

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 *Corinthians* 10:3-6)

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## **Romans 2:13 and the Jealousy Narrative** by Timothy F. Kauffman

Former Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) minister and erstwhile Reformer, Jason Stellman, recently celebrated his second year since converting to Roman Catholicism, a conversion due in no small part to the Roman Catholic exegesis of *Romans* 2:13, “the doers of the law shall be justified.”<sup>1</sup> N. T. Wright, an Anglican minister and proponent of the “New Perspective on Paul,” uses this same verse to conclude, that “Justification, at the last, will be on the basis of performance.”<sup>2</sup> When Norm Shepherd taught at Westminster Theological Seminary, he proposed *Thirty-Four Theses* on justification, of which his 20<sup>th</sup> relied on a similar reading of *Romans* 2:13: “The Pauline affirmation in *Romans* 2:13, ‘the doers of the Law will be justified,’ is not to be understood hypothetically in the sense that there are no persons who fall into that class, but in the sense that faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ will be justified (Compare *Luke* 3:21; *James* 1:22-25).”<sup>3</sup> Rich Lusk, of Federal Vision notoriety, insists as well, “we find the Bible teaching that future justification is according to works. Final justification is to the (faithful) doers of the

law.”<sup>4</sup> Of course, Lusk argues, this does not overturn justification by faith—rather it enhances it, for justification is by faith. It is “speaking of initial justification,” Lusk says, “[b]ut it is indisputable that the biblical data on final justification brings works into the picture.” “Jesus is not kidding or messing around,” Lusk continues, “when he speaks of a future justification according to our words (*Mt.* 12:37; 25:31ff).”<sup>5</sup>

Whether it be Romanism, Shepherdism, Wright’s “New Perspective,” or Lusk’s “Federal Vision,” there is a constant siren song of works righteousness coming from outside the doors of the Church, attempting to convince the sheep to plead their own righteousness before God for their final justification. Because Lusk is a former PCA minister, and in fact made the above case while he was still in the PCA, his is on the surface a compelling case, and he claims to reason as a Reformer might, saying, “But what happened to using Scripture to interpret Scripture? Why not plug into *Rom.* 2 the people that Scripture says elsewhere did (or kept) the law? That makes far more sense than filling in Paul’s terms with our own notions of what ‘doing the law’ might entail.”<sup>6</sup>

Lusk then proceeds to reason not as a Reformer, but as a Roman Catholic, claiming that “The standard will be soft and generous” on Judgment Day, “because God is merciful” and “will judge us as a Father and Husband, not as a cold, aloof Sovereign,” and “will use ‘fatherly justice’

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<sup>1</sup> Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), “The Journey Home” with Marcus Grodi (December 9, 2013, Jason Stellman, guest). Retrieved January 8, 2014 (42:00-46:00) from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC\\_cjqjTRAk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC_cjqjTRAk). See also, his *Conversion Testimony*, delivered at the 2013 Holy Family Conference in Kirkland, Washington (March 9, 2013). Retrieved December 23, 2014 (22:00) from <http://www.calledto communion.com/media/Holy%20Family%20Conference%20-%20Conversion%20Story.mp3>.

<sup>2</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 440.

<sup>3</sup> Norman Shepherd, *Thirty-four Theses on Justification in Relation to Faith, Repentance, and Good Works*, 1978. Retrieved August 19, 2014 from <http://www.hornes.org/theologia/norman-shepherd/the-34-theses>.

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<sup>4</sup> Rich Lusk, *Future Justification and Doers of the Law*, 2003. Retrieved August 19, 2014 from <http://www.hornes.org/theologia/rich-lusk/future-justification-to-the-doers-of-the-law>.

<sup>5</sup> Lusk, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Lusk, 2003.

in the final judgment, not ‘absolute justice.’<sup>7</sup> Because his attempts to lower God’s standard of righteousness are indistinguishable from Rome’s, we put Lusk in the same category as Jason Stellman. Lusk is merely a Roman Catholic in Presbyterian clothing (he is now a member of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches—CREC), but we nevertheless agree with his insistence that Scripture must be used to interpret Scripture. His use of the interpretive principle, however, has not prevented him from filling in Paul’s terms with his “own notions of what ‘doing the law’ might entail.” To correct Lusk, and to correct Wright, Stellman, and Shepherd as well, we shall use Scripture to interpret Scripture, and shall not only use Paul to interpret Paul, but also use Jesus to interpret Paul, and Moses and the Prophets to interpret Paul, for it is from them that Paul learned the Gospel that he was teaching to the Gentile congregation at Rome. In the process we shall see that Lusk, Wright, Shepherd, and Stellman have all overlooked Paul’s own explanation of how *Romans* 2:13 is to be read. *Romans*, as we shall see, is to be read *jealously*.

What we find in our analysis of Scripture is a consistent narrative from Moses to Paul in which the Jews are driven to jealousy by the transference of what were ostensibly Jewish blessings to Gentile recipients. We will focus particularly on Paul’s use of Ezekiel because both Jesus and Paul rely heavily on Ezekiel to criticize the Jews. They both incite Jewish jealousy by teaching that the promises of God to the descendants of Abraham have been lavished on the Gentiles. Among those promises are a new heart, a new spirit, and along with them, obedience to the Law: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (*Ezekiel* 36:25, 25).

Once Paul establishes that the Gentiles have new hearts, a new spirit, and now “walk in my statutes,” he then insists that these “doers of the law” will be justified by faith alone. Paul’s message in *Romans* 2:13 is not that the “doers of the Law will be justified” based on their works, but rather that it is the Gentiles, not the Jews, who have the new heart, the new spirit, and with it, true obedience that shows them to be the true descendants of Abraham (*Romans* 2). It is these *spiritual* descendants of Abraham, not his *physical* descendants, who will be justified by faith alone (*Romans* 3). Once we can see *Romans* 2 in the light of the groundwork Ezekiel laid, the *Jealousy Narrative* will then serve to contextualize other passages of Scripture that Lusk, Wright, Shepherd, and Stellman also use to support their hypothesis that our final justification will be based on our personal righteousness and our performance. In the end,

Paul condemns justification by works as a different gospel, and insists that the justification of those who have a new heart, a new spirit, and now “walk in my statutes, and... keep my judgments, and do them” is by faith alone and is under no circumstances based on the works of the law.

### *The Jealousy Narrative in Romans*

Let us now sit at Paul’s feet and learn from him why he wrote the letter to the Romans in the first place. His explicit purpose in writing the epistle is to make his fellow countrymen jealous: “salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.... For I speak to you Gentiles.... If by any means I may provoke to emulation [*jealousy*] them which are my flesh, and might save some of them” (*Romans* 11:12-14). Paul is writing to make the Jews jealous, and he does so by saying that “salvation is come to the Gentiles.” Jealousy, or what may be called the *Jealousy Narrative*, therefore is the lens through which *Romans*, and in particular *Romans* 2:13, must be read.

Let us therefore go all the way back to Moses, and the rampant disobedience and unbelief of the Israelites who had “provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods,” and “with abominations provoked they Him to anger” (*Deuteronomy* 32:16). Because they had provoked God by their unbelief and disobedience, Moses prophesied that God would one day do the same to them, stirring them to jealousy by a believing, obedient people:

And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. (*Deuteronomy* 32:20-21)

In *Romans* 10:19, Paul reveals to the Jews what is clear to the casual reader of *Deuteronomy*: that “foolish nation” which “are no people” refers to the Gentiles. It is by no coincidence that Paul begins the epistle by commending the Gentiles in Rome because their “faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (*Romans* 1:8), and ends by saying that their “obedience is come abroad unto all men” (*Romans* 16:19). They are the truly circumcised ones (*Romans* 2:29)—they are the true Jews, the promised descendants of Abraham, the people of God who both believe and obey. The Jews on the other hand, are portrayed as disobedient, unbelieving, and uncircumcised (*Romans* 2:24-25)—they are the true Gentiles, and are no descendants of Abraham at all. This is the core of the *Jealousy Narrative* and *Romans* cannot be fully understood apart from it.

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<sup>7</sup> Lusk, 2003.

We note for example that Paul describes all of the benefits the Jews had as God's people: "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (*Romans* 9:4-5). Before he completes his epistle, he has moved each blessing into the Gentile column: adoption (8:15); glory (9:23); covenants (11:25-27); law (2:14); service (12:1); promises (4:13); fathers (4:14, 9:7-14); and ethnic relation to Christ (4:16, 9:8).

The *coup de grâce* occurs in *Romans* 10:6-8 when Paul appropriates Moses' Valedictory Speech (*Deuteronomy* 30:11-14) and tells the Jews that *Moses had preached the righteousness of faith to them long ago*—a righteousness which the Gentiles now possess, and which the Jews do not. We provide Moses' words, and Paul's adaptation of them, to illustrate how Paul incited Jewish jealousy:

**Moses:** For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, *that we may hear it, and do it?* Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, *that we may hear it, and do it?* But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (*Deuteronomy* 30:11-14)

**Paul:** For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach. (*Romans* 10:5-8)

Right where the Jews expected to be justified by the Law, Paul has inserted faith. Where the Law says, "the man which doeth those things shall live by them," Paul substitutes a righteousness that is from Christ. Thus Paul ends his *Jealousy Narrative* in *Romans* 10, insisting that by seeking a righteousness based on the law, the Jews *still have not even obeyed Moses*: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" (*Romans* 10:16; compare *Isaiah* 51:1). That is to say, they have not obeyed (as the Gentiles have) Moses' commandment to believe (as the Gentiles have) in Jesus (*Deuteronomy* 18:5). Clearly as a student both of the Scripture and of Christ Himself, Paul was aware of the ancient pedigree of the *Jealousy Narrative*, for it was ever present throughout the Old Testament and in the preaching ministry of Jesus. To discover this, we will examine several

cases of the *Jealousy Narrative* in the Old Testament, focusing on those used so well by Jesus and by Paul in the New.

#### *The Jealousy Narrative in the Old Testament*

Although there are many examples of the *Jealousy Narrative* in the Old Testament, we will focus only on seven that Jesus and Paul invoked in their application of the narrative in their teaching ministries. Their use of these Old Testament illustrations will serve us well as we show where Lusk, Wright, Shepherd, and Stelman all went wrong.

#### **The Queen of Sheba (*1 Kings* 10)**

When the Queen of Sheba met Solomon, she was initially resistant to the truth, but when she witnessed his wisdom, his house, his wealth, "and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her" (*1 Kings* 10:5). She was undone. "It was a true report that I heard.... Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: ... Blessed be the LORD thy God...because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice" (*1 Kings* 10:6-9). The Queen of Sheba was a Gentile, yet she believed, and repented of her unbelief.

#### **The Widow of Sidon (*1 Kings* 17)**

During the drought in Israel, the prophet Elijah had been receiving his sustenance at the brook Cherith. When the brook dried up for lack of rain, the Lord sent him to Sidon to "dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee" (*1 Kings* 17:9). Notably, when Elijah commanded the widow to give him the last of her food, he assured her that the Lord had promised to provide, and she believed His promise, giving him her last "handful of meal...and a little oil" (*1 Kings* 17:12-15). The widow was a Gentile. She believed, and obeyed.

#### **Naaman the Syrian (*2 Kings* 5)**

Naaman was a Syrian general, "a great man with his master, and honourable...he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper" (*2 Kings* 5:1). His wife's Jewish servant girl knew there was a prophet in Samaria, and that Naaman's only hope was to seek him out. Naaman sought Elisha, and initially refused to dip himself seven times in the Jordan, but his servants persuaded him to do as the prophet instructed. When Naaman emerged from the river without leprosy, he concluded, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (*2 Kings* 5:15), and thenceforth desired to worship the Lord alone (*2 Kings* 5:17-19). Naaman was a Gentile leper. He believed, and obeyed.

#### **The Ninevites (*Jonah* 3)**

When Jonah was commanded to preach to the Ninevites, he initially demurred, but when persuaded by events ordained by God, he went to Nineveh (*Jonah* 1-2). Despite Jonah's

misgivings, “the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes” (*Jonah* 3:5-9). The Ninevites were Gentiles, yet they believed and repented.

### **Hosea’s Children, Loruhamah and Loammi (*Hosea* 1:1-2:23)**

When the Lord told Hosea, “Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms” (1:2), he married Gomer, and the two children of Gomer became the metaphors both of God’s rejection of Israel and of His election of Gentiles. The first child was called “Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away” (1:6). The second child was called “Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God” (1:9). Nevertheless, even though Israel had been cut off, her children would be beyond numbering, “and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God...and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God” (1:10, 2:23). Paul would later explain that this signifies the ingrafting of the Gentiles (*Romans* 9:25-26), and by this means, “all Israel shall be saved” (*Romans* 11:26).

### **The Gentiles and Samaritans of *Ezekiel***

We will now spend more than a little time with *Ezekiel* because his development of the *Narrative* is so significant to our understanding of the *Jealousy Narrative* in the *Gospels* and in Paul. As we shall see, *Ezekiel* is the foundation upon which Paul constructs his arguments in *Romans* 2.

### **Jerusalem’s Sisters (*Ezekiel* 16)**

When the Lord spoke to unfaithful, disobedient Israel, He told them they were children of Gentiles: “thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite” (*Ezekiel* 16:3). That was an insult on its own, but before *Ezekiel* was finished, the Lord had made Israel the middle sister between two of the worst possible siblings the Jews could imagine: “thine elder sister is Samaria...and thy younger sister...is Sodom” (*Ezekiel* 16:46). Samaria was known for her idols (*Isaiah* 10:10-11) and Sodom was known for her homosexuality (*Genesis* 19:4-5), and Israel was now their near relation. Not only was Israel in a bad family, she was so wicked that she made Sodom and Samaria look good by comparison. Israel had looked down upon her “sisters” in judgment, but in truth she was worse than they—so much worse that she had “justified” them both:

[T]hou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters. (*Ezekiel* 16:51-52)

As unfaithful as Israel was, the Lord was not unfaithful to His covenant, and promised that He would cause Israel to remember her ways and be ashamed, and that He would accomplish this in a most unusual way—He would give Samaria and Sodom back to Israel *as daughters*:

Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, *when thou shalt receive thy sisters*, thine elder and thy younger: *and I will give them unto thee for daughters*, but not by thy covenant. (*Ezekiel* 16:60-61)

The significance of this within the context of the *Jealousy Narrative* is that God provoked the Jews to jealousy in the Old Testament by portraying them as worse than the worst Gentiles imaginable, and promised that He would provoke them further *by including her wicked sisters in the new covenant*—something both Jesus and Paul would one day expound upon in the New Testament.

### **“Make you a new heart and a new spirit” (*Ezekiel* 18-33)**

The *Jealousy Narrative* is further advanced in *Ezekiel* 18 through 33, when God tells the Jews that the sins of the wicked will not accrue to them in judgment if they repent, and that the “righteousness” of the self-righteous will not accrue to them in acquittal:

But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes... *All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him*: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.... But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth... *All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned....* (18:21-24)

When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, *all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered*; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.... But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. (33:13, 19)

It is this warning that so fanned the flames of Jewish jealousy in the Old Testament. The sinner could repent, and all of his wickedness would not be counted against him? Yet if the “righteous” committed sins, not one good work would accrue to him to offset the deficit? Unthinkable! The response of the Jews to Ezekiel would one day echo throughout the pages of the New Testament: “That’s not fair!” It was, at its core, an indictment of Jewish self-righteousness.

It must also be noted that the context of *Ezekiel* is the Jewish claim to the right to Abraham’s inheritance based on genealogy alone. The land was expected to be theirs based on their genetic relationship to him (11:15; 33:24), and in “pride” and “haughtiness,” they were trusting in their own “beauty” and their own righteousness (16:15, 50, 56; 33:13), looking down on sinners (16:51) even while they themselves had “committed abomination” (16:50; 18:12; 22:11). Ezekiel justifiably responds that they are lawbreakers, and will by no means inherit the land on account of their relationship to Abraham (33:25, 26). Instead of claiming relation to Abraham, they ought rather to bring forth the fruit of repentance (14:6, 18:30). This sequence is quite familiar to us as it is the basis of so many rebukes of the Jews in the New Testament. They claimed to be Abraham’s descendants, but were lawbreakers at heart. John warns that they ought to bring forth the fruit of repentance, rather than “say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father” (*Matthew* 3:8-9; *Luke* 3:8). Jesus has this similarly terse response: “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham” (*John* 8:39). Paul agrees: “They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God” (*Romans* 9:8).

It is in this context that we also see in *Ezekiel* the precursor to Jesus’ rebuke of the Jews that “they say, and do not” (*Matthew* 23:3), and Paul’s warning that the Jews are not doers of the Law, but are hearers only (*Romans* 2:13), and James’ admonition, “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (*James* 1:22). The Jews in Ezekiel’s day were as deceived as they were in Jesus’ day:

[T]hey sit before thee as My people, *and they hear thy words, but they will not do them*: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: *for they hear thy words, but they do them not.* (*Ezekiel* 33:31, 32)

The message that resounds throughout the Old Testament and New is that the Jews “honoured Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me” (*Matthew* 15:7-8). The only solution for such a condition is translation from death to life through rebirth and the indwelling of the Spirit, and

that is precisely what the Lord prescribed for His people in *Ezekiel* 18: “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (verses 30, 31).

The result of such a heart change would have had two beneficial effects: the self-righteous would stop resting on his own righteousness, and the wicked would turn from his wickedness, or in a word, *repentance*. In *Ezekiel* 18 and 33, the Lord thrice warned the righteous that they must not trust in their own righteousness (18:24, 33:12-13). To cease trusting in their own righteousness, however, would require new hearts. In the same chapters He thrice comforted the wicked that if they would turn from their sins, none of their wickedness would accrue to them in judgment (18:21-22, 33:12-15), but to turn from wickedness would require a new heart.

This, of course, was not what the Jews were expecting at all, for it is not the wicked only but the self-“righteous” too, who are commanded to repent. What was being commanded to both the wicked and the self-“righteous” was regeneration, for *both* stood in dire need of it: “turn yourselves from all your transgressions...and make you a new heart and a new spirit.” In this exchange in *Ezekiel* we see a foreshadowing of Christ’s interaction with the Pharisees and Publicans. Just as the Pharisees would one day reject the offer in the New Testament—because it “unfairly” acquitted the sinner—the Jews rejected the command in the Old Testament, and on the same grounds—*because it was unfair*: “Yet ye say, *The way of the Lord is not equal....* Yet saith the house of Israel, *The way of the Lord is not equal!*” (18:25, 29). “Yet the children of thy people say, *The way of the Lord is not equal....* Yet ye say, *The way of the Lord is not equal!*” (33:17, 20).

What was “unfair” in the minds of the Jews was that all their hard work would not accrue to offset their sins if they *did not* repent, and neither would the sins of the wicked accrue in judgment if they *did*. Even now we can hear the early laborers as they murmur against the householder, “Thou hast made them equal unto us!” (*Matthew* 20:12); and the Jews as they respond to Paul incredulously, “What advantage then hath the Jew?” (*Romans* 3:1); and the elder brother who is indignant that “thou hast killed...the fatted calf” for “this son of yours,” but never allowed so much as a “kid” in return for “these many years” of service (*Luke* 15:29-30). To the self-righteous, God’s gracious acquittal of the sinner is always “unfair.”

**“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (*Ezekiel* 36)**

What we find in *Ezekiel* 36 is the ultimate end of God’s command to “make you a new heart and a new spirit.” The

natural man is completely unable to comply with such a command, and because neither the self-“righteous” nor the wicked are able to fashion new hearts and new spirits for themselves, the Lord promised that He would do it for them:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. (36:26-28)

What would one day deeply offend the sensibilities of the Jews is that this promise of a new heart and a new spirit had been lavished upon the Gentiles. Both Jesus and Paul apply these verses to the Gentiles as the *Jealousy Narrative* is worked out in the New Testament. They both continuously put forth not the Jews but the harlots, publicans, lepers, Samaritans, and Gentiles as the recipients of this promise—the regenerated, Spirit-indwelt, sons of Abraham who will inherit the land, and who are, incidentally, better at obeying the Law than the Scribes and Pharisees. To see this, we need only examine Jesus’ application of the *Jealousy Narrative* in the *Gospels*.

#### *The Jealousy Narrative in the Gospels*

In one of the most dramatic displays of the *Jealousy Narrative*, Jesus reads from *Isaiah* in the synagogue, and concludes by saying, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Those who heard Him bore witness to Him and marveled “at the gracious words” He spoke (*Luke 4:21-22*). Everything seemed to be progressing nicely, but then He invoked the *Jealousy Narrative* by reminding them of Naaman the Syrian and Zarephath, the widow of Sidon. There had been no shortage of *Jewish* widows in Elijah’s day, but Elijah went to help the *Gentile* widow of Sidon instead. There had been no shortage of *Jewish* lepers in Elisha’s day, but Elisha went to help the *Gentile* Naaman instead (*Luke 4:25-27*). Jesus elicited the expected response, and His audience erupted in a jealous rage. Those who heard Him “were filled with wrath” and tried to drive Him out of town and throw him off a cliff (*Luke 4:28-29*). He had made them jealous by showing that God’s blessings—to which the *Jews* believed they were entitled—were being lavished upon the *Gentiles*, and had been for a very long time. Other New Testament examples abound:

When He healed the ten lepers, the only one who returned to thank him was a Samaritan, not a Jew, and Jesus made a point of it: “There are not found that returned to give glory to God, *save this stranger*” (*Luke 17:12-19*).

When He taught the Parable of the Two Sons (*Matthew 21:28-31*), the purpose was to show that “the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before” the chief priests and the elders. The publicans and harlots “did the will of his father,” but the elders and priests did not.

When he encountered a believing Roman Centurion (*Matthew 8:5-10*), He marveled, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, *no, not in Israel*.” He then turned to the Jews and informed them that this Roman occupier would “sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” as if he were a Jew, but the Jews “would be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” as if they were Gentiles (*Matthew 8:11-12*).

When Simon the Pharisee had Jesus in his home for dinner, Jesus showed that a repentant prostitute was better than a Pharisee at obeying the law to love God (*Luke 7:40-50*).

When He taught the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the point was that the Samaritan knew better than the Jewish priests and Levites how to obey the law to “love thy neighbour” (*Luke 10:30-37*).

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son (*Luke 15*), the older son (the scribes and Pharisees) is provoked to jealousy by the gracious treatment of the younger son (the sinners and tax collectors). The father in the parable uses his elder son’s jealousy as an occasion to invite him to join the feast.

In the Parable of the Laborers (*Matthew 20*), the early laborers (Jews) are made jealous by the compensation received by the late workers (Gentiles). The householder uses their jealousy as an occasion to proclaim God’s freedom to save both Jew and Gentile, according to His sovereign will.

In the Parable of the Householder’s Vineyard, “the kingdom of God shall be taken from you [the Jews], and given to a nation [the Gentiles] bringing forth the fruits thereof [obedience]” (*Matthew 21:33-43*).

In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (*Luke 18:10-14*), a tax collector goes home justified, but the Pharisee does not.

In Jesus’ visit with Zacchaeus (*Luke 19*), it is a repentant, obedient tax collector who is identified as the true “son of Abraham.”

In *Luke 11*, Jesus insists that the Gentile Queen of Sheba would one day “rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation [of Jews], and condemn them” (31), and promised that the Gentile Ninevites would “rise up in the

judgment with this generation [of Jews], and shall condemn it” (32).

When he taught the Parable of the Sower, it is in the context of His comparison of the Jews, whose “heart is waxed gross” (*Matthew* 13:15), to His followers who received His teachings “in an honest and good heart” (*Luke* 8:15).

Jesus clearly invested a great deal of His time making the Jews jealous by portraying believing Gentiles as if they were the chosen people of God, and portraying unbelieving Jews as if they were Gentiles. The sinners, tax collectors, harlots, lepers, Samaritans, and Gentiles—even the Roman occupiers—are better than the Jews at everything: glorifying God, loving God, loving their neighbor, repenting, obeying the law, and importantly, *believing in Jesus*.

While we do not deny that all the attributes of a believer are certainly resident in each of Jesus’ examples—the leper, the harlot, the Samaritan, the centurion, Zacchaeus and the Tax Collector—we must not miss that Jesus has represented the ideal Jew *in their aggregation*:

The harlot...	... loved God ...	... more than the Pharisee.
The Samaritan...	... loved his neighbor ...	... better than the priests and Levites.
The centurion...	... believed in Jesus ... ... and would dine with Abraham...	... more than Israel... ... but the Jews would not.
The Samaritan leper...	... glorified God ...	... more than the Jews.
Zacchaeus...	... was a son of Abraham ...	... in contrast with the Pharisees.
The tax collector...	... was justified ...	... and the Pharisee was not.

And what an aggregation it is! This is what it looks like both to hear and to do the law, to believe in God and glorify Him, to be a true son of Abraham, and inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is these, not the Jews, who have received the promised regeneration. It is these to whom the promise of God is fulfilled, “A new heart also will I give you.... And I will put my spirit within you, *and cause you to walk in my statutes*” (*Ezekiel* 36:26-27). It is by these that the promise of Moses is fulfilled, that God would stir the Jews to jealousy with “a foolish nation” who “are not a people.”

This “Nexus of Jewishness”—centered as it is on Samaritans, Gentiles, publicans, harlots, and lepers—is the object of the Pharisees’ scorn throughout the *Gospels*, and not without cause. It is the *Jealousy Narrative* in full force, and it had a very specific purpose: to make the Jews jealous that they may be saved. The fact that His preaching occasionally netted a Pharisee (*John* 3, 7:50, 19:39) is evidence that Jesus’ *Jealousy Narrative* had its intended effect. As we shall see, His apostles learned this well from Him, and applied it with considerable success in the book of *Acts* as well.

*The Jealousy Narrative in Acts*

When the Apostles began to take their message to the world, they carried the *Jealousy Narrative* with them. The effect was the same. When Paul and Barnabas preached in Antioch in Pisidia, it was the Gentiles who were interested in his message (*Acts* 13:42), and when they came out in numbers, Jewish jealousy kicked in: “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, *they were filled with envy*, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming” (*Acts* 13:45). When Paul and Barnabas saw their response, they doubled down, trying even harder to provoke the Jews to jealousy:

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, *lo, we turn to the Gentiles...*” And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. (13:46-50)

When Paul and Silas preached in Thessalonica, it was the Gentiles who believed—“the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few” (*Acts* 17:4)—and it had the intended effect: “But the Jews which believed not, *moved with envy*, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people” (17:5). When Paul said of the Jews that their ears, eyes and hearts were closed, he invoked the *Jealousy Narrative* again, and once again it had the desired effect: “Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning [disputation] among themselves” (*Acts* 28:28-29).

The effectiveness of the *Narrative* is seen when the Jews depart from the synagogue after Paul preaches the Gospel,

but the Gentiles remain and insist that he come back the following Sabbath to preach again (*Acts* 13:42). After “the congregation was broken up,” the Jews, who were apparently waiting curiously, “followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God” (13:43). The Jews eventually “expelled them out of their coasts” (13:50), but at the Jewish synagogue at Iconium, the same method is applied, and “a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed” (14:1).

With this backdrop of the *Jealousy Narrative* in the Old Testament, *Gospels*, *Acts*, and *Romans*, we will now turn our attention to Paul’s precise use of *the Narrative* in *Romans* 2.

### *The Jealousy Narrative in Romans 2*

In *Romans* 2, we necessarily divide the chapter into two parts, *Romans* 2:1-16 and *Romans* 2:17-29, for so Paul himself divides the chapter. The latter half is merely a recapitulation of the former. In the first half, Paul begins by challenging the self-righteous hypocrisy of the Jews “for thou that judgest doest the same things” (2:1) “after thy hardness and impenitent heart” (2:5). He ends with the Gentiles, not the Jews, doing “the things contained in the law” (2:14), by their obedience showing that it is they, not the Jews, who have “the law written in their hearts” (2:15). It is the Gentiles, not the Jews, who have a new heart and a new Spirit, in accordance with the covenant promise in *Ezekiel* 36:26.

In the second half, Paul doubles down on the *Jealousy Narrative*. He repeats the charge against the Jew who “retest in the Law” (2:17) and “makest thy boast of the law” (2:23), and yet continues to disobey it (2:21-25). It is the Gentiles, on the other hand, who are uncircumcised “by nature,” and yet “keep the righteousness of the law” (2:26) and “fulfil the law” (2:27). It is the Gentiles, not the Jews, who by the Spirit, are obeying the Law, in accordance with the covenant promise in *Ezekiel* 36:27.

In this light, it is clear that Paul in *Romans* 2 is applying with his typical rigor the implications of the *Jealousy Narrative*. He is juxtaposing Jews and Gentiles in the pattern established by his Master. Jesus had the Gentiles rising in judgment to condemn the Jews for their disobedience (*Matthew* 12:41, 42), and Paul follows suit: “And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?” (*Romans* 2:27).

Thus, in light of the vast amount of Scriptural data from Moses, the Prophets, the *Gospels* and *Acts*, it is difficult to see *Romans* 2 in any other light than that of the *Jealousy Narrative* that God has superimposed on the history of His people. There is no better catalyst for Jewish jealousy than

for the Law and the circumcision to be given to those who “by nature” have neither, and in this, Paul has made plain that the covenant promises of God have been manifested in the Gentiles: “A new heart also will I give you.... And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (*Ezekiel* 36:26-27). In both halves of *Romans* 2, it is the Jews who are portrayed as having hard, impenitent, uncircumcised, disobedient hearts (2:5, 25), while the wicked Gentiles who had been portrayed in such unflattering detail in *Romans* 1 are portrayed with tender, repentant, circumcised, obedient hearts, with the Law inscribed upon them (2:15, 28, 29). It is these believing Gentiles who rise like the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites to judge the disobedient Jews (2:27). As we shall demonstrate, in each half of chapter 2 Paul’s approach is resonant of what he learned by reading *Ezekiel* and by hearing the words of his Lord (*Galatians* 1:12).

### *The Jealousy Narrative in Romans 2:1-16*

We notice from the beginning of the chapter Paul’s heavy reliance on *Ezekiel* as he compares Israel to her idolatrous elder sister Samaria and to her sexually deviant younger sister Sodom (*Ezekiel* 16:46). Israel, *Ezekiel* said, was so disobedient, that by comparison she had “justified” her sisters. In this pitiable condition Israel had presumed to stand in judgment of her sisters even though she herself was guilty of the same things: “bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they” (*Ezekiel* 16:52). In *Romans* 1 Paul has set up the same comparison. He has portrayed the Gentiles as wholly given over to idolatry and sexual deviancy just as Samaria and Sodom had been, for the Gentiles “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image” (1:23), and “burned in their lust one toward another; men with men” (1:27). These are the Samaritans and Sodomites—Israel’s elder and younger sisters—and the Jews of Paul’s day continued to stand in judgment of them.

At this point, Paul invokes the *Jealousy Narrative*, just as *Ezekiel* had: as the Gentiles “are without excuse” (*Romans* 1:20), so too are the Jews inexcusable, for even as they look down upon Gentiles and Samaritans in judgment, they are guilty of the same offenses (*Romans* 2:1-3). This is *Ezekiel*’s tune, and Paul is singing with him on the refrain, for Paul has essentially restated *Ezekiel* 16 for the Jews of his day. Paul continues in *Romans* 2:4-6, reminding the Jews of God’s forbearance in His command to repent in *Ezekiel* 18-33: “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin” (18:30). “[T]urn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (33:11). Echoing *Ezekiel*, Paul asks, “despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (*Romans* 2:4).

It was in this same context that Ezekiel implored the righteous to stop trusting in their own righteousness, and implored the wicked to turn from their wickedness.

When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, *all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered*; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it... But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. (*Ezekiel 33:13, 19*)

It is not insignificant that when Jesus spoke the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, He used the same terms that Ezekiel had, addressing it “unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (*Luke 18:9*). The meaning of the parable was that “every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (*Luke 18:14*), which is, significantly, the message of *Ezekiel 17*. The message of Ezekiel and the message of Jesus is one of repentance, and it is addressed to all, self-righteous and sinner, Jew and Gentile alike. We are particularly interested, therefore, in Paul’s choice of words in *Romans 2:6-10*, as he simply recapitulates Ezekiel’s message of *Ezekiel 16* and *17*, and Jesus’ parables of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (*Luke 18:9-15*) and the Two Sons (*Mathew 21:28-32*). He describes what repentance does, and does not, look like:

- (6) Who will render to every man according to his deeds:
- (7) To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:
- (8) But unto them that are contentious (ἐξ ἐριθείας), and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,
- (9) Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
- (10) But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.

The word rendered as “contentious” in *Romans 2:8* is ἐξ ἐριθείας, and actually refers not to the disputatious and argumentative (as it is typically translated), but to “every one that exalteth himself” and “trusted to his own righteousness,” the sin of self-promotion and vainglorious self-esteem (compare *Philippians 2:3*; *James 3:14*). It is “a desire to put one’s self forward,” in the sense of self-commendation—the very sin prohibited in *Ezekiel 33:13*.<sup>8</sup> Paul is not here contrasting good works unto justification with bad works unto damnation. Instead, he is contrasting repentance with impenitence. The chapter to this point has

been focused on *repentance*, not on justification (*i.e.*, “the goodness of God leadeth thee to *repentance*.... But after thy hardness and *impenitent* heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath...” –*Romans 2:4-5*). This repentance is noticeably lacking in the self-promoting hypocrisy of the scribes, priests, and Pharisees, yet is found conspicuously in the patient continuance of the harlots, lepers, tax collectors, Gentiles, and Samaritans as they turn from their evil works (*Luke 3:10-14*, *Matthew 21:32*). Simply put, *Romans 2:6-10* says that he who humbles himself will be exalted, and he who exalts himself will be made low. Thus Paul is merely recapitulating Ezekiel’s message by contrasting true repentance of turning from evil works with false repentance that consists of shameless, hypocritical, self-promotion that serves as a cloak for disobedience, “for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness” (*Ezekiel 33:31*).

In light of the *Jealousy Narrative*, we also see here in *Romans 2:6-10* Paul’s recapitulation of Jesus’ “Nexus of Jewishness” that we identified earlier. It is read as a contrast between the self-commendation of the elder son, the Pharisee, the Rich Young Ruler and the hypocrites—“Lo, these many years do I serve thee...” (*Luke 15:29*), “I fast twice in the week, I give tithes...” (*Luke 18:12*), “All these have I kept from my youth...” (*Luke 18:21*), who “sound a trumpet” to announce their almsgiving (*Matthew 6:2*)—and the actual humble obedience of the harlot, the Samaritan, the younger son, the leper, and the humble—“for she loved much” (*Luke 7:47*); “[he] was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves” (*Luke 10:36*), “I...am no more worthy to be called thy son” (*Luke 15:21*), “[he] returned to give glory to God” (*Luke 17:18*), who give their alms “in secret” (*Mathew 6:4*). The former all commended their own righteousness in self-exaltation with trumpets and fanfare but continued in disobedience, whereas the latter fled from their own righteousness and nevertheless repented and obeyed the Law. The former are they who were asked to work in their Father’s vineyard and replied “I go, sir’: and went not.” The latter are they who initially refused to work in their Father’s vineyard, but afterward “repented and went” (*Matthew 21:28-32*). The former *talked* about doing the Law, but the latter actually *did* it, showing forth the fruits of repentance (compare *Matthew 3:8*). They are the fulfillment of God’s promise, “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, *and do them*” (*Ezekiel 36:26*). To the perpetual horror of Jesus’ self-righteous listeners, that promise was being fulfilled in the Gentile “Nexus of Jewishness,” and not in the priests, scribes, Levites, and Pharisees.

God is no respecter of persons (*Romans 2:11*), so of course the unrepentant will suffer judgment, be they Jew or Gentile, and the repentant will enjoy salvation, be they Jew or Gentile. The problem for the Jews is not that God

<sup>8</sup> “Canvassing for public office, intriguing,” (see its use in antiquity, Aristotle, *Politics* 1302b4, 1303a14). “Selfish or factious ambition” (Walter Bauer, *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, University of Chicago Press, 1979, 309).

forgives the repentant. The problem for the Jews was that God had granted that repentance to the Gentiles, eliciting the age-old self-righteous and jealous indignation: “That’s not fair!” Thus, when Paul says, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” he is plainly speaking of believing, repentant Gentiles of the order of the “Nexus of Jewishness”—the harlot, the Samaritan, the centurion, the leper, and the tax collector—or, in this context, the formerly unclean Gentiles of *Romans* 1. It is these who are justified *vis-à-vis* the unrepentant Jews who are not. By this Paul makes obedience a distinguishing characteristic of God’s justified people—for that is precisely what Ezekiel had prophesied (36:27), and what Jesus had taught (*John* 13:25, 15:10), and what John had foreseen (*Revelation* 12:17, 14:12)—and thus Paul’s earnest desire is “to make the Gentiles obedient” (*Romans* 15:18). In this he is merely advancing the *Jealousy Narrative*, but he is very, very far from commending a works-righteousness for justification.

The historical temptation here has been to read *works causality* into the justification of the Gentiles in *Romans* 2:13, but Paul will have nothing of it. Christ is just as much “the end of the law for righteousness” in *Romans* 2 as He is “the end of the law for righteousness” in *Romans* 10. Certainly “Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, ‘That the man which doeth those things shall live by them’” (*Romans* 10:5), but Paul dismisses that righteousness and speaks instead of a righteousness that is by faith. In this we note that Paul has done with Ezekiel in *Romans* 2 what he does with Moses in *Romans* 10. Ezekiel, after all, described a “righteousness which is of the law,” as well: “And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, *which if a man do, he shall even live in them*” (20:11); “and they despised my judgments, *which if a man do, he shall even live in them*” (20:13); “they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, *which if a man do, he shall even live in them*” (20:21).

In the midst of Ezekiel’s appeals to obedience as well as the command that both the wicked and the righteous “get a new heart and a new spirit,” what comes plainly to the fore is the futility of man’s attempts to establish his own righteousness and bring about his own rebirth. Finding none repentant, and finding none with new hearts and new spirits, the Lord announces “I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked” together (*Ezekiel* 21:3-4), because “I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: *but I found none*” (22:30). Lacking a Savior, the self-righteous and the wicked would perish together—the very point Paul makes in *Romans* 2:12, “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.”

The historical Jewish response to Ezekiel’s admonition, as the succeeding centuries demonstrated, was to redouble their efforts to establish a righteousness before God based on the Law, while hoping for a “soft” standard of judgment on Judgment Day, Lusk’s “fatherly justice” that is in fact a compromise with unrighteousness. Instead, God provided the new heart and new spirit Himself (*Ezekiel* 36:26) because His people could not provide their own. Likewise, because no one righteous could be found to “stand in the gap” for His people, the Father provided Jesus Who came to Earth to “stand in the gap” before Him, for His people had no righteousness of their own to plead.

The problem for the Jews in this scenario is that when God had granted that new heart and that new Spirit and found “a Man among them, that should...stand in the gap before Me,” it was the Gentiles who were the beneficiaries of His grace, eliciting the response in *Romans* 3:1-5 “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?...[is] the faith of God without effect?... Is God unrighteous...?” Paul had anticipated such a response of jealous indignation and cries of injustice, and pointed back to Christ as the solution to the false dilemma created by Jewish jealousy. If God’s promise had been to Abraham’s “seed, through the law,” their objection might receive a hearing, but it had not. If God had justified the ungodly without penalty, the Jews might have a case, but He had not. His promise had been to Abraham’s descendants according to faith, and He had kept that promise. He had provided the Man “to stand in the gap before Me” to propitiate their sins, and satisfy the unbending requirements of His own standard of justice. Therefore the charges of God’s alleged unfaithfulness and injustice fall flat. He keeps His promises and is simultaneously “just, and the justifier” of the ungodly:

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: *that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* (*Romans* 3:24-26)

Where then, is boasting? Paul asks in 3:27, hearkening back to 2:8 (ἐξ ἐπιθείας). Where is the shameless, hypocritical self-promotion and trusting in one’s own righteousness? It is excluded by the law of faith (3:27), and the law of faith excludes obedience as the ground of justification. On this basis Paul proceeds unwavering toward his conclusion that God does not justify “him that worketh,” but “him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly” (*Romans* 4:5), for Jesus “in due time” indeed had “died for the ungodly” (*Romans* 5:6)—the very offense that had been a stumbling block to the Jews in

Ezekiel's day—"The way of the Lord is not equal!" (*Ezekiel* 18:25)—and in Jesus' day—"a friend of publicans and sinners!" (*Luke* 7:34). Paul did not offer a "righteousness which is of the law" in *Romans* 2 only to rescind it in *Romans* 10, and he certainly did not commend a "soft righteousness" of Lusk's imagination. Of course the "doers of the law shall be justified" (*Romans* 2:13), and those "doers," and not "hearers only," turned out to be the heathen of whom, in Scripture it is stated: "foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith" (*Galatians* 3:8). The only perfect "doer" of the law is the Man Christ Jesus. But the ungodly Gentiles and Samaritans of *Romans* 1 who "believeth on him" and are justified by faith alone (*Romans* 3:28) on account of Christ's righteousness alone (*Romans* 3:24-26) obey the law, albeit imperfectly, out of gratitude for the salvation they have received, and so provoke the unbelieving, self-righteous Jews who claimed the law and the promises but neither believed nor obeyed.

Paul then continues by extolling the covenantal benefits that the regenerate Gentiles enjoy. In their unregenerate condition, the Gentiles' consciences had been informed by the outward testimony of creation (*Romans* 1:19-20), but in their regenerate condition, the Gentiles now benefit not only from the outward testimony, but also from the inward testimony of the Law. In his characteristic reference to a *joint* testimony Paul says of them, "their conscience *also bearing witness*" (compare *Romans* 8:16, 9:1). It is these informed thoughts that either accuse or excuse the regenerate, in the same way that John describes this very phenomenon in the believer: "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart" (*1 John* 3:20). It is precisely this blessing of the Law written inwardly that has Jeremiah insisting that its recipients "shall teach no more every man his neighbour" (*Jeremiah* 31:34), and Paul saying that the heirs of the promise "are no longer under a schoolmaster" (*Galatians* 3:25), and that Gentiles "are a law unto themselves" (*Romans* 2:14). To illustrate his point by negation, we simply point out that when *unregenerate* Gentiles "are a law unto themselves" and every man does "that which was right in his own eyes" (*Judges* 17:6; 21:25), the result is chaos, not "patient continuance" in "doing the law." Paul therefore, clearly, has believing Gentiles in mind here, and their patient continuance in doing the Law is the fruit of their regenerate condition, and is not the common condition of all mankind.

In this, Paul is consistent with Christ's application of the *Jealousy Narrative* in the *Gospels*. Jesus' application of the *Narrative* involved a contrast between the lawlessness of the Jews with the obedience of the lepers, tax collectors, harlots, Samaritans, and Gentiles, but He consistently focuses on their *faith* for salvation. Although the Samaritan leper was glorifying God in accordance with the Law, Jesus says, "Arise, go thy way: *thy faith* hath made thee whole" (*Luke* 17:19). The Roman Centurion was known for his

love for God's people in accordance with the Law, but Jesus highlights *his faith* (*Luke* 7:9). Jesus likened the harlots and tax collectors to the first son who "did the will of his father" (*Matthew* 21:29-31) in accordance with the Law, but when He explained the meaning of the Parable, He observed that John the Baptist came preaching, and "the publicans and the harlots *believed him*" (*Matthew* 21:32). Jesus said of the harlot at the Pharisee's house, "she loved much" (*Luke* 7:47) in accordance with the Law, but then He turned to her and said, "*Thy faith* hath saved thee" (*Luke* 7:50). On all these occasions, the objects of Jesus' teaching lessons were performing good works in accordance with the Law (doers of the Law), and in fact were exceeding the Jews (hearers only) in their obedience, but He does not point to the Law as the instrument of their healing or their salvation. *He points to faith*. We should not be surprised that Paul takes the same approach in *Romans* 2. The wicked Gentiles of *Romans* 1 have been given new hearts and a new spirit, they have heard the preaching of the Law unto repentance and have believed, and by that faith alone they are justified, for "we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (*Romans* 3:28).

Thus, the meaning of *Romans* 2:13, by logical deduction, is this: "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified, *and that by faith alone*." This is what made the Jews jealous in *Ezekiel*; it is what made the Jews jealous in the *Gospels*; it is what made the Jews jealous in *Acts*; and it is what made the Jews jealous in *Romans*. Believing Gentiles are obeying as if they were Jews and as Abraham's true descendants are justified by faith alone, while unbelieving Jews are disobeying as if they were Gentiles, resting on the law for righteousness, and seeking but not finding that righteousness at all.

On this point, Augustine agrees: "'the doers of the law shall be justified' must be so understood as that we may know that they are not otherwise doers of the law, unless they be justified, so that justification does not subsequently accrue to them as doers of the law, but justification precedes them as doers of the law" (*Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter*, 45).

Obedience to the law is the outward attribute of God's justified people, *but they are justified by faith alone*. In light of Paul's use of the Samaritans and Sodomites in *Romans* 1 to make his case by way of example, truly we may say that what Ezekiel had prophesied had come true: "thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters" (16:61). Out of those Samaritans and Gentiles, Jesus had cleansed for Himself "a peculiar people" who were not only "zealous of good works" (*Titus* 2:14) but also had been justified apart from them. *Romans* 2:13-15 is therefore highlighted as the parenthetical statement that it clearly is. Those who have

sinned “in the law” or “without the law” (*Romans* 2:12) shall perish “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (*Romans* 2:16). Such is the end that awaits those who trust to their own righteousness, ἐξ ἐπιθείας, Jew or Gentile. Not so the regenerate, who have the law written on their hearts, and live as if they were a law unto themselves, obeying its precepts not for justification but because they have been justified. To the chagrin of the Jews, those regenerate, believing, justified, and *peculiarly obedient* people are Gentiles, and as prophesied, the Jews are confounded and ashamed by this (*Ezekiel* 16:61).

### ***The Jealousy Narrative in Romans 2:17-29***

*The Jealousy Narrative* continues its successful overtures in the second half of the chapter. Paul clearly portrays the Jews as unbelieving and disobedient, after having portrayed the Gentiles as believing and obedient. Here the Gentiles are uncircumcised “by nature” (*Romans* 2:27), yet inwardly are the real Jews, for “he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit” (2:29). Paul is again writing of believing Gentiles here: they are regenerated, circumcised in the heart, and indwelt by the Spirit. These are the real, believing Jews, even though they are outwardly Gentiles. The Jews, on the other hand, while circumcised in the flesh, are unbelieving Gentiles at heart, for they rest on their obedience with an unwarranted confidence, shameless in their self-promotion even as they disobey, resting on and boasting in the Law even as they are unbelieving lawbreakers:

Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God...being instructed out of the law; And art confident...thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?...if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. (2:17-25)

Because of their disobedience, Paul lays at their feet the charge that “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written,” an unmistakable reference to *Ezekiel* 36:20-23. Here in the second half of *Romans* 2, Paul has done as his Master instructed, continuing His ministry by provoking the Jews to jealousy, portraying them as unbelieving Gentiles, and portraying believing Gentiles as the real Jews. Whereas the chapter started with the Jews judging the Gentiles (2:3), Paul ends the chapter with the Gentiles judging the Jews: “And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?” (2:27).

Thus in *Romans* 2 Paul brings the full weight of *Ezekiel*’s message to bear on the Jews of his day, just as Jesus had done before him. He shows them that *Ezekiel*’s ancient promise of “a new heart...and a new spirit” followed by repentance and obedience, had been fulfilled in the Gentiles. It is the Gentiles, not the Jews, who have believed and obeyed, showing themselves to be the true sons of Abraham, who truly “do the works of Abraham” (*John* 8:39), but are justified quite apart from those works (*Romans* 3:28). It is these Gentile sons of Abraham who have the Law written in their hearts and the Spirit indwelling, Who causes them to “walk in my statutes, and...keep My judgments, and do them” (*Ezekiel* 36:27). The scribes, Pharisees, and Levites did their works “to be seen of men” (*Matthew* 23:5) and “justify [themselves] before men” (*Luke* 16:15), and of men they “have their reward” (*Matthew* 6:16). But God’s people are patient in their continuance of good works, and their “praise is not of men, but of God” (*Romans* 2:29), and their “Father, which seeth in secret” rewards them openly (*Matthew* 6:18). Such a dramatic contrast understandably leaves the Jews bewildered in their jealous indignation, as they question the faithfulness (*Romans* 3:3) and righteousness (3:5) of God. As Paul demonstrates in *Romans* 3 and 4, however, both charges are overturned, for the promise “was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (4:13), and God “hath set forth [Jesus] to be a propitiation...that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (3:25, 26).

What we have seen in *Romans* 2, and particularly in 2:13, is a restatement of *Ezekiel*’s condemnation of the Jews—“for they hear thy words, but they do them not” (*Ezekiel* 33:32)—and Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees—“for they say, and do not” (*Matthew* 23:3)—all in the context of *the Jealousy Narrative* in which Israel’s elder and younger sisters are given back to her as daughters. It is these who initially “answered and said, ‘I will not’: but afterward...repented, and went” (*Matthew* 21:29). It is these who are the doers of the law, and not the hearers only. It is these who have a new heart and a new Spirit and are justified by faith alone.

### ***A Future Justification based on Words and Works?***

Because they did not understand *the Jealousy Narrative*, Lusk, Wright, Shepherd, and Stellman all misunderstood Paul to be speaking in *Romans* of an initial justification that is based on faith, and a final justification based on works. To support this, these men also appeal to a future justification by “words” (*Matthew* 12) and a future justification by works (*Matthew* 25). In both passages, the errant interpretation by Lusk, Wright, Shepherd, and Stellman is plainly corrected by the *Jealousy Narrative*.

### A Future Justification by Words?

In *Matthew* 12:36-37, Jesus warns the Pharisees: “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For *by thy words thou shalt be justified*, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

As we noted at the beginning of the article, Lusk appeals to this passage when he says that ‘Jesus is not kidding...when he speaks of a future justification according to our words (Mt. 12:37; 25:31ff).’ Stellman, also, finally capitulated to the Roman view of justification due in no small part to his belief that Jesus was teaching a future justification based on words. Shepherd, likewise, made the same case in his *Thirty-Four Theses* (thesis 4). But a closer reading of *Matthew* 12 tells a different story.

John the Baptist was the herald of the Messiah, announcing the arrival of Kingdom of God (*Matthew* 3:1-17). When Jesus heard that John had been imprisoned—a formal rejection of the Kingdom of God by the Jews—He immediately departed and went to “Galilee of the Gentiles” (*Matthew* 4:12-17). It is common, as we shall see, for Jesus to turn to the Gentiles when He and His Kingdom are rejected by His own. This is what is happening in *Matthew* 12. Jesus and His disciples had picked corn on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees criticized them for it (12:2). Then He went into their synagogue, and the Pharisees questioned whether He ought to be healing on the Sabbath (12:10). After He healed a man, “the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him” (12:14).

What happened next was simply the working out of the *Jealousy Narrative*. When Jesus knew their thoughts, “he withdrew himself from thence” and turned His attention to the Gentiles “and healed them” that it might be fulfilled, “I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles... And in his name shall the Gentiles trust” (*Matthew* 12:18-21). The new heart and new spirit of Ezekiel is hereby given to the Gentiles. Then, when Jesus healed a blind, dumb, demon-possessed man, the people were astonished and understood that the Kingdom of God had come: “Is not this the son of David?” (12:23). But the Pharisees criticized Him further, saying, “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils” (12:24). Jesus explained, rather, “I cast out devils by the Spirit of God” and “the kingdom of God is come unto you” (12:28).

The contrast is strikingly clear: Jesus had come by the Spirit of God, preaching the Kingdom of God, *and the Jews rejected Him*. Jesus then turned to the Gentiles with “My Spirit upon Him,” preaching the Kingdom of God, *and the Gentiles believed in Him*. It is in this context that Jesus introduces “justification by words.” He begins by saying,

All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever *speaketh a word* against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever *speaketh* against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.... A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every *idle word that men shall speak*, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy *words* thou shalt be justified, and by thy *words* thou shalt be condemned. (*Matthew* 12:31, 32, 35-37)

What have we before us but a contrast between Gentile belief, and Jewish unbelief? The Gentiles expressed their belief with *their words*: “Is this not the son of David?” (*Matthew* 12:23). The Pharisees expressed their unbelief with *their words*: “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils” (12:24). As Jesus explains in this context, the Gentiles expressed their *belief* from the “good treasure” of their regenerated hearts, while the Pharisees expressed their *unbelief* from the “evil treasure” of their unregenerated hearts. It is by *words* that their belief or unbelief is expressed: “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (12:34). In this context, Jesus says we will give an account for our words “in the day of judgment” (12:36). This, Lusk, Shepherd, and Stellman think, is a reference to a future justification by *works*.

But Jesus then gives two examples of what it will look like to be justified by our words “in the day of judgment,” and His examples serve to correct Lusk, Shepherd, and Stellman. To provoke the Jews, Jesus explained that the *Gentile Ninevites* would rise at the judgment and condemn this present generation because the Ninevites “repented at the preaching of Jonas” (*Matthew* 12:41). And the *Gentile Queen of Sheba* would rise at the judgment and condemn this generation because she was able “to hear the wisdom of Solomon” (12:42). The shaming of the Jews by Gentiles in the Day of Judgment would be strange, were it not for our knowledge of the *Jealousy Narrative*. The Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites—Gentiles all—are justified by their words, and this “adulterous generation,” the Pharisees, is condemned by theirs. That is the contrast we are offered.

Since the context here is “the day of judgment” at which men are either justified or condemned by their words, it would be well to know what, precisely, the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba *actually said*: “And Jonah...said, ‘Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.’ *So the people of Nineveh believed God*” (*Jonah* 3:5). “*It was a true report* which I heard in mine own land of thine acts,

and of thy wisdom: Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came” (2 *Chronicles* 9:5-6).

Since the people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast and turned from their evil ways (*Jonah* 3:5-10), and since the Queen of Sheba loaded Solomon with gifts (2 *Chronicles* 9:9), their examples provided a perfect opportunity for Jesus to say these Gentiles would be *justified by their works* in the day of judgment. But He did not. Instead, He said they would be justified *by their words*, and said their words were just an overflow of what was in their hearts: “we believe God!” and “It was a true report!” But the words of the Pharisees were “we do not believe!” and “we must destroy him!” Works are not in view here—only words of belief and words of unbelief.

The Pharisees finally asked for a sign that they, too, might believe, but the only sign they would receive is the sign of the Resurrection (*Matthew* 12:38-40). Thus, Jesus reveals here what He ultimately would reveal to Paul—namely that faith is trust in God that springs from the overflow of the heart, and is expressed with our *words*: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (*Romans* 10:9-10).

Applied to the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites, they believed with their hearts unto righteousness and confessed with their mouths unto salvation. Not so for the Pharisees. To complete the *Jealousy Narrative*, Jesus explained that while the demon-possessed Gentile had been freed from his bondage, the final condition of these Pharisees would be seven times worse than that man’s original condition. “Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation” (*Matthew* 12:45).

And what can we say of Lusk, Shepherd, and Stelman? Only that they stopped reading at “by thy words thou shalt be justified” (*Matthew* 12:37) and skipped forward to “whosoever shall do the will of my Father” (12:50), and concluded that Jesus had our works in mind for justification at the last day. Had they paused to reflect on why and how Jesus was making the Jews jealous, they would have seen that when we rise at the judgment, like the Queen of Sheba and the repentant Ninevites, we remain justified at the last day as we always have been—by faith alone. But more than this, Jesus has shown us here that the righteousness we possess at the Last Judgment *is the same righteousness by which we were justified at our conversion*. In both examples Jesus appeals to that righteousness which the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba possessed by faith when they first heard and believed the preaching of Jonah and the wisdom of Solomon. For “with the heart man believeth

unto righteousness,” and “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (*Romans* 10:10, 17).

### **A Future Justification by Works?**

Lusk, Wright, Shepherd, and Stelman also appeal to *Matthew* 25:31-46, to prove a future justification based on works.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.... Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty.... (*Matthew* 25:31ff)

This, they say, is evidence of a final justification based on our personal righteousness. However, upon closer examination, we see the *Jealousy Narrative* being applied by the Lord even at the final judgment scene. This becomes evident when we see the series of parables and encounters leading up to *Matthew* 25. Leading up to His narrative on the final Judgment, Jesus has relentlessly testified of the unfruitfulness of the Jews, and gave advance warning that the Kingdom was about to be taken away from them, *because they do not obey the Law, but are hearers only*:

*Matthew* 21:28-32, the parable of the “two sons” contrasting the faith and obedience of the publicans and the harlots with the unbelief and disobedience of the scribes and the chief priests.

*Matthew* 21:33-46, the parable of the householder, in which the Kingdom of God is taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles, who are those “other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons...a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

*Matthew* 22:1-14, the parable of the wedding banquet, in which the original invitees “made light of it,” so the feast is given instead to the heathen, “both bad and good.”

*Matthew* 23:1-39, in which Jesus condemns the disobedience of the scribes and Pharisees, yet commends their teachings to his disciples and the multitudes. As Ezekiel had said and as Paul would one day echo, the scribes and Pharisees, “*say, and do not*” (23:3).

*Matthew* 24:1-51, in which Jesus foretells the final rejection of the Jewish nation. Here He returns to the parable of the householder (21:33-46), saying, “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household...whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing” (24:45-46). Because it is the scribes and Pharisees who “say, and do not,” it is clear that the “faithful and wise servant” refers to the Gentiles.

*Matthew* 25:1-13, in which the foolish virgins look with jealousy upon the oil and lamps of the wise virgins. In this context, the foolish virgins are Israel, and the wise virgins are Gentiles.

*Matthew* 25:14-30, in which the talent is taken from the “wicked and slothful...unprofitable servant” and given to the “good and faithful servant.” This again is an application of the *Jealousy Narrative* in which the unprofitable servant personifies the Jews who criticize the Master for “reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed,” which is to say, He reaped His harvest from among the Gentiles, instead of among the Jews where the Word was first sown.

This unrelenting application of the *Jealousy Narrative* is the context of *Matthew* 25:31-46, and we see the Judgment scene here not as a sidebar to *the Narrative*, but as a continuation of it. The final humiliation of the Jews on Judgment Day is that the believing Gentiles were more obedient than the unbelieving Jews. That the *Jealousy Narrative* is carried all the way to the end should not surprise us. The fire of God’s jealousy, after all “shall burn unto the lowest hell” (*Deuteronomy* 32:22).

This scene of judgment is typically misread in isolation as if Jesus was planning to separate people on Judgment Day based on works—as if Jesus had said, “And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another *based on their works*.” But Jesus says no such thing. He says, rather, that He will separate them based on whether they are sheep or goats—sheep *believe* and goats *do not believe*: “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep” (*John* 10:26). The believing sheep are therefore separated from unbelieving goats before the first “good work” or “bad work” is ever mentioned—which is to say that on Judgment Day, Jesus will separate sheep from goats *based on a righteousness that is by faith apart from works*. Then, just as the scribes and Pharisees were to be shamed and humiliated on the last day *based on the faith* of the Gentiles (*Matthew* 12), they are also to be humiliated on the last day *based on the obedience* of the Gentiles (*Matthew* 25). In the context of the *Jealousy Narrative*, Jesus is recounting the fruitful obedience of the Gentiles before the Jews, but not until He first separates them based on faith. This is consistent with the message throughout Scripture—that God’s name will be sanctified before the nations based on His people’s *obedience*, but His people will be justified before God based on a *righteousness that comes by faith alone, apart from works of the Law*. As Paul said, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace” (*Romans* 4:16). Justification of necessity must be by faith apart from works, so that it might be by grace. But God’s name is sanctified before the heathen based on the works that spring from a new heart and a new spirit: “...I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.... A new heart also will

I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: ... and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (*Ezekiel* 36:23, 26-27).

Notably, “the righteous” sheep have done “the things contained in the law” (*Romans* 2:14), but they eschew the shameless self-promotion of the Pharisees to the very end: “Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?” (*Matthew* 25:37-39). Those are not the questions that are asked by people who have been taught, or who have believed, a “gospel” of justification by works.

*Matthew* 12 and 25 are typically interpreted apart from the context of the *Jealousy Narrative* and instead are read in a Roman Catholic context—as if Jesus was formally confirming a final justification by meritorious works and words—and Lusk, Wright, Shepherd, and Stellman all read them that way. But Jesus is actually highlighting the faith and obedience of the Gentiles as a continuation of His Father’s *Jealousy Narrative*—something Paul imitates meticulously when he begins and ends his *Epistle to the Romans* with the faith (1:8) and the obedience (16:19) of the Gentiles. In that context, *Matthew* 12 and 25 speak clearly of a justification that is *apart from works*. In Jason Stellman’s conversion testimony at the *Coming Home Network*, he explained how he had arrived at the Roman Catholic gospel of justification by works: “And so I thought, ‘I need to go back to Paul, but I also need to go back to Jesus, too. I need to start looking at the way Jesus speaks about judgment, sin, the relationship of faith and works, and what happens at the last day.’”<sup>9</sup> Indeed he does. Lusk, Wright, and Shepherd would do well to do the same.

### Conclusion

We understand that the interpretation of *Romans* 2:13 that we have put forth in this monograph may be difficult to adopt, especially in view of a prevailing Evangelical conviction that Paul is speaking hypothetically of “doers of the Law” being justified *by the law*. Even Calvin’s understanding of *Romans* 2:13 was that Paul was speaking hypothetically here, as if to convey the impossibility of the obeying the law for justification.<sup>10</sup> However, there is no need to take Paul hypothetically when he says the Gentiles do “the things contained in the law” (*Romans* 2:14) and “keep the righteousness of the law” (2:26). Remember this is about repentance versus impenitence and the fruits thereof (2:1-10). The *Jealousy Narrative* provides a context

<sup>9</sup> EWTN, (45:20 – 46:00).

<sup>10</sup> “Still more, we can prove from this passage that no one is justified by works; for if they alone are justified by the law who fulfill the law, it follows that no one is justified; for no one can be found who can boast of having fulfilled the law” (Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, CCEL).

in which such statements are seen as the fulfillment of *Ezekiel* 36:27, “and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” The Gentiles have neither the Law “by nature” (*Romans* 2:14), nor are circumcised “by nature” (2:27), yet they have been given both signs of the covenant, for these are in reference to the new heart and new spirit by which God’s people believe unto justification, and being justified by faith alone, begin to obey the Law far better than any unregenerate scribe or Pharisee could ever hope to do. Here, Augustine corrects Calvin, and supports this interpretation:

Now he could not mean to contradict himself in saying, “The doers of the law shall be justified,” as if their justification came through their works, and not through grace; since he declares that a man is justified freely by His grace without the works of the law, intending by the term “freely” nothing else than that works do not precede justification.... (*Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter*, 45)

In light of Jesus’ use of Gentiles, Samaritans, harlots, publicans, lepers, and yes, even a Roman Centurion, as models of both faith and obedience to the Law *vis-à-vis* the unbelief and disobedience of the scribes, chief priests, and Pharisees, we need only understand that Paul was applying the *Jealousy Narrative* to show—as Jesus did with Naaman the Syrian, the widow of Sidon, the Queen of Sheba, and the Ninevites—that the wicked Gentiles of *Romans* 1 were receiving the gracious gift of “a new heart” and “a new spirit,” (*Ezekiel* 36:26) and with that gift came the promise of Spirit-led obedience of the people of God: “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes” (36:27).

We note as well that historically, *Romans* 2:15 has been taken to mean that God puts His Law in the hearts of all mankind, and even Calvin reads this to mean that God has “imprinted on their hearts a discrimination and judgment by which they distinguish between what is just and unjust.”<sup>11</sup> However, there is no cause for such a reading, especially since it is *creation*, not the Law written in the heart, that serves this purpose for the unregenerate (*Romans* 1:19-20). The writing of the Law on the heart is not something that God bestows promiscuously upon all mankind, but rather to His special people, alone. Because God promises the writing of the law on the hearts of His people (*i.e.*, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” – *Jeremiah* 31:33; compare *2 Corinthians* 3:3, *Hebrews* 10:15, 16), it therefore makes little sense for Paul to say that God puts His Law in the hearts of all mankind in order to elicit Jewish jealousy. The writing of the Law in the heart is a *covenant promise* to “My people” alone, which is

precisely why *Romans* 2:15 necessarily incites the Jews to jealousy. We believe that Calvin again is corrected by Augustine here, when he says of this passage in *Romans*,

such Gentiles as have the law written in their hearts belong to the gospel, since to them, on their believing, it is the power of God unto salvation.... Now what the apostle attributed to Gentiles of this character,—how that “they have the work of the law written in their hearts” [*Romans* 2:15]; must be some such thing as what he says to the Corinthians: “not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” [*2 Corinthians* 3:3]. (*Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter*, 44, 46)

In this context, when Paul says, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (*Romans* 2:13), the *Jealousy Narrative* helps us understand his meaning. His consistent message in *Romans* 2 is that the uncircumcised Gentiles and Samaritans portrayed in *Romans* 1 had received and believed the Gospel, had repented, and were now walking in righteousness, and doing “the things contained in the law” (2:14) and keeping “the righteousness of the law” (2:26), but the unrepentant Jews “obey unrighteousness” (2:8) and are “breaking the law” (2:23). By appealing to *Ezekiel* 16 as the foundation of *Romans* 2, and showing that the prophecy of *Ezekiel* 16 is now an accomplished fact, Paul is essentially saying, “For not unbelieving Israel is just before God, but her believing Sisters are,” for this is the essence of the *Jealousy Narrative*. When Paul explains this to the Corinthians, he describes people of Corinth as if he was writing to the Gentiles and Samaritans of *Romans* 1: “fornicators...idolaters...adulterers...effeminate...abusers of themselves with mankind...thieves...covetous...drunkards...revilers...extortioners...shall not inherit the kingdom of God.... *And such were some of you*” (*1 Corinthians* 6:9-11; see also *Ephesians* 5:3-8). Yet these repentant Gentiles and Sodomites were now walking in the righteousness of the law, having been justified by faith alone: “but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (*1 Corinthians* 6:11). They were not justified by their good works, but “works” are what justified Gentiles *do*.

Just as the *Jealousy Narrative* spurns any notions of law righteousness in *Romans* 2, it also prohibits any notions of law righteousness in *Matthew* 12 or 25. We see in *Luke* 11:31-32 that obedient Gentiles rise to judge the disobedient Jews, and we also see them do so in *Romans* 2:27. This theme of obedient Gentiles rising in judgment of disobedient Jews “in the day of judgment” is a product of the *Jealousy Narrative* in which Gentile faith and obedience is contrasted with Jewish unbelief and disobedience, even up to the Day of Judgment. Therefore, Gentiles in *Matthew* 12:41-42 rise to judge the unbelieving

<sup>11</sup> Calvin, *Commentary on Romans* 2:15.

Jews “in the day of judgment,” yet are justified not by their works but “by their words” which were the overflow of the faith that came from the heart upon their first hearing of the Gospel (*Matthew* 12:34, 37; *Romans* 10:10). Just so, the sheep of *Matthew* 25 are separated from the goats based on a righteousness apart from works of the Law before any good work is mentioned. Only then is their obedience acknowledged before the goats, consistent with Jesus’ constant theme of Gentiles who possess a faith greater than any He had found in Israel, and would therefore dine with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the children of the kingdom would be cast out into outer darkness. We therefore insist with Paul that God’s “peculiar people” are “zealous of good works” (*Titus* 2:14), but we also insist with Moses, Ezekiel, Jesus, Paul, and all of Scripture, that God’s peculiar people are justified by faith alone, “apart from the works of the law” (*Romans* 3:28).