

Did Christ's Sacrifice Bring an End to the Law?

*How are Christians "not under law, but under grace"?
How is Jesus the "end of the law"?*

Two key passages from the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans are typically taken out of context by nominal "Christians"—causing a great deal of confusion. Read in isolation, these passages give the *appearance* that Christians are no longer required to keep the laws and commandments of God. But what do these passages *really* say?

Romans 6:14—"For sin shall not rule over you because you are **not under law, but under grace**"—cannot be understood in isolation; the entire context of Romans six must be examined if we are to understand Paul's intent. In fact, the key is actually given in the first two verses of the chapter. Paul asks and answers the question: "What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound? **MAY IT NEVER BE!** We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?" (verses 1-2).

Remember that *sin* is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4). Obviously, then, if Christians are *not* to continue living in sin, they must be keeping the commandments and laws of God. However, God's laws are now kept in the spirit—under the grace of God!

Paul goes on in Romans six to explain that the operation of baptism pictures the "death and burial" of the old sinful man—which justifies one to God the Father and brings forgiveness of past sins. He explains it this way: "Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death [since Jesus died for our sins]? Therefore, we were buried with Him through the baptism into the death; so that, just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life [now with the Holy Spirit of God—in spiritual obedience].

"For if we have been conjoined together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be *in the likeness* of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with *Him* **in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin; because the one who has died to sin** [through repentance and water baptism] **has been justified from sin** [through the blood of Jesus Christ].

"Now if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from *the* dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him. For when He died, He died unto sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives unto God. In the same way also, you should indeed **reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord.**

"Therefore, **do not let sin rule in your mortal body by obeying it in the lusts thereof.** Likewise, do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin; rather, yield yourselves to God as those who are alive from *the* dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.

"For sin shall not rule over you because **you are not under law** [for forgiveness and justification], **but under grace** [for forgiveness and justification]. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law [for forgiveness and justification], but under grace [for forgiveness and justification]? **MAY IT NEVER BE!** Don't you realize that to whom you yield yourselves *as* servants to obey, you are servants of the one you obey, whether *it is* of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks *be* to God, that you were *the* servants of sin, but you have obeyed from *the* heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you" (verses 3-17).

Keep in mind that from Romans 3:20 to 6:23, Paul's entire explanation of justification of past sins by *grace* through the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ is contrasted with the absolute inability of any *law* to bring true spiritual justification to the sinner. That is the context in which

Romans 6:14 was written. When Paul writes that Christians are “not under law, but under grace,” he means that we are not trying to achieve justification *through* law—which is in fact impossible—but *through* God’s grace.

This then is the true, scriptural meaning of Romans 6:14.

The apostle John further explains the *continuous* justification and forgiveness of sins that believers have through faith in the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ: “If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him, but we are walking in the darkness [living in sin], we are lying to ourselves, and we are not practicing the Truth [‘Your Word is the Truth,’ (John 17:17)]. However, if we walk in the light [of God’s Word, in love and obedience], as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin.**

“If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our own sins, He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And *yet, if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ the Righteous*; and He is *the* propitiation [continual source of mercy and forgiveness] for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for *the sins* of the whole world” (I John 1:6-10; 2:1-2).

John then follows his explanation of forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ with the admonition that we are likewise required to keep God’s commandments. This again substantiates that God’s merciful grace does not allow anyone to continue to *live* in sin. Notice: “And by this *standard* we know that we know Him: if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. On the other hand, **if anyone is keeping His Word, truly in this one the love of God is being perfected. By this means we know that we are in Him.** Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked” (I John 2:3-6). **This is the full, true meaning of living in the grace of God.**

Romans 10:4—“For Christ is the **end of the law** for righteousness to every one that believeth” (*KJV*)—is also typically misunderstood. When this verse is read in isolation—without considering the context and historical background, or the underlying Greek—it does indeed give the impression that Christ brought the law to an end. But is that what it really means? If so, *which* law did Jesus end?

Because of this one verse, numerous people assume that all the laws and commandments of God have come to an end. But is this true? Is it possible for a man to *end* any law of God? Try ending the law of gravity. It can’t be done. All things are subject to law and all men are subject to God’s law. Would Christ, Who is the Lawgiver, actually end all of God’s law, so that people may freely sin without consequence? Absolutely not! But that’s what millions of Protestants embrace from reading this one verse.

Rather than read this verse in isolation, let us examine the context in which Paul wrote the passage. Remember, men divided the Bible into chapters and verses. The context of Romans 10:4 actually begins *not* with verse one, but with Romans 9:30. Paul wrote: “What then shall we say? That *the* Gentiles, who did not follow after righteousness, have attained righteousness, even *the* righteousness [justification] that *is* by faith” (Rom. 9:30).

After one has been justified from past sins, they are to keep the commandments of God in the “spirit of the law.” Paul wrote, “Since *it is* indeed one God Who will justify *the* circumcision by faith, and *the* uncircumcision through faith. **Are we, then, abolishing law through faith? MAY IT NEVER BE! Rather, we are establishing law**” (Rom. 3:30-31). And again, “So that

even as sin has reigned unto death, so also might **the grace of God reign through righteousness** [justification] unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What then shall we say? **Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound? MAY IT NEVER BE! We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?**” (Rom. 5:20-21; 6:1-2).

Additionally, the Jews who rejected Jesus Christ and continued with their temple rituals and observation of the traditional laws of Judaism did not attain to the justification of God by their works of law. **True** spiritual justification can only come through the grace of God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins: **“But Israel, although they followed after a law** [In the Greek text there is *no* definite article “the” before “law.”] **of righteousness** [justification], **did not attain to a law of righteousness** [justification]. **Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but BY WORKS OF LAW** [In the Greek text there is *no* definite article “the” before “works” or “law.”]; for they stumbled at the Stone of stumbling, exactly as it is written: ‘Behold, I place in Sion a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offense, but everyone who believes in Him shall not be ashamed’ ” (Rom. 9:31-33).

It is important to note that in the above passage there is no definite article before “law” or “works of law.” Therefore, Paul is not referring to the Ten Commandments. Paul is actually writing about a “justification by works of law”—that is, through the operation of temple rituals and/or traditional laws of Judaism. Anyone who rejects Jesus Christ can **never** obtain justification of past sins through rituals or Jewish traditional laws, or laws of any other religion. This is why Paul said the Jews stumbled; Jesus was that “Rock of offense”—Whom they rejected. While the Jews attempted to obtain justification of sins through temple rituals and other laws, true spiritual justification of past sins can only come from God the Father through the sacrifice of Christ. This is only obtainable through repentance of sins and water baptism with true faith and belief in Jesus’ shed blood—all through the operation of God’s grace. This spiritual justification by faith—or “the righteousness of faith”—cannot be obtained by any “work of law.”

Notice how Paul explains this in chapter ten: “Brethren, the earnest desire of my heart and my supplication to God for Israel is for salvation. For I testify of them that **they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.**

“For they, being ignorant of the righteousness [justification] *that* comes from God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness [justification], have not submitted to the righteousness [justification] of God. **For Christ is the end of works of law for righteousness** [justification] **to everyone who believes**” (Rom. 10:1-4).

In other words, *for those who believe*, true justification comes through Christ—thus putting an **end** to futile attempts at justification through ritual works.

So the actual meaning of Romans 10:4 is that Jesus Christ, through His sacrifice for sin, once for all time, ended the temple ritual laws and the traditional laws of Judaism for justification. By writing this, Paul did not unilaterally terminate all the laws of God as millions want to assume. He was emphasizing that true spiritual justification from God the Father is uniquely received through faith in the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ, which is the operation of faith and grace combined, and cannot be procured by any work of any law.