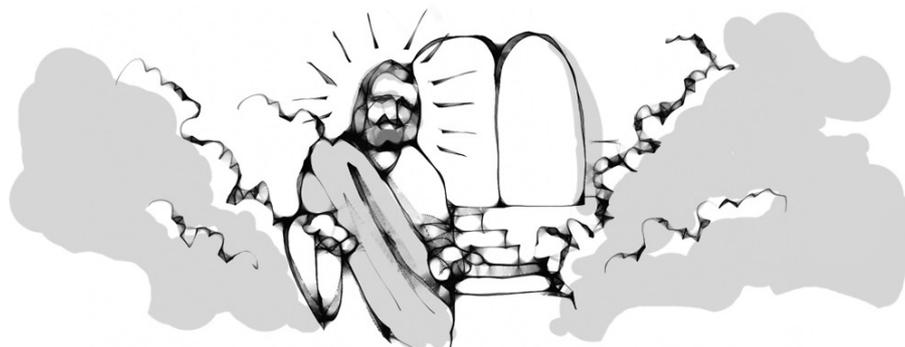


Christ, the End (Goal) of the Law



SABBATH—MAY 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 5:12–21; Romans 6:15–23; Romans 7:13–25; Romans 9:30–Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:19–24.

MEMORY VERSE: “For Christ is the end [purpose; goal] of the law so that there may be righteousness [holiness] for everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4, NRSV).

A WELL-KNOWN MAGAZINE RAN A FULL-PAGE AD WITH A HEADLINE THAT READ: “Achieve [Get] Immortality!¹ (We’re [We Are] Not Joking).” In a way, they were joking. This is because the ad went on to say, “You can start a lasting history. How? Make gifts in your name forever. Contact us for our free booklet.”

Writers, thinkers, philosophers, and religious leaders now and in the past have all wrestled with the question of death and what death does to the meaning of our lives. So, the ad was a clever way to help people deal with their limited time on earth.

But all throughout the New Testament, we have been pointed to the only way to achieve (get) immortality. We do so through faith in Jesus rather than through keeping the law. But we are expected to keep it anyway. Obeying the law is not opposed to grace.² Instead, keeping the law is what we do as a result of receiving grace.

This week we continue studying law and grace.

DEFINITIONS

1. immortality—the ability to live forever.
2. grace—God’s gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

WHERE SIN ABOUNDED (BECAME PLENTIFUL) (Romans 5:12–21)

The law points out sins. But the law is powerless to save us from them. Because the law is powerless, it points out our need for Jesus, the only answer for sin.

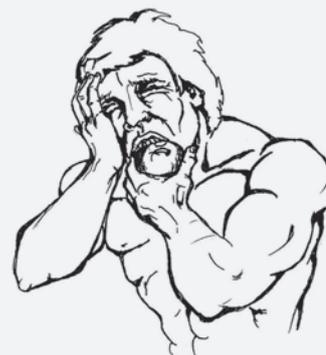
Read Romans 5:12–21. In what way is the message of God’s grace explained in these verses?

Notice in these verses the connection between sin and death. Time and again sin and death appear in close relationship with each other. That is because sin means breaking God’s law, and it leads to death.

Now read Romans 5:20. When the law “entered,” sin increased. This is because the law clearly pointed out what sin was. The natural result of sin is death. But Paul says this: “Where sin increased [grew], God’s grace increased even more” (Romans 5:20, NIV). In other words, no matter how bad sin is, God’s grace is more than enough for those who claim His promises by faith.

The translation of 1 John 3:4 in the King James Version is “sin is the transgression [breaking] of the law.” Because of the influences of this translation, many people limit sin to the breaking of the Ten Commandments alone. But a better translation is “sin is lawlessness” (*anomia*)³ (NKJV). Anything that goes against the principles (laws) of God is sin. The Ten Commandments had not yet been formally made known when Adam ate the forbidden fruit. But Adam disobeyed a command of God (Genesis 2:17). So, as a result, he was guilty of sin. It is through the sin of Adam that the curse of death has touched all generations of people on earth (Romans 5:12, 17, 21).

Adam was unfaithful. But Jesus was loyal to God’s law. This led to the hope of eternal life. Jesus was tempted⁴ but He never yielded (gave in) to sin (Hebrews 4:15). Here in Romans, Paul praises Jesus’ righteous (perfect) obedience, which has led to eternal life (Romans 5:18–21) for those who accept it. As the Second Adam, Jesus kept the law fully and broke the curse of death. His righteousness can now belong to the believer. A person is “sentenced” to death by inheriting the sin of the first Adam. But he or she can now receive the gift of life by accepting the righteousness of the Second Adam, who is Jesus.



When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he disobeyed a command of God.

DEFINITIONS

3. *anomia*—a Greek word meaning “against the law.”

4. tempted—to feel a desire to sin.

LAW AND GRACE (Romans 6:15–23)

It is not easy for Christians to understand that keeping the law is still necessary for a person who is saved by grace alone. If a believer receives righteousness by accepting Jesus, why is it still necessary to keep the law? This question gives another opportunity to make an important point: God never planned for the law to save us. The law's duty (after the Fall) was to show what sin is. But the Cross does not remove the need for a person to obey God's law. In the same way, someone who has been pardoned for breaking the speed limit cannot continue to break it.

According to Romans 6:12 and Romans 6:15–23, what does living a life of grace mean?

Grace and the law do not oppose each other. They do not remove each other. Instead, they are powerfully connected. The law cannot save us. But it can show us why we need grace. Grace is not opposed to law but to death. Our problem is not the law itself but the eternal death that happens because we break the law.

Paul warns the Christian against using the promised gift of grace as an excuse to sin (Romans 6:12, 15). The law describes sin. So, Paul tells Christians not to sin. In other words, Paul is telling them: *keep the law, obey the commandments!*

“Paul had always honored God's law. Paul had shown that in the law there is no power to save men from the penalty of disobedience. Wrongdoers must repent⁵ of their sins and humble themselves before God, whose law they have broken. And they must also use faith in the blood of Christ as their only way of receiving pardon.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [Leaders and Teachers]*, page 393.

Why is it so easy to fall into the trap of thinking we do not have to obey the law because it does not save us?

DEFINITIONS

5. repent—to feel sorry for your sins and to turn away from them with the help of the Holy Spirit.

O WRETCHED (UNHAPPY) MAN! (Romans 7:21–25)

Read Romans 7:13–25. How are we to understand these verses? Is Paul talking about an unconverted (unchanged) man before accepting Jesus as his Savior? Or is this the experience of the converted (changed) man who has accepted Christ? What reasons can you give for your answer?

If you are not sure who Paul is talking about here, you are not alone. Bible thinkers also have wrestled with this question for hundreds of years. The person described here is someone who delights in the law of God (this does not sound like a nonbeliever, does it?) yet is someone who seems to be enslaved to sin (which makes no sense because Christians are promised power over sin). *The SDA Bible Commentary* says, “Paul’s main purpose in these verses is to explain the connection between the law, the gospel, and the person who has been awakened to how hard the battle against sin is. Paul’s message is: ‘The law may point out how hard the struggle is, but only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring victory and relief.’ ”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 554.

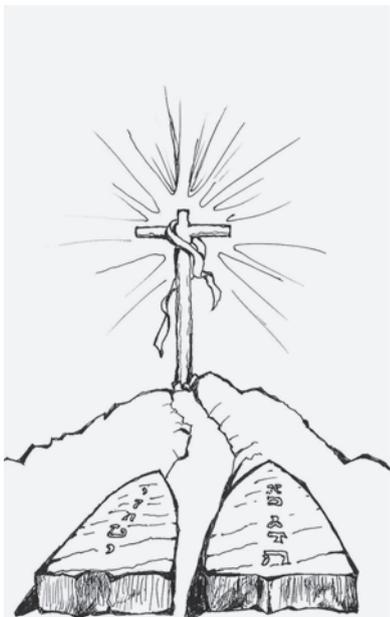
No matter what we think these verses mean, we must always remember that the person who struggles with sin can still make right choices. If this were not true, then all of the promises about power over sin would be meaningless. Also, as Matthew 5 shows, sin often starts before an act is done. As a result, a person breaks the law by just thinking something sinful. This fact could cause a lot of frustration. But, as Romans 7 explains, the person may be helpless, but he or she is not hopeless. For the person who lives in the Spirit, the ever-present law serves as a reminder that freedom from guilt comes through Jesus (Romans 7:24–Romans 8:2).

Read again the verses for today. In what ways do they describe your own experience with the Lord? Even though you struggle, how can you experience the hope that Paul wrote about here?



Though sin may enslave us, it can't remove our power to make right choices.

THE GOAL OF THE LAW (Romans 9:30–Romans 10:4)



The law reminds all of us that Christ is our righteousness.

The title for this week's lesson comes from Romans 10:4: "Christ is the end [goal] of the law" (NKJV). There are many who have been taught to think negatively about the law. They automatically interpret the verse to mean, "Christ made the law obsolete [outdated; old-fashioned]." But this reading goes against the many verses in the book of Romans and the other parts of the New Testament that support the idea that the law is still valid (good).

Read Romans 9:30–Romans 10:4. How is Paul explaining that salvation is by faith and not by the law?

As with the rest of the letter to the Romans, Paul's purpose in these verses is to show the true Source of righteousness. The law shows us what righteousness is. But it is powerless to make people righteous. So, Paul gives us a paradox⁶ to help explain how the law shows us what holiness is. But keeping it cannot make us holy: the nations (Gentiles; non-Jews) who did not even work for righteousness have received it. But Israel, who worked hard to keep the righteous law, did not receive it. Paul is not separating Jews from righteousness. At the same time, he is not saying that every non-Jew is righteous either. He is just saying that the law does not bring righteousness to a sinner, whether Jew or Gentile.

Many Jews were sincere in their desire for righteousness. But their search failed (Romans 10:2). They were very eager about serving God but wanted to do it in their own way. They had taken the goal of God's revelation (the law) and confused it with the Source (Jesus) of their salvation. The law is good, but it is not good enough to save anyone. Instead of making a person righteous, the law points to the person's sinfulness. It points out more clearly the need for righteousness. That is why Paul describes Christ as the "end [goal]" of the law. Christ does not end the law. But He is the goal of the law. He is the One to whom the law points. The law leads a person to Christ. It points the sorrowful sinner to Him for salvation. The law reminds all Christians that Christ is our righteousness (Romans 10:4).

People who take the law seriously are always in danger of legalism,⁷ of trying to have "their own righteousness." As we try to obey God's law, how can we be careful not to fall into this very clever trap?

DEFINITIONS

6. paradox—something (such as the law) that is made up of two opposite things and that seems impossible but is actually true or possible. For example, the law points out what holiness is, but keeping it cannot make us holy.

7. legalism—the belief that you can earn your salvation through keeping the law and doing good works.

THE DISCIPLINARIAN⁸ (Galatians 3:19–24)

Following the book of Romans, Paul is careful to say in the book of Galatians that the purpose of the law is to make clear what sin is and not to make people righteous (Galatians 3:19, 21).

Read Galatians 3:23, 24. What examples does Paul use to describe the purpose of the law? What do you think the examples mean?

Depending on the translation, the law is pictured in verse 24 as a “schoolmaster,” “taskmaster,” “tutor,” and “custodian.” The Greek word means a slave who is the disciplinarian for the son of a rich man. It was the tutor’s responsibility to make sure that the son learned self-discipline.⁹ The tutor might be a slave, but he was given the authority to correct or discipline the son, even if it meant physical punishment. When the son reached adulthood, the tutor no longer had authority over him.

If the law is the tutor, what do you think is the purpose of the law for someone who has received salvation in Christ?

The tutor no longer had authority over the adult son. But it was expected that the lessons that the son had learned would help him to make wise decisions. In the same way, the Christian is expected to control his or her actions in keeping with the principles of the law.

In addition to its role as a tutor, the law also worked as a caretaker that protected the believer until the “faith” came (Galatians 3:23, KJV). Here again we understand that Christ is the “end,” the goal, of the law. Paul makes that point very clear when he says that the law brought us to Christ, so that “we might be justified [made righteous; pure] by faith” (verse 24, KJV).

Read carefully Galatians 3:21. What does it say that should end forever any idea that we can be saved by obedience to the law? Why is this such good news? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.



Paul pictures the law as a schoolmaster or tutor.

DEFINITIONS

8. disciplinarian—a person who uses discipline and correction to make sure that rules or orders are obeyed.

9. self-discipline—the process (method) of learning how to keep self’s desires under strict control.

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “The law shows sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ. Then it helps us to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by letting God know our sorrow for sin and our faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“The law of Ten Commandments is to be thought of as positive, not negative. This is because its laws are the sure guarantee of making Christians happy while obeying God. As received in Christ, it makes us pure. Through Him, it builds in us a character [a holy life] that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the Christians who obey, it is a wall of protection. We find in it the goodness of God. By pointing out to men the unchangeable principles of righteousness, God tries to shield them from the evils that result from breaking His law.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, pages 234, 235.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In class, talk about the wonderful hope found in Galatians 3:21. How is the gospel of grace so clearly presented there? Why should this verse be a “cure” for legalism?
- ② Godly living is required for those who call themselves children of God. Many well-meaning Christians point to the need for us to reach “perfection” if we desire to enter God’s kingdom. Unfortunately, many who believe in this doctrine (belief) think that a person’s own good works can gain him or her salvation. But they choose to overlook the fact that the sinful human nature is real. Humans have sin passed on to them by their forefathers and deal with temptations every day. Even more serious is the discouragement that can come to those who are looking to themselves and how well they are doing for their salvation. Next to the holiness of God and His law, who among us can ever measure up? So, how then can we be careful not to get caught up in any false teaching that will lead us away from the righteousness of Christ covering us?
- ③ What is the goal of the law?