

Christ: The End of The Law

This week, we are taking a look at another study from *Lessons on Faith*, this time a contribution from E. J. Waggoner entitled, “Christ The End of The Law.” He presents the Adventist take on the verse that says, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness” in Romans 10. This is a passage that has been made a stumbling-block to many Christians, who have taken it to mean that because of Christ’s sacrifice, the law has been “brought to an end.” We will see that this is not the case and, aside from the doctrinal information we can draw from it, we will also be looking for opportunities to learn more deeply of the sanctified life.

We begin, then, with this:

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In Rom. 10:4 we read as follows: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” Before showing what this text means, it may be well to briefly show what it does not mean. It does not mean that Christ has put an end to the law, because (1) Christ Himself said concerning the law, “I am not come to destroy.” Matt. 5:17. (2) The prophet said that instead of destroying it, the Lord would “Magnify the law and make it honorable.” Isa. 42:21. (3) The law was in Christ’s own heart: “Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.” Ps. 40:7, 8. And (4) since the law is the righteousness of God, the foundation of His government, it could not by any possibility be abolished. See Luke 16:17.

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I think that the approach Waggoner uses to examining Biblical doctrine is worthy of our emulation. He turns to other passages that talk about the same topic to see what the overall “witness” of the inspired authors declares. Then, having done that, he looks at the character of Christ and asks, “Is this compatible?” We can always, in every case, tell a true doctrine from a false one by simply examining it in light of the character of Christ, and by the way that He defines grace, love, salvation, and so on.

Look at the righteousness by faith doctrine, a familiar example for us. Christ, being a loving Savior, has purposed to save His people FROM, rather than IN, their sins. If you are familiar with the life and ministry of Martin Luther, included among his “95 Theses” against the papal practice of indulgences was this: “Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of the souls that are there if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church?”

We have a very similar question that we could ask of any preacher, or teacher, or pastor, that teaches salvation in sin. We need to understand, those who teach salvation in sin do not see sin as the problem. They see God’s punishment of sin as the problem. I want you to take some time to think about that, and realize how significant it is. Those who teach that “forgiveness” and not “atonement” get us into Heaven, and that we are saved (which, for them, means we “avoid the punishment/wrath”) while still committing sins do not see the sin as the enemy. They see Yahweh’s just response to sin as the real danger to avoid!

This is a subtle thing, but it should teach us just how important the Victory over sin doctrine that the CSDA Church *uniquely* teaches actually is, and we could perhaps make an entire study out of just this

point. The Victory over Sin is the only approach to the Gospel that properly identifies sin, and not Yah's wrath, as the true death of the soul, and therefore rightly emphasizes that true salvation, true everlasting life, is not the escape from Yah's wrath, but rather the escape from sin.

And so, with that necessary fact in mind, we must ask those who teach anything contrary to this life-giving plan of salvation, "Why, if Christ can save us entirely and utterly from both sin and its effects, would He not do so immediately, and completely, for those poor souls who come to Him for safety? Why would He continue to leave them in a situation where their flesh can win out over grace, and their natural inclinations are unchanged, so that they remain in a state for which the stated wages are death?"

We can apply this perfect test – the character of Christ – to any doctrine, and frame a question that will reveal the truth. If we exercise divine wisdom in this practice, we can never be misled by false doctrines again. All that is necessary is that we know Christ Yahshua, know His character, and we are settled into the truth so that we cannot be moved.

We continue:

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The reader must know that the word "end" does not necessarily mean "termination." It is often used in the sense of design, object, or purpose. In 1 Tim. 1:5 the same writer says, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." The word here rendered "charity" is often rendered "love," and is so rendered in this place in the New Version. In 1 John 5:3 we read, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments," and Paul himself says that "love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13:10. In both these texts the same word (agape) is used that occurs in 1 Tim. 1:5. Therefore we say that this text means, Now the design of the commandment (or law) is that it should be kept. Everybody will recognize this as a self-evident fact.

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Waggoner's parallel should be sufficient to demonstrate the error of the traditional reading of this verse by nominal Christians. We read that the "end" of the commandment is charity from a pure heart, unfeigned faith, and a good conscience. Does this mean that, having these things, we no longer require the 10 Commandments? This hardly makes sense, since the New Testament lists the "heroes of the faith," the Old Testament individuals who followed Yahweh. They had all these things, and yet were respectful, and obedient to, the articles of the Decalogue. Some may say that the Commandments were "required" until Christ came, but that is not what the passage from 1 Timothy says. If we take "end" to mean the termination of the law, then we have a great many verses that simply make no sense at all.

Furthermore, agape-love, and pure faith, and a good conscience will do nothing but underscore and give meaning to our obedience to the Law, for none can violate any of the commandments with the motive being "a pure faith." Christians must still come to the point where they realize that their stance "against the law" is John's very definition of sin as *anomia*, or "lawlessness;" and further, that it is almost invariably focused, not on the 10 Commandments themselves, but with the 4th only that their tradition has rejected.

We continue:

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But this is not the ultimate design of the law. In the verse following the one under consideration, Paul quotes Moses as saying of the law that “the man that doeth those things shall live by them.” Christ said to the young man, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” Matt. 19:17. Now since the design of the law was that it should be kept, or, in other words, that it should produce righteous characters, and the promise is that those who are obedient shall live, we may say that the ultimate design of the law was to give life. And in harmony with this thought are the words of Paul, that the law “was ordained to life.” Rom. 7:10.

But “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” and “the wages of sin is death.” Thus it is impossible for the law to accomplish its design in making perfect characters and consequently giving life. When a man has once broken the law, no subsequent obedience can ever make his character perfect. And therefore the law which was ordained unto life is found to be unto death. Rom. 7:10.

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Waggoner here is setting up “the problem.” What is “the problem?” The problem is that the life led by the agnostics, and atheists, and generally irreligious, is a lie. They have told themselves that after all, “people are not so bad,” and it’s actually true... to a degree. There are people who have no taste for religion who are kind, and pleasant, and trustworthy and honest. They are “not so bad.” But a photograph of a flower, however beautiful, is only impressive until you hold it next to a real flower. The closer you look at that photograph, the more blurry and indistinct it becomes. If you get close enough, you will find only a smudge of color, with very little beauty at all. But the things that Yah makes, those are different from the things that humans can fashion. The closer you look at a real flower, the more beautiful it appears, and even down to the cells and systems that work together to give this creation life... they are unlike anything that we can conceive with our mortal minds.

People in general, except for those that even human society considers “evil,” are not so bad... until they are compared to the character of Yahshua, to Life Himself, and then we see just how badly they fall short of Yahweh’s ideal for humanity.

People need a Savior in order to restore them to the image of Elohim that we were created to be originally, and the Law was “added because of transgressions,” to show us what Yah would have His people do – not out of mere obedience, but out of their very nature, when they are united with Him. Without Him, however, obedience to the Law is impossible, and this ought to give people some indication that, as Paul said, the Law is indeed “holy,” not just some tool to be used for a time, and then discarded.

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If we were to stop right here with the law unable to accomplish its purpose, we should leave all the world under condemnation and sentence of death. Now we shall see that Christ enables man to secure both righteousness and life. We read that we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Rom. 3:24. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 5:1. More than this, He enables us to keep the law. “For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2

Cor. 5:21. In Christ, therefore, it is possible for us to be made perfect--the righteousness of God--and that is just what we would have been by constant and unvarying obedience to the law.

Again we read, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. . . . For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Rom. 8:1-4.

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Waggoner here quotes what I consider to be one of the most powerful verses in the New Testament, and perhaps in the entire Bible. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that we, in our flawed, sinful flesh, can be called "the righteousness of God" in Christ. Through Christ, we can be righteousness – not just righteous, but the expression of Yah's character in human form. If you think, "That sounds like Yahshua," then yes, it does. This is the meaning of John's amazing statement that "we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1John 3:2) People have accused us, when hearing that we teach complete victory over sin for the born-again believer, of being "prideful" to make such a claim. And yet nothing we have ever said, no new light that has ever been revealed to the CSDA Church, has matched these amazing statements given through Christ's apostles.

But again, this can only be done through the indwelling of Christ in us, and then we shall experience the "end" or the "purpose" of the Law. It was added because of transgressions, yes... but why? It was to show us righteousness, so that we should be able to recognize Christ when He appeared, both in the world, and to our hearts. The Jews, by claiming to be obedient to the law but denying its spirit, were unable to recognize the Messiah. They were in the best position – on paper – to receive Yahshua; but "His own" did not receive Him, because they did not know the Law. In these last days, we see history repeating itself. Christ shall come to receive His people unto Himself, but those who are *anomia*, who are anti-law, will find that this has also made them anti-Christ.

Here is the last part of the study:

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What could not the law do? It could not free a single guilty soul from condemnation. Why not? Because it was "weak through the flesh." There is no element of weakness in the law; the weakness is in the flesh. It is not the fault of a good tool that it cannot make a sound pillar out of a rotten stick. The law could not cleanse a man's past record and make him sinless; and poor, fallen man had no strength resting in his flesh to enable him to keep the law. And so God imputes to believers the righteousness of Christ, who was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, so that "the righteousness of the law" might be fulfilled in their lives. And thus Christ is the end of the law.

To conclude, then, we have found that the design of the law was that it should give life because of obedience. All men have sinned and been sentenced to death. But Christ took upon Himself man's nature and will impart of His own righteousness to those who accept His sacrifice, and finally when they stand, through Him, as doers of the law, He will fulfill to them its ultimate object, by crowning them with

eternal life. And so we repeat, what we cannot too fully appreciate, that Christ is made unto us “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

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It is true that, had man not received a fallen nature through Adam’s sin and our corporate accountability, obedience to the law COULD have been life for humanity. In fact, in those unfallen worlds, and for the angels, obedience to the law is the safeguard against death, for that is the wage of transgression. They keep the law naturally, joyfully, because there is no weakness in their flesh that should war against the law of righteousness.

But for human beings, we among all the intelligences of the universe, we have sinful flesh. We have the “disease of sin” among us, and because of this we must reject the headship of the first Adam (not the man himself, but His spiritual legacy over us) and accept the headship of the Last Adam, Christ Yahshua. Thus, our faith triumphs over that sinful flesh, and the “end” of that conversion process is everlasting life. I note, with great pleasure, that Waggoner does not merely say, “those who accept His sacrifice” are “saved.” No, we must accept His sacrifice and then “stand, through Him, as doers of the law.” That is a full expression of the Gospel. This is justification (the acceptance of the sacrifice) and then sanctification, which is what leads us into that one-ness with the Father and Son by which they share their glory, and their everlasting life, with us.