

A Study on the Meaning of ἔργα νόμου in Pauline Theology

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1. Purpose and Background

The purpose of this article is to clarify the meaning of ἔργα νόμου in Pauline Texts. The meaning of ἔργα νόμου is considered to be one of the most important elements of Pauline Theology. Certainly, the theme “justification by faith” is profound in Pauline Theology. Although “by faith” is relatively uncontroversial, “justification” has been extremely controversial. Justification has been related to “the righteousness of God.” For example, the arguments of Bultmann and Käsemann are well known.¹

The meaning of ἔργα νόμου has importance for how to relate “law” and “justification by faith.” Paul states: ²⁰ διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας.

“Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:20) Moreover, Paul states, (Galatians 2:15-16)

¹⁵ ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί· ¹⁶εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἂν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ.

“We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.” As we can see, here Paul seems to deny ἔργα νόμου. Does

¹ Cf. R. Bultmann, *Exegetica Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments* (E. Dinkler ed.), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1967, 472;

E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, (tr. and ed. G. W. Bromiley) Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980.

Paul deny observing the whole of νόμος or a part of νόμος ? That is significant for identifying the meaning of “justification.” If Paul’s usage of ἔργα νόμου includes the observance of basic norms like the Decalogue, along with norms concerning circumcision, cultic service, diet, and Sabbath, then observing the Decalogue should be denied as the antithesis of justification. This is Luther’s view.² This view about the usage of νόμος weakens the continuity between the OT and the NT concerning the meaning of “righteousness.” Conversely, Dunn asserts that ἔργα νόμου does not include the Decalogue itself, but is limited to norms like circumcision.³ In Dunn’s position, foundational law, such as the Decalogue, is not denied by justification, thus the OT and the NT maintain continuity concerning the meaning of “righteousness.”

Therefore, clarifying the meaning of ἔργα νόμου becomes important, and should be carried out, not only through a theological method, but also through a linguistic method. In order to clarify the meaning of ἔργον or ἔργα, this paper will deal with the Septuagint (LXX) that was widely read during the period in which Paul’s texts were generated, and examine the usage of sentences that includes ἔργον or ἔργα. This will shed light on what Paul means by ἔργα νόμου. As Stuhlmacher writes, Christianity was derived from Hebrew Scripture, the Septuagint and oral traditions of Synagogues in the Diaspora.⁴ Paul often quotes from the Septuagint for Greek speaking believers who received the letter to the Romans and the Galatians; he also needed to consider the reactions of Jewish believers who read the Hebrew scriptures. So we must examine Greek texts with ἔργον or ἔργα and Hebrew texts with the equivalent words. Thus this paper will pay attention to Hebrew texts as well as Greek texts.

² M. Luther, *Luther’s Works Volume 26 Lectures on Galatians 1535* (Jaroslav Pelikan ed., Walter A. Hansen, assoc. ed.), Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963, 138. Cf. M. Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Epistel-Auslegung Bd. 4, Der Galaterbrief* (Hermann Kleinknecht ed.), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980, 94f.

³ J. D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005, 101.

⁴ P. Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments Eine Hermeneutik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979, 244. Cf. P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans A Commentary*, Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1994, 55f.

2. Research History on ἔργα νόμου

Concerning the meaning of ἔργα νόμου in Pauline Theology, let us view the perspectives of Augustine, Luther, Bultmann, Wilckens, Conzelmann, Sanders, Dunn and Bachmann.

Augustine writes:

When St. Paul says, therefore, that man is justified by faith and not by the observance of the law, he does not mean that good works are not necessary or that it is enough to receive and to profess the faith and no more. What he means rather and what he wants us to understand is that man can be justified by faith, even though he has not previously performed any works of the law. For the works of the law are meritorious not before but after justification.⁵

Augustine's understanding is that Pauline Theology does not deny the observance of the law.

Luther writes the following about Galatians 2:16.

In order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law.

All these words are to be read with feeling and emphasis. As I have warned before, Paul is speaking here not about the Ceremonial Law alone but about the entire Law. For the Ceremonial Law was as much the divine Law as the moral laws were. Thus circumcision, the institution of the priesthood, the service of worship, and the rituals were commanded by God as much as the Decalogue was.⁶

Luther denies the observance of the whole law as the antithesis of justification; not only individual cultic norms, but also basic norms like the Decalogue. Building on Luther, Bultmann intensified the view, and consequently greatly influenced German Theology.

⁵ St. Augustine, *On Faith and Works* (Gregory J. Lombardo tr.) New York, N.Y./Mahwah N.J., Newman Press, 1988, pp28,29.

⁶ See note 2. p138.

Bultmann writes:

But why is this the case? Because *man's effort to achieve his salvation by keeping the law* only leads him into sin, indeed this effort itself in the end *is already sin*.⁷

Wilckens, however, raises the following question:

How can the judgement according to the works in Rom. 2 and the thesis in the train of thought of 1:18, "in the basis of works of law, no one can be justified before God" (3:20) be intrinsically harmonized? On the one hand, in 2:13, only doers of the law can be justified in the last judgement: on the other hand in 3:28, conversely, man can be justified only through faith without works of law. How can both be harmonized? The answer to this question has profound effect on the understanding of the Pauline doctrine of justification.⁸

Conzelmann writes:

It also becomes clear that on the one hand the law has come to an end as a way of salvation, ..., whereas on the other hand it remains in force as a moral demand. The law is certainly not false! Indeed, it was given for life (Gal. 3.12; Rom. 7.10).⁹

Conzelmann recognized that the dimension of the law is involved with salvation and ethical norms, and Paul denied the former, but not the latter.

Sanders writes:

<Gal. 2:11-22>.What specific 'work of the law' triggered this situation is not

⁷ R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1954, 260.

⁸ U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer, 1. Teilband (Röm 1-5)*, Zürich / Einsiedeln / Köln: Benziger, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag., 1978, 142f.

⁹ H. Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of The New Testament* (J. Bowden tr.), London: SCM Press Ltd, 1968, 224. Cf. H. Conzelmann, *Grundriß der Theologie des Neuen Testaments 4. Aufl.*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1987, 249.

entirely clear. Perhaps it was the food – Gentile meat and wine, or perhaps it was the company – the chief apostle to the Jews should not associate too much with Gentiles. In any case, the issue was the degree of association between Gentile and Jewish members.”¹⁰ Sanders seems to be unclear on the issue.

Dunn writes:

The point is that Protestant exegesis has for too long allowed a typically Lutheran emphasis on justification by faith to impose a hermeneutical grid on the text of Romans. The emphasis is important, that God is the one who justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4. 5), and understandably this insight has become an integrating focus in Lutheran theology with tremendous power. The problem, however, lay in what that emphasis was set in opposition to. The antithesis to ‘justification by faith’ – what Paul speaks of as ‘justification by works’ – was understood in terms of a system whereby salvation is *earned through the merit of good works*.¹¹

Dunn continues:

The phrase “works of the law” in Gal. 2.16 is, in fact, a fairly restricted one: it refers precisely to these same identity markers described above, *covenant* works – those regulations prescribed by the law which any good Jew would simply take for granted to describe what a good Jew did. To be a Jew, was to be a member of the covenant, was to observe circumcision, food laws and sabbath.¹²

In short, Dunn asserts that Paul only denied the detailed norms about circumcision, diet and Sabbath. Moreover, Bachmann intensified the view and states that ἔργα νόμου indicates regulations of the law.¹³

These views indicate that there is no consensus among scholars concerning

¹⁰ E. P. Sanders, *Paul: A Very Short Introduction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, 61f.

¹¹ *ibid.* 3. Dunn, 2005, 131.

¹² *ibid.* 3. Dunn, 2005, 101.

¹³ M. Bachmann, *Lutherische und Neue Paulusperspektive*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2005, 83-94.

the meaning of **ἔργα νόμου** in Pauline Theology. Thus a semantic word study will be used to clarify the meaning of Paul's terminology.

3. An Examination of the Meaning of **ἔργα νόμου** in Greek and Hebrew Texts

In this section, let us examine the meaning of **ἔργον**(or **ἔργα**) that Paul denied in Romans and Galatians. We will deal with the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2Kings) and 1 and 2 Chronicles from the Septuagint(LXX).¹⁴ From these texts, sentences with **ἔργον**(or **ἔργα**) and its derivative words (cognates: **ἐργάζομαι**, **λειτουργία** and others such as **ἐργοδιωκτέω**) are extracted, and each meaning is identified. Then Hebrew texts (MT) that will be parallel with the above Greek texts will be examined.

3. 1 The Meaning of **ἔργα νόμου** in the Torah and the Prophets.

See Table 1, The Meanings of **ἔργον**(or **ἔργα**) and its Appearances in the Septuagint. The meaning of **ἔργον**(or **ἔργα**) in the Torah and the Prophets can be roughly categorized into 10 meanings: (a) cultic service, (b) service, (c) labor work, (d) skilled work, (e) work of hands, (f) making,(g) His work, (h) business or mission, (i) practice and (j) deed, doing.¹⁵ The number of appearances of cultic service is 156 times which accounts for 37 % of all usage. Thus cultic service is important as the main meaning of **ἔργον**(or **ἔργα**) in the Torah and the Prophets. Especially in Numbers, the cultic service usage is frequently found, indicating that it might include a nuance of “cultic service by people.”

The second major usage is (c) labor work. This usage often appears in the Exodus accounts of tabernacle or temple, and in the Chronicles' accounts of temple construction by Solomon. (e) work of hands also has some affinity with temple construction. In addition to that, (g) His work that refers to God's own work, has a similar meaning to the work of Your hands.

¹⁴ In my plan, I will deal with the whole OT in the future, yet I started up from so-called Enneateuch, and added Chronicles from the Writings here.

¹⁵ These words are taken from English version of the Bible (NASB).

Table 1, The Meanings of ἔργον(or ἔργα) and its Appearances in the Septuagint(LXX)

			(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)
		Total	cultic service	service	labor work	skilled work	work of hand	making	His works	business	practice	doing deed	The others
T o t a l		421	156	16	108	19	50	5	14	9	5	3	36
Names of Bible Text	Genesis	18		2	7		1		3	3		1	1
	Exodus	112	18		34	14	21	3	2		2	1	17
	Leviticus	17		1	12		1			3			
	Numbers	87	71		8		2					1	5
	Deuteronomy	27	4		10		8		4				1
	Joshua, Judges	7			2				3		1		1
	1 Samuel	7	3				1		1	1			1
	2 Samuel	5		1	2								2
	1Kings	28	1	4	8	2	8	1	1				3
	2Kings	11	1	1	6		2				1		
	1Chronicles	50	37	2	5	3		1		1			1
	2Chronicles	52	21	5	14		6			1	1		4
* ἔργον, cognates	ἔργον or ἔργα	253	50	2	90	17	47	2	14	8	5	2	16
	ἐργάζομαι	36	8	3	16	2	3	1		1		1	1
	λειτουργία	117	98	11									8
	ἐργοδιωκτέω etc	15			2			2					11

Finally, it is notable that the meaning of (j) deed, doing appears only three times in the Torah and the Prophets. Moreover, in Exodus 36:4, it is used to mean “deed,” yet the original Greek is not ἔργον, but ἐργάζομαι. The other cases are in Genesis 20:9 and Numbers 16:28. Only three cases imply the meaning of doing or deed. Therefore, roughly speaking, ἔργον(or ἔργα) in Torah and Prophets means (a) cultic service or (c)~(h) (works, making). The meaning of (j) deed, doing rarely appears. As seen in the table, the total appearances of ἔργον(or ἔργα) are 253 times, ἐργάζομαι and its derivatives 36 times, λειτουργία and its derivatives 117 times, and ἐργοδιωκτέω and others 15 times.

3.2 An Examination of Hebrew Words that are equivalent to ἔργα of ἔργα νόμου in the Torah and the Prophets

Next, let us examine Hebrew words that are equivalent to ἔργον(or ἔργα) in the Torah and the Prophets. The result is in Table 2 (The Relationship between ἔργον or ἔργα and its Hebrew Equivalents). The Hebrew equivalents are seven, namely

עָבַד, עָבַדָה, מְלָאכָה, שָׂרַת, מַעֲשֵׂה, עֲשָׂה, פָּעַל which appear more than six times.¹⁶

¹⁶Cf. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck et al. (tr. Douglas W. Stott), Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986.

עָבַד appears 33 times in the Torah and 3 times in the Prophets totaling 36. עֲבָדָה appears 62 times in the Torah and 34 times in the Prophets totaling 96. מְלָאכָה appears 58 times in the Torah and 47 times in the Prophets totaling 105. שָׂרָת appears 21 times in the Torah and 29 times in the Prophets totaling 50. מְעֵשֶׂה appears 55 times in the Torah and 30 times in the Prophets totaling 85. עָשָׂה appears 5 times in the Torah and 2 times in the Prophets totaling 7. פָּעַל appears 6 times in total, and other words appear less than 5 times for each. The result is presented in Table 2, line 4.

Next, the general and theological meaning of the Hebrew equivalent for ἔργον (or ἔργα) must be dealt with in a semantic examination. See the right column of Table 2 concerning the above mentioned 7 Hebrew equivalents.¹⁷

Following (1)–(7) are the explanations of these Hebrew equivalents.

- (1) עָבַד means to labor and to serve, servant, to make, to do, etymologically. Its verb form implies the meanings of ① to serve, ② to work, ③ to do cultic service and ④ to make among others. Its noun form is used in the meanings of ① slave, ② servant, ③ cultic service, ④ servant for god, ⑤ labor, and ⑥ worship among others. The usages of עָבַד in the MT and the LXX refer to “cultic service” appear 16 times, “service” 4 times, and “labor work” 16 times.
- (2) עֲבָדָה is the noun form of עָבַד and includes the meanings of ① the work in a general sense, ② the work as cultic service, ③ hand service, and ④ the work of bearing burdens among others, etymologically. The usages of עֲבָדָה in the context of the MT and the LXX can be classified as “cultic service,” 82 times, “service” appears 2 times and “labor work” 12 times.
- (3) מְלָאכָה means “to send a message, messenger”, etymologically. This meaning then came to mean ① skilled work, sanctuary construction, namely work for temple construction. Later it came to mean manual work in the Tannaitic period, that is ② work including labor. Moreover, ③ result of hands, ④ mission, business ⑤ work of hands, ⑥ cultic service (with labor). The usages of מְלָאכָה in the context

¹⁷ The numbers of appearance are in the Septuagint.

of the MT and the LXX can be classified as ① “cultic service” 16 times, “skilled work” 14 times, “labor work” 61 times, “His work” 4 times, “business” 6 times and “work of hands” 4 times.

(4) שָׂרַת etimologiacally means to serve. In addition to that, the word is also used to mean ① to do cultic service publicly, to serve as a priest or to present offerings, ② to serve, ③ to work among others. The usages of שָׂרַת in the MT and the LXX can be classified as “cultic service” of a priest 40 times and “service” 10 times.

(5) מַעֲשֵׂה is derived from עָשָׂה and means “work,” “making” and “deed” among others etymologically. The word is used to mean ① work, ② the work of human hands, ③ fruits, ④ God’s work, ⑤ deed of moral, ⑥ labor, ⑦ God’s governance, ⑧ creation, making, ⑨ practice, ⑩ deed among others. The usages of מַעֲשֵׂה in the context of the MT and the LXX can be classified as “labor work” 14 times, “work of hands” 44 times, “making” 2 times, “His work” 8 times, “idols” namely “skilled work” 5 times, “practices” 5 times, “business” 3 times, “cultic service” 2 times and “deed, doing” 2 times.

(6) עָשָׂה means “to do, to make, to build, to offer sacrifice,” among others. The word is used to mean ① to do act, ② to make, ③ to make an idol, ④ to create, ⑤ to produce, ⑥ God does great things, God’s works, God’s judgement, ⑦ to do good or evil ⑧ God’s act in history ⑨ to work among others. The usages of עָשָׂה in the MT and the LXX can be classified as “making” 2 time, “labor work” 2 times, “work of hands” 2 times, and “deed, doing” 1 time.

(7) פָּעַל generally means “to make, to do, to serve.” It is similar to עָשָׂה but has a more poetic origin. This word, in verb form means ① to make, ② to work, ③ to serve, ④ to do among others. In noun form it is used as “deed(s) of human beings” and “works, wages” of God. The usages of פָּעַל in the context of the MT and the LXX can be classified as “making” 1 time, “labor work” 3 times and “His work” 2times.

From the examination, it became clear that original Hebrew words for $\xi\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$ (or $\xi\rho\gamma\alpha$) which appears in the LXX, are עֲבָד , עֲבָדָה , מְלָאכָה , שֶׁרֶת , מַעֲשֵׂה , עֲשֵׂה and פְּעַל . The meaning of $\xi\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$ (or $\xi\rho\gamma\alpha$) of $\xi\rho\gamma\alpha$ νόμου in Paul can be either “ עֲבָד , עֲבָדָה , מְלָאכָה , שֶׁרֶת ” that have a strong connotation of cultic service, or “ מַעֲשֵׂה , עֲשֵׂה ”. However, מַעֲשֵׂה and עֲשֵׂה mean “labor work, work of hand, making, God’s work, idol(s), practice(s), deed and doing.” Apart from “practice(s), deed or doing”, these meanings do not bear any significant theological meaning in Pauline Theology.¹⁸ Moreover, “deed or doing” only appears three times. Thus this usage is uncommon in the Torah and the Former Prophets. Therefore, $\xi\rho\gamma\alpha$ νόμου must mean “cultic services” from עֲבָדָה , which was suggested by Klaus Haacker¹⁹. Whereas שֶׁרֶת refers to special cultic service carried out by priests in tabernacle or temple, and always is translated as $\lambda\epsilon\iota\tau\omicron\upsilon\rho\gamma\iota\alpha$ in Greek. It is clearly different from $\xi\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$. That is, $\xi\rho\gamma\omicron\nu$ (or $\xi\rho\gamma\alpha$) is distinguished from $\lambda\epsilon\iota\tau\omicron\upsilon\rho\gamma\iota\alpha$, thus it is distinguished from “cultic service” by priests. I suggest that Paul might distinguish שֶׁרֶת from $\xi\rho\gamma\alpha$ νόμου.

Thus, when Paul uses $\xi\rho\gamma\alpha$ νόμου, he means “cultic services” by people, including labor, (עֲבָדָה , מְלָאכָה). It could include norms concerning circumcision, diet, and Sabbath that should be observed by people. (These norms are stated by Paul as dispensable for Gentile believers). This leads to the conclusion that observing basic norms like the Decalogue is not included in $\xi\rho\gamma\alpha$ νόμου.

¹⁸ Ibid.3.p.94. “Practice(s)” might have some affinity with theological implication related to law, because its object can be “way”, “method”, or “custom.” In the case, $\xi\rho\gamma\alpha$ νόμου means “way of law”, “method of law” and “custom of law.” It is close to “regulations of law” that Bachmann asserts. However, it appears only 4 times. Though “deed and doing” are widely translated as “carry out law” and “doing law,” but the usage rarely appears in the Torah and the Former Prophets as mentioned above, it only appears 2 times in the LXX.

¹⁹ Klaus Haacker, *Lutherische und Neue Paulusperspektive*, M. Bachmann ed, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005, p.13.

Table 2 The Relationship between **ἔργον**(or **ἔργα**) and its Hebrew Equivalent.

Hebrew translated with ἔργον in the LXX	Times occurred in the Torah	Times occurred in the Propets	Meaning of ἔργον (or ἔργα) in the LXX (meanings) (times)	General meanings of Hebrew words translated with ἔργον (or ἔργα) in the LXX.
עֲבַד	33	3	Cultic service service labor work 16 4 16	Etymology: עֲבַד 'ābad is to serve, to labor, slave, servant, to make, to do. Cognates: The verb : ①to serve ②to work ③to cultic serve ④to make, The noun : ①slave ②servant ③cultic service ④servant for god ⑤labor ⑥making ⑦worship. The OT Usage : The verb : עֲבַד occurs 271 times, The noun: עֲבַד 'ēbed 805 times, the LXX: δουλεύειν (114), λατρεύειν (75) ἐργάζεσθαι (37) λειτουργία (13) Noun : עֲבַד 'ēbed δούλος(314), παῖς (336), θεράπῳν (42) , ἔργον
עֲבוֹדָה עֲבֹדָה	62	34	Cultic service service labor work 82 2 12	Etymology: עֲבוֹדָה 'ābōdā is service, labor, slave, servant, to make, to do Cognates: ①work in general sense ②work as cultic service ③hard service, ④the work of bearing burdens. The OT Usage : The noun עֲבוֹדָה 145 times The majority of occurrences involves cultic services with labor. The LXX: noun עֲבוֹדָה 'ābōdā usually with ἔργον, λειτουργία, ἔργον δουλεία, ἐργασία, λατρεῖν
מְלָאכָה	58	47	Cultic service labor work skilled work His work business work of hand 16 61 14 4 6 4	Etymology מְלָאכָה to send (a message), messenger, angel, mission, work. Cognates : ①skilled work, sanctuary construction → unskilled work (at Rabbinic times) ②general work including physical labor (at Rabbinic times or early) ③result of work. ④mission, business. ⑤work of the hand. ⑥cultic service (with labor). In the LXX translates מְלָאכָה melā'kā, consistently with ἔργον or λειτουργία
שָׂרַת	21	29	Cultic service (as a priest) service 40 10	Etymology : שָׂרַת šrt is to serve, Cognates : ①to do cultic service publicly, to serve as a priest, ②to serve, ③to work. In the LXX, שָׂרַת šrt 80% used as λειτουργία public service.
מַעֲשֵׂה	55	30	Labor work work of hand making His work skilled work practice business Cultic service deed, doing 14 44 2 8 5 5 3 2 2	Etymology : מַעֲשֵׂה ma'āseh is the noun of 'āśā have two meaning: Something made, work and deed. Cognates : ①Work ②the work of human hands ③fruits ④God's work ⑤deed of mortal ⑥labor ⑦God's governance ⑧ practices ⑨creation, making ⑩deed. The LXX translates מַעֲשֵׂה ma'āseh with ἔργον, ἐργασία
עָשָׂה	5	2	making labor work work of hand doing 2 2 2 1	Etymology: עָשָׂה 'āśā, to do, to make, to build, to press wine, to offer sacrifice construction worker, cultivated field, work. Cognates : ①act, doing ②to make ③to make idle ④to create ⑤to produce ⑥God do great things, God's works, God's judgement ⑦to do good and evil ποιέω, δικαιοσύνη ⑧God act in history ⑨work. The LXX translates עָשָׂה 'āśā with ποιέω
פָּעַל	3	3	Making labor work His work 1 3 2	Etymology: פָּעַל pā'al is to make, to do, to work, to serve, resemble with 'āśā This root was more poetic contexts. Verb : ①to make ②to work ③to serve. The LXX translates (Human) ἐργάζομαι, ποιέω, (God) ἔργω Noun : (Human) deeds, (God) works, wages. The LXX translates (Human) ποίημα, ποίσεις, (God) ἔργον, ἐργασία
Others	24	12	36	כְּלִי : ἐργαλεία Exdus 39: 9, 1Kg 7:47 tool occurs 5 times נָגַשׁ : ἐργοδιώκταις Exdus 5:6, 5:13 taskmasters 4 חַרְשֵׁת : ἔργον Exdus 31:5 works of hand 4 צָבָא : λειτουργεῖν number 4:3, 4:23, 4:39, 4:41 to serve 4 סְבָלוֹת : ἔργα Exdus 1:11, 5: 4, 5:5 to bear burden 3 כָּהֵן : λειτουργεῖν 2Chronicles 11:14 to serve 2 עָבַר : λειτουργεῖν 2Samuel, 19:19 to pass over 1 בְּגָד : ἐργαλεία Exdus 39:21 tool 1 מִשְׁלָח : ἔργοις Deuteronomy 23: 21 to do serve 1 צוּק : κατειργάσατο Judges 16:16 to urge 1 נִצַּח : ἐργοδιώκται 1Chronicles 23:4 to look after 1 רָדָה : ἐργοδιώκτουτες 2Chronicles 8:10 govern 1 and others : 8
Total	260	161	421	

3.3 The Meaning of ἔργα νόμου in the Psalms

In the Psalms of the Septuagint, ἔργον(or ἔργα) appears 77 times and means “work of thy hand,” “work of God,” and “His work.” Moreover ἐργάζομαι is used as “doing.” This is a special usage in the Psalms and appears 20 times.

Next, see Table 3 (ἔργα νόμου in the Psalms in relationship to the Hebrew equivalent(s)).

In the Psalms, מַעֲשֵׂה and פֶּעַל are mainly used. The former appears 37 times and the latter 36 times. עֲבוּדָה and מְלָאכָה each appear once only.

In the Psalms, מַעֲשֵׂה is used with the meaning of “His work.” (14 times), “work of thy hand” (9 times) and “work of God” (4 times). Its tendency is similar to the cases in the Torah and the Prophets, yet there is the case of “deed, doing” (3 times) in the Psalms and it occurs more frequently than in the Torah and the Prophets. פֶּעַל in the Psalms also has the same tendency. It is used to mean “His work” (3 times), “work of thy hand” (5 times), “work of God” (4 times) and “deed, doing” (1 time). It is noteworthy that פֶּעַל is translated as ἐργάζομαι meaning “doing” 20 times. As mentioned above, instead of עֲשֵׂה, the word פֶּעַל is mostly used in poetic texts. פֶּעַל, meaning “doing”, is translated as ἐργάζομαι in the Psalms of the LXX, because עֲשֵׂה is the equivalent for ποιέω in other cases. Therefore, פֶּעַל = doing = ἐργάζομαι can be seen as a special usage in the Psalms of the LXX when compared with the Torah and the Prophets. In the Psalms, ἔργον(or ἔργα) appears a little more frequently as “deed or doing” than that in the Torah and the Prophets. Other than ἐργάζομαι that is equivalent for פֶּעַל, the examination of the meaning of ἔργον(or ἔργα) in the Psalms supports the results from the examination of the Torah and the Prophets.

Here, the Psalm 61:13 should be noted in that the ἔργα is quoted in Rom. 2:6.

ὃς ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ. (Rom. 2:6)

σὺ ἀποδώσεις ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ (Ps 61:13b,in the LXX)

כִּי־אֲתָה חֲשִׁלֵּם לְאִישׁ כַּמַּעֲשָׂהוּ: (Ps 62:13b,in the MT)

“For you recompense a man according to his work” (Ps 62:12b) In this case, ἔργα means “works” or “deeds,” and its Hebrew equivalent is מַעֲשֵׂה (singular in the MT).

It is continued in Rom. 2:7:

τοῖς μὲν καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν ζητοῦσιν ζωὴν αἰώνιον, “to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life”; In Rom. 3:20 Paul writes, διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας. “because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.” It seems that Rom. 2:6-7 and 3:20 are ambivalent.²⁰ Then, the equivalent of ἔργα in Rom. 3:20 must not be from מַעֲשֵׂה. It would be from עֲבָדָה, עֲבָרָה and מְלָאכָה. The author suggests that the Hebrew equivalent is עֲבָרָה. Therefore, the Hebrew equivalent for ἔργον(or ἔργα) could be עֲבָרָה, not מַעֲשֵׂה.

Table3 ἔργον(or ἔργα) in the Psalms in relationship to the Hebrew equivalents.

Hebrew translated with ἔργον/α or ἐργάζομαι in the LXX	Times occurred in the Psalms	Meaning of ἔργον (or ἔργα) in the LXX (meanings) (times)	General meanings of Hebrew words translated with ἔργον(or ἔργα) in the LXX.
מַעֲשֵׂה	37	His work work of thy hand work of God work of men's hand practice deed,doing 14 9 4 5 2 3	Same with table 2
פָּעַל	16	His work work of thy hand work of God make labor work work of men's hand deed, doing 3 5 4 1 1 1 1	Etymology of פָּעַל pā'al is to make,to do, to work,to serve, resemble with 'āśā.This root was more poetic contexts. Verb: ①to make②to work ③to serve. The LXX translates:verb:(Human)ἐργάζομαι, ποιέω,(God)ἔργω. Noun:(Human) ποίεμα,ποιέσεις:deeds, (God) ἔργον, ἐργασία:works,wages
	20	doing (ἐργάζομαι) 20	This root was more poetic contexts. Verb: ①to make ②to work ③to serve. The LXX translates:verb:(Human)ἐργάζομαι,ποιέω,(God)ἔργω, Noun:(Human) ποίεμα, ποιέσεις:deeds, (God) ἔργον, ἐργασία:works,wages
and thers	4	His work Deed Labor work Business 1 1 1 1	מַעֲלָלִים " עֲבוּרָה מְלָאכָה
Total	77	77	

²⁰ Concerning νόμος, Rom. 7:12 states, ὥστε ὁ μὲν νόμος ἅγιος καὶ ἡ ἐντολὴ ἁγία καὶ δικαία καὶ ἀγαθή. “So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.”

4. ἔργα νόμου in Rabbinic Literature

Next, let us see how עֲבֹדָה is used in Paul's day, namely from the 2nd century BCE to the 2nd century CE. Simeon the Just (Simeon II) who was the High Priest in 200 BCE is recorded in the MISHNAH Aboth Chapter 1, Mishnah 2, "Simeon the Just was of remnants of the Great Synagogue. He used to say: By three things is the world sustained: by the law <תורה>, by the [temple] service <עבודה>, and by the deeds of loving-kindness <גמילות חסדים>." Here we can see that עבודה is important as much as תורה.²¹

Moreover, Sanders states, "Not only is it the case that the halakah induces the feeling of the presence of God by regulating it, as it were, into the fabric of every day life, but the study of the Torah itself cause one to feel that he is in the presence of God. Thus the Temple service, where the priest ministers before God, prayer and the study of the Torah are all called 'abodah, service. Wherever two speak of the Torah together, God ('the shekinah')²² is with them."²³

The above-mentioned *Sifre Deuteronomy* (41 piska) includes the following,

And to serve him (Deut. 11:13): This refers here to study. You might say, "This refers to study (according to you), but might it not refer to actual work?" (The answer is No,) since Scripture says, *And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to work it and guard it* (Gen 2:15) – What kind of work or guarding was there at that time? Thus you learn that *to work it* refers to study, and *to guard it* refers to the commandments. Just as serving at the alter is called "service" <עבודה>, so is study called "service" <עבודה>.²⁴

The Sifre Deuteronomy is a part of the Tannaitic Literature. It is dated in the first and the second century CE. It can be seen that 41 piska provides Jewish thought in

²¹H. Danby ed., *The Mishnah*, London: Oxford University Press, 1954, 446. Cf. Die sechs Ordnungen der Mischna, משניות Mischajot, Basel: Victor Goldschmidt Verlag, 1986, 327

²² Aboth 3:2, וַיֵּשׁ בֵּינֵיהֶם דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָה, שְׂכִינָה שְׂרוּיָהּ בֵּינֵיהֶם, This is related to Rom.10:8a.

²³ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, 221f.

²⁴ *Sifre Deuteronomy Commentary, 41 piska*, 80. טַפְרֵי דְבִירָב עִם תּוֹסֵפוֹת מֵאִיר עֵין. Cf. R. Hammer, *Sifre A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* ed. שלום שלימ, New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 1986, p.85.

almost same age as Paul's age. The text supports our view that the Hebrew equivalent of ἔργον(or ἔργα) is עבודה, while עבודה has an additional meaning of "the study of the Torah" to the meaning of Temple Services. This is related to Rom 2:13a, because listening to the Torah is one form of the study of the Torah.

And then, the Sifre Deuteronomy(piska85) includes another phrase, explaining the Deuteronomy13:5 וְאַתָּה תַעֲבֹדוּ 'ye shall serve Him'. The Sifre Deuteronomy say: ' וְאַתָּה תַעֲבֹדוּ בתורתו עבדהו ובמקדשו ' the meaning as following :
 –and Him ye shall serve—serve Him according to His Torah and in His Sanctuary ²⁵
 Therefore ἔργα νόμου is equivalent to עבודות בתורה or עבודה בתורה ²⁶ in Hebrew and Services according to the Torah in English.

5. Summary

As we have seen, the following become clear.

- (1) The meaning of ἔργον(or ἔργα) in the Torah and the Prophets can be summarized as (a) cultic service, (b) service, (c) labor work, (d) skilled work, (e) work of hands, (f) making, (g) His work, (h) business, (i) practice, and (j) deed,doing.
- (2) The most frequent meaning of ἔργον(or ἔργα)is (a)cultic service.The next frequent meaning is (c) labor work. These are followed by (d) skilled work, (e) work of hand, and (g) His work.
- (3) In the Torah and the Prophets, ἔργον(or ἔργα) rarely means (j) "deed, doing".
- (4) The Hebrew equivalents for ἔργον(or ἔργα) can be עֲבָד, עֲבָדָה, מְלָאכָה, שֵׁרָת, פָּעַל, עָשָׂה, מַעֲשֵׂה.
- (5) ἔργον (or ἔργα) has meaning of "cultic service" including labor by people (עֲבָד, מְלָאכָה, עֲבָדָה). Especially עֲבָדָה seems to fit in the context.
- (6) The Hebrew equivalent of ἔργα of ἔργα νόμου can be עֲבָדָה, not מַעֲשֵׂה as seen in the comparison between Rom. 2:6-7 and 3:20.
- (7) ἔργα νόμου does not include the special cultic service by priests at tabernacle or Temple (שֵׁרָת). שֵׁרָת is always translated as λειτουργία.

²⁵ Hammer, R., *Sifre: A Tannaitic on the Book of Deuteronomy*, New Haven / London: Yale University,1986, p.137

²⁶ עבודות(plural) was used rarely and עבודה(singular) was generally used for the plural cases in the Scripture, so it can be עבודה בתורה.

- (8) ἔργον(or ἔργα) is not be equivalent for עֲשֶׂה .
- (9) So far, the joint form of ἔργα νόμου in Hebrew could not be found.
- (10) ἔργα νόμου does not include “keeping out the Decalogue.”
- (11) ἔργον(or ἔργα) indicates עבודתה , so ἔργα νόμου means observing detailed norms such as circumcision, diet, Sabbath and participation in service in the Temple.
- (12) ἔργα νόμου also can mean “the study of the Torah” (עבודה).²⁷
- (13) ἔργα νόμου is equivalent to עבודה בתורה in Hebrew and Services according to the Torah in English.

²⁷ Note the relationship with Rom 2:13a

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