

ROMANS 10

COMMENTARY

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

10:1 The Apostle Paul has previously asserted how distraught he is over a widescale, First Century Jewish rejection of Yeshua as the Messiah (9:1-3). He tells the Believers in Rome, “Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved” (TNIV). Paul might identify later as the Apostle to the nations (11:13), but there should be little denying the reality that Paul strictly adhered to his own credo, declaring the good news of salvation in Israel’s Messiah “to the Jew first” (1:16), something witnessed in his own ministry activities when serving in a new location (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8)—something even to be observed when he would finally arrive in Rome (28:17, 23).

Messianic readers of vs. 1-3, who will hear these verses read periodically to stir necessary attention to Jewish evangelism, today in the Twenty-First Century, can be at somewhat of a loss when failing to realize that evangelical Christian examiners of Romans have had to be quite firm in directing evangelical Christian readers to the fact that God is not finished with His Jewish people. To many Christian laypersons, Romans chs. 9-11 are seldom examined with thoughts of First Century Jews, Greeks, and Romans in the Body of Messiah—much less contemporary Jewish people today, the State of Israel, and what is in view for future salvation history. Among commentators, Douglas J. Moo asserts,

“[Paul] wants his predominantly Gentile...readers to know that he takes no delight or satisfaction from Israel’s fall. Quite the contrary, on his part, Paul remains passionately committed to the salvation of the Jews. His commitment rests in the desire, or will, of his most inmost person, the heart; and it comes to expression in his prayer of petition on behalf of Israel, that they might experience the salvation that has been made available in the gospel.”¹

Grammatically speaking, Paul speaks about how his praying for his Jewish brethren is *eis sōtērian* (εἰς σωτηρίαν), “to/for salvation.” The clause *eis sōtērian* is witnessed in numerous places from Paul throughout the Apostolic Scriptures, detailing the salvation of people (Acts 13:47; cf. Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; Romans 1:16; 10:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13), sometimes within the context of some prior action of sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10) or training in Tanach Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15). The connection of the preposition *eis* with other direct objects, such as *eis Christon* (εἰς Χριστόν), “to Christ/Messiah” in Galatians 3:24, is also important to note. In C.E.B. Cranfield’s estimation of the clause *eis sōtērian* in v. 1,

“[This] indicates the aim toward which Paul’s desire and prayer are directed, and so is really equivalent to ἵνα σωθῶσιν [*hina sōthōsin*]. In this prayer for Israel’s salvation he has set an example for

¹ Moo, pp 631-632.

the Church [i.e., contemporary Christianity] to follow. A church which failed to pray for Israel's salvation would be a church which did not know what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ."²

The clause *hina sōthōsin* (ἵνα σωθῶσιν), "so that they may be saved," is witnessed in Paul's letters. It notably occurs in 1 Corinthians 10:33, "I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved [*hina sōthōsin*]."³

Among Messianic writers, we should all be able to wholeheartedly agree with the perspective of Tim Hegg on v. 1:

"The fact that Paul continued to have a heartfelt desire for Israel's salvation, and that he prayed to God for their salvation, is proof that Paul did not consider their rejection of Yeshua to be final and closed. Paul did not consider for a moment that God had cast away His people—this was unthinkable for Paul for the very reason that such a position goes counter to the very words of Scripture."⁴

While Paul himself regularly prayed and agonized over the salvation of his Jewish people—"Believe me, friends, all I want for Israel is what's best for Israel: salvation, nothing less. I want it with all my heart and pray to God for it all the time" (The Message)—too many people in contemporary Christianity do not even realize that their Messiah faith is even connected to the Jewish people, Second Temple Judaism, or even that Jesus Christ was a Jew. **The Messianic movement has done a considerable amount of good in helping many contemporary Christians to reconnect with their Hebrew and Jewish Roots.** Yet ironically enough, as many non-Jewish Believers have entered into the Messianic community, the salvation of the Jewish people has become a distant afterthought of many who now make up the independent, and at times rogue, Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement—which does not tend to have a very fair outlook on the positive achievements of either the Christian Church or Jewish Synagogue.⁵ Later in Paul's letter, we will need to consider the ramifications of non-Jews being grafted-in to the olive tree (11:16-17), and the directive to them of not being arrogant about it (11:18).

10:2 Paul actually acknowledges some of the virtues of his fellow Jews, in stating, "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened" (RSV). That Paul's fellow Jews undoubtedly had zeal, is something seen throughout the Apostolic Scriptures (Acts 21:20; Galatians 1:14). Paul's own zealotry (Acts 22:3) led to his persecution of the Believers, something he did in ignorance (1 Timothy 1:13). The zeal for God (*zēlon Theou*, ζῆλον θεοῦ) depicted here, of the Jewish people in general, would obviously have not gone as far as his. As is stated by *Testament of Asher* 4:5 in the Pseudepigrapha, "such persons are like gazelles and stags: In appearance they seem wild and unclean, but as a whole they are clean. They live by zeal for the Lord, abstaining from what God hates and has forbidden through his commandments, staving off evil by the good."⁶ That Paul's fellow Jews are good and moral people, and are mostly sincere, is obvious. Cranfield goes as far as to say,

"Their zeal is for God. It is no heathen fanaticism of an empty ideology, but zeal for the true God. Israel is absolutely right in the object of its zeal. And it is undoubtedly zeal—fervent, strenuous, tenacious, concentrated zeal. There is no support here for any patronizing superciliousness on the part of Christians. Indeed, orthodox Judaism puts much that passes for Christianity, and even much true Christianity, to shame both in respect of the seriousness of its zeal and by the fact that its zeal is really zeal for God."⁷

² Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 513.

³ Also 1 Thessalonians 2:16.

⁴ Hegg, *Romans 9-16*, 315.

⁵ Consult the relevant sections of the author's book *Confronting Critical Issues: An Analysis of Subjects that Affects the Growth and Stability of the Emerging Messianic Movement*.

⁶ H.C. Kee, trans., "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1, 817.

⁷ Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 514.

The issue in view is not that Paul's fellow Jews have zeal; the issue is *all' ou kat' epignōsin* (ἀλλ' οὐ κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν), "but not according to knowledge" (HCSB). The standard Jewish zeal, while rightly focusing on God and His ways, does not have *epignōsis* (ἐπίγνωσις), which *AMG* states "is more intense than *gnōsis* [γνώσις]...knowledge, because it expresses a more thorough participation in the acquiring of knowledge on the part of the learner. In the NT, it often refers to knowledge which very powerfully influences the form of religious life, a knowledge laying claim to personal involvement."⁸ Mark Nanos is probably correct to conclude that for many First Century Jews, this meant "not possessing complete information/comprehension."⁹ While there is a genuine and sincere zeal on the part of Paul's Jewish brethren, it is somewhat skewed, given how many have missed seeing Yeshua as Messiah. The zeal depicted by Paul, however positive it may be, does have a downside to it. It is not the same zeal as a figure like Phinehas (Numbers 25:6-13; Psalm 106:31; Sirach 45:23-24).

10:3 Much of the dilemma that Paul describes, on behalf of his fellow Jews, involves an inappropriate approach to the righteousness of God. He says, "For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (ESV). What *tēn tou Theou dikaiosunēn* (τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην) involves here, which has obviously been missed, does involve some important contemporary discussion in Romans examination. The "righteousness of God" has been traditionally viewed as being a human status of innocence attainable before God, perhaps per Paul's own later word of Philippians 3:9: "and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the Law*, but that which is through faith in Messiah [or, the faithfulness of Messiah]¹⁰, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith." Additional components of what righteousness or justification may involve, have had to be considered, as v. 3 notably appears in the Kingdom New Testament with a non-traditional rendering: "They were ignorant, you see, of God's covenant faithfulness, and they were trying to establish a covenant status of their own; so they didn't submit to God's faithfulness." How much of what v. 3 says about the First Century Jewish people, involving righteousness or justification being their status of God's own or chosen, is debated.

N.T. Wright reflects the view that v. 3 describes, as is seen in his Kingdom New Testament, a First Century Jewish misplaced status of covenant membership:

"They have attempted...to set up a status of covenant membership in which the principle of 9:6-29 would be quietly set aside; this would be a status for all Jews, and only for Jews. No pruning down to a remnant; no admission of Gentiles (except by becoming full Jews through proselyte initiation). This is the 'righteousness' they sought to establish: a status that would be 'their own.' This does not refer to a status they might have achieved by moral effort, by climbing up a ladder called 'works,' but to a status that would be theirs and theirs only."¹¹

Wright has interjected some useful thoughts, but he likely goes a bit too far in only associating the "righteousness" or *dikaosunē* (δικαιοσύνη) of v. 3 as being a covenant status. James D.G. Dunn is a bit more moderate, in thinking, "God's righteousness [is] God's gracious accepting and sustaining power to faith, therefore open to all and not the special prerogatives of Israel..."¹² He goes on to summarize,

"Paul's criticism in effect is that in seeking to 'establish' covenant righteousness as 'theirs' they failed to appreciate the full significance of the fact that only God's righteousness can 'establish' the covenant...What [Paul] objected to was Israel's attempt to maintain a claim of national monopoly to

⁸ Zodhiates, *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 624.

⁹ Nanos, in *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 273.

¹⁰ Grk. *pisteōs Christou* (πίστεως Χριστοῦ).

¹¹ Wright, in *NIB*, 10:655.

¹² Dunn, *Romans*, 38b:587.

that covenant righteousness and the consequent misunderstanding of ‘the righteousness of God’ which that entailed.”¹³

From this vantage point, then, believing that the Jewish people are essentially “saved” by being physical descendants of the Patriarchs, would result in a skewed orientation to how God acts in history, and toward being graceful (if that is possible) toward other peoples. It could also manifest itself in various Jewish approaches to the Torah or Law of Moses, likely also manifesting itself in attitudes focused more on self-achievement than on God’s mercy and forbearance.

Moo represents more of a traditional Reformation Protestant perspective on the “righteousness of God” in v. 3, in that the righteousness Paul speaks of is a status of being innocent of sin before God, but he is notably willing to acknowledge the components suggested by other interpreters. He states,

“[I]f we give ‘their own’ a corporate sense—‘Israel’s own’—Paul would presumably be referring to Israel’s misunderstanding of righteousness as something that applied to Israel alone. With the former meaning, Paul is scolding the Jews for *self*-righteousness—the attempt to establish a relationship with God based on one’s own works. On the latter view, Paul is scolding them for *national* righteousness—the attempt to confine a relationship with God to Israel to the detriment of all other nations. The ‘national righteousness’ view can find some support in Paul’s stress in vv. 4b and 9-13 on the universal dimensions of God’s righteousness in Christ: against Israel’s attempt to keep righteousness to themselves, Paul proclaims the availability of righteousness ‘for all’ in Christ. But the more immediate contrast to ‘their own righteousness’ is ‘God’s righteousness.’ This suggests that ‘their own,’ like the contrasting term, ‘God’s,’ is not simply possessive, but has the nuance of source. And this, in turn, favors an individualizing rather than a corporate interpretation.”¹⁴

Hegg’s approach, when considering “righteousness” as *involving* a status of being God’s own in v. 3, is most useful, as he does not limit it to exclusively this, recognizing the traditional view of such “righteousness” also involving (limited) human action:

“The two aspects in which they lack knowledge are, as it were, two sides of the same coin. They lack knowledge of God’s means of declaring a person righteous (‘the righteousness of God’) and they hold to a means of a righteous status (their people-group status as Israelites, and their subsequent keeping of Torah to maintain this status) which, in the end, God will reject. The subsequent act of disobedience is Israel’s lack of willingness to submit to God’s revelation of Himself as a merciful God, and One Who willingly gifts His children with righteousness, to receive the status of righteousness as an undeserved act of grace. As long as Israel believes that she has attracted God’s righteousness through her national identity maintained through her life of Torah, she is unable to receive God’s method of declaring a sinner righteous, namely, to be reckoned righteous on the basis of Messiah’s work and His work alone. Israel’s sin is thus summed up by Paul as their refusal to let grace be grace—the refusal to give God alone the glory. Israel refuses to humble herself to accept God’s righteousness as an undeserved gift.”¹⁵

Because of the limitations present regarding the “righteousness of God” among many of his fellow Jews, they have been unable to see God’s Instruction or Torah, pointing them to Yeshua the Messiah, and the righteousness represented by Him and His atoning work for all of sinful humanity (v. 4).

¹³ Ibid., pp 588-589.

¹⁴ Moo, 634.

¹⁵ Hegg, *Romans 9-16*, 316.

4 For Messiah is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

10:4 Many people read Romans 10:4, as it appears in most English Bible versions, and view it as being definitive evidence that the Torah is no longer relevant to be followed. The claim that “Christ is the end of the law...” is quite frequent in discussion between Christians, Messianics, and Jews relating to the position that the Law of Moses plays, or does not play, in the lives of God’s people today. Is the claim of Romans 10:4 so absolute, meaning that the Messiah is the termination of the Torah? Or, might there be more than that many Bible readers have overlooked? *Not enough probably understand that Romans 10:4 should never be read so simplistically.*

In Romans 10:1-3 preceding, readers have seen that the larger issue at work is how the Apostle Paul was totally distraught over how many of his Jewish brethren have rejected the Messiah Yeshua, trying to find a righteousness via their own status, actions, and deeds:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.”

The answer to the dilemma of establishing one’s own righteousness is undeniably Yeshua the Messiah. Romans 10:4, in an English version like the NASU, communicates, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” In what way is the Savior Yeshua the answer to the problem of establishing one’s own righteousness, if He is the “end,” viewed as being a nullification or abolishment of the Mosaic Law? If the Messiah really is the termination of Moses’ Teaching, would this not contradict His own words about the Torah not passing away (Matthew 5:17-19)?

The Contemporary English Version renders Romans 10:4 with, “But Christ makes the Law no longer necessary.” Is this what the Apostle Paul is really saying? Is the man who in Romans 3:31 says that Messiah followers are to “establish” or “uphold the law” (RSV/NIV), and who in Romans 7:12 could communicate that “the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” and in Romans 7:14 that “the Law is spiritual,” and who even could claim in Romans 7:22 “I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man”—suddenly saying that the Law of Moses is of no value?¹⁶ If God’s Torah is valid in these preceding verses, then some further examination on what Romans 10:4 actually communicates is imperative.

If one were to only examine the English text of this verse, it could seem that there might be legitimate claim against those who believe that the Torah or Law of Moses should be heeded and followed as valid instruction. Many of today’s Christians will eagerly point out the word “end” in Romans 10:4 and simply say, “*Jesus Christ terminated the Law of Moses.*” But how many English speakers are aware of the fact that this is a stretch for the English language? *Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, for example, does define the English word “end” with the definition “an outcome; result.”¹⁷ Perhaps a little more elementary would be how in *Webster’s Intermediate Dictionary*, designed as clearly printed on its cover “for young teenagers,” appears a critical definition for “end” that can get overlooked even by some of the most well-trained seminary professors: “the goal toward which an agent acts or should act.”¹⁸ In the English language alone is an available definition of

¹⁶ I would clarify that even if Paul is using the rhetorical device of prosopopeia in the latter passages of Romans 7:12, 14, 22—Paul speaking as an imaginary “I”—the sentiments of the Torah being of value are still very much Paul’s personal feelings.

¹⁷ *Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, second edition (Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, Inc, 2002), 209.

¹⁸ *Webster’s Intermediate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1977), 245.

Even the strongly fundamentalist *The Christian Student Dictionary* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1982), 240 includes the definition “A purpose; goal” for the English word “end,” actually providing the explanatory sentence: “*To what end are you doing all that work?*”

“end” that does not mean “termination” or “abolishment.” The English sentence, “the end of all of NASA’s work is the putting of a man on the moon” (Hegg),¹⁹ clearly does not mean that once Apollo 11 landed on the lunar surface that the existence of NASA and the exploration and study of space all of a sudden became irrelevant. Although in some popular speech the English word “end” is not always akin to “goal,” it can legitimately be used this way.²⁰

For Romans 10:4, our appeal must be principally made to the source text, which asserts *telos gar nomou Christos* (τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς). Among Greek lexicons, we should not be surprised to see that the word *telos* (τέλος)²¹ too has a wider connotation of definitions not limited to “end.” A critical definition of *telos* provided by *BDAG* includes, “**the goal toward which a movement is being directed, end, goal, outcome**”²²; *Thayer* offers the definition, “*The end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose*”²³; *Vine* says that it can mean “‘the aim or purpose’ of a thing”²⁴; and *CGEDNT* provides the definition “*outcome, result, goal, aim, fulfillment.*”²⁵ Perhaps most importantly, *AMG* remarks that *telos* “does not, as is often supposed, mean the extinction, end or termination...It simply means the goal reached.”²⁶

English Bible readers, encountering Romans 10:4 among a variety of English Bible versions, will see some (significant) variance as to how the Greek term *telos* (τέλος) is approached and translated:

ΤΕΛΟΣ TELOS IN ROMANS 10:4	
GREEK	VARIED ENGLISH VERSIONS
<p><i>telos gar nomou Christos eis dikaiosunēn panti tō pisteuonti</i></p> <p>τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι</p>	<p>“For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified” (RSV).</p> <p>“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (ESV).</p> <p>“Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (NIV).</p> <p>“Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (TNIV).</p>

¹⁹ Hegg, *Romans 9-16*, 317.

²⁰ The 1993 German Elberfelder Bibel has “Denn Christus ist des Gesetzes Ende.” The term *Ende* primarily means “end; close; film etc.: ending; result, outcome” (*Langenscheidts New College German Dictionary, German-English* [Berlin and Munich: Langenscheidt KG, 1995], 181), which likewise, in a language most closely related to English, does not necessarily imply termination.

²¹ Given the theological and spiritual importance of τέλος, not only for Messianics in Romans 10:4, but how frequently you will see *telos* used in scholastic works, please be aware that it is properly pronounced as *tēlōs*, with both a short ē and short ō sound.

²² *BDAG*, 998.

²³ *Thayer*, 620.

²⁴ *Vine*, 199.

²⁵ *CGEDNT*, 180.

²⁶ Zodhiates, *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 1376.

	<p>“For Christ ends the law and brings righteousness to everyone who has faith” (NEB).</p> <p>“Christ is the fulfillment of the law and means righteousness for everyone who has faith” (<i>Lattimore</i>).</p> <p>“For the termination of the law is Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes” (The New Testament—An Expanded Translation, Wuest).</p> <p>“For Christ marks the termination of law, so that now anyone who has faith may attain uprightness” (Goodspeed).</p> <p>“Christ is the goal of the Law, which leads to righteousness for all who have faith in God” (Common English Bible).</p> <p>“The Messiah, you see, is the goal of the law, so that covenant membership may be available for all who believe” (Kingdom New Testament).</p> <p>“You see, God’s purpose for the law reaches its climax when the Anointed One arrives; now all who trust <i>in Him</i> can have their lives made right with God” (The Voice).</p>
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Among the two major Messianic versions, the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) and Tree of Life Family Bible (TLV), it should not be surprising to encounter how *telos* (τέλος) is translated as “goal”:

“For the goal at which the *Torah* aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts” (CJB).

“For Messiah is the goal of the *Torah* as a means to righteousness for everyone who keeps trusting” (TLV).

It cannot go unnoticed, how earlier in 6:22, *telos* is used previously to describe the “outcome” of a Believer’s being set free from sin: “now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life [*to de telos zōēn aiōnion*, τὸ δὲ τέλος ζωὴν αἰώνιον]” (NASU). The argument as to what *telos* (τέλος) means in Romans 10:4 does need to take into consideration various linguistic factors, the least of which concern how *telos* is used in the Epistle to the Romans. Wright describes how “The...problem with the mainstream reading is Paul’s use of the word *telos* and its cognates elsewhere, not least in Romans itself. The only other occurrences of the noun in this letter come in 6:21-22: ‘the end of those things is death²⁷...the fruit you have is unto

²⁷ Grk. *to gar telos ekeinōn thanatos* (τὸ γὰρ τέλος ἐκεῖνων θάνατος); “For the outcome of those things is death” (NASU).

sanctification, and its end is eternal life²⁸. By itself, we might be misled into reading the first of these as meaning 'termination,' but the second makes it clear what Paul means is 'goal.' Sanctification leads to, points toward, eternal life, and is consummated and completed thereby."²⁹

Cranfield directs us on how, "**The interpretation of this verse has been much debated down the centuries.**"³⁰ A typical perspective that one will find today, in a general evangelical Christian resource like the *ESV Study Bible*, is summarized by Thomas R. Schreiner:

"**End** probably includes the idea of both goal and termination. The Mosaic law has reached its goal in Christ (it looked forward to and anticipated him), and the law is no longer binding upon Christians...Since Christ is the goal and end of the law, righteousness belongs to all who trust in Christ."³¹

How one chooses to approach the word *telos* (τέλος) is certainly dependent on one's presuppositional bias. If one's theological commitment is to the idea that Jesus Christ abolished the Law of Moses, then Romans 10:4 will be translated along the lines of termination. If one's theological commitment is to the idea that Jesus Christ is the goal, purpose, or aim of the Law of Moses, then Romans 10:4 will at least be understood with "end" meaning this, and with "goal" as a preferred rendering. Recognizing the Messiah as the *telos* of the Mosaic Torah from this latter perspective has been acknowledged by many important Christian voices since the Protestant Reformation.

Martin Luther, surprisingly, approached Romans 10:4 from the perspective of the Tanach or Old Testament Scriptures pointing to the Messiah:

"The apostle, moved by the Spirit, out of his incomparably clear insight, reveals their {words of Moses} real meaning, instructing us, as it were by an important proof, that the whole Bible everywhere speaks alone of Christ when we regard its real meaning, even when the words, outwardly considered as a picture and image, may sound differently. For this reason we also read: 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness' (10:4); that is, everything (*in Scripture*) points to Christ."³²

John Calvin also asserted how everything in the Tanach or Old Testament Scriptures was to point to the Messiah, and to the righteousness He provides:

"The word *completion*, or *perfection*, as Erasmus has translated it, is, I think, quite appropriate in this passage. Since, however, the other reading [end] has received almost universal approval, and is also quite suitable, I leave it to my readers to retain it...Indeed, every doctrine of the law, every command, every promise, always points to Christ. We are, therefore, to apply all its parts to Him. But we cannot do this, unless we are stripped of all righteousness, are overwhelmed by the knowledge of our sin, and seek unmerited righteousness from him alone."³³

From my own evangelical Christian background, John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* offered these comments on Romans 10:4:

²⁸ Grk. *to de telos zōēn aiōnion* (τὸ δὲ τέλος ζωὴν αἰώνιον); "and the outcome, eternal life" (NASU).

²⁹ Wright, in *NIB*, 10:657.

³⁰ Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 515; cf. Kruse, pp 402-405 for a relatively recent discussion in New Testament studies.

³¹ Schreiner, *ESV Study Bible*, 2174.

³² Luther, 147.

³³ Calvin, pp 221-222.

“For Christ is the end of the law—The scope and aim of it. It is the very design of the law, to bring men to believe in Christ to justification and salvation. And He alone gives that pardon and life which the law shows the want of, but cannot give.”³⁴

Some of today’s Messianic people might wonder, given the strong evidence in favor of *telos* (τέλος) meaning something along the lines of goal, purpose, aim, or even culmination—why more of today’s English Bibles have not represented a more pro-Torah position on Romans 10:4. Not very many laypersons are aware of **the considerable amount of ink spilled in contemporary Romans commentaries and theological resources over this verse**. Surveying a small selection of publications released over the past half-century, a majority still seems to favor *telos* being some kind of a termination of the Mosaic Torah, with a minority favoring *telos* as the Messiah being the goal of the Torah. The following chart has laid out some of views of Romans commentators on 10:4:

ROMANS 10:4	
THE MESSIAH IS THE CONCLUSION OF THE TORAH OF MOSES	THE MESSIAH IS THE GOAL OF THE TORAH OF MOSES
<p>“[P]rior to Christ, God’s purpose had worked with particular reference to Israel (9:6-18), and the righteousness of God had been more or less confined to Israel—so that a closer correlation between God’s righteousness and Israel’s practice of the law could be readily assumed. But now with Christ a new stage in God’s dealings with humankind has been reached (3:21). Christ is the end of the old epoch and of Israel’s exclusive privileges with it....The word ‘end’ therefore is probably intended in the primary sense of ‘termination, cessation.’”³⁵</p> <p>James D.G. Dunn</p>	<p>“[I]n this passage Paul is concerned to show that Israel has misunderstood the law. At this point a statement that Christ is the goal to which all along the law has been directed, its true intention and meaning, is altogether apposite. Israel has misunderstood the law, because it failed to recognize what it was all about...So we conclude that <i>telos</i> should be understood in the sense...Christ is the goal, the aim, the intention of the law—apart from Him it cannot be properly understood at all....We conclude that the verse as a whole means: For Christ is the goal of the law, and it follows that a status of righteousness is available to every one who believes.”³⁶</p> <p>C.E.B. Cranfield</p>
<p>“<i>Telos</i> could mean ‘end’ in the sense of ‘goal’ or ‘completion’, indicating that the law pointed to Christ and that he fulfilled it. Or it could mean ‘end’ in the sense of ‘termination’ or ‘conclusion’, indicating that Christ has abrogated the law. Paul must surely mean the latter. But the abrogation of the law gives no legitimacy either to antinomians, who claim that they can sin as they please because they are not ‘under the law but under grace’ (6:1, 15), or to those who maintain that the very category of ‘law’ has been abolished by Christ and that the only absolute left is to love.”³⁷</p> <p>John R.W. Stott</p>	<p>“<i>Christ is the end of the law</i>. This means that Christ has become the culmination or climax of the law in the sense that it has pointed to him and has been finalized in him. The law has not ceased to have any value; in 7:12, 14 Paul says the law is ‘holy, righteous, good’ and ‘spiritual.’ As part of Scripture, it is also ‘profitable’...So Christ has not abolished the law (cf. Mt. 5:17-20) but has replaced it as the standard for righteousness. In this sense he has culminated the law as the focal point of its purpose.”³⁸</p> <p>Grant R. Osborne</p>

³⁴ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, reprint (Peterborough, UK: Epworth Press, 2000), 561.

³⁵ Dunn, *Romans*, 38b:596-597.

³⁶ Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, pp 519-520.

³⁷ Stott, pp 281-282.

³⁸ Osborne, 266.

<p>“V. 4...reads literally ‘for end/termination/purpose/goal of the Law [is] Christ for righteousness to all those believing.’ This is one of the most debated verses in the Pauline corpus...<i>Telos</i>, ‘end,’ can indeed have several possible meanings. End as completion or termination does not exclude end as goal. But in Paul’s writings <i>telos</i> seems to always include the notion of termination, whatever other nuances it may have (cf. 1 Cor. 1.8; 10.11; 15.24; 2 Cor. 11.15; Phil. 3.19).”³⁹ Ben Witherington III</p>	<p>“Paul argues [that] Christ is the ‘end’ (<i>telos</i>) of the law for righteousness from the standpoint of faith. The Greek term for ‘end’ can involve either ‘goal’ or ‘termination.’ ‘Goal’ seems the likelier primary nuance, but the context (which defines the <i>sense</i> in which the law ends or climaxes) clarifies the sense of the statement in any case. Israel failed to attain the law of righteousness because they pursued it by works rather than by faith (9:31-32); Gentiles conversely attained righteousness by faith (9:30). The problem thus is not the law, but the wrong approach to the law (as Paul will further clarify in 10:5-8). Like faith (3:31), Christ is the goal of the law, what the law points to for those with the perspective of faith. But if the law is approached as a ‘law of works’ (3:27), as in 10:5, recognizing the reality of Christ should finish off that approach; those who ‘believe’ (10:4) will not take this approach.”⁴⁰ Craig S. Keener</p>
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Messianics who have written on Romans 10:4, most understandably, strongly tend to favor *telos* (τέλος) meaning “goal.” Noting the *BAGD* (edition prior to *BDAG*) definition of *telos*, David H. Stern states in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*,

“[I]n the great majority of cases its meaning its either (1) ‘aim, purpose, goal’ toward which a movement is being directed...or (2) ‘outcome, result, consummation, last part’ of a process not obviously being directed and which may or may not terminate...These meanings are reflected in the English word ‘teleology,’ the branch of philosophy dealing with goals and purposes.”⁴¹

Hegg details some of the spiritual importance of *telos* being approached as meaning “goal”:

“By stating that the word ‘end’ (*telos*) means ‘goal’ here, I mean that Yeshua is the aim or intention of the Torah, and that the full meaning and function of the Torah cannot be realized apart from Him....[T]he one who, seeing in the Torah the coming, suffering Messiah, realizes that his sin is far greater than he had previously considered. That the Messiah, foreshadowed in the slaughter of the perfect sacrificial animal, should have to undergo the agony of death to expunge my sins, that He should need to carry the weight of my guilt because I could not carry it myself—in this the Torah brings me to my knees in repentance, seeking the grace and mercy of God without which I have no hope.”⁴²

Some commentators, who are unfavorable to the continued validity of the Torah or Law of Moses in the post-resurrection era, recognize how “end” as akin to “termination” can be seen as being a bit disrespectful to God’s (previous) revelation in the Mosaic Law, and have opted for some combination of applications for the term *telos*. Moo thinks,

³⁹ Witherington, pp 260-261.

⁴⁰ Keener, pp 124-125.

⁴¹ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 396.

⁴² Hegg, *Romans 9-16*, pp 317, 318.

“[W]ith the coming of Christ the authority of the law of Moses is, in some basic sense, at an end. At the same time, a teleological nuance is also present. This is suggested not only by the contextual factors...but also by the fact that similar NT uses of *telos* generally preserve some sense of direction or goal. In other words, the ‘end’ that *telos* usually denotes is an end that is the natural or inevitable result of something else. The analogy of a race course (which many scholars think *telos* is meant to convey) is helpful: the finish line is both the ‘termination’ of the race (the race is over when it is reached) and the ‘goal’ of the race (the race is run for the sake of reaching the finish line)...The English word ‘end’ perfectly captures this nuance; but, if it is thought that it implies too temporal a meaning, we might also use the words ‘culmination,’ ‘consummation,’ or ‘climax.’”⁴³

Moo, who does not believe in the continued validity of the Mosaic Law in the post-resurrection era, argues that *telos* regards the Messiah being the “goal” of the Torah along the lines of someone crossing the finish line of a race, which would then terminate the race. Yet the Messiah Himself actually directs those who have found Him, to uphold the continued authority of Moses’ Teaching, instructing its commandments to others (Matthew 5:19). To his credit, though, Moo offers an array of alternative translations for *telos* like culmination, consummation, and climax that those who favor the continued validity of the Torah in the post-resurrection era should welcome in modern English translations (like the TNIV), as these English terms draw the attention of the reader to how the Torah is *to point to the Messiah*.

Another interpreter, James R. Edwards, is rather tentative about what *telos* means in Romans 10:4. He recognizes the challenges present in approaching *telos* from the perspective of “end” akin to “termination,” but then notes some of his difficulties with reconciling it to his interpretation of other passages in Romans (“under the law” in 6:14 and “released from the Law” in 7:6):

“The dogmatic distinction in theology between law (OT) and grace (NT), which is particularly common in Protestantism and Orthodoxy, normally interprets verse 4 in the...sense...that Christ annuls the law...In reaction to this position, and in a desire to avoid anti-Semitic overtones, recent scholarship usually favors the first view that Christ is the goal and fulfillment of the law...This interpretation is supported by the fact that in Romans **end** (Gk. *telos*) normally signifies the completion of a process rather than its termination (e.g., 2:27; 6:21-22). Nevertheless, the latter interpretation is vulnerable to passages like 6:14 and 7:6, which imply a supersession of the law by grace.”⁴⁴

When the Apostle Paul communicates later to his disciple Timothy, about *telos tēs parangelias* (τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας), this is not at all to be understood as “the termination of our instruction,”⁴⁵ but instead “the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5, NASU). Other valid renderings include “the aim of our charge” (RSV), “The whole point of what we’re urging” (The Message), or even “the purpose of the commandment” (NKJV). *Telos* regards the purpose or the focus of someone’s instruction in the faith, and as it regards Romans 10:4, such an educational goal or purpose for understanding the Messiah would be most appropriate to add to the positive components intended by *telos*. In Wright’s valid estimation, though, he approaches *telos* in Romans 10:4 from the perspective of Yeshua being the Torah’s climax:

“I conclude that in 10:4 Paul does not intend to declare the law’s abrogation in favor of a different ‘system,’ but rather to announce that the Messiah is himself the climax of the long story of God and Israel, the story Torah tells and in which it plays a vital though puzzling part. God’s purposes in Torah,

⁴³ Moo, 641; also Kruse, 404.

⁴⁴ Edwards, pp 249-250.

⁴⁵ The KJV actually does have “the end of the commandment.”

purposes both negative and positive, have reached their goal in the Messiah, and the result of that is the accessibility and availability of 'righteousness' for *all* who *believe*."⁴⁶

Theologically, it is most imperative that *telos* (τέλος) in Romans 10:4 be approached from the perspective of goal, aim, purpose, or even climax—and *not* termination. What is the Apostle Paul really trying to communicate? Is he not trying to say that his own fellow Jews have largely missed the point of the Torah? Does he not express the frustration, "since they are unaware of God's way of making people righteous and instead seek to set up their own, they have not submitted themselves to God's way of making people righteous" (v. 3, CJB)? If God's Torah were approached properly, then whether it be First Century Jews who were unable to see Yeshua as the Deliverer *or* modern Christians who need greater clarification in the ways of holiness and obedience—then the Torah could rightly serve as the foundation of one's understanding of salvation history. Without Moses' Teaching, you cannot fully appreciate the arrival of the Messiah onto the stage of not only redemption for all humanity—but *yourself personally*. The common mortal inability to obey the commandments in the Law, for example, is to clearly point us to the need **we all have** for a Divine Savior!

Within Romans 10:4, the Apostle Paul is by no means communicating that Yeshua the Messiah is the abolition of the Mosaic Torah; in being the *telos nomou* (τέλος νόμου) Yeshua the Messiah is the Torah's goal, its climax, its inevitable outcome, or even its dénouement. Arriving at saving faith in the Messiah of Israel is the *resultant end*, with Him being the consummation to whom the Torah points.

Paul does not say that Yeshua the Messiah terminated the validity and relevance of the Law of Moses, as Romans 10:4 is so commonly misinterpreted. The purpose of the Torah—and **indeed all of Holy Scripture**—is that it must point to our innate human need for a Savior. If we can realize how "through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin" (3:20b), *then* we can also realize how "Messiah is the goal of the Torah for righteousness to everyone who believes" (my translation). Recognizing that we all fall short of His high standard (3:23), each man and woman must be convicted of sin, cry out in repentance before the Father, and receive the forgiveness that He offers in His Son. The Torah is to always show us the need for a Redeemer, and the fact that we need salvation.

Those who believe that the Torah or Law of Moses has come to a total conclusion, often look to some independent "law of Christ" (based in an interpretation of Galatians 6:2), centered around the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chs. 5-7)—which ironically enough is predicated upon the Messiah's assertion that Moses' Teaching remains valid. Let us never think that all theologians and commentators who believe that the Torah has been abolished, are God-less and immoral people, who do not want Believers to follow any code of conduct. Moo's view is,

"Paul is *not* saying that Christ has ended all 'law'; the believer remains bound to God's law as it now is mediated in and through Christ (see Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:19-21). Nor is he saying that the Mosaic law is no longer part of God's revelation or of no more use to the believer. The Mosaic law, like all of Scripture, is 'profitable' for the believer (2 Tim. 3:16) and must continue to be read, pondered, and responded to by the faithful believer."⁴⁷

Unfortunately, with a contemporary Christian theology that advocates the widescale abolition of the Torah, Moo's word about reading, studying, and pondering the Law are not going to be heeded by that many modern Christian people. While today's Messianic movement can be accused of being a bit stagnant, at times, with its teaching regimen limited to the weekly Torah portion—the reverse error is a widescale dismissal of considering the Torah and Tanach, the Old Testament, in any sort of personal and corporate instruction. And indeed, a fair majority of modern Christians do not read the Old Testament, much less consider its purpose for Messiah followers.

⁴⁶ Wright, in *NIB*, 10:658.

⁴⁷ Moo, 642.