

The New Perspective on Paul: An Example

What does this verse mean?

For we hold that a person is justified by faith, apart from works prescribed by the law. (Rom. 3:28)

Traditional Interpretation

People are put right with God by trusting in what God has graciously done through Jesus Christ rather than by doing things that would earn God's favor. In this view, "works prescribed by the law" = meritorious acts of human achievement (keeping commandments, performing good works, etc.).

New Perspective

People are put right with God by trusting in what God has graciously done through Jesus Christ rather than by being faithful to the covenant that God made with Israel. In this view, "works prescribed by the law" = covenant markers that identify Jews as belonging to God's chosen nation (circumcision, Sabbath observance, dietary restrictions, etc.).