

THE END OF THE LAW

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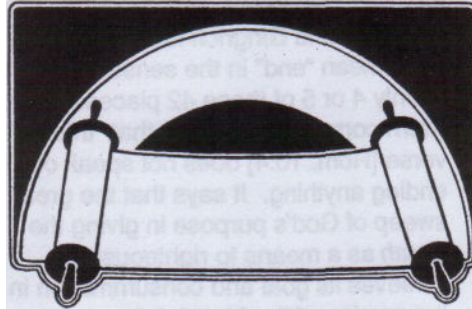
"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."

-Romans 10:4

Many Christians are taught from today's pulpits that God had to abolish the Old Testament law code because it was just too difficult for His people to obey all those rules. We are told by Christian Bible teachers that under the Old Covenant, it was impossible for people to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blamelessly. However, it is written of Zachariah and Elisabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, that "they were both righteous before God, walking in *all* the commandments and ordinances of the Lord *blameless*" (Luke 1:6). Of course Zachariah and Elisabeth didn't have the benefit of our modern-day Bible teachers to tell them that this was impossible to do. All they had was the Torah to tell them that it *is* possible:

"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 mavest do it (Deut 30:11-14).

Walking according to the commandments of the Torah is not impossible. It is not some deep, mysterious secret which only a special class of super-spiritual saints can attain. "It is not hidden from thee," Scripture declares. "It is not in heaven." It does not require being caught up into the third heaven. "Neither is it beyond the sea." It does not require traveling to the other side of the ocean and conferring with some guru or priest or rabbi. The ability to walk according to the commandments of the Torah is within reach of the average child of God: "But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mavest do it."



In Romans 10, Paul writes that "Christ is the end of the law," and he then quotes this passage from Deuteronomy 30 and comments on it. Therefore, if we want to correctly understand what Paul meant when he wrote that "Christ is the end of the law," then we must keep in mind that believing in Christ and walking according to the commandments of the Torah are not mutually exclusive in Paul's mind; on the contrary, they go together. Otherwise, Paul would not connect this passage from Deuteronomy 30 (which talks about obeying commandments of Torah) with faith in the Messiah.

The Torah describes God's standard of righteousness, and offers it to those who will embrace it by faith. Christians sometimes forget that God's people were justified by faith even before Christ, under the Old Covenant. Three times the New Testament states "the just shall live by faith," and many Christians assume that this is strictly a New Testament concept, something unknown to those living under the Old Covenant. However, this concept was not a new revelation to the New Testament writers; it was a direct quote taken from the Old Testament writings (Hab. 2:4).

Why did Paul connect the passage from Deuteronomy 30, about obeying Torah, with faith in Yeshua as the Messiah? Because Paul knew that the promised Messiah was meant to be *the object* of our faith, the key to living out the blessed life described in Deuteronomy 30 and the rest of the Torah. The identity of the Messiah was no longer hidden in heaven nor buried beneath the sea; the long-awaited

Messiah had been revealed to God's people in the person of Yeshua of Nazareth. The promised Messiah was the goal, the object, the *logos* made flesh, the fulfillment of the Torah. With this thought in mind, let us look at the statement that "Christ is the end of the law."

When some people hear the phrase "end of the law," they think this means "no more rules to obey." This is anarchy, something which the New Testament clearly condemns. God's Kingdom is not to be characterized by lawlessness. On the contrary, Yeshua taught that at the end of this age, God's Kingdom will be purged of its long-lasting and deep-rooted lawlessness [ovoupy, *anomos*, "without law," the source of our English word *anomianism*]. (See, e.g., *anomos* in Matt. 7:23 and the parables in Matt. 13, esp. vss. 41, 49.)

What, then, does "the end of the law" mean in Romans 10:4? Doesn't "the end" of something mean that it's all over, finished, terminated, ceased to exist? This is the usual meaning in English, but the New Testament is written in Greek, not English. The Greek word translated "end" here is *rtkos* (*telos*). According to the Gingrich lexicon, the noun *telos* can mean "the end" in one of two senses: 1) in the sense *termination, cessation, conclusion* [as in the English definition of "the end" discussed above]; or, 2) in the sense *end, goal, outcome*, i.e., the aim or purpose [as in our English statement "The end doesn't justify the means"].

The important question is this: Which of these two definitions should be applied to *telos* in Romans 10:4? Definition #1 would imply that the commandments of the Torah are no longer valid; they have been abolished by the Messiah who said to not even think that He had come to abolish the Torah (Matt. 5:17ff). Definition #2 would not imply that the commandments of the Torah are abolished, but that faith in the Messiah is *the means* to obtain *the end*, the end (or goal) being the righteousness described in the Torah, and the ability to walk out that righteousness

and live a Torah-observant lifestyle. Unfortunately, most English Bible translations cause the uninformed reader to assume that "the telos/end of the law" means that the Torah is now ended and obsolete. Here are a few examples:

• "For Christ ends the law." (*New English Bible*) Here the noun *telos* is magically changed into a verb ("ends") by the translators, so that there can be no possibility of understanding "the end" as the goal."

• "But now the Law has come to an end." (*Jerusalem Bible*) Here the first word *yap* (*gar*) is translated "But," subtly but erroneously implying that there is some contrast between Torah-obedience and believing in Christ — even though *gar* is not a word which implies contrast, but "a conjunction used to express cause, inference, or continuation; or to explain" (Gingrich lexicon), normally translated "for." The *Jerusalem Bible* translators also made sure to capitalize "Law" so that the reader would be sure to know that it is God's Law being talked about here. Paul is referring to God's Law, of course, but these particular translators want the reader to think that the Torah has, in their words, "come to an end," even though the verb "has come" does not appear in the Greek text.

• "For Christ has brought the Law to an end." (*Today's English Version*) This translation, also called *Good News For Modern Man* (or "Good Noose," if you prefer) does the same as the *Jerusalem Bible* above, capitalizing "Law" and supplying a non-existent verb, "has brought."

• "He ends all of that." (*Living Bible*) As in the *New English Bible*, the noun *telos* mysteriously changes into a verb, "ends." Thus obedience to God's holy Torah can be dismissed with the belittling phrase "all of that," and thereby be viewed as something vain and futile. (The anti-Torah bias of the *Living Bible* is also evident in verses such as John 1:17, where the KJV's "For the law was given by Moses" expands in the *Living Bible* to "Moses gave us only the Law with its rigid demands and merciless justice.")

It is obvious that the above translators want their readers to think that "the

telos of the law" means that the Torah is finished and its commandments are no longer valid. David Stem, in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (p. 396), points out that *telos* is used 42 times in the New Testament, and according to the Amdt and Gingrich lexicon, *telos* must mean "end" in the sense of "finish" in only 4 or 5 of these 42 places. David Stern correctly concludes that "this verse [Rom. 10:4] does not speak of ending anything. It says that the great sweep of God's purpose in giving the *Torah* as a means to righteousness achieves its goal and consummation in the coming of the Messiah."

Faith in the Messiah should not end our obedience to God's Torah. Faith in the Messiah should be the starting point of our obedience. By being "the goal at which the *Torah* aims" (Stem's translation), the Messiah becomes the Source which enables and equips and empowers God's people to live a life of obedience to God's commandments.

The ability to live a life of obedience to Torah is within the reach of the average child of God. "It is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off... The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 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" (Deut. 30:11; Rom. 10:8f).

Some people think that when Paul wrote about being "saved" here, he meant only "saved from hell." While faith in Christ does save us from hell, the salvation to which Paul refers here is also salvation from the powers of our carnal, sinful nature. We are saved not only from hell; we are also saved from those hellish things inside us, those things which seem to make obedience to God's commandments impossible — our greed, our anger, our unforgiveness, our lust, our selfishness, our apathy, etc., etc. Whatever weaknesses and character flaws we have, through faith in the Messiah, we can be delivered from these things, so that we can be free to trust and obey and thereby experience the victorious, blessed life that our Father in heaven wants us to have. Q

•* GOADS •*

The words of the wise are as goads..."

True Christian consistency does not consist in stereotyping our opinions and views, and in refusing to make any improvement lest we should be guilty of change, but it consists in holding our minds open to receive the rays of truth from every quarter and in changing our views and language and practice as often and as fast, as we can obtain further information. I call this Christian consistency, because this course alone accords with a Christian profession. A Christian profession implies the profession of candor and of a disposition to know and obey all truth. It must follow, that Christian consistency implies continued investigation and change of views and practice corresponding with increasing knowledge. No Christian, therefore, and no theologian should be afraid to change his views, his language, or his practices in conformity with increasing light."
-Charles Finney

READERS: Here are some other resources you may want to check out (listed in alphabetical order):

Bible Sabbath Association, 3316 Alberta Dr., Gillette, WY 82718. Offers many excellent books, pamphlets, tapes on subject of the 7th-day Sabbath. Ph. (307) 686-5191.

First Fruits of Zion, 6657 W. Ottawa Race, Unit A-4, Littleton, CO 80123. Bimonthly Messianic magazine from Jerusalem. Torah studies & more. Ph. 800-775-4807.

Hebrew Roots, PO Box 98, Lakewood, WI 54138. Published several times a year, as funds are available. Studies that explore Hebrew roots of the Faith. Ph. (715) 757-2775.

Integrity Teaching Services. Tapes & articles on a number of subjects. Richard Peacock, 14 Uppermoor Close, Pudsey, Leeds LS28 8BU, U. K.

Messianic Home Magazine, PO Box 3381, Lebanon, TN 37088. Published quarterly. Pro-Torah & pro-family. Ph. (615) 449-6804.

Petah Tikvah, 165 Doncaster Rd., Rochester, NY 14623. Published quarterly. Studies, news from Israel, much more. (Rev. Twistruth regularly visits the pages of PT.) Ph. (716) 475-1188.