

DID CHRIST REPLACE AND END THE LAW?

by: Mike Nolen / Blog #54

Most of Traditional Christianity believes Christ came to do away with the Law. The teaching goes that He “nailed it to the cross!” They will quote: “For Christ is the *end* of the Law for righteousness to every one that believes” (Rom. 10:4). Are we to understand Jesus’ statement, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law...” (Matt. 5:17) is abrogated by Paul’s comment? Therefore, Christians are *now released* from any obedience to the Law?

The controversy doesn’t involve the verse, but the word— “end.” The English translation typically evokes thoughts of *cessation or termination*. When considering the original Greek word, “telos,” we understand that it has a variety of meanings. Yes, it can imply termination, but it can also connote aim, outcome, purpose, and goal. However, other Bible translations support the idea of *termination*. Notice: “Christ ended the Law so that everyone who believes in Him may be right with God” (*New Century Version*). “But Christ makes the Law no longer necessary for those who become acceptable to God by faith” (*Contemporary English Version*).

By isolating the above translations of Romans 10:4 from the context, it would indeed appear that Paul reversed the Law’s immutability and released Christians from its observance. However, for those serious about “*contextual clarity*,” to believe this “*termination interpretation*” knows it contradicts the *immediate context* of Romans 10:4; and the broader context of Romans 9 through 11.

Additionally, consider what Paul says regarding the Law to the Roman Congregation, which, *IN CONTEXT*, contradicts not only Romans 10:4, but the whole concept of the *antinomian termination view*. Notice: “For not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the *doers* of the Law shall be justified” (Rom. 2:13). “Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid: yea, we *establish* the Law” (Rom. 3:31). “Wherefore the Law is *holy*, and the commandment *holy*, and *just*, and *good*” (Rom. 7:12).

When we honestly study Paul’s analysis of the Law, we find not the abrogation of the Law, but rather a *clarification* of the Law’s *true intent*. When considering what Paul is actually saying in Romans 10:4, we must understand the broader context of Romans 9-11, which primarily addresses the rejection of Christ and a misunderstanding of the Law’s true purpose by God’s people, Israel.

Remember, instead of attaining righteousness by faith, Israel sought it through obedience to the Law, failing to recognize that *God’s intention* for them *was to attain it by faith* through Jesus Christ (Rom. 9:31-10:3). Clearly, Paul reveals that God uses Israel’s failure of this as a means to include the Gentiles with salvation and ultimately, the salvation of Israel (Rom. 11:1-36). We must *not interpret* Rom. 10:4 in light of a conflict between Law and the gospel of Christ, but rather a “*truth*” of how God is *strategically working His plan of salvation* for both Jew and Gentile (Rom.). 10:12).

Is it really logical to think the appearance of Christ suddenly makes the Law void and non-applicable, as some claim? Or conversely, does it make more sense to consider His appearance actually *represents the goal* on which the Law was designed? The evidence points to the latter! It was *intended* to be a teacher (Rom. 7:7-14).

So, if our Savior's appearance did not terminate the law, then what does the statement "Christ is the end of the Law" actually mean? And if the word "*end*" refers to a *goal or purpose*, how then is Christ the goal or purpose of the Law? These are good questions!

In an attempt to answer this, let's get back to Paul. Paul quotes two verses from the Old Testament in Rom. 10:5-8, notice: "For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on Law shall live by that righteousness" [Lev. 18:5]. "But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus: do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven?" [that is to bring Christ down], or who will ascend into the abyss?" [that is, to bring Christ up from the dead]. But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart— that is, the word of faith which we are preaching" (Deut. 30:12-14; paraphrased).

Some Christians get confused by Paul's references to Leviticus and Deuteronomy and assume he is teaching two different ways of achieving righteousness. However, if this were true, how could he *denounce the Jews* for relying on works to attain righteousness when they would have been doing precisely what Leviticus 18:5 seems to command?

The misunderstanding in Romans 10:6 stems from the *mistaken assumption* that the English word "But," translated from the Greek word "de" is a correct translation. However, a deeper look into the Greek word "de" reveals that the word is frequently translated as "and" in preference to "alla" which is *consistently translated* into the English word "but," because it *provides a contrast*. But Paul, in this context, is using the Greek word "de" to *harmonize faith and works!* He is *not attempting to contrast* as an antithesis—one against the other.

Paul presents *Christ as the goal of the Law*, who offers righteousness to all believers, and then, in Romans 10:5, elaborates on this by quoting Leviticus 18:5. He then shifts to Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in Romans 10:6-8. By doing this, Paul shows that achieving the righteousness required by the Law to live is neither insurmountable nor extraordinary, as if it were climbing to heaven to bring Christ down or descending into the abyss to raise Him up.

This was Paul's way of illustrating to the Pharisees their misinterpretation of the Law, which created an impossible situation that the Jews sought to remedy by their own works. Remember, Jesus said, "...I have kept my Father's commandments..." (John 15:10). He was the only human being who was completely obedient to the Law's requirements (Phil. 2:8 & Rom. 10:5).

Jesus made a very enlightening statement, which has become a stumbling block to many a prospective antinomian: “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). The Law of God has reached its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the embodiment, the purpose, and the goal of God’s holy righteous Law!

Jesus Christ is the object of all the promises, types, and sacrificial ceremonies (Heb. 10:1-8). Paul understood this! That is why he made the statement: “For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes” (Rom. 10:4). Christ and Paul were not incongruous. The righteousness required by the Law is fulfilled through the Word, which is in the heart and in the mouth, in essence, by believing and confessing that Jesus is the Christos [the anointed] (Rom. 10:8-10). Christ is not the end [the termination]; rather, He is the goal of the Law! Without His presence in our lives, we are *unable* to live by the *just requirements* of the Law!