

"Christ the End of the Law"

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"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4). This is supposed by antinomians to teach the abolition of the law. The text is not usually quoted in full, the objector contenting himself with the statement that "Christ is the end of the law," meaning that Christ abolished the law. This text is so generally quoted in favor of the abolition of the law, that before we consider its real application, we will briefly show the absurdity of the popular interpretation.

1. If Christ abolished the law, then there can be no sin now, for "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4), and "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5:13). And if there is no sin, there can be no impending punishment, and all men will be saved. Those texts, therefore, which speak of the "wrath of God," and the "indignation," "torment," and "destruction," to be visited upon sinners, are made of no effect. There is no one so much of a Universalist as he who claims that the law of God is abolished.

2. The text says that Christ is the end of the law "to everyone that believes." The necessary inference is that he is not the end of the law to unbelievers. Those, therefore, who claim that the apostle by the expression "end of the law" means abolition of the law, must teach that the law is abolished only for Christians; that is that the law binds worldlings, but that Christians are under no obligation to it. And so it would follow that while an act performed by an unbeliever might be in violation of the law, and therefore a sin, the same act performed by a believer would be perfectly justifiable. We trust that there is no one who would hold to so monstrous a theory as this, yet that is a legitimate deduction from antinomian claims.

3. If Paul, in Rom. 10:4, means that the law is abolished for believers, it would follow that it has been abolished as many times as there are Christians, being done away every time a man is converted; and further, that whenever any believer falls away, and loses his faith, the law is for him re-enacted! The absurdity of this just conclusion must convince every one of the absurdity of the premise.

4. Again: From the parables of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13, we learn that both righteous and wicked are to remain together on the earth until the end of the world. We know also that both classes have existed since the fall. It follows, therefore, from antinomian interpretation of Rom. 10:4, that the law of God always has been,

and will be until the end of time, both abolished and in full force at the same time! This is the climax of absurdity, and shows conclusively that whatever may be the meaning of Rom. 10:4, it certainly does not teach that any part of God's Law is, or ever will be, abolished, either for Christians or unbelievers.

And now as to what the text really does mean. The word "end" is often used in the sense of "object" or design. Thus in James 5:11 (KJV) we read, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." No one supposes that this means the end of the Lord's existence, but the object of the Lord in allowing Job to suffer affliction. In like manner we understand Rom. 10:4 to teach that Christ meets the design of the law to those who believe. In order to understand how he does this, we must consider the end or design of the law.

In Rom. 7:10 the apostle says that the commandment (meaning the whole law) "was ordained to life." That is, if man had never violated the law, it would insure his eternal life. This is what the Saviour said to the young man in Matt. 19:17, as previously noticed. In the next verse to the one under consideration we read the same thing: "For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them" (Rom 10:5). But while this is true, the fact presents itself that no man has kept the law (Rom. 3:9, 19, 23), and that in his natural condition no man can keep the law, because "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). How, then, can any one obtain eternal life, which the law was designed to bestow? The answer is, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). The law was "ordained to life" (Rom. 7:10) and "Christ who is our life" (Col. 3:4), is therefore the end of the law.

But this is only the result. It might be asked, "Does Christ accomplish this result for us, by freeing us from obligation to keep the law?" We answer, No; for since only those who do the commandments shall live by them (Matt. 19:17; Rom. 10:7), it follows that no one can receive eternal life if he continues to violate them. Therefore since the object of the law was to give life, it follows that it was also the design that man render obedience to it. So we read in 1 Tim. 1:5 that "the purpose of the commandment is love (agape)," and "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10), or, as John says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3).

We have already seen that no man has attained this end. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." From past sins we are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). But being

justified through faith in Christ, we are still dependent on Him, for “without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:4, 5). It is only by abiding in him that we are able to bear fruit. And this is why the apostle says of the Jews that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3). The righteousness of God is His law (Isa. 51:6, 7), and the apostle means that the Jews, being zealous toward God, and desiring to serve Him by keeping His commandments, had sought to do so in their own strength, and had failed. Their zeal was good, but their knowledge was deficient, in that they did not perceive that only in Christ could they hope to attain perfection.

To all believers, Christ “became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30.) Not by freeing us from obligation to keep the law, for then He would be to us, not righteousness, but unrighteousness, or, in other words, would become the minister of sin. Without Him our efforts are failures; with Him to strengthen us, we can do all things; and when at last we stand before God, holy and without blemish, “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” it will be because we have been made “complete in him.”

We think it must be evident to all that Rom. 10:4 is pressed into antinomian service by mutilating the text and leaving out the complete statement that “*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*” Righteousness is obedience to the law.