

LUKE'S READING OF PAULINE JUSTIFICATION AND TORAH
IN ACTS 13

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Acts 13.16-41 relates Paul's sermon in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, which is Paul's first and longest speech in the book of Acts. At the climax of this sermon, Paul makes the following statement (Acts 13:38-39):

γνωστὸν οὖν ἔστω ὑμῖν, ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, ὅτι διὰ τούτου ὑμῖν ἄφεσις
ἁμαρτιῶν καταγγέλλεται, [καὶ] ἀπὸ πάντων ὧν οὐκ ἠδυνήθητε ἐν νόμῳ
Μωϋσέως δικαιωθῆναι, ἐν τούτῳ πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων δικαιούται.

Therefore, let it be known to you, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and in this man everyone who believes is justified from everything from which you could not be justified in the law of Moses.¹

Readers familiar with the Pauline epistles may detect in these verses a decidedly Pauline flair. References to justification, faith and the insufficiency of

1. All English translations of biblical texts are my own. The Greek text is that of NA²⁸. The most significant textual variants in these verses occur in the Western text, which contains several expansions (rendered in italics): 'Therefore, let it be known to you, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, *and repentance* from everything from which you could not be justified in the law of Moses. In this man, *therefore*, everyone who believes is justified *in the sight of God*.' Also, B (original reading) has διὰ τοῦτο ('for this reason') instead of διὰ τούτου ('through this [man]'). For a discussion of these variants, see Josep Rius-Camps and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition—Acts 13.1–18.23* (4 vols.; LNTS, 365; London: T. & T. Clark, 2004–2009), III, pp. 78-79, 102.

the law all resemble the language of the epistles. One gets the sense that the author of Acts is trying to present an authentic Paul here. Closer examination, however, reveals a number of potential discrepancies. Although these verses seem to mimic important Pauline catchphrases, they do so in a way that is rather uncharacteristic of Paul (discussed below). As S.G. Wilson puts it, 'It has long been recognized that while these words echo Pauline language they do not express Pauline thought with any precision.'² This raises the question of whether the Paul of Acts bears any real resemblance to the Paul of the epistles.

Another issue for interpreting these verses is how we should understand their relationship within the broader context of Acts. First, what is the relationship between these verses and the rest of Paul's sermon in Acts 13? While these verses ostensibly form the climax of Paul's speech, their connection with the rest of the speech is not obvious. Are they merely a token slogan artificially tacked onto the end of the sermon, or is there a more integral connection? Secondly, what do they tell us about Luke's theology of Torah? On one level, these verses appear to criticize or at least marginalize the law. How should we reconcile this with the explicit affirmations of Torah observance that occur throughout Luke-Acts, particularly in connection with Paul himself?

In sum, there are two primary questions to address in these verses: (1) how do they relate to the language and theology of the Pauline epistles? and (2) how do they relate to the context in which Luke places them—both the immediate context and the theological context of the book of Acts? One of the issues at stake in these questions is the degree to which Luke was successful in incorporating the 'real' Paul into his literary work. Do these verses represent a shoddy imitation of Paul arbitrarily placed in Paul's mouth despite their incongruency with the surrounding context? Or is it possible that Luke uses authentic Pauline thought, albeit modified slightly to suit his purposes, in a way that is both intentional and skillful?

In this article, I wish to argue for the latter option. I propose that these verses represent an early reception of Paul that is compatible with the Pauline epistles but that nonetheless serves Luke's purposes in Acts. To support this proposal, I wish to examine the language and message of our passage vis-à-

2. S.G. Wilson, *Luke and the Law* (SNTSMS, 50; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 59.

vis the Pauline epistles, noting both the similarities and differences. Next, I will comment on the relationship of these verses to the rest of Paul's sermon in Acts 13. Finally, I wish to explore how the statement about the law in these verses relates to Luke's theology of Torah more broadly in Luke–Acts. I hope to demonstrate that Luke uses these verses to advance his own reading of Paul and his legacy.

Luke's Use of Paul in Acts 13.38-39

There is considerable debate over how well Luke's portrait of Paul in Acts matches the historical Paul as we know him from the epistles. Philipp Vielhauer's influential essay, 'On the "Paulinism" of Acts', is a classic expression of the view that the Lukan Paul is irreconcilably at odds with the epistolary Paul.³ While this position has held considerable sway, a number of scholars have critiqued Vielhauer's position and argued that the difference between the two Pauls is not so great.⁴ Much of the debate centres on how

3. Philipp Vielhauer, 'On the "Paulinism" of Acts', in Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (eds.), *Studies in Luke–Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), pp. 33-50. Also influential in this regard has been Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 112-16. Critical scholarship in general has long doubted the historicity of Luke's portrait of Paul. For a summary (and critique) of this trend, see James H. Charlesworth, 'Why Should Experts Ignore Acts in Pauline Research?', in Isaac W. Oliver and Gabriele Boccaccini (eds.), *The Early Reception of Paul the Second Temple Jew: Text, Narrative and Reception History* (Library of Second Temple Studies, 92; London: T. & T. Clark, 2019).

4. Peder Borgen, 'From Paul to Luke: Observations toward Clarification of the Theology of Luke–Acts', *CBQ* 31 (1969), pp. 168-82; F.F. Bruce, 'Is the Paul of Acts the Real Paul?', *BJRL* 58 (1976), pp. 282-305; Jacob Jervell, 'Paul in the Acts of the Apostles: Tradition, History, Theology', in Jacob Kremer (ed.), *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie* (BETL, 48; Gembloux: Duculot, 1979), pp. 297-306; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB, 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), pp. 145-47; Stanley E. Porter, *Paul in Acts* (LPS; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), pp. 187-206; *idem*, 'Was Paulinism a Thing When Luke–Acts Was Written?', in Daniel Marguerat (ed.), *Reception of Paulinism in Acts: Réception du Paulinisme dans les Actes des apôtres* (BETL, 229; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), pp. 1-13; Michael B. Thompson, 'Paul in the Book of Acts: Differences and Distance', *ExpTim* 122 (2011), pp. 425-36; Richard B. Hays, 'The Paulinism of Acts, Intertextu-

we conceptualize Paul's view of Torah. For example, Vielhauer assumes that Paul's letters proclaim freedom from the Jewish law through Christ, while 'Acts portrays the Gentile missionary Paul as a Jewish Christian who is utterly loyal to the law.'⁵ Whether or not Vielhauer's interpretation of the epistles is accurate is a heated subject within Pauline studies and beyond the scope of this article.⁶ What is undeniable, however, is that Luke's portrait of Paul differs drastically from the way he has been received by most interpreters in subsequent history. I would like to propose that this is not because Luke's knowledge of Paul was insufficient but because he interpreted Paul's message quite differently from most later interpreters.

Obviously, I cannot defend this proposal at length here. Instead, I wish to determine whether Acts 13.38-39 is compatible with this approach. Do these verses evince genuine knowledge of the real Paul, or are they antithetical to what we know about Paul from the epistles? Of course, most scholars assume that Luke had no knowledge of Paul's epistles, although I think there is reason to question that consensus.⁷ Nonetheless, does our passage offer a portrait of

ally Reconsidered', in David P. Moessner et al. (eds.), *Paul and the Heritage of Israel: Paul's Claim upon Israel's Legacy in Luke and Acts in the Light of the Pauline Letters* (Luke the Interpreter of Israel, 2; London: T. & T. Clark, 2012), pp. 35-48; Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012-2015), I, pp. 250-57.

5. Vielhauer, 'On the "Paulinism" of Acts', p. 38.

6. Scholars of a 'Paul within Judaism' persuasion would contest Vielhauer's interpretation on this issue. See, e.g., Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (eds.), *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); Mark D. Nanos, *Reading Paul within Judaism* (Collected Essays of Mark D. Nanos, 1; Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).

7. Others who question that consensus include Morton S. Enslin, "'Luke" and Paul', *JAOS* 58 (1938), pp. 81-91; *idem*, 'Once Again, Luke and Paul', *ZNW* 61 (1970), pp. 253-71; William O. Walker Jr, 'Acts and the Pauline Corpus Reconsidered', *JSNT* 7 (1985), pp. 3-23; *idem*, 'Acts and the Pauline Corpus Revisited: Peter's Speech at the Jerusalem Conference', in Richard P. Thompson and Thomas E. Phillips (eds.), *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), pp. 77-86; Michael D. Goulder, 'Did

Paul that is compatible with Paul's letters? In what follows, I will interact with the points raised by Vielhauer and others regarding the alleged incongruity between our passage and the Pauline epistles.

At first glance, we can say that these verses certainly contain elements that sound distinctly Pauline. The most obvious of these is the verb *δικαίωω*, 'to justify'. In his letters, Paul frequently uses 'justification' as a near synonym of 'salvation'.⁸ Luke, however, does not. In fact, our passage is the only place in Luke–Acts where Luke uses *δικαίωω* in a clearly soteriological sense,⁹ and it is placed conspicuously in the mouth of Paul. Likewise, the way these verses point to the necessity of belief/faith and the insufficiency of the law certainly resembles statements from the epistles.¹⁰ These elements suggest that Luke is drawing on genuine Pauline teaching as a source for these verses.

At the same time, however, there are elements of these verses that are distinctly Lukan. First, the opening phrase, 'let it be known to you' (*γνωστὸν ... ἔστω ὑμῖν*) is found three other times in Acts (Acts 2.14; 4.10; 28.28) but nowhere in the epistles. Secondly and similarly, the phrase 'law of Moses' (*νόμος Μωϋσέως*) hardly occurs in the Pauline corpus but is found frequently

Luke Know Any of the Pauline Letters?', *PRSt* 13 (1986), pp. 97-112; Anthony J. Blasi, *Making Charisma: The Social Construction of Paul's Public Image* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1991), pp. 39-73; Heikki Leppä, *Luke's Critical Use of Galatians* (Vantaa, Finland: Dark Oy, 2002); Marianne Palmer Bonz, 'Luke's Revision of Paul's Reflections in Romans 9–11', in David H. Warren, Ann Graham Brock and David W. Pao (eds.), *Early Christian Voices: In Texts, Traditions, and Symbols. Essays in Honor of François Bovon* (BIS, 66; Boston: Brill Academic, 2003), pp. 143-51; Ryan S. Schellenberg, 'The First Pauline Chronologist? Paul's Itinerary in the Letters and in Acts', *JBL* 134 (2015), pp. 193-213.

8. E.g. Rom. 3.24, 28; 4.25; 5.1, 18; 8.30; 1 Cor. 6.11; Gal. 2.16; 3.8; Tit. 3.7.

9. The only other passage that comes close is in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Lk. 18.14. Note that some view this parable as expressing a genuine (even Pauline) conception of justification by grace. See F.F. Bruce, 'Justification by Faith in the Non-Pauline Writings of the New Testament', *EvQ* 24 (1952), pp. 66-77 (66-69). This parable, however, is more concerned with repentance and humility than it is with the mechanics of salvation.

10. E.g. Rom. 3.20-21, 28; 4.5, 13; 5.1; 8.3; 9.31-32; 10.4; Gal. 2.16, 21; 3.11, 21-25; 5.4; Phil. 3.9. Cf. Eph. 2.8-9.

in Luke–Acts.¹¹ Of course, neither of these phrases contradicts Pauline thought, but they demonstrate that Luke played an active role in shaping the language of this speech. Thirdly and more significantly, the language of ‘forgiveness of sins’ (ἄφεσις τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν) is much more Lukan than Pauline. This phrase is found eight times in Luke–Acts¹² and constitutes an important soteriological term for Luke. In contrast, the term ‘forgiveness’ (ἄφεσις) is absent from the seven undisputed letters of Paul, and it occurs only twice in the disputed letters (Eph. 1.7 and Col. 1.14).¹³ All this to say, our passage frames Paul’s message of justification in terms that Luke favours. For some scholars, this suggests that Acts 13 portrays a decidedly Lukan rather than a Pauline soteriology.¹⁴

There are a few observations to make about this, however. To start, just because Paul never uses the phrase does not mean he would oppose the concept. In fact, the concept of forgiveness of sins *does* appear in Paul’s epistles, even if the exact phrase ‘forgiveness of sins’ is rare; what is more, Paul explicitly connects the concept of forgiveness with justification (Rom. 4.6-8; cf. also Eph. 4.32; Col. 2.13; 3.13). Forgiveness, after all, is a logical corollary

11. Paul uses a similar phrase, ἐν γὰρ τῷ Μωϋσέως νόμῳ, only once in 1 Cor. 9.9. The phrase νόμος Μωϋσέως occurs in Lk. 2.22; 24.44; Acts 13.38; 15.5; 28.23; elsewhere in the New Testament only in Jn 7.23; Heb. 10.28.

12. Lk. 1.77; 3.3; 24.47; Acts 2.38; 5.31; 10.43; 13.38; 26.18.

13. Col. 1.14 uses the same phrase as Luke’s (ἄφεσις τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν), while Eph. 1.7 uses the synonymous phrase ἄφεσις τῶν παραπτωμάτων (‘forgiveness of trespasses’).

14. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, ‘Pauline Justification as Presented by Luke in Acts 13’, in Rekha M. Chennattu and Mary L. Coloe (eds.), *Transcending Boundaries—Contemporary Readings of the New Testament: Essays in Honor of Francis J. Moloney* (Rome: LAS, 2005), pp. 249-63 (257-58). In fact, many scholars insist that Luke has failed truly to grasp Pauline theology in our passage. See, e.g., Vielhauer, ‘On the “Paulinism” of Acts’, pp. 41-42; W.H. Bates, ‘A Note on Acts, 13:39’, in Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Evangelica: Papers Presented to the Fourth International Congress on New Testament Studies Held at Oxford, 1969*. Vol. VI (TU, 112; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973), pp. 8-10 (10); John Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament: Justification in the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 142; Wilson, *Luke*, p. 59; C.K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), I, pp. 650-51; James D.G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), p. 181.

of justification. Moreover, the fact that the phrase ‘forgiveness of sins’ occurs in Ephesians and Colossians hardly qualifies as proof that the phrase is un-Pauline. After all, many scholars think that Paul was in fact involved in the composition of these two letters.¹⁵ Even if we insist on ascribing these epistles to a Pauline ‘school’ or a sympathetic disciple of the apostle, this only demonstrates that those closest to Paul thought it quite conceivable to attribute this phrase to him. In short, even if Luke is inserting his own language here, there is nothing inherently un-Pauline about equating justification with the forgiveness of sins.

A fourth and even greater discrepancy between our passage and the epistles is the way Luke uses the verb ‘justify’. Although the occurrence of the word seems to echo Paul, these verses frame justification as a negative construct: ‘justified *from* (ἀπό) one’s sins’.¹⁶ Several scholars insist that this negative construction—stating that one is justified *from* something—is something ‘which Paul never does’.¹⁷ Of course, these scholars seem to have overlooked Rom. 6.7, where Paul does precisely that: he speaks of being ‘justified

15. For what it is worth, Michael J. Gorman (*Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and his Letters* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd edn, 2017], p. 109) estimates that approximately 40–50 percent of scholars contest Pauline authorship of Colossians, while 50–60 percent contest Pauline authorship of Ephesians. This means that roughly half of scholars affirm Pauline authorship for these two epistles. These figures are based on Gorman’s ‘ongoing survey of scholarly publications on the Pauline letters’ and are intended to ‘give us a rough indication of which of the disputed letters are more or less likely to be from the hand of Paul’.

16. Many English translations render the negative construction δικαιωθῆναι ἀπό as ‘set free from’, following BDAG, *s.v.* ‘δικαιόω’. The notion of being ‘made righteous (justified) from sin’ is admittedly awkward. Barrett (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts*, I, p. 650) opines: ‘The use of ἀπό suggests that δικαιωθῆναι does not have its usual Pauline forensic sense but means something more like *release from*. Forgiven, the believer is actually set free from sin, sins no more.’ Nonetheless, in order to highlight the potential parallels with other usages of δικαιόω in the New Testament, I retain the translation ‘justify’ throughout this article.

17. The words belong to Vielhauer, ‘On the “Paulinism” of Acts’, p. 41. So also Fitzmyer, ‘Pauline Justification’, p. 258; John J. Kilgallen, ‘Acts 13,38-39: Culmination of Paul’s Speech in Pisidia’, *Bib* 69 (1988), pp. 480-506 (503).

from sin' (δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας).¹⁸ Nonetheless, the point remains that Luke's construction differs from Paul's more typical use of the term.

What is more striking, however, is that Luke frames justification as a consequence not of Jesus' death but of his resurrection (Acts 13.34-37). In fact, nowhere in Luke–Acts, does Luke attribute salvific power to Jesus' death.¹⁹ Like the rest of Luke–Acts, the sermon in Acts 13 depicts Jesus' death as a necessary but unfortunate occurrence.²⁰ For Luke, it is his resurrection that vindicates Jesus and demonstrates his messianic status. Again, however, it is common for scholars to overemphasize the discord this creates with the Pauline epistles. While no one can deny that Paul puts a special focus on Jesus' crucifixion, interpreters often overlook just how important the resurrection is to Pauline theology as well. For Paul, as for Luke, Jesus' resurrection is the focal point of one's faith and a source of justification (Rom. 1.4; 4.25; 10.9; 1 Cor. 15.17).²¹ In short, there is nothing contrary to Pauline theology in Luke's emphasis on Jesus' resurrection. Luke may not emphasize the salvific role of the cross as Paul does, but this omission does not demonstrate incompatibility.²² While Luke may not have captured the fulness of Pauline theology on the subject, he certainly has not contradicted Paul.²³

18. As pointed out by David A. deSilva, 'Paul's Sermon in Antioch of Pisidia', *BSac* 151 (1994), pp. 32-49 (47). Cf. Reumann, *Righteousness*, p. 141; Barrett, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts*, I, p. 650. One might compare the way the verb σφίζω is used, e.g. in Rom. 5.9.

19. Acts 20.28 is a possible exception, as it speaks of 'the *ekklesia* of God, which he acquired through the blood of his own'—or 'through his own blood'; note that several important manuscripts read 'the Lord' instead of 'God' in this verse. See the discussion in Keener, *Acts*, III, pp. 3037-40. Keener suggests that this verse draws on Lk. 22.20, where Jesus' blood inaugurates a new covenant.

20. Vielhauer, 'On the "Paulinism" of Acts', p. 45.

21. Cf. also 1 Pet. 1.3; 2.21, where regeneration and salvation are through Jesus' resurrection.

22. Keener (*Acts*, I, p. 228) notes that it is a methodological error to posit difference based on omission. 'Comparing Acts with Paul does not mean that we should seek to find every aspect of the epistolary Paul in Acts, only that what we do find should be compatible with him.'

23. Luke may have another motivation for focusing on the salvific effects of Jesus' resurrection rather than his death. Mark S. Kinzer (*Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen: The Resurrected Messiah, the Jewish People, and the Land of Promise* [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018]) argues that Luke presents Jesus' death as a

A final point of potential conflict between Acts 13 and Paul's letters concerns the ambiguity in the wording of our passage. The last clause in our passage reads: 'In this man everyone who believes is justified from everything from which you could not be justified in the law of Moses.' Vielhauer and other scholars have taken this to mean that Luke believes the law can justify a person from some things but not from everything.²⁴ According to this reading, faith in Jesus supplements rather than replaces justification via the law. Such a notion flies in the face of Paul's insistence on faith alone as the mechanism of salvation.²⁵ But this is not the only way to read Acts 13.39. Many interpreters understand this verse to mean that faith in Jesus justifies one from 'everything' and that this is something the law never offered.²⁶ In other words, the law was never capable of offering justification; only faith in Jesus can do that. I believe such a reading is preferable not only because it fits better with Pauline theology, but also because it agrees with what Luke places in the mouth of Peter in Acts 15.11. In that verse, Peter explains why circumcision should not be imposed on Gentile believers with the following statement:

participation in Israel's suffering, while his resurrection functions as a guarantee of national redemption and restoration.

24. Vielhauer, 'On the "Paulinism" of Acts', p. 42; Bates, 'Note', p. 10; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 413; William Loader, *Jesus' Attitude toward the Law: A Study of the Gospels* (WUNT, 2/97; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 371-72; Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified*, p. 212.

25. See the references listed in n. 10 above.

26. Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity Part I: The Acts of the Apostles* (5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1920-1933), IV, p. 157; C.A. Joachim Pillai, *Apostolic Interpretation of History: A Commentary on Acts 13:16-41* (Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1980), pp. 64-65; Wilson, *Luke*, p. 59; Craig L. Blomberg, 'The Law in Luke-Acts', *JSNT* 22 (1984), pp. 53-80 (65); Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel and Donald H. Juel; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 106; F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. edn, 1988), pp. 262-63; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of his Teaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 187; *idem*, 'Pauline Justification', pp. 259-60; Barrett, *Acts*, I, p. 650; I. Howard Marshall, 'Acts', in G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (eds.), *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 513-605 (587); Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (BECNT, 5; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 458-59.

‘Through the grace of the Lord Jesus, we [Jews] believe in order to be saved, just as they [Gentiles] will.’²⁷ The point of both passages in Acts is not to denigrate Torah but to deny it a soteriological role.²⁸ Regardless of how we reconstruct Paul’s view of Torah, we must admit that this at least comes close to what Paul says in his letters. These considerations suggest that the discrepancies between our passage and the Pauline epistles are not as great as some propose.

In sum, while there are legitimate differences of language and emphasis between our passage and Paul’s letters, the message Luke places in Paul’s mouth in Acts 13.38-39 is entirely compatible with the epistolary Paul. Moreover, there are significant commonalities between the two. It is worth highlighting a few parallels in addition to those we have already observed. First, while it may be mere coincidence, it is interesting to note that the verb *καταγγέλλω* (translated as ‘to proclaim’ in our passage) is found in the New Testament only in Acts (x11) and the Pauline corpus (x7).²⁹ This may represent an affinity between Luke’s language in our passage and that of Paul. Secondly, there are some similarities between our passage and Gal. 2.16-17. For one thing, the message is nearly identical: ‘a person is not justified by works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ’ (Gal. 2.16). For another, both passages use a nearly identical phrase: Acts speaks of being ‘justified in him’ (*δικαιωθῆναι ἐν τούτῳ*), while Galatians speaks of being ‘justified in Christ’ (*δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ*; Gal. 2.17). Thus, there is a very close parallel in both the meaning and the wording of these two passages. Third and perhaps more significant is the phrase ‘everyone who believes’ (*πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων*) which oc-

27. Here I follow John Nolland, ‘A Fresh Look at Acts 15.10’, *NTS* 27 (1980), pp. 105-15 (112-13), in translating *σωθῆναι* as an infinitive of result in this verse.

28. Against those who assume Acts 15.10 denigrates Torah observance, see Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke–Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), p. 151 n. 55; Nolland, ‘Fresh Look’; Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude*, pp. 373-74; Isaac W. Oliver, *Torah Praxis after 70 CE: Reading Matthew and Luke–Acts as Jewish Texts* (WUNT, 2/355; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), pp. 445-47; Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified*, pp. 213-15. Also note that, as Acts 15.1 indicates, the issue Peter addresses in his speech is soteriological (see further below).

29. Acts 3.24; 4.2; 13.5, 38; 15.36; 16.17, 21; 17.3, 13, 23; 26.23; Rom. 1.8; 1 Cor. 2.1; 9.14; 11.26; Phil. 1.17-18; Col. 1.28.

curs three times in Acts and seven times in Paul's letters.³⁰ The five occurrences of this phrase in the book of Romans share some interesting parallels with our passage: they all take place in the context of soteriology and an explicit reference to righteousness/justification (*δικαιοσύνη*), often also in connection to a statement about the law. For instance, Paul says, in Rom. 3.21-22, that 'the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from law ... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all who believe.' Similarly, Rom. 10.4 states, 'Christ is the goal of the law unto righteousness to everyone who believes.' Like Acts 13.38-39, these verses contain the phrase 'everyone who believes' alongside a reference to righteousness/justification and a statement about the law. Is it just coincidence that this cluster of terminology and concepts would occur together with such frequency in Romans and then be repeated by the Lukan Paul? While these parallels alone may not prove Luke's reliance on Paul's epistles, it should make us take more seriously the idea that Luke is intentionally incorporating authentic Pauline thought into the book of Acts.³¹

To summarize this section, Acts 13.38-39 certainly uses some phrases and concepts that are characteristic of Luke, and these verses by no means exhaust Paul's theology of justification. One cannot expect Luke to reproduce a full account of Paul's theological framework in these two short verses, and it is entirely reasonable for him to reframe some of Paul's language in his own terms. Nonetheless, there is nothing in these verses that is incompatible with the theology expressed in Paul's epistles. Moreover, these verses contain several suggestive parallels with the epistles. While Luke's account may be abbreviated, it is not thereby unfaithful to Paul. It is entirely plausible that these verses are based on an accurate source for Paul's message.

30. Acts 2.44; 10.43; 13.39; Rom. 1.16; 3.22; 4.11; 10.4, 11; 1 Thess. 1.7; 2 Thess. 1.10. Outside of Acts and Paul, the phrase occurs only in Johannine texts: Jn 3.15-16; 12.46; 1 Jn 5.1.

31. Another potential parallel between our passage and Paul's letters occurs in Acts 13.45. Bonz ('Luke's Revision', pp. 147-48) argues that the Jews' 'jealousy' and 'contention' (*ἀντιλέγειν*) here intentionally echo Rom. 10.19-21.

The Literary Context: Paul's Sermon

If Acts 13.38-39 is an accurate portrayal of Paul's message, the next step is to understand how this message functions within the book of Acts. To address this, we need to look at both the literary context and the theological context of Acts. In this section I will address the literary context by examining how these verses fit into the rest of Paul's sermon in the book of Acts.

Paul's sermon occurs within the context of a synagogue service in Pisidian Antioch, just after the reading of the law and the prophets (Acts 13.14-15).³² The sermon itself can be divided into four main sections: (1) an overview of Israel's history (vv. 16-25); (2) an overview of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (vv. 26-31); (3) a series of prophetic proof-texts for Jesus' resurrection (vv. 32-37); and (4) a concluding exhortation and warning (vv. 38-41), which contains our passage.³³ Some of these sections bear strong parallels with other speeches in Acts. For instance, the first section resembles Stephen's speech (Acts 7.2-53), which consists almost entirely of an overview of Israel's histo-

32. Incidentally, Acts 13.14-15 is one of the earliest extant descriptions of public Torah reading in the synagogue, alongside Philo (*Legat.* 156; *Somm.* 2.127; *Hypoth.* 7.11-14; and *Omn. Prob. Lib.* 81-83), Josephus (*Ant.* 16.43; *Apion* 2.175) and the Theodotus inscription (cf. Acts 15.21). Luke-Acts also offers the earliest evidence for the *Haftarah* (reading from the Prophets) in Lk. 4.16-21 and in Acts 13.14-15, 27. For a discussion of this evidence, see Lawrence H. Schiffman, 'The Early History of Public Reading of the Torah', in Steven Fine (ed.), *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction During the Greco-Roman Period* (Baltimore Studies in the History of Judaism; London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 38-49 (40-41); Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2nd edn, 2005), pp. 146-55. Note also that the three elements described in Acts 13.14-15—Torah reading, Prophets reading and homily—comprise what Michael Fishbane calls 'the three basic features of the ancient institution of the synagogue' which represent 'three levels of authority in Judaism and three modes of religious instruction' (*Haftarot: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* [JPS Bible Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002], p. xix). This suggests that Luke is intimately familiar with the Jewish setting of his narrative.

33. For a similar approach to the sermon's structure, see Kilgallen, 'Acts 13,38-39', pp. 485-86.

ry.³⁴ Similarly, the second and third sections closely mirror Peter's sermon in Acts 2, which also has an overview of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (Acts 2.22-24) followed by a discussion of Scripture passages applied to the resurrection (2.25-36).³⁵ The final section of Paul's sermon, which begins with our verses of interest, opens with the word 'therefore' (οὖν), implying that it follows logically from what precedes. The logic of this progression, however, is not obvious from this sermon alone. Nonetheless, the progression here follows a pattern that we are conditioned to expect in Acts. Luke has already demonstrated numerous times that Jesus' resurrection is proof of his messianic status, and that the logical response to that status is to repent and believe in him for the forgiveness of sins (Lk. 24.46-47; Acts 2.38; 3.12-19; 4.10-12; 5.30-31; 10.40-43; cf. 17.31). Paul's sermon in Acts 13 follows the same pattern. The message of justification follows naturally after the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection. Thus, the statement about forgiveness and belief in 13.38-39 fits well at this point in the sermon.³⁶

What is less clear, however, is why this announcement of forgiveness and justification is accompanied by a statement about the insufficiency of the law. Our passage does not merely state that Jesus (or his resurrection) is the source of forgiveness and justification, but it makes a claim that one is 'unable to be justified in the Torah of Moses' (οὐκ ἠδυνήθητε ἐν νόμῳ Μωϋσέως δικαιωθῆναι). At first glance, this critique of the law seems out of place, since there is nothing in the sermon prior to this that calls for it. This has led some interpreters to conclude that Acts 13.38-39 is merely a 'Pauline afterthought' injudiciously tacked onto an otherwise coherent sermon by Luke.³⁷ Nonethe-

34. As Haenchen observes (*Acts*, p. 415), the brief history of Israel in Paul's sermon here (Acts 13.16-25) more or less resumes where it left off in Acts 7, so that 'Luke avoids repeating anything already said in Stephen's speech.'

35. Vielhauer ('On the "Paulinism" of Acts', p. 44) observes these connections between Paul's sermon and the speeches of Stephen and Peter.

36. Some also see, in v. 34, which speaks of the 'holy and sure things of David' (τὰ ὅσια Δαυὶδ τὰ πιστά; taken from Isa. 55.3), a link to our passage: these holy and sure things are none other than the promise of forgiveness and justification for those who believe (see Kilgallen, 'Acts 13,38-39', pp. 497-507; deSilva, 'Paul's Sermon', p. 46; Bock, *Acts*, p. 460).

37. The phrase belongs to Bates, 'Note', p. 10. Cf. Fitzmyer, 'Pauline Justification', p. 256, who says, 'These verses are introduced, moreover, by οὖν, "therefore," and clearly draw a hortatory conclusion, but they do not follow logically from the

less, there are a few considerations to suggest that this Pauline statement about the law serves a more integral role within the context of Acts 13. First, Beverly Roberts Gaventa observes that the mention of ‘law’ in 13.38 and ‘prophets’ in v. 40 serves as bookends with the reading of ‘the law and the prophets’ that occurs just before the sermon begins (v. 15).³⁸ This suggests that Luke does not introduce the Torah of Moses in v. 38 randomly, but rather he prepares his reader for its arrival at this point.

Secondly, I suggest that Luke wishes to broach the subject of the law in connection with Paul as soon as he can in his narrative. Keep in mind that this is Paul’s first speech in the book of Acts. More than that, this speech occurs just after Luke has revealed to his reader that the mysterious figure named Saul is none other than the apostle Paul with which his reader may already be familiar (Acts 13.9).³⁹ Perhaps Luke presumes that his readers expect to hear something about the Torah from Paul’s lips. Thus, it is appropriate that Luke would include in the context of Pauline justification a statement that the law is insufficient for salvation.

A third indication that the statement about the law is integral to Paul’s sermon arises from a more detailed discussion of the sermon’s conclusion. Immediately after our passage, Paul concludes his sermon with a warning from the book of Habakkuk:

Beware, therefore, lest what was spoken in the Prophets should come to pass: ‘Look, you despisers, and marvel and vanish! Because I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will never believe if someone reports it to you’ (Acts 13.40-41).

These verses quote Hab. 1.5, following the LXX with a few minor differences. Both the LXX and Acts, however, differ from the MT, which reads ‘look among the nations’ (לִּבְיָנִים רְאֵה) rather than ‘look, you despisers’ (ἴδετε, οἱ καταφρονηταί). Here, the LXX seems to rely on a Hebrew vorlage with

preceding argument in the sermon; they seem to be more or less adventitiously joined to the preceding.’

38. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), p. 201.

39. Keener (*Acts*, II, pp. 1444, 2022) entertains the possibility that some first-time readers might be surprised at this point.

בוגדים (‘traitors’) instead of בגוים (‘among the nations’).⁴⁰ The key interpretive issue for our purposes, however, is the nature of the ‘work’ (ἔργον) described in these verses. Within the original context of Habakkuk, the text refers to God’s ‘work’ in raising up the Chaldeans to conquer Judah as an act of divine judgment. Within Acts 13, however, the referent is less clear. While the conclusion of Paul’s sermon certainly contains overtones of judgment,⁴¹ it seems likely that Luke has an additional referent in mind given his emphasis on the word ‘work’ in the quotation—emphasized by repeating the word a second time, whereas both the LXX and the MT of Hab. 1.5 contain the word

40. Even though καταφρονῆται (‘despisers’) is not the closest translation for the Hebrew בוגדים (‘traitors’), the LXX renders all other occurrences of the root בגד in Habakkuk with the καταφρονέω word-group (Hab. 1.13 and 2.5). The MT reading (בגוים) in Hab. 1.5 is attested in Mur88, Aquilla, Symmachus, Theodotion, Vulgate and Targum. The reading בוגדים is supported by the LXX, Syriac and Jerome’s claim to have seen it in a few Hebrew manuscripts. Although 1QpHab speaks of בוגדים in its commentary on Hab. 1.5, this is not necessarily the reading of its vorlage, since the actual citation of the verse is lost in a lacuna and elsewhere the commentary involves readings that differ from the cited text. For a discussion of this evidence and a defence of the MT reading, see O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 143-44; Robert D. Haak, *Habakkuk* (VTSup, 44; Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 36; Francis I. Andersen, *Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 25; New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 140; Anthony Gelston (ed.), *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (Biblia Hebraica Quinta, 13; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), p. 155*; Timothy H. Lim, *The Earliest Commentary on the Prophecy of Habakkuk* (Oxford Commentary on the Dead Sea Scrolls; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 43.

41. The possibility that Luke’s readers would have connected this warning with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE should not be ignored. Note that 1QpHab specifically identifies the Chaldeans of Habakkuk as ‘the Kittim’, i.e. the Romans. On this identification, see Lim, *Earliest Commentary*, pp. 19, 55, 65-68. In the same vein, note that some scholars see hints of national redemption or restoration earlier in Paul’s sermon, in Acts 13.33-35 and 38-39. See Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (2 vols.; FF; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), II, pp. 168-72; Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified*, p. 212 n. 59; Isaac W. Oliver, *Luke’s Jewish Eschatology: The National Restoration of Israel in Luke–Acts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 65-66.

‘work’ only once.⁴² Some interpreters suggest that God’s ‘work’ in the context of Acts 13 is Jesus’ resurrection, as highlighted in vv. 30-37, and thus v. 41 warns against failure to believe Paul’s report of the resurrection.⁴³ A more compelling case can be made, however, for identifying the ‘work’ here as the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God.⁴⁴ Note that in the surrounding chapters, ἔργον refers exclusively to the Gentile mission (Acts 13.2; 14.26; 15.38). As Robert Wall observes, this term is used strategically at both the commissioning and the conclusion of Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13–14):

The repetition of ‘work’, first in 13:2 and then in 14:26, brackets off the narrative field within which the divinely intended referent of Habakkuk’s prophecy about God’s work is made clear: God’s ‘work’ in this new situation is mediated through Paul’s prophetic ‘work’ among the Gentiles.⁴⁵

Wall argues further that Acts 15.3 contains an intertextual echo of 13.41: both verses use the word ἐκδιηγέομαι (‘to report’ or ‘to describe in detail’), and this word is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Significantly, Acts 15.3 uses ἐκδιηγέομαι to describe how Paul and Barnabas ‘reported in detail the conversion of the Gentiles’ (ἐκδιηγούμενοι τὴν ἐπιστροφὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν) to the Jesus-followers they met on their way to the Jerusalem Council. This strongly supports identifying the ‘work’ that ‘someone [will] report to you’ in 13.41 as pertaining to the Gentile mission.⁴⁶ This position is corroborated by the aftermath of Paul’s sermon in Acts 13: the result is ‘the Jews’ becom-

42. Robert W. Wall (‘The Function of LXX Habakkuk 1:5 in the Book of Acts’, *BBR* 10 [2000], pp. 247-58) suggests that Luke’s alterations of the LXX in his quotation of Hab. 1.5 signal ‘a second horizon of meaning’ (p. 250). Wall argues that the repetition of ἔργον in Acts 13.41 communicates both judgment, as per the original context in Habakkuk, and the Gentile mission (p. 251, see below). Note, however, that D and other later manuscripts omit the second occurrence of ἔργον in Acts 13.41, bringing Acts into closer alignment with the LXX.

43. Pillai, *Apostolic Interpretation*, pp. 72-73; David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), p. 395.

44. Haenchen, *Acts*, pp. 416-17; deSilva, ‘Paul’s Sermon’, p. 48; Wall, ‘Function’, p. 251. Tannehill (*Narrative Unity*, II, p. 172) thinks the ‘work’ is both Jesus’ resurrection and the Gentile mission.

45. Wall, ‘Function’, p. 251.

46. Wall, ‘Function’, pp. 253-56.

ing jealous and a large number of Gentiles believing (vv. 44-49). Thus, Acts 13.41 uses Hab. 1.5 both to warn against the consequences of unbelief and to presage the success of the Gentile mission.

This interpretation of Acts 13.41 sheds light on our passage because it suggests that 13.38-39 is not merely a generic statement about justification and the law but is meant to highlight the terms under which Gentiles can be saved. As Wall suggests, there is a 'conflict within Israel over the soteriology of the Gentile mission' that runs throughout Acts, culminating in the rejection of circumcision as a salvation requirement in Acts 15.⁴⁷ In this light, the statement about the law's salvific inability in 13.38 is entirely fitting and strategically placed in its context. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the statements about faith and law in v. 38 with the quotation from Habakkuk in v. 41 provides strong resonance with the use of Habakkuk in Paul's epistles. As Craig Keener notes, there are two passages in the Hebrew Bible that Paul appeals to in his epistles that combine the language of faith/belief with that of righteousness: Gen. 15.6 and Hab. 2.4. Paul uses these two passages in his letters to support his theology of justification by faith.⁴⁸ Keener suggests it may be no coincidence that in Acts 13 Luke places in Paul's mouth a quotation from Habakkuk immediately after he declares justification by faith.⁴⁹ Moreover, the language of faith/belief (*πιστεύω* and related terms) unites these verses: In contrast to those who fail to believe and face judgment (Hab. 1.5/Acts 13.41), those who believe find forgiveness, life, and justification/righteousness (Hab. 2.4/Acts 13.38-39).

To summarize, it seems that there is more logic behind the flow of thought in this sermon than first meets the eye. The statement about faith, justification and the law is to be expected by readers at this point and it draws on Paul's own engagement with the book of Habakkuk. Rather than an arbitrary intrusion into the sermon, 13.38-39 seems to be placed there strategically by Luke.

47. Wall, 'Function', p. 254. The theme of salvation for Gentiles by faith (not by circumcision) gradually increases in volume over the course of Acts (see, e.g., 2.21; 4.12; 10; 13.38-39; 15).

48. Gen. 15.6 is cited in Rom. 4.3, 9, 22; Gal. 3.6. Hab. 2.4 is cited in Rom. 1.17; Gal. 3.11.

49. Keener, *Acts*, II, pp. 2090-91.

The Theological Context: Luke's View of Torah

The preceding section raises the question of how we are to understand these verses in relation to Luke's broader attitude toward the law. One cannot read Luke–Acts without noticing how often Luke comments on the Torah piety of his protagonists. Zechariah and Elizabeth are described as 'righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord' (Lk. 1.6). Similarly, Luke goes out of his way to demonstrate that Jesus' parents were scrupulous in their Torah observance (Lk. 2.22-24, 27, 39). Jesus' teaching in Luke affirms the eternal validity of the Torah (Lk. 16.17), and on no less than three occasions Jesus points to the Torah as a source of life (Lk. 10.25-28; 16.19-31; 18.18-30).⁵⁰ Luke also highlights how the women who wished to anoint Jesus' body were faithful in their observance of the Sabbath (Lk. 23.56). Likewise, throughout the book of Acts, Luke characterizes Jewish believers as walking in Torah piety, 'zealous for the law' (Acts 21.20) and 'devout according to the law' (22.12).

This characterization is most striking in Luke's portrayal of Paul. Aside from Acts 13.38-39, Paul offers not even a hint of criticism against the Torah in the book of Acts.⁵¹ On the contrary, Luke seems eager to demonstrate Paul's continuing fidelity to Torah. Paul circumcises Timothy (Acts 16.3), undergoes a Nazirite vow (Acts 18.18), observes purity rites and offers sacrifices in the Temple (Acts 21.26; 24.17) and observes the festivals: Unleavened Bread (Acts 20.6), Pentecost (Acts 20.16) and the Day of Atonement (Acts 27.9). Right up to the end of Acts, Paul claims to have remained faithful to Torah and denies all allegations that he teaches or behaves contrary to Torah (Acts 21.24; 24.11-13; 25.8; 28.17).⁵² It is difficult to escape the con-

50. On these three passages, see Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified*, pp. 166-70. As Jervell notes, 'Only Luke among the Gospel authors quotes Lev. 18:5: *touto poiei kai zēsē*—and without any critical note. Cf. Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12' (Jervell, *Luke*, p. 150 n. 28).

51. As observed by Daniel Marguerat, 'Paul and the Torah in the Acts of the Apostles', in Michael Tait and Peter Oakes (eds.), *The Torah in the New Testament: Papers Delivered at the Manchester-Lausanne Seminar of June 2008* (LNTS, 401; London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), pp. 98-117 (99).

52. These statements respond directly to accusations against Paul (Acts 18.13, 15; 21.21, 28; 23.29; 24.5-6). Like the similar accusations against Stephen (Acts 6.11-14), Luke frames these accusations as false.

clusion that Luke wishes to affirm the ongoing validity of Torah observance, especially for Jewish followers of Jesus.⁵³

There are, however, three potential objections to this pro-Torah portrait of Luke–Acts, which lead some scholars to suppose that despite the above evidence Luke still advances a fundamental rejection of the law, or at least of certain Torah commandments. The first is the idea that the sabbath controversies in Luke’s Gospel (Lk. 6.1-5, 6-11; 13.10-17; 14.1-6) entail a rejection of Jewish sabbath observance.⁵⁴ While a full engagement with this topic is beyond the scope of this article, I wish to respond with two observations: (1) these pericopes deal with controversy surrounding how to keep the sabbath, not whether it should be kept at all; and (2) nowhere in Acts do Jesus’ followers engender any sabbath controversy. On the contrary, Luke affirms that they continued to observe it (Lk. 23.56; Acts 1.12; 13.14; 16.13; 17.1-2; 18.4). It is thus unwarranted to use the sabbath controversies in Luke to overwrite the positive attitude toward sabbath observance found in the rest of Luke–Acts.⁵⁵

The second potential objection is based on Peter’s vision in Acts 10. In his vision, Peter saw a sheet filled with animals and heard a divine voice telling him to ‘slaughter and eat’ (Acts 10.13). Peter objected, stating that he had never eaten anything ‘common or impure’, to which the divine voice replied, ‘What God has purified, do not make common’ (vv. 14-15). The standard interpretation of this episode is that it represents the abrogation of the Torah’s dietary laws.⁵⁶ However, this interpretation is mitigated by three observations: (1) the divine voice never asks Peter to transgress the laws of Leviticus 11. Luke’s description makes clear that the sheet was filled with *all* kinds of animals (πάντα, v. 12), not just impure animals, so Peter could have availed

53. Scholars who concur with this conclusion include Jervell, *Luke*, pp. 133-51; Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian*, pp. 175-202; Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (NTT; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 54-61; Oliver, *Torah Praxis*; Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified*, pp. 160-224.

54. E.g. Yong-Eui Yang, *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel* (JSNTSup, 139; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). Yang discusses the evidence from Luke’s Gospel on pp. 242-72.

55. For a detailed discussion of Jesus’ sabbath controversies in Luke which concludes that Jesus upheld the sabbath, see Oliver, *Torah Praxis*, pp. 99-112, 124-45.

56. So, e.g., Bruce, *Acts*, p. 206, who writes, ‘This was in effect an abrogation of ceremonial food laws and much else of the same character.’

himself of a pure animal. The fact that Peter failed to identify the pure animals in the lot is, it seems, the point of the vision; (2) the passage itself explicates the meaning of the vision in v. 28, when Peter says, ‘God showed me that I should not call any *person* common or impure.’ In other words, the vision is not really about animals but about people: it symbolizes the purification of Gentile followers of Jesus; (3) in the following chapter (11.1-3), the Jewish believers in Jerusalem criticize Peter for eating with uncircumcised men, not for eating meat from impure animals. In Chris Miller’s words, ‘The accusation of the brethren in Jerusalem was not directed toward *what* Peter ate, but rather, *with whom* he ate—not his menu but his companions.’⁵⁷ For these and other reasons, a growing number of scholars conclude that the issue at stake in this passage is not *kashrut* but the acceptance of Gentile Jesus-followers without circumcision.⁵⁸

The third potential objection to the claim that Luke–Acts affirms Torah observance comes from the account of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. According to a common interpretation of this passage, the apostles and elders ruled that the Torah has no jurisdiction over followers of Jesus. In the eyes of many interpreters, Acts 15 represents a fundamental rejection of the law.⁵⁹ Against this view, however, one must note that there is no question anywhere in this passage about whether Jewish believers should circumcise their children or follow Torah. The issue is explicitly framed as concerning Gentile salvation: ‘Unless you are circumcised in accordance with the custom of

57. Chris A. Miller, ‘Did Peter’s Vision in Acts 10 Pertain to Men or the Menu?’, *BSac* 159 (2002), pp. 302-17 (308-9).

58. Scholars who argue that Peter’s vision does not represent the annulment of the dietary laws include Colin House, ‘Defilement by Association: Some Insights from the Usage of *κοινόσ/κοινώω* in Acts 10 and 11’, *AUSS* 21 (1983), pp. 143-53; Miller, ‘Peter’s Vision’; Clinton Wahlen, ‘Peter’s Vision and Conflicting Definitions of Purity’, *NTS* 51 (2005), pp. 505-18; Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 125-26; David B. Woods, ‘Interpreting Peter’s Vision in Acts 10:9-16’, *Conspectus* 13 (2012), pp. 171-214; Oliver, *Torah Praxis*, pp. 320-64; Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified*, pp. 216-20.

59. The scholarly literature on Acts 15 is enormous. An example of the traditional approach is Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; London: Faber & Faber, 1960), who refers to Acts 15 as ‘the report of how the Gentile Church is declared free from the Law’ (p. 212).

Moses, you cannot be saved' (v. 1). The council's decision makes essentially the same point as Acts 10: Gentile Jesus-followers are to be accepted without circumcision. The passage assumes, however, that Jewish believers will continue to observe Torah.⁶⁰ Furthermore, in the very next chapter, Luke describes how Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts 16.3), demonstrating that the council's decision does not entail a full-scale rejection of circumcision.⁶¹ In short, Acts 15 addresses the soteriology of the Gentile mission; it does not denigrate the value of Torah observance tout court.⁶²

To summarize, neither the sabbath controversies in Luke's Gospel nor the episodes in Acts 10 and 15 detracts from the unambiguous affirmation of Torah observance that permeates Luke-Acts. Luke seems eager to portray his protagonists, especially Paul, as continuing to walk in fidelity to Torah. Outside of Acts 13.38-39, every statement Paul makes about the law in Acts is in its defence. It seems Vielhauer was correct in his assessment that 'Acts portrays the Gentile missionary Paul as a Jewish Christian who is utterly loyal to the law.'⁶³ All this highlights the issue of how we are to interpret our passage in light of Luke's broader attitude toward Torah observance.

I propose that the affirmations of Torah observance that permeate Luke-Acts have the effect of relativizing Paul's critique of the law in Acts 13. Note that Acts 13.38-39 does not actually denigrate Torah observance.⁶⁴ As Wilson states,

60. As noted by Michael Wyschogrod (*Abraham's Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations* [ed. R. Kendall Soulen; Radical Traditions; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], p. 209), 'It is clear that both parties [in Acts 15] agreed that circumcision and Torah obedience remained obligatory for Jewish Jesus believers since, if this were not the case, one could hardly debate whether circumcision and Torah obedience was obligatory for gentiles.'

61. This point is reiterated in Acts 21.21-24, where the rumour that Paul teaches Diaspora Jews not to circumcise their children is demonstrated to be false.

62. For a more detailed study of Acts 15 that arrives at a similar conclusion, see Oliver, *Torah Praxis*, pp. 365-98.

63. Vielhauer, 'On the "Paulinism" of Acts', p. 38.

64. This is true regardless of whether we understand the phrase *ἐν νόμῳ Μωϋσέως* locatively ('in the law,' i.e. within its domain) or instrumentally ('by the law,' i.e. through its observance). As noted by Peterson, *Acts*, p. 401 n. 88, in either case the force of the verse is more or less the same.

The assertion that the gospel provides what life under the law lacks is made solely with respect to the Christian view of salvation. It does not follow that the law has been done away with or that it no longer has a role to play in Jewish or Jewish-Christian piety; it means simply that the law, on its own, is an inadequate vehicle of salvation.⁶⁵

In other words, Luke sees no contradiction between denying the Torah a salvific role and affirming its ongoing observance.⁶⁶ In fact, I suggest that Luke is signalling to his readers how he thinks Paul should be interpreted here. By embedding this Pauline statement about the law's salvific inability within a narrative that repeatedly and conspicuously affirms Torah observance, Luke shows that Torah observance is not incompatible with a Pauline message of justification through faith in Jesus. Moreover, by placing similar soteriological statements in the mouth of Peter elsewhere in Acts (10.43; 15.11), Luke seeks to demonstrate that this notion of justification by faith was upheld by other Torah-observant apostles as well.⁶⁷ In other words, Luke presents a united front in Acts in which salvation is through faith in Jesus, not through the law—a position his readers would recognize as characteristically Pauline. As we have seen, in Acts, this position has a distinct impact on the terms under which Gentiles are to be accepted as genuine Jesus-followers (i.e. without requiring circumcision). Nonetheless, Luke's narrative makes clear that this Pauline position does not infringe upon the value of Torah observance, especially for Jewish followers of Jesus.

Interpreters have often struggled to come to terms with Luke's failure to articulate a clear message of the Torah's obsolescence. In other words, why

65. Wilson, *Luke*, p. 59. Cf. Jervell, *Luke*, p. 146; Keener, *Acts*, II, pp. 2077-78; Thiessen, *Gentile Problem*, p. 166; Isaac W. Oliver, 'The "Historical Paul" and the Paul of Acts: Who's More Jewish?', in Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia (eds.), *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), pp. 51-80 (59).

66. Cf. Jervell, *Luke*, p. 144.

67. The importance of faith is no small issue for Luke. He frequently affirms the soteriological role of faith: Lk. 8.12; Acts 10.43; 13.39; 15.7, 9, 11; 16.31; 20.21; 26.18. To this list we might add the necessity of faith for 'salvation' in healing accounts: Lk. 7.50; 8.48; 17.19; 18.42; Acts 14.9. Moreover, it is precisely the attribute of faith/belief that marks one as belonging to the community of Jesus-followers: Acts 2.44; 4.4, 32; 5.14; 9.42; 10.45; 11.17, 21; 13.12, 48; 14.1, 23; 15.5; 16.1, 34; 17.12, 34; 18.8, 27; 19.2, 4, 18; 21.20, 25; 22.19.

did Luke fail to place on Paul's lips the message that most scholars attribute to him, namely, that the Christ event has rendered the law inoperative? Vielhauer suggests two possibilities: either (1) Luke misunderstood Paul's argument about the Torah, or (2) the issue was no longer relevant in Luke's day.⁶⁸ I propose a third option: Luke is intentionally countering what he sees as a misinterpretation of Paul's message and legacy. I think Luke understood Paul's message fairly well, and that the issue of Torah observance was still quite pertinent for him and his readers. The fact that much of the discussion of the law in Acts is centred around the figure of Paul suggests that Luke saw Paul's relationship with the Torah as an issue that he needed to address.⁶⁹ In short, Luke crafted his presentation intentionally to promote a certain interpretation of Paul.⁷⁰

Conclusion

I have argued that Acts 13.38-39 represents an accurate (even if selective) portrayal of Pauline thought. Although Luke uses some of his own language and emphases, the message of these verses is entirely compatible with the message of Paul's epistles, and even contains verbal parallels with the epistles. Our passage, however, is not a mere 'Pauline meteorite' lacking any connection to the surrounding context.⁷¹ The conclusion to Paul's sermon in Acts 13 follows a pattern evinced in other speeches in Acts. Luke sees the message of salvation through faith as the logical consequence of Jesus' messianic status. Moreover, from a literary standpoint, a statement about the Torah's salvific inability in 13.38-39 is fitting at this point and carries forward a theme that will culminate in Acts 15. Nonetheless, the critique of the law in our passage is relativized by the positive attitude toward Torah observance

68. Vielhauer, 'On the "Paulinism" of Acts', p. 42.

69. As noted by Wilson, *Luke*, p. 108; Marguerat, 'Paul and the Torah', p. 101.

70. I thus concur with Oliver ('Historical Paul', p. 71), who contends that Luke 'framed Paul within a Jewish framework in order to correct what he perceived to be misunderstandings of Paul's comments and actions'. Similarly, Thiessen (*Gentile Problem*, pp. 164-67) argues that Acts offers precisely an early 'Paul within Judaism' interpretation of Paul.

71. The phrase comes from Marguerat, 'Paul and the Torah', p. 104, who claims that Acts 13.38-39 'has been termed a "Pauline meteorite" in Luke's narrative'. Marguerat provides no sources for this phrase.

that permeates Luke–Acts, particularly depictions of Paul himself. Luke makes clear that, while the law is insufficient as an instrument of salvation, it nonetheless remains valid as a way of life. He frames Paul’s theology in such a way as to emphasize that this message of salvation through faith in Jesus is not antithetical to Torah observance. In sum, Luke is engaging in Pauline interpretation. By intentionally drawing on Pauline language and theology but placing it within a narrative context that validates Torah observance, Luke suggests to his readers a way of reading Paul.