Evergreen Presbyterian Church

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November 1st, 2026

Sermon Title: Christ the End of the Law

Sermon Text: Romans 10:4

Rom. 10:1 ¶ Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

Rom. 10:2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Rom. 10:3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Rom. 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Main Point: Christ does not put an end to the law, but he is the one who is its fulfillment and final goal.

Outline:

1. Christ the interpreter of the law
2. Christ the mediator of the law
3. Christ the substance of the law
4. Christ the administrator of the law
5. Christ the author of the law on our hearts
6. Christ the Obeyer of the Law

Introduction

Today's verse is the foundational argument Paul is making for why the Jews couldn't get righteousness from the Law: because they wouldn't go to Jesus Christ who is the substance of all the law.

> "[B]eing ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to <u>*God's*</u> righteousness. ***<u>For</u>*** Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Paul makes this "for" statement here. He says they didn't find righteousness. They didn't submit to God's righteousness. And when he says "for" he's using the word in the sense of "because." They wouldn't submit to God's righteousness BECAUSE Christ is the end of the law.

The whole law was showing them righteousness. It was staring them in the face. And what was staring them in the face was the face of Jesus. But because Jesus stripped them of bragging rights, they didn't want him. They wanted something that would elevate them. But Jesus comes to make us less and less.

But that's the tragedy of Jewish unbelief: they have the law. And as Paul says here, "<u>*Christ*</u> is the end of that law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Now, we've already explored the tragedy of Jewish unbelief. But today I instead want to explore Paul's "because" statement here. He says this: that Law that the Jews had for centuries? Christ is the "end" of it.

And by "end" Paul doesn't mean that Jesus is the one to put the Law to death or abolish it. But he *does* mean that Jesus perfects, completes, or consummates it. He's saying, "all this stuff God was aiming at in the Law? Jesus is the capstone of it. He's the one that completes the whole structure and fulfills all that it was aiming at." What an incredible thing for him to say about Jesus Christ.

What I want to do today, then is to just celebrate and explore the ways that Jesus is the substance, the completion, the true "end" or "goal" of the whole law. In his excellent book *The Vindication of the Law,* Anthony Burgess (one of the men who helped to write our church's confession – the Westminster Confession of Faith) wrote a chapter dedicated to this question: what does it mean that Christ is the "end of the law"? And he says that there are at least six things that Paul means when he say that Jesus is the "end of the law."

And I'm totally stealing his outline with my own **six points here**, giving full credit to Anthony Burgess. Christ is the interpreter of the law, the mediator of the law, the substance of the law, the administrator of the law, the author of the law on our hearts, and finally he is the obeyer of the law.

What I hope happens here today is at least two things: first, I hope that you will be encouraged to love God's law and to see it as a good thing, as a blessing, and as a proclamation of the grace of God. The law of Moses was a covenant of grace, *broadly* speaking. And when we say that we mean that the mosaic law, understood in light of its true sense, and in the sense that it pointed to Jesus – preached grace to God's people, and continues to preach grace to God's people.

How did the law preach grace? Because whatever the law commanded or promised or threatened, it was always meant to stir God's people toward Christ. They weren't supposed to rest in the commands themselves; they were supposed to go on to Christ. So the Israelites were stung by the snakes, but then they were given the bronze serpent to look at and be saved. A believer – whether they lived in the Old or New Testament era – was always meant to come to Christ and abide in him. But God used the law to do that!

So the idea of having the law abolished or done away with is like a person trying to live without a vital organ. It just won't work. Anthony Burgess puts it this way: he says that the law and gospel are like two twins which are each distinct, but who can never be separated from each other. A law without gospel only condemns. A gospel without law turns the grace of God into a license to sin, leaving the believer without a rule for holy living. So I hope this sermon causes you to have a positive appreciation for God's law.

And the second thing I hope for today is that we will all be moved to glorify Jesus Christ more. Because if he is the end of the law, then that is a tremendous reason for us to exalt Jesus and think highly and wonderfully of him.

1. Christ the interpreter of the law

First today, Christ is the end of the law because he is the interpreter of the law.

I choose these words very carefully. Jesus interprets the law, but doesn't give a new law. He opens and explains the law that Israel already had. Even when he surprised the scribes and Pharisees with his behavior, he was never breaking God's law. He never violated the Sabbath, nor did he teach people to. He violated the *Rabbis'* idea of what lawkeeping looked like but he never violated God's law.

He said things like, "I did not come to abolish [the Law or the Prophets] but to fulfill them." He said in John 10(:34), "The scriptures cannot be broken." He said in Luke 16(:17), "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void." Jesus' most sharp accusation against his theological opponents was, "You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men" (Mark 7:8-13). People were amazed at his teaching that he taught as one with authority; in other words, he spoke like he knew what he was talking about.

Jesus was not overturning the law, he was defending it, explaining it, and opening it up. He wasn't closing the book of the law to do something else. More than anything, he wanted people to know the law, because if you know the law, then you're going to see and believe in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus gave the sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, he wasn't correcting Moses or giving a new reading of the Scriptures. Instead, he was exposing the spiritual depth of the Law of God that people were missing. He was saying, the law runs as deep as the heart. It was already there.

2. Christ the mediator of the law

<u>Second, Christ is the end of the law because he is the mediator of the law.</u>

What do we mean when we say "mediator"?

A mediator is someone who stands in the middle of two estranged parties to bring them into a covenant of peace. As Job cried out, a true mediator must be able to "lay his hand on us both" (Job 9:33). A mortal man cannot reach up to a holy God. Only Jesus Christ, the God-Man, can lay one hand on the throne of Heaven and the other on sinful humanity, absorbing the curse of the Law to secure our peace. This is why we need a mediator.

Remember: God gave the law to Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai after he saved God's people from Egypt. God gave the tablets to Moses. And Galatians 3:19 says that the law was put into place through Moses. But even there, Moses is serving as a type of Christ. As someone pointing forward to Christ.

Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2:5 that "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ." A mortal man who is a sinner simply isn't a sufficient mediator to stand between God and a sinful people.

So even at Sinai, Moses is standing there, holding out the law, as a type of Christ.

Think of the graciousness of God here. Even in the Law of Moses we have a mediator. The very fact that the Law of Moses had instructions for a mediator to stand between God and man is proof that the Law of Moses was gracious in nature. If it weren't gracious then there wouldn't have been a need for a mediator. There wouldn't have even been a *provision* for a mediator!

Why am I pointing these things out? Because it's easy for us to think, "Well the Law belongs to Moses, and the gospel belongs to Christ." In reality, they both belong to Christ when we rightly listen to them.

The Law of God proclaims the grace of God because it proclaims Christ. And the gospel proclaims the goodness of the law, and shows us what God wants for his people. But we cannot have any of these blessings without Jesus Christ, our mediator who stands between God and sinners. This is why Hebrews 8(:6) tells us that "Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better." Jesus Christ is the one who is the mediator standing between a holy God and a sinful people. This is a role He was already performing in a typical sense at Sinai.

He's the mediator of the law.

3. Christ the substance of the law

Third, Christ is the end of the law because he is the substance of the law.

Twice the New Testament talks about the Law with this "shadow" language. Hebrews 10:1 is a passage that talks about the ceremonial law of Moses, and there

the author of Hebrews says, “[T]he law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities.” So here Hebrews sets up the option: shadow vs. true form.

And if you go to Colossians 2:17 Paul tells us, speaking of Jewish ceremonies and festivals: “These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.”

So both Hebrews and Colossians speak very highly of God’s law. These ceremonies they’re talking about were not empty rituals just used to take up time. Instead, they are shadows. They show the shape of what is to come. They’re the outline. But those ceremonies are still not *the thing* we were meant to be waiting for. So what are we waiting for? The substance. Hebrews calls Jesus “the true form of these realities.” Colossians calls Jesus the “substance” of the law. Think of the Law as the silhouette; and think of Christ as the body casting the shadow.

There is this very popular trend among some evangelical Christians, where they like to take Jewish ceremonies and almost repurpose them. Christians today still participate in Passovers and seder meals. Some like to participate in the feast of tabernacles. Others like to wear prayer shawls or blow the ram’s horn (called a shofar). Some will observe Hanukkah. There are probably other Jewish practices that have been co-opted by Christians as well. I would not call such ceremonies a sin. But here is what I would like to say:

These ceremonies are worth studying and learning about because they are the shadows that lead the participants to Christ, and which preached Christ for generations before the incarnation. Now, the working assumption here is that if these things were good prior to the coming of Christ, they must still be good today. But a Christian that participates in these things needs to recognize that by participating in these things they are living in the shadow instead of the substance.

What I think Paul would do is, he would not say, “participating in the Passover is a sin.” I think he would probably participate in these things insofar as it would give him the ear of a Jewish person. After all, he was willing to have Timothy circumcised in order to prove that he didn’t hate the ceremonies. So I think he *would* go back to the shadows, in a sense, if he thought that doing so would win people over to Jesus.

But I also think Paul would ask, “Why would you have the Passover when you could have Christ himself in the word and sacraments? Why have Christ obscurely in the Passover when you could have Jesus himself right now? Why live by shadows when the substance has come?”

So because of this, I do think I would caution any Christian against re-observing the shadows. You would need to have a very good and a very clear reason for doing so. Think of it like this: if there was still value in the Passover Jesus wouldn’t have given us the Lord’s Supper.

It’s time for all believers to be people step forward into the substance, and don’t live backwards with one foot in the shadows.

4. Christ the administrator of the law

<u>Fourth, Christ is the end of the law because he is the administrator of the law.</u>

The New Testament writers (and Christ himself) uphold the moral law of God as a permanent and unchanging standard of righteousness. But what the New Testament does is, it changes how we see the law by placing it the hands of Jesus Christ. Instead of throwing away the Ten Commandments, the apostles celebrate this exact same moral standard under new, grace-filled titles. They call it the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2), the sovereign "royal law" (Jas. 2:8), the "law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25), the "law of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:2), and the "new commandment" (1 Jn. 2:7). Yet all of these different titles point to one important reality about how the law is administered. In Christ, we don’t approach the moral law in the same way that it was handed down by Moses: with terror and fear of being condemned.

Instead, in Christ, we receive the law from a gracious Savior who gave Himself to satisfy its ultimate demands. This is what we mean when we say that Christ is the administrator of the law. It’s his law. The law of Christ. And the fact that Jesus is the administrator of the law changes everything, because it transforms our obedience from the fearful duty of condemned slaves into the joyful devotion of redeemed children. This isn’t just a new change. In Acts 7:38 Stephen makes this statement:

> "This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai..."

This has always been the law handed down from Jesus to his people. Jesus was always there at Sinai.

And Anthony Burgess even argues that the "Angel of the Lord" who was at Sinai was none other than Jesus himself. Christ was the one actually administering the covenant to Moses. The book of James (4:12) also makes a statement that is interesting:

> "There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy."

Think of what James is saying: Christ is the King of His church, and He administers the Moral Law as a rule of life for His people.

So as believers, we shouldn't think of the law as a fearful, condemning thing. Instead, it's what our life is meant to look like. It's what our life is meant to be shaped like. It's the same thing that Jesus lived out day after day, and it's the reason why the moral law is really the law of Christ.

Because Jesus is the administrator of that law.

5. Christ the author of the law on our hearts

Fifth, Christ is the end of the law in the sense that he is the author of the law on our hearts.

Here is what I mean: God has never been contented with his covenant people just going through the motions and merely DOING the right things. He has from the beginning commanded hearts that are engaged in His law. An example of this is Deuteronomy 6:5-6, where God says this:

> "You shall ***love*** the Lord your God with all your ***heart*** and with all your ***soul*** and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your ***heart***."

God's not asking for mere ritual exactness or external compliance. He wants the heart. From the beginning these were commands meant to be written on the heart. Deuteronomy 10:16:

> "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn."

Here God is, he's not telling Israel not to have the sign of the covenant, but he does tell them, "the flesh isn't enough. It has to be the *heart*." 1 Samuel 15:22:

> "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams."

God's not asking for surface obedience. He wants heart obedience. He wants love from his people. One more. From Isaiah 29:13:

> "And the Lord said: 'Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men...'"

Under the old covenant, the Law was continually demanding the heart. But on its own, in and of itself, the law couldn't supply that. So was Israel just always meant to feel like they were a failure factory, and that there was no hope? Of course not. This is why we see the promise of Jeremiah 31:33:

> "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Notice that in this promise, the content of the law remains the same. He doesn't replace the law with something else. The coming of Christ changes the location of the law, but not the content of it. It's still God's law, but now it's on the heart. And in Christ, God provides what he demands: not only cleansing from sin, but also heart change. And he *gives* that heart change.

The critical difference between the Law in the Old Covenant and the Law in the New Covenant is the thing upon which it is written. In the old, it was written on tablets. This is why Paul says in 2 Corinthians that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." What's wrong with the letter? The letter's written on stone, demanding

perfection… and when we fail it issues a death sentence. That is the letter that kills. It's the law read apart from Christ, far from the heart.

So when Paul says "the Spirit gives life" then, he's talking about the promise of the covenant that God gave in Jeremiah 31: the law written on the heart doesn't crush the sinner: exacting and demanding in its perfection.

In *Christ*, when we come to the law looking to its mediator and administrator, Jesus Christ… when we come to the law looking to the Savior that the law proclaims… when we receive the Spirit who writes that law on our hearts, then we are surrounded by grace and we have life, and we don't just *do*: we also *love* – which is what the Law called for from the beginning.

So we could put it this way: the law apart from Christ is death. It stays on the stone. It's a dead letter. But in Christ, the law comes alive, it's gracious, it has provisions for mercy, it gives us peace with God because Christ himself fulfills it on our behalf.

Jesus is the one who doesn't just stand there. He works in our hearts and blesses us so that we love what we have in Him. He is the author of the law on our hearts.

6. Christ the Obeyer of the Law

<u>Finally this morning, Christ is the end of the law in the sense that he is the obeyer of the law.</u>

One thing that Paul has been telling us in Romans is that the law does call for us to completely and perfectly obey it. And this is why Jews and Gentiles both stand condemned before God's law. Because we've all broken it. We've all fallen short of it.

But Paul tells us that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Paul is *not* preaching a righteousness through lawkeeping. It's not an option because we've already broken it. So what is our hope? Well it's the righteousness of faith that Paul has been talking about here. Righteousness that comes to a sinner who has broken the law… and the righteousness comes from someone who

did keep the law. And that is Jesus. Jesus is the obeyer of the law. Look at Galatians 4:4:

> "God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law."

Jesus was born “under the law,” meaning he lived with the same obligation to keep God’s law as every other human being who has ever been born. And all of his life was spent keeping that law truly – which means not just externally, but also from the heart, out of love for God.

Theologians call this the doctrine of Christ's active obedience. He intentionally placed Himself under the obligations of the Covenant of Works to fulfill what all of us failed have to do. We may have failed to keep the covenant of works, but Jesus did not. He succeeded. Romans 5:19:

> "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

The good news says that when we place our faith in Christ, even though we are sinners and have failed to keep the law, when we trust in Christ his exact obedience is imputed to our account.

Conclusion

Think about the context of all of what we’ve just seen. In Romans 10:3 Paul said that the Jews were “seeking to establish their own righteousness.” And because of this, the Jews wore themselves out trying to build their own resumes of perfection. And in so doing, they missed the Jesus that the law was preaching.

I mentioned when we started that my hope today was twofold. First, that you would see God’s law not as a burden, but as a blessing—that you would see the gospel radiating from it. And second, that you would see Jesus Christ as the Savior He really is, the absolute center of everything God has been doing since the beginning of the world.

Think of Jesus on the road to Emmaus. He walked with those discouraged disciples, and Luke tells us that “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted

to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." All of the shadows, all of the ceremonies, all of the promises of the Law… they take us directly to Jesus.

What a great Savior. He was born under the law. He perfectly obeyed the law. He didn't just keep it; He loved it, because it reflected His own holy nature.

But remember why Paul is writing this in Romans 10. He is grieving for people who had a zeal for God, but who were frantically trying to "establish their own righteousness."

They wanted to keep the law on the tablets of stone!

Some of you may have come in here this morning exhausted because you are trying to do the exact same thing. You are trying to establish your own righteousness. You are trying to use the law to make yourself acceptable to God, and it is a heavy, crushing weight.

You need to hear verse 4 today: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

The striving is over. The mediator has stood in the gap. The obeyer has kept the standard. Yes, the law sets a standard of perfection that we have broken—we have all fallen short! But that is exactly why we flee to Him. When you place your faith in Jesus, His perfect law-keeping is placed onto your account. And when you stumble tomorrow, you know that you're not facing the terrors of Mount Sinai; you are facing the gracious Administrator of the New Covenant who has already paid for your sin.

The law is no longer a dead letter that condemns you; it is a clear and wonderful path laid out by the Savior who loves you. He is the end of the law. Look to Him, rest in His righteousness, and believe.

Let's pray.