:18–3:20 drew a picture of the human condition, 3:21–4:25 depicts the divine remedy and speaks about its relation to the law. The universal sinfulness of humans, Jew and Gentile alike, is dealt with by the righteousness of God. This divine remedy is apart from law but fulfills the law. [*Nomos in Paul's Letters*] This section, 3:21–4:25, is organized around a “principle-example” pattern. Romans 3:21–31 states the principle; 4:1–25 provides the example. An outline of the section offers assistance in reading.

I. The Principle (3:21–31)

A. The righteousness of God apart from law (3:21–26)

B. The implications of the righteousness apart from law (3:27–31)

1. Opponent (v. 27a) // Paul (v. 27b)
2. Opponent (v. 27cd) // Paul (vv. 27e–29a)
3. Opponent (v. 29b) // Paul (v. 30)
4. Opponent (v. 31a) // Paul (v. 31b)

II. The Example (4:1–25)

A. The Righteousness of Abraham was a gift through faith (4:1–12)

Introduction: Opponent (vv. 1–2a) // Paul (vv. 2b–3)

1. Abraham's righteousness was a gift (vv. 4–5)
2. Abraham's righteousness consisted of forgiveness (vv. 6–8)
3. Abraham's righteousness came while he was a Gentile/uncircumcised (vv. 9–12)

B. The Promise to Abraham was from grace through faith (4:13–25)

1. The promise rests on grace (vv. 14–17a)

Nomos in Paul's Letters

ΑΩ Paul used the Greek word *nomos* in two very different ways. On the one hand, the dominant use of the term is for the Torah (= the Jewish Scriptures/the Old Testament).

- the whole Torah—Rom 3:19
- some part of the Torah
 - the Pentateuch—Rom 3:21b
 - the Decalogue—Rom 13:8–10
 - a particular law—Rom 7:2–3; 7:7
 - the essence of the Torah—Rom 8:4
- Torah as shorthand for the Mosaic covenant of obligation—Gal 3:21; Rom 3:21a; 10:4

On the other hand, Paul sometimes used *nomos* to mean something like “principle,” “claim,” or “purpose.” (Cf. Rom 3:27; 7:23,25; 8:2) Only the context can determine which meaning is appropriate in each case.