

MOSAIC LAW IS ESTABLISHED

Romans 3:31

by Avram Yehoshua

[The Seed of Abraham](#)

There are a number of verses in the New Testament, after the resurrection,¹ that declare the Law of Moses to be the Standard by which God wants all Christians to live their lives by.² Romans 3:31 is one such verse. It validates Mosaic Law for Christians by saying that the Law is *established* by a Christian's faith in Yeshua (Jesus). Unfortunately, the Church teaches just the opposite of this. Just what the Greek word means has been the subject of much debate among Christian scholars. Because of their theological position against Mosaic Law they all fail to see the plain meaning of what Paul wrote. In other words, because they have unwittingly learned anti-Mosaic Law theology from the Roman Catholic Church, they are not able to understand this simple, but profound verse.³

Some English translations of Rom. 3:31 use the word *establish*, while others speak of the Law being *upheld*. The Greek verb ἵστομεν (*histomen*) is the basis for both English verbs:

“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.” (Romans 3:31 NKJV; *establish* for also the ASV, KJV and NASB)

“Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! Instead we uphold the law.” (Romans 3:31 NET; *uphold* for also the ESV, HCSV, NIV and NRSV)

The Apostle to the Gentiles⁴ point-blank asks the question about the Law's validity, specifically in relation to a Christian's faith—is the Law made void or nullified⁵ by one's faith in Christ? Paul emphatically answers—‘God forbid!’ (KJV), ‘Absolutely not!’⁶ (NET), ‘Not at all!’ (NIV), and ‘May it never be!’, are all accurate English translations for the Greek phrase μὴ γένοιτο (*mae gih'noytoe*). Paul could not have made it any plainer and stronger—faith in Christ *does not* nullify Mosaic Law. The ‘law’ that the Apostle

¹ I write of *after the resurrection* because the Church teaches that with the death of Jesus, Christians didn't have to keep Mosaic Law. This article, about Romans 3:31, is written to prove that the Church is wrong.

² There are many verses, *after the resurrection*, that declare Mosaic Law to be God's Standard for Christians to live by. The following are some articles that present them: [The Feasts of Israel and the Church](#), [The Two Triangles of the NT](#), [Grace, Holiness and the Pharisaic Church](#), [Hebrews and the Change of the Law](#), [Law 102](#), [Take the Quiz! Five Quick Questions about the New Testament](#)) and my book, [The Lifting of the Veil—Acts 15:20-21](#).

³ See [A Snapshot of Church History and Mosaic Law](#) to realize that Pope Sixtus threw out Mosaic Law and brought in Sunday, Easter and anti-Semitism in 120 AD (cf. Daniel 7:25; Rev. 18:4). In other words, it wasn't Jesus or the Apostles who gave Christianity anti-Mosaic Law theology, Sunday, Easter and Xmas, etc.

⁴ Rom. 11:13; 1st Tim. 2:7; 2nd Tim. 1:11.

⁵ The Greek word for ‘make void’ or ‘nullify’ (the law) is καταργούμεν (*katargumen*). It means, “to cause something to lose its power or effectiveness, invalidate, make powerless...to cause something to come to an end or to be no longer in existence; abolish, wipe out, set aside.” From Walter Bauer, augmented by William F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and Frederick Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (third edition, 2001), (Accordance Bible Software), p. 525.

καταργέω Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Accordance Bible Software), paragraph 5,373: “to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative.”

⁶ The Greek phrase for ‘Absolutely not!’, etc., is μὴ γένοιτο (*mae gih'noytoe*); see [Ancient Greek](#); also [Rom. 3:4](#) for why ‘God forbid!’ is an accurate translation even though the term ‘God’ is not in the Greek phrase.

is writing of is Mosaic Law, as both the context and the use of the term in the New Testament speak of.⁷ In other words, Mosaic Law is established by a Christian's faith in Christ (and not just the Ten Commandments or only the so-called 'moral law,' as some teach).

The same Greek phrase is also used by Paul in Rom. 9:14 where he says, "What shall we say then?! Is there unrighteousness with God?! *Certainly not!*" It's the most powerful way that Paul could say, 'No!,' for either God being unrighteous or Mosaic Law being nullified by our faith in Jesus. 'On the contrary,' Paul says in Rom. 3:31, our faith in Christ *establishes* the Law.

The Greek word for *establish* or *uphold* is ἵστομεν (*histomen*). It means, 'to cause or make to stand,'⁸ and 'to establish...to validate something that is in force or a practice.'⁹

Christian Interpretations of Romans 3:31

Everett Harrison

Christian theologian Everett Harrison (1902-1999) states that Romans 3:31, "has elicited many interpretations, attesting its difficulty."¹⁰ Really? It's certainly not a difficult Greek or English verse to understand. There's nothing in the Greek grammar that baffles theologians. It's alleged difficulty lies in the fact that Paul seems to be upholding Mosaic Law and Christianity doesn't recognize it as valid for Christians. Because of that scholars have to perform theological gymnastics, worthy of the Olympics, in order to strip the verse of its clear Mosaic Law meaning. Harrison's own understanding is one such example. He states,

"Paul has twice mentioned law observance (vv. 27, 28) as not entering at all into justification, which is by faith apart from works of the law. May we draw the conclusion, then, that the law is useless? By no means, the apostle would answer, for the operation of faith really upholds or establishes the law. The gospel establishes the law *in that the latter is vindicated*. The law has *fulfilled* a vital role by bringing an awareness of sin (v. 20). A broken law made the redeeming work of Christ at the cross necessary (vv. 24, 25). One who sees that the cross was a divine necessity will never feel that *he can make himself approved by God by fulfilling the law's demands*. If that were possible, Christ would have died in vain. Since the death of Christ was in terms of God's righteousness (v. 26), this means that *the demands of the law have not been set aside in God's plan of salvation*. It is not damaging to this position that "law" lacks the article here, for the same is true in 5:20."¹¹

Harrison is correct that we cannot be justified (saved) by keeping Mosaic Law, or adding anything to the finished Work of Yeshua on the Cross, but he completely misses what Paul means by saying that the Law is *vindicated* in its revealing of our sins and the need for a Savior (v. 20), which it certainly does, but this

⁷ For why the use of the term *law* in the New Testament overwhelmingly refers to Mosaic Law, see [Mosaic Law and the Ten](#).

⁸ ἵστημι Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, paragraph 4,996.

⁹ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 482; "to validate something that is in force or in practice; reinforce validity of, uphold, maintain...validate or maintain your own tradition Mk. 7:9; uphold (the) law Rom. 3:31."

¹⁰ Everett F. Harrison, Author; Frank E. Gaebelin, general Editor; J. D. Douglas, associate ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 10, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan, 1990), (Accordance Bible Software) paragraph 52,876.

¹¹ Ibid.

has nothing to do with v. 31 and the Law being *established* by our faith in Yeshua. He also says that when one realizes that the Savior was who we needed we won't try to keep the Law for salvation and again, as right as that is it has nothing to do with v. 31. Harrison is pontificating because he doesn't understand the verse.

Harrison also doesn't realize that v. 20 speaks of Mosaic Law *revealing* just what sin is in the New Testament *and that we still need to know what sin is*. This way we won't sin against our Savior in ignorance. Paul speaks of Mosaic Law when he uses the term *law* in Rom. 3:20; 31. He states in v. 20 that *it's only by the Law* that the *full* knowledge (*epi'gnosis*) of sin:

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, *for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” (Romans 3:20 NKJV)

In other words, it's not just “the knowledge of sin,” but “the *full* knowledge of sin” (*epi'gnosis*). Christians are handicapped and blind to what is sin in God's eyes because they have been taught that Mosaic Law was invalidated at the Cross—something Paul is literally coming against here in v. 20. Paul could not have said it any plainer: “*Do we then nullify the Law through faith? Absolutely not!* The Law becomes our lifestyle. We keep the Sabbath day holy, just as Jesus did, and we don't eat pig or shrimp, just as Jesus wouldn't.

The Law for Harrison was valid or validated only as a way for one to realize their need for the Savior, but not any longer once he was saved, yet how illogical is that? Once saved does it matter if a Christian sins? Of course, Paul says (Rom. 6:1f), and so how does a Christian determine what constitutes sin for him *after* the resurrection? The Apostle answered that 11 verses earlier in Romans 3:20, “*for by the law is the full knowledge of sin.*”

In other words, Mosaic Law reveals things that man cannot get unless taught by Mosaic Law (e.g. the 7th day Sabbath and Passover). Without Mosaic Law a Christian doesn't know God's definition of sin *after* the resurrection. The Letter to the Romans was written about 23 years *after* Messiah was crucified and rose from the dead, which means that one cannot assign it to Messiah's words about Mosaic Law before He was crucified (e.g. Mt. 5:17-19; cf. Luke 24:44).

Instead of explaining what v. 31 means, Harrison preaches to us by saying that no one can keep the Law for eternal life or that one would ‘never feel that he can make himself approved by God (for eternal life) by fulfilling the law's demands.’ As true as that is it has absolutely nothing to do with v. 31.

Harrison then goes on to list other scholarly interpretations, saying that some think v. 31 is intended,

“to provide a transition to chapter 4, where Abraham's justification is explained. On this view ‘law’ simply means Scripture, or more specifically, the Pentateuch.¹² This view gets support from v. 21 with its mention of ‘the Law and the Prophets’ ... Further, it is doubtful that the material of the following chapter can be said to uphold the law.”¹³

‘Law’ does mean the Pentateuch (i.e. Mosaic Law; the five books of Moses; Genesis through Deuteronomy), but Paul isn't using it as a bridge into chapter four. It's meant to be a definitive declaration ending chapter three. Torah (or Mosaic Law) is established by faith in Christ. Paul may have been dealing Christians who thought that ‘all you need is faith in Christ, and Mosaic Law isn't needed,’ since that's all it takes to enter into the Kingdom. As King Solomon once penned, ‘There's nothing new under the sun’ (Eccl. 1:9c). Again, once in His Kingdom, does it matter if one sins? And if so, how is sin defined in the New Testament by Paul? (Rom. 3:20b)

It's also nice to know that some teach that the Apostle was declaring that God's Word (‘Scripture’) has

¹² See p. 2, note 7, for why ‘Law’ in v. 31 means Mosaic Law.

¹³ Harrison, *Romans*, paragraph 52,876.

been established by our faith in Christ. Hadn't that already been established at Mt. Sinai 1400 years earlier? Did Paul need to tell anyone that?

As for some theologians bringing up the Prophets, the Prophets didn't say anything outside or contrary to the Law, but rebuked Israel for not keeping Mosaic Law. Harrison continues with other so-called scholarly interpretations:

“Another possibility is that Paul is striking out against antinomianism.¹⁴ If his statement had occurred in the course of his argument in chapters 6 to 8, this would be quite apparent, but it is less likely here. Still another view is that Paul means to say that the moral standards of the law are maintained under the gospel, thus anticipating the truth stated in 8:4. In line with this is *Luther's interpretation that to establish the law means to fulfill it through faith*.¹⁵ But again, this anticipates what is developed only later on. The view that Paul means to say that *we establish the law because under the gospel Christ keeps it for us is unsupported by anything in the passage*. Doubtful also is the contention of H. J. Schoeps that Paul ‘implies that faith is the true content of the law’ (*Paul*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961, p. 210). This runs counter to the argument in the preceding context.”¹⁶

Verse 31 doesn't speak of there being no laws, but just the opposite (the Law, with all its rules is established), and so anti-nomianism is certainly not what Paul is teaching against. Harrison lists another scholarly interpretation that speaks of the Law in v. 31 meaning only of the moral laws being established. This, though, creates quite a problem. Every Christian knows that it's immoral to steal or murder, but they don't realize that in God's eyes, the 7th day Sabbath, as well as the Feasts of Israel and the Mosaic dietary laws, to name three Pillars of Mosaic Law, are also moral laws.

The question is, who determines what is moral? God or the Church? The Church easily sweeps under the rug God's 7th day Sabbath, all His Feasts (Lev. 23) and the Mosaic dietary laws as ‘ceremonial’ and so the Church teaches that it's not for a Christian to keep because ‘only the moral laws come through into the New Testament.’ This is odd though, when the punishment against stealing, an uncontested moral law, is to repay it back and then some (cf. Ex. 22:1), but the punishment for desecrating the 7th day Sabbath (Ex. 31:12-17) or not keeping the Passover, is death (Num. 9:1-13, esp. v. 13 where ‘cut off’ is understood as death). As the Mosaic moral laws of murder and adultery, both of which have death as their punishment, it seems that God looks upon what the Church calls His ceremonial laws as just as important and moral as not murdering or committing adultery. Also, to classify the Sabbath, etc., as a ceremonial law is an artificial distinction that Man has made: God never makes in Torah. All its rules come from the mouth of God and to disobey God is certainly immoral, unrighteous and sinful (cf. Dt. 8:3; Mt. 4:4).

When a theologian or a Christian pastor is committed to a preconceived heretical assumption, that Mosaic Law is not for a Christian, it's easy to see how their reasoning goes through theological acrobatics to present their false understanding that directly go against what Scripture is plainly stating. Every law, statute, and rule ‘of Moses’ that applies to us we need to walk in, just as Yeshua and all His Apostles did (1st Cor. 4:16-17; 11:1; 1st Jn. 2:6). We are not to keep them as the Rabbis teach, but as The Rabbi teaches us (Mt. 23:8).

The Lord Yeshua tells us that all the rules of Moses are an organic whole that display God's very definition of love (and consequently, sin). When challenged by a Scribe concerning which of the Mosaic laws was the greatest, Yeshua says to love God and neighbor. Then He goes on to say that *all the other com-*

¹⁴ Anti-nomianism speaks of the “view that Christians are released by grace from the obligation of observing the moral law,” and if ‘no moral law’ then certainly no ceremonial laws like the Passover.

¹⁵ At least we know who came up with the heretical understanding of “fulfill.” (See Mt. 5:17-18; Lk. 24:44).

¹⁶ Harrison, *Romans*, paragraph 52876.

mandments have their reason for existing to explain how to love God and neighbor: “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Mt. 22:40 NKJV).

The Church says, ‘hang the Law!,’ but that’s not what Jesus is saying. According to Messiah Yeshua, God (the Father) has given us *His understanding of how to love Him and our neighbor in all the rules of Mosaic Law*. In other words, every commandment, statute, ordinance and judgment, etc., is God’s very definition of *how* to love Him and our neighbor and consequently, what is righteous and holy and what is sinful and disobedient, and how God wants us to walk out our faith in His Son.

Obedience to God is the highest form of morality and freedom. Not obeying Him is immoral and so not keeping any of His rules that apply to us is immoral and sinful. In other words, eating bacon or catfish is immoral, as God forbids this for His people Israel (cf. Lev. 11:1f.), of which Gentile Christians are a part of (John 10:16; Rom. 11:11f.; Eph. 2:11f.).

When Yeshua stood before His 12 Apostles and said, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life...” (Jn. 14:6), He was aligning Himself with Torah and saying that He was the Living Torah. Those three nouns (Way, Truth and Life) are all synonyms for Mosaic Law.¹⁷ We are called *to follow and imitate* Yeshua, and one of those ways is to realize that He kept Torah all His life as His Father’s lifestyle for Him. It obviously didn’t “save Him,” but it showed us if He sinned or not. Truly, it is the Way to walk out our faith in Him.

Harrison writes that Luther interpreted v. 31, that the Law was established, in that it is *fulfilled* by our faith in Christ. Luther used a clever slight-of-hand magic trick in that his teaching seems to say something, but it means absolutely nothing. Because Jesus kept the Law a Christian doesn’t have to? Can Christians steal because Yeshua didn’t? How then is the Law *established*? As unbiblical and illogical as that is, Luther has quite a following among millions of Christians, other than Lutherans who, not knowing where it originated from, use “fulfill” to wave off having to observe Passover, etc. Harrison rightly criticizes Luther’s teaching when he says there’s nothing in Rom. 3:31 to support it. What was sin for Yeshua is also sin for us. How could it not be? Isn’t He our Example to emulate? (cf. 1st Cor. 11:1) If it was sin for Yeshua to eat bacon or desecrate the Sabbath, how could it not be sin for us? Because He fulfilled the Law? So, does that mean we don’t have to love God or Man, and we can rob banks and murder people? Jesus *fulfilled* all those laws. How ridiculous it is to think that Jesus *fulfilling* the Law means we don’t have to keep it!¹⁸

Finally, Harrison brings up H. J. Schoeps who said that faith was ‘the true content of the law.’ Harrison rightly points out that this thought runs ‘counter to the argument in the preceding context.’ It also side-

¹⁷ The terms, *Way, Truth and Life* (John 14:6) are synonyms for Mosaic Law—God’s Word (Isaiah 1:10; 2:3; 5:24). Yeshua, speaking of them together, is emphatically declaring that He is the living Word of God; the living Torah, the living embodiment of all the words or instructions of God (i.e. Mosaic Law), which emanate from God’s very nature. What was first spoken by God to Israel, and then written down by Moses (Mosaic Law; Torah), is a written reflection of God the Son (and the Father and the Holy Spirit), for They are one. The Hebrew word translated as ‘Law’ actually means instruction or teaching, so Mosaic Law is the Instruction or Teaching of God concerning Himself, His Ways and His Nature, and how He wants Israel to live out their lives before Him.

1. *The Way* is a synonym for Mosaic Law in Ex. 13:21; 18:20; 23:20; 32:8; Dt. 9:12, 16; 11:28; 13:5; 31:29; Ps. 25:8; 32:8; 119:1, 14, 27, 30, 32-33, 35 (path i.e. ‘way’), 104-105; 139:24; Prov. 2:20; 15:10; 23:19; 29:27; Jer. 6:16; Mal. 2:8-9.
2. *The Truth* is a synonym for Torah in Ps. 119:43, 142, 151, 160; Mal. 2:6, and,
3. *The Life* is a synonym for Mosaic Law in Dt. 30:15, 19-20; 32:47; Ps. 16:11; Prov. 3:1-3, 13-18; 6:23; 10:17; 12:28, etc.

Yeshua didn’t do away with the Law of Moses—He amplified it (Mt. 5:17f.). See also Acts 9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 24:12, 14 concerning *The Way* as the name of the movement for the Jewish (and Gentile) people who believed in Yeshua and walked out their faith in Him through God’s Torah.

¹⁸ See [Ten Ways Yeshua Fulfilled The Law](#).

steps the fact that Paul distinctly speaks of *the Law being established*. Paul should have left ‘law’ out of the verse entirely and instead substituted ‘faith,’ but this would have made for a very queer sentence:

“Do we then make void *faith* through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish faith.” (Romans 3:31 Schoeps version)

“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish *faith*.” (Romans 3:31 another Schoeps’ version)

Hmm...no wonder Schoeps didn’t substitute faith for law in the verse. It makes absolutely no sense. He died in July 1980. I hope he had a good day job.

Douglas Moo

Douglas Moo (born 1950) is a Reformed New Testament scholar who, after teaching for more than 20 years at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois, has served as Blanchard Professor of New Testament at the Wheaton College Graduate School since 2000. He also has a funny, cow-like last name). He states of v. 31 that it,

“reveals again Paul’s desire to prevent his readers *from drawing too extreme a conclusion from his argument against the law*. Paul’s blunt rejection of the law from any role in justification in favour of faith. (20-21, 27-28) *does not mean that he thereby seeks to nullify the law*. On the contrary, Paul insists, we *uphold* the law. Unfortunately, Paul does not here explain how it is that his preaching *upholds* (or ‘*establishes*’, Gk. *histeämi*) the law. He may mean that his doctrine of justification by faith *is fully in accord* with the teaching of the Pentateuch (‘the law’), as he makes clear in ch. 4. More likely, however, since his focus in vs. 27-28 has been on the demands of the law, he is teaching that *faith itself provides for the complete fulfilment of its demands*. As Paul will put it in 8:4, ‘the righteous requirements of the law’ are ‘fully met’ in the Spirit-filled believer.”¹⁹

Moo rightly understands that Mosaic Law (the Pentateuch) cannot be used for justification, but he fails to tell us how it’s ‘fully in accord’ with the Law. How can this concept be reconciled with the reality that God demands obedience to His divine rules and ways in Torah and that ‘we’ don’t uphold the Law, but our faith in Christ upholds or establishes Mosaic Law? Be that as it may, Moo fails to realize that Paul is saying that the Law is God’s Standard or Guideline for how a Christian is to walk out his faith in Yeshua once he is Born Again—just as Yeshua walked before His Father. It was the Law that judged Jesus sinless and it’s the Law that *continues* to reveal our sins to us, but cannot condemn us now because the Law’s ability to condemn a person stops at death—the Law’s just punishment for those who break it. Now, new creatures in Christ (2nd Cor. 5:17), the Law cannot condemn us when we sin, but it does reveal how we should walk out our faith in Yeshua.

We partake of Messiah’s righteousness by faith in Him who took the Law’s just punishment for us, but that doesn’t mean Mosaic Law is not valid for us. The Apostle Paul doesn’t realize it, but he is coming against the ‘spiritualizing away’ of the Law. As some Christians say:

“Jesus kept the Law and He’s in me, so that’s how I keep it. He’s my Passover Lamb so I don’t have to keep Passover.” (Something Luther would have said.)

Such reasoning and logic! If Jesus were leading them they would be keeping the Passover and the Sabbath, etc., so they could not only learn more about who their Savior is, because all the Feasts and Ways of

¹⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition; ed. D. A. Carson. et al. Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), p. 1129.

the Law reflect Him and reveal to us who He is, but they would actually be disciples of Christ: following Him, and not the Pope who gave them *illicit SEX* an acronym for Sunday, Easter, Xmas, which also includes the eating of unclean animals as well as a healthy dose of anti-Mosaic Law theology). After all, as they would say, Mosaic Law is only for the Jews (who don't believe in Jesus). So according to them, God gave Mosaic Law to Israel only until His Son would come and now, under Grace, it doesn't matter what day they assemble on (let alone keep holy) nor what foods they eat as long as they bless the food to the nourishment of their body.²⁰

Being the Passover Lamb is not just a name or designation given to the Messiah. It's the Tip of the divine Iceberg that reveals Him as the sacrificial *Redeemer* of Israel.²¹ Even if someone academically knows all there is to know about the Passover, but doesn't observe it, their knowledge is superficial and two dimensional. It's likened unto someone knowing all about watermelons, but who has never tasted one. They have knowledge, but not an experiential knowledge.

Returning to Moo's second and last possibility, he seems to be a follower of Luther in that one's faith in Christ has fulfilled the Law ('faith itself provides for the complete fulfillment of its demands). Again we have the superficial point that since Christ kept the Law, Christian doesn't have to. Does this position really explain how our faith *establishes* (not fulfills) the Law? Of course not, but this is part of theological gymnastics. It reminds me of a magician who by distracting us with one hand, allows his other to perform the trick and deceive us. These theologians speak of everything but how our faith establishes the Law.

With this *understanding* that Moo presents, how is it that we're preached at in church to love our neighbor, not steal and not lie? Didn't Jesus *fulfill* that, too? Where does our emulation of God the Son stop? The Church says, 'At the moral laws, but Paul insists that our faith in Christ establishes the Law—all the Law, not just the so-called moral law/s. Also interesting to note: Paul never speaks of a truncated Mosaic Law.

One's faith in Yeshua doesn't mean that he can skip the rules of Mosaic Law anymore than one can murder or lie with impunity. Jesus fulfilling the Law doesn't mean a Christian can live whatever way his heart directs him.²² We are called *to follow Christ*, to be His disciples—not trek off on our own ways, especially ways that are diametrically opposed to Jesus (e.g. Sunday vs. Sabbath). We are called to emulate Christ, not to walk in ways that would have been sin for Jesus. The Apostle John, **more than 60 years** *after* the resurrection, wrote that we're to walk *just like Jesus did*:

“He who says he abides in Him *ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*” (1st John 2:6 NKJV; cf. 1st Cor. 11:1; 4:16-17)

R. C. H. Lenski

R. C. H. Lenski (1864-1936) was a highly revered Lutheran theologian whose commentary on the Letter to the Romans is read today by many outside, as well as inside, his denomination. Speaking of Rom. 3:31 he writes:

“But if faith is the only source and the only medium of God's act of justifying does it not, by ruling out all 'works of law,' then abolish 'law,' anything and everything in the nature of law? Is that what Paul is doing? “The very question suggests that” he “could not and would not do such a thing. *Καταργέω*” (*katar'geo*; nullify, render void, invalid) “means

²⁰ For why this is wrong scripturally, see [Law 102, Take the Quiz! Five Quick Questions about the New Testament and The Two Triangles of the NT.](#)

²¹ See [Passover and Jesus](#) and [Passover](#).

²² See [Ten Ways Yeshua Fulfilled The Law](#) to realize that 'fulfill' does not mean 'do away with' (the Law).

to render ineffective and thus to abolish. After its effect has been removed, law, whether of the Mosaic or of any other type, might as well be thrown aside altogether (antinomianism). ‘Perish the thought!’ Paul exclaims...The very idea is intolerable. ‘Abolish law?’ ‘On the contrary...we are *establishing* law,’ upholding, supporting law. The verb used is not ‘giving’ or ‘setting up’ law (δίδωμι, τίθημι) but *maintaining whatever law has already been properly given and set up* (ἱστώμεν a verb). ‘Law’ is again *generic* and includes Jewish *as well as pagan law* and also the fact that pagans are ‘law’ for themselves (2:14). Our teaching that faith is the only source and means of justification, Paul says, upholds all law.”²³

Lenski, as well as our previous two theologians, realizes that Paul is not abolishing ‘law,’ but Lenski too, takes us to places that don’t speak of v. 31. With ‘the very idea is intolerable’ of abolishing the Law, Lenski tows the Party Line, but doesn’t understand that Paul is speaking in the context of the laws that God gave to Israel, not ‘all laws’ (generic), but specifically Torah.²⁴ There was no need for a Jewish man by the name of Paul to validate pagan laws as *established* or *upheld*, as everyone already knew that Rome’s laws were intact and established, but Torah still valid? With Paul’s overemphasis on Grace it seems that some Christians were abolishing Torah and hence, the Apostle’s need to present it as valid and for Christians. Lenski though, goes on to deal with the heretical teaching of the founder of the Church he belongs to, Martin Luther, by saying,

“Both of the misgivings stated in these last two verses are not of a serious nature; the brief answers suffice. In other connections Paul treats these matters more at length. Yet some ask further regarding this matter of law: ‘Just how does our Christian teaching regarding faith support law?’ They usually answer: ‘Faith itself requires law, for it brings forth the new life that delights to run the way of God’s commandments’ (Ps. 119:32). Then Luther is quoted: ‘Faith fulfills all laws; works fulfill not a tittle of the law.’ But when this is said to be the whole of faith’s support of law, when the law’s function of producing the realization of sin (3:20) is ruled out, we cannot agree. It, too, receives the support of ‘this faith’ teaching. *Without law and the realization of sin faith itself would be impossible in the first place*; and after we come to have faith, it remains only when by means of the law we daily see our sins, daily repent, daily cry for pardon. Rom. 7:7-25 is Paul’s own full exposition of this subject.”²⁵

Lenski rightly comes against Luther’s interpretation that ‘faith’ fulfills the Law. Conceptually, Lenski is right about the Law’s place in the believer’s everyday life, but it seems to be only speaking of the typical Christian understanding of the so-called moral *laws* vs the carnal law against them within us (cf. Rom. 7:25–8:4). The climax of Romans 7:7-25 has Paul struggling with his carnality and the Spirit within who wants to do right. It’s Paul’s faith that allows him to rise above his sins and its condemnation, as he allows the Holy Spirit to neutralize and overcome them. Yeshua took his sins, their condemnation of him and their punishment of him upon Himself, setting Paul (and us) free from them even as they daily tormented him. He learned to walk and to live in the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 5:15, 25), *but this doesn’t express Paul’s meaning for Rom. 3:31*.

Lenski too, as sharp as he was in not being dragged into the ‘faith fulfills the Law and so I don’t have to keep Mosaic Law’ Camp, didn’t realize that Paul spoke of *all* God’s laws and rules—every single one of them. As Yeshua said to Satan:

²³ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans 1–7*, Lenski’s Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), (Accordance Bible Software), pp. 276-277.

²⁴ See [Mosaic Law and the Ten](#).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

“It is written! ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, *but by every word* that proceeds from the mouth of God!’” (Matthew 4:4) and,

“...assuredly I say to you! Until the Heavens and the Earth *pass away, not one jot or tittle will by any means pass from the Law* until all is *fulfilled!*” (Matthew 5:18)

‘Fulfilled’? The Church teaches that ‘all was fulfilled at the Cross!’, but they really have no idea what they’re talking about. Yeshua said, *after* the Resurrection, that *fulfill* speaks of what God’s Old Testament words concerning a coming Messiah:

“Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be *fulfilled* which were *written in the Law of Moses* and the Prophets and the Psalms *concerning Me.*”” (Luke 24:44 NKJV)

Yeshua is also speaking of what God the Father says through Jeremiah when He speaks of the New Covenant for Israel:

³¹“Behold! The days are coming,’ says Yahveh, ‘when I will make a *New Covenant* with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah—³²not according to the Covenant that I made with their Fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My Covenant which they broke, though I was a Husband to them,’ says Yahveh. ³³But *this* is the Covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days,’ says Yahveh: ***‘I will put My Law in their minds and write it on their hearts,*** and I will be their God and they shall be My people. ³⁴No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, “Know Yahveh!,” for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ says Yahveh. ‘For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more.’” (Jeremiah 31:31-34; cf. Heb. 8:10; 10:16 which replicate v. 33 and so confirm that Mosaic Law is God’s lifestyle for every Christian)

Jeremiah 31:31-34 is the only passage in all the Old Testament where the term ‘New Covenant’ is found. There are a number of places that speak of the New Covenant, referring to it as an everlasting covenant (e.g. 2nd Sam. 23:5), etc., but none that literally have ‘New Covenant,’ except v. 33. This is significant because of what God says concerning Mosaic Law—He wants to put it in every Christian’s mind and write it upon their hearts! Some might try to finagle their way out of this by saying it’s only the (so-called) moral laws that God is speaking of, or it’s just the Ten Commandments. From an English translation the term ‘law’ can theoretically be either of those two also, but the Hebrew word is very specific: it’s Torah (תּוֹרָה)²⁶ and it means Mosaic Law.

²⁶ תּוֹרָה Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael A. Fishbane, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), (Accordance Bible Software), paragraph 6,368: “God places the *Teaching*, i.e., the Torah, in the *inmost being* or heart of the people.”

John E. Hartley, author; R. L. Harris, Editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, associate Editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. I (Accordance Bible Software), p. 403. “*Law teaching*. ASV always ‘law,’ RSV sometimes ‘teaching,’ ‘instruction’ and ‘decisions.’ The word is used 221 times...The priests are to teach the law given by Moses (Lev. 10:11; Dt. 33:10)...Ezra the priest faithfully taught the Law of Moses in the fall Feast of Tabernacles in accordance with the Deuteronomic injunction (Dt. 31:9-11; Ezra 8:1ff.)”

Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, Authors; M. Richardson, translator, *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 4 (Boston, MA USA: Brill Academic Publishers; 2002), (Accordance Bible Software), p. 1,710; “in the sense of stretching out the finger, or the hand, to point out a route...direction, instruction.” Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, based on the lexicon of Wilhelm Gesenius; Edward Robinson, translator and E. Rodiger, Editor, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Abridged (Accordance Bible Software), paragraph 9,707; “direction, instruction, law.”

One of the primary things that God desires to do for those who enter into His New Covenant through the Blood of Christ is to give them a new nature; a nature exactly like their Savior's.²⁷ The Christian's new nature is seen in Messiah Yeshua, who kept all Torah that applied to Him. Yeshua is *one* with Mosaic Law because He is God's living Word. Mosaic Law was originally God's *words* to Moses for Israel, and Moses wrote those words down. We know them as Mosaic Law.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews quotes Jer. 31:33 twice (Heb. 8:10; 10:16), using the plural, 'laws,' for Torah instead of just 'law,' confirming and validating God's desire to place the laws and rules of Torah upon every Christian heart and mind so the Christian can walk out his faith in Jesus through *all the laws and rules* of Moses that apply to him. Hebrews was written **37 years** *after* the resurrection, and so no one can say that the author didn't know any better or that he hadn't come into the full understanding of how Christ's death affected the Law for Christians, as many theologians do with Luke's Book of Acts, for it always upholds Torah,²⁸ even though Luke wrote it 34 years *after* the resurrection, was a traveling companion of the Church's "No Law!" champion (Paul), and was a Gentile, meaning that he shouldn't have even known about Mosaic Law, let alone uphold it every time he speaks of it.

The Church's teaching that Jesus and/or Paul 'made it unnecessary for Christians to keep Passover and the 7th day Sabbath, etc., because Jesus *fulfilled* it for them' is wrong.²⁹ The understanding from Jeremiah, literally confirmed twice in Hebrews, is that God desires to place His Torah in our minds and on our hearts.

Every word of God, as Yeshua told Satan, is divine and necessary for our soul to thrive and be alive, and to know how to walk out our faith in Christ. Mosaic Law, as interpreted by Yeshua, not necessarily by the Rabbis or the Pastors who are anti-Mosaic Law, is what we are to order our lives by. After all, as the Apostle Paul wrote, Mosaic Law is *established by our faith* in Messiah Yeshua.

The Law is Established?

Before Paul was blinded by Yeshua on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9:1f.), and before Peter walked on water (Mt. 14:28-29), the Pharisees taught the Jewish people to believe that keeping Mosaic Law earned or merited them eternal life.³⁰ Nowhere in the Tanach (Old Testament) does God say that, but this is what most Jews,³¹ including Peter and Paul, believed in the days before the Lord Yeshua ministered and was crucified. This is the reason why Paul is so *adamant about justification by faith* and not works (of the Law, like keeping the Sabbaths or feeding the poor, i.e. loving one's neighbor). The Jewish people weren't the only people who believed this. Every pagan religion, ancient and modern, justify eternal life by works (e.g. Mormonism, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism and Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.).

²⁷ See [Salvation—The Promise!](#)

²⁸ See Acts 25:8; 26:6-8, 18, 20-23; 28:17-20 where Paul speaks about having done nothing against Mosaic Law *nor* that it had been invalidated by Yeshua's death. In Acts 18:18 Paul takes a Nazarite Vow (the cutting off of his hair speaks of it; Num. 6:18-19). The Nazarite Vow entails at least three animals being sacrificed (Num. 6:14). Luke writes that Paul desired to keep 'the coming (Mosaic) feast in Jerusalem' (Acts 18:21). In Acts 21:20-24 Paul takes his *second* Nazarite Vow and James expressly says it was *to show everyone that he kept Mosaic Law* (v. 24). See also Acts 22:12; 23:1-6 where Paul backs down from speaking harshly against the Aaronic High Priest, *citing* Mosaic Law (Ex. 22:8), when he could have spoken of Yeshua 'as the true High Priest of Israel (24:10-18).

²⁹ See 1st Cor. 5:6-8 where Paul exhorts the Corinthians to not only be "unleavened bread," but to also keep the Feast (of Unleavened Bread).

³⁰ See [The Lifting of the Veil—Acts 15:20-21](#), p. 100f.

³¹ The Sadducees, who were the aristocratic priestly class, didn't believe in an afterlife (Acts 23:8), and so they didn't believe that keeping Torah merited eternal life.

With the death and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua, and faith in Him and Him only for eternal life and justification before the Judgment Seat of God, the heretical concept of keeping Mosaic Law for eternal life was shattered, exemplified by the decision of James at the Council of Acts 15. This was nothing new for the biblical religion of the Hebrews—as God had saved Israel out of Egyptian slavery by faith in the blood of the lamb (Ex. 12:1-50f.). *After* that, He gave Israel rules to live by at Mt. Sinai. Once saved or justified, we fall into the same category and that’s when Mosaic Law comes in as God’s holy Standard (cf. Rom. 7:12, 14), or our Christian lifestyle.

James determined *how* the new Gentile Christian was to walk out his faith in the Jewish Savior once he had been justified (Acts 15:19-21), and this is where ‘works’ or the good deeds³² of Mosaic Law come in—not for salvation, but for the divine lifestyle of a Christian. In other words, the Law takes its rightful place *after* justification as God’s holy Standard for how Christians are to walk out their faith in Jesus.

When Paul speaks of the Law being *established*, the Apostle is saying that Mosaic Law is now taking its rightful biblical place, not as the locomotive for salvation, but as the train car in back of the locomotive. Mosaic Law is *behind* faith in Yeshua’s saving act. It’s two sides of the same coin. The Law has no part in saving anyone—neither the ancient Hebrew slave in Egypt nor Paul on the Road to Damascus, but once saved Mosaic Law takes its *divinely ordained place* in Messiah Yeshua’s Kingdom as the *Teaching of God* that shows all Christians God’s Days and Ways in *how* to live their life. The Hebrew word for Mosaic Law, Torah, means ‘teaching’ or ‘instruction,’ and so Mosaic Law is *God’s teaching and instruction* to Israel as to how to live out their faith in His Son. *This* is what Paul means when he states that our faith in Yeshua *establishes* Mosaic Law (in its rightful place). Mosaic Law is God’s very definition of *how* to love Him and our fellow man (Mt. 22:35-40), for every law, rule and statute reveals how to love God or Man.

Christian theologians and pastors, not realizing this, turn Paul’s simple question and direct answer on its head because they think that Mosaic Law has been ‘superseded by grace and faith,’ and so they cannot fathom that Paul is actually upholding the rules of Mosaic Law and *establishing* it in its rightful place for us to walk in. It’s easy to see unless one is predisposed to Mosaic Law having been done away with at the Cross.³³

Conclusion

Romans 3:31 presents Mosaic Law being validated by a Christian’s faith in Yeshua. When one realizes that before Yeshua came, Judaism taught justification by the works of the Law, it’s easy to see why Paul emphasized justification by faith in Messiah over and against the keeping of the Law. Yet, once that point is made, Paul let’s us know that the Law is established in its proper place as God’s holy Standard to live out our faith in His Son.

Just as those who crucified Yeshua rejected Him as the Messiah because He didn’t meet their expectations of a conquering King who would overthrow Rome, so too Christians who follow the Church’s heretical teaching on Mosaic Law being not for us. They refuse to follow the biblical Jesus because they have been deceived by their church that Jesus ‘set them free from Mosaic Law.’ In this area Christians follow a Law-less Savior who has been given to them by the Roman Catholic Church.

Isn’t Jesus the *same* yesterday, *today* and forever (Heb. 13:8)? In other words, He has not changed. He’s

³² The good deeds or works of Torah are the keeping of its laws and rules (cf. Jn. 3:21; Rom. 3:20, 28; Titus 2:14).

³³ The Scripture the Church uses for the Law being nailed to the Cross is Col. 2:14. Interesting to note, however, is that nowhere in the second chapter of Colossians nor anywhere else in Paul’s Letter to the Colossians is the Greek (or English) word for Law used. Paul wasn’t speaking about the Law being nailed to the Cross, but our sin indebtedness to God (see [Nailed to the Cross—Col. 2:14](#)).

still a 7th day Sabbath keeping, Passover celebrating and pig abstaining Christ. How could Christian pastors, scholars, commentators and ‘regular Christians’ not understand that our faith in the Savior has not nullified Mosaic Law for Christians when Paul point-blank asks the question:

“Do we then make void the Law through faith?”

And then he answers it with a resounding,

‘No! Absolutely not! God forbid!

Therein lies the power of a lie, in its ability to deceive, and the lie that Mosaic Law is not for Christians only falls slightly behind the lie that the Snake spoke to Eve (cf. Daniel 7:25).

Christians are to order their lives around the all the rules of Moses that apply to them—just as Jesus, Peter and Paul did. What though, if one sins in trying trying to keep, say, the Passover? We’ve all heard that no one can keep the Law perfectly, but who has kept either of the two great ‘Christian’ commandments perfectly? (Mt. 22:35-40) Does that mean we shouldn’t try? Of course not. The Blood of Forgiveness allows us to try and try again and the Holy Spirit empowers us to be like Yeshua, with the two great commandments and every other rule of Moses. Isn’t that actually what a Christian calls upon whenever he sins against God in his failure to keep ‘the moral laws’ and asks Jesus to forgive him? The concept is the same. There is no reason not to try to keep Mosaic Law just because we can’t keep it perfectly, just as there is no reason not to try to love one’s enemy because we can’t do that perfectly either. We will fail in these things, but we can always call upon the Lord to forgive us and to empower us to walk like He walked.³⁴

“Do we then make void the Law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we *establish* the Law.” (Romans 3:31)

³⁴ See Romans 6:1-3; 1st John 1:7; 2:1-46; 3:4. Revised on Sunday, June 19, 2022.