

Romans 10:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,
That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

Analysis

For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them—Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5, which establishes the law's principle: do and live. *Poieō* (ποιέω, "do, perform, practice") combined with *zaō* (ζάω, "live") presents perfect obedience as the condition for life. The law's standard is absolute—"the man which doeth" must do all the law without exception (Gal 3:10; James 2:10). This is "the righteousness which is of the law" (hē ek tou nomou dikaiosynē, ή ἐκ τοῦ νόμου δικαιοσύνη)—a hypothetical righteousness Israel pursued but could never attain.

Paul is not denigrating the law—he affirms its holiness (Rom 7:12). The problem is human inability, not divine requirement. The law's "do this and live" principle remains valid but unachievable post-fall. Christ alone fulfilled this condition (Matt 5:17-18), keeping every jot and tittle. In union with Christ, believers receive His law-keeping righteousness while the law's curse falls on Him (Gal 3:13). The law's purpose was never to save but to reveal sin and drive us to Christ (Gal 3:19-24).

Historical Context

Rabbinic interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 emphasized doing the commandments as the path to life—both temporal blessings in the land and eternal life in the world to come. Second Temple Jewish texts like 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch (both c. AD 100) wrestle with the apparent impossibility of perfect law-keeping, yet maintain works-

righteousness. Paul's radical gospel reinterpretation—that the law's "do this and live" is fulfilled only in Christ—inverts the entire system.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why must the law's standard remain uncompromised and absolute for the gospel to make sense?
2. How does Christ's perfect law-keeping (active obedience) complement His sin-bearing (passive obedience) in your salvation?
3. In what areas are you most tempted to believe "do this and live" rather than "believe and live"?

Interlinear Text

Μωσῆς	γὰρ	γράφει	ό	δικαιοσύνην	ό	ἐκ	ό
Moses	For	describeth	which	the righteousness	which	is of	which
G3475	G1063	G1125	G3588	G1343	G3588	G1537	G3588
νόμου	ὅτι	ό	ποιήσας	αὐτοῖς	ἄνθρωπος	ζήσεται	ἐν
the law	That	which	which doeth	them	the man	shall live	by
G3551	G3754	G3588	G4160	G846	G444	G2198	G1722
αὐτοῖς							
them							
G846							

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 18:5 (Parallel theme): Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.

Nehemiah 9:29 (Word): And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.

Ezekiel 20:13 (Parallel theme): But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.

Ezekiel 20:21 (Parallel theme): Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness.

Ezekiel 20:11 (Parallel theme): And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them.

Galatians 3:12 (Word): And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Romans 7:10 (Word): And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.