

Is Christ the End of the Law?¹

Copyright (c) 2006 by Frank W. Hardy, Ph.D.

Introduction

In Rom 10:4 Paul says, "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." This is a difficult passage. In one popular interpretation, the law begins at Sinai and ends at the cross and thus applies only to the Jews.

To understand what Paul is saying, in view of the claims many have put forward, we should read what Scripture tells us about the time before Sinai and the time after the cross. Doing this should tell us if there was a law then or not. I challenge the assumption that the moral law of God has had only a brief career and applies only to one segment of mankind. But let us see if it does or does not.

Was the Law Only For the Jews?

The question whether the law was only for the Jews must be considered in different time frames. Here we discuss the relevance of the law both before Sinai and after the cross. At issue is whether it came into existence only at Sinai and whether it lost its binding force at the cross.

Before Sinai

In one passage Paul says, "And where there is no law there is no transgression" (Rom 4:15). This is an important concept. Was there transgression before Sinai? If so, there was a law before Sinai. If not, there should be no punishment before Sinai, because it would be unfair to punish people if they have done nothing wrong.

Let us start at the beginning with Cain. When he killed his brother was he breaking God's law? Or any law? Was he doing anything wrong when he killed his brother? The fact that God punished him for killing his brother tells me that, yes, what he did was wrong. (How have we come so far that it becomes necessary to establish the factual accuracy of points like this?) What Cain did was a transgression. Of what?

There are other examples. Consider the flood of Noah. Why did the Lord send a flood on the earth to destroy every living thing? They weren't transgressing because there was no law to transgress, so why did God punish them? But if the punishment was fair, it follows that there was transgression and that there was a law to transgress. Well, there was transgression before the flood. Otherwise, God would not have destroyed the world by a flood. Below I show six examples of the word "sin" in Genesis before Sinai and nine references to the word "wicked(ness)":²

¹ The present paper is based on a sermon I gave at Westminster, MD, July 22, 2006.

² Unless stated otherwise, all quotations are from the THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved."

Sin

Genesis 4:7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

Genesis 15:16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

Genesis 18:20 Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous

Genesis 31:36 Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. "What is my crime?" he asked Laban. "What sin have I committed that you hunt me down?"

Genesis 39:9 No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

Genesis 42:22 Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood."

Wicked(ness)

Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

Genesis 13:13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.

Genesis 18:23 Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"

Genesis 18:25 Far be it from you to do such a thing- to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Genesis 19:7 and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing.

Genesis 38:7 But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death.

Genesis 38:10 What he did was wicked in the LORD's sight; so he put him to death also.

Genesis 39:9 No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

Genesis 44:5 Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done."

From the above passages we can be sure that there was both sin and wickedness before Sinai, but if this had not been the case, i.e., if there were no transgression of a law because there was no law to transgress, it follows that there should be no righteousness either. Calling someone "righteous" presupposes a standard of righteousness. So was there righteousness before Sinai? That term also is used in nine passages:

Righteous(ness)

Genesis 6:9 This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.

Genesis 7:1 The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation.

Genesis 15:6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 18:23 Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"

Genesis 18:24 What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?

Genesis 18:25 Far be it from you to do such a thing— to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Genesis 18:26 The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

Genesis 18:28 what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?" "If I find forty-five there," he said, "I will not destroy it."

Genesis 38:26 Judah recognized them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah." And he did not sleep with her again.

In view of the evidence presented so far, I think we can safely infer that God had a law before Sinai. In Exod 16 the God says in so many words that breaking the Sabbath breaks one of His "commands." This is from the story about manna in the wilderness.

Exodus 16:28-30 Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out." So the people rested on the seventh day.

The manna fell in chapter 16. God came down on Sinai in chap. 20. From this I conclude that there were "commands" before Sinai (vs. 28) and that those pre-Sinai commands included the obligation to rest on the seventh day (vss. 29-30).

After the cross

Up to this point our focus has been on the time before Sinai. We now change this focus and consider the time after the cross. There are many ways to view the question of Sabbath keeping in the apostolic church. The one I follow here has to do with perceptions of the church by those who interacted with it during the first three and a half years after Christ – from His ascension in Acts 1 to the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7.

Acts 2. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the church at Pentecost in Acts 2. This was fifty days after the Passover at which Christ was crucified and ten days after He ascended to heaven in Acts 1. Seven weeks would be enough time for everyone in Jerusalem to know it if the apostles had abandoned the seventh-day Sabbath after the cross. Evidently they hadn't – for two reasons. First, they were still alive. According to Exod 31:14 breaking the Sabbath was a capital offense. And second, because their message was so well received by Jews who had come from everywhere. Three thousand souls were added to the church when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 4. In Acts the apostles were arrested because they were teaching the people about the resurrection of Jesus (see vss. 1-2).

Acts 4:14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.

Acts 4:21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened.

If these men had been Sabbath breakers, the priests and rulers would not have known how to punish them.

Acts 5. While the rulers were becoming increasingly frustrated with the apostles, the common people held them in highest esteem. One example of this is found in Acts 5 and, in my view, such evidence provides overwhelming proof that the apostles were still Sabbath keepers at this time in history. The people brought their sick out onto the street so that Peter's shadow would fall on them as he walked by, in hopes that doing that would effect a cure.

Acts 5:15 As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.

Acts 6. In Acts 6 notice two things. First the apostles' teaching was well received by at least some of the temple priesthood.

Acts 6:7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Those who opposed the church's teaching had to resort to slander in order to have anything to say.

Acts 6:11 Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God."

Acts 6:13-14 They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

Please notice that the witnesses who said such things were "false witnesses" (vs. 13). In any event, if Stephen had been breaking the Sabbath they would not have needed to persuade men secretly to say that they had heard him say this or this. He would have been stoned in chap. 6 instead of chap. 7.

Acts 7. When Stephen was finally executed his accusers listened patiently to everything he said up until the crucial moment when he spoke about seeing Jesus at the right hand of God.

Acts 7:56-58 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

"On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1). The seventy weeks of Dan 9:24 were now over. From this point on the gospel would go primarily, though not exclusively, to the Gentiles. Actually it would go to everyone without distinction. But throughout the second half of the seventieth week (from the ascension to Stephen), the church was widely respected by everyone living in Jerusalem. The highest levels of leadership among the Jews opposed the church throughout this period, but the masses were open to the apostles' influence. This fact is impossible to account for on the assumption that the members of church were no longer keeping the seventh day as the Sabbath. They were keeping it.

From this I draw that the Sabbath was not abolished at the cross, or if was, no one knew it. There was a Sabbath before Sinai and there is a Sabbath after the cross. So what did Paul mean when he said that Christ is the end of the law? How can we interpret what he said in a way that is consistent with the abundant biblical evidence we have examined so far?

We have seen that, right from the beginning, God has had clear moral expectations for mankind, and that when they set those expectations aside He punished them appropriately. The fact that a world-wide flood inflicted universal punishment is evidence that there was universal wickedness before the flood. This was long before Sinai.

And after the cross we have seen that the apostolic church was held in high esteem by the Jews in Jerusalem for three and a half years after the cross, under circumstances where the rulers of the people would love to have found some reason to condemn them. At the end of this time it is true that persecution broke out and the church was scattered everywhere, but up until A.D. 34 even the apostles' worst enemies could not find any way to accuse them. This speaks to the matter of Sabbath keeping, because Sabbath breaking was still a capital offense. If the Jewish leaders could have accused the apostles of Sabbath breaking, they surely would have. The fact that they did not tells me they could not. The only conclusion I can draw from these facts is that the apostles were still keeping the Sabbath after the cross, and that they were keeping it in a way that even their worst enemies found to be blameless and above reproach.

Back to Rom 10:4

The passages we have examined above show that the law did not end at the cross, and yet Paul seems to say that it does. What are we missing? Is there some way to reconcile the two conflicting streams of evidence? Or do they conflict with each other after all? Paul's words seem so clear that it would be impossible to misunderstand them. But what could he possibly mean? To answer this question we have to think very carefully about what words he uses to express himself. The one word that requires the greatest scrutiny here is the Greek word *telos* "end." It occurs in the New Testament 33 times in 32 verses.³ In most cases it simply means "end." No discussion required. But there are five examples, including the one we are studying here, where it means more than this. Consider the following passages:

Luke 22:37 It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment [*telos echē*]."

³ Matt 10:22; 24:6, 13f; 26:58; Mark 3:26; 13:7, 13; Luke 1:33; 18:5; 21:9; 22:37; John 13:1; Rom 6:21f; 10:4; 13:7; 1 Cor 15:24; 2 Cor 3:13; 11:15; Phil 3:19; 1 Thess 2:16; 1 Tim 1:5; Heb 6:8; 7:3; Jas 5:11; 1 Pet 1:9; 3:8; 4:7, 17; Rev 21:6; 22:13.

Romans 10:4 Christ is the end of the law [*telos gar nomou*] so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

1 Timothy 1:5 The goal of this command [*to de telos tēs paraggelias*] is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

James 5:11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about [*to telos kuriou*]. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

1 Peter 1:9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith [*to telos tēs pisteōs*], the salvation of your souls.

In Luke 22:37 one could misinterpret the writer's intent to mean that those Scriptures come to an end which tell about Christ's earthly life. (But in this case, what does Jesus mean by saying, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" [Matt 24:35]?) Skipping over Rom 10:4 temporarily, let us go to 1 Tim 1:5 where it appears that a "command" comes to an end. This is not one of God's commandments, but something Paul himself has said. Two verses earlier he tells Timothy to "command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer" (1 Tim 1:3). This is the command he is talking about in vs. 5. If this command ends, does that mean that the men in question can start teaching false doctrines again? (Saying so would itself be a false doctrine.)

Now 1 Pet 1:9. One reason for wanting the commandments to go is so that faith can come. We proceed on the assumption that the two are hostile to each other. If we have law, we cannot have faith. If we have faith, we cannot have law. And so we interpret the word "end" in Rom 10:4 in a way that seems to make this conclusion plausible. But in 1 Pet 1:9 it is not the law that comes to an end. It is our faith. If we are capable of interpreting in a way that leads to such results, it's clear that we're getting something hopelessly wrong! And of course ending our faith is not what Peter is saying at all (he's speaking of the goal of our faith, not the end of our faith), but my point is that the word "end" can be misunderstood.

The best illustration of an impossibly bad misinterpretation of the Greek word *telos* is found in Jas 5:11, where the words *to telos kuriou* could be translated literally as, "the end [*to telos*] of the Lord [*kuriou*]." What James means is "the goal of the Lord," i.e., what the Lord had in mind by dealing with Job as He did. And that is what the word *telos* means in Rom 10:4 as well.

In another passage Paul says, "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24). What does the law lead us to? It leads us to Christ. So if I have this right, Christ is the goal toward which the law leads. The object and purpose of the law is to lead us to Christ. Why should this be? Because the function of law is to show us our need. It can't supply our need. That's not what law does. It only points out the fact that we are deficient. Once it does that, and we realize that we are sinful and need cleansing, the knowledge we have gained from the law drives us to Christ because He *can* supply our need – abundantly, more than we ask or think. The moral law of God always – even in Old Testament times – has the goal and purpose of causing people to respond to its Author in faith. Here is the meaning of Rom 10:4. The law still serves this same function now, and we can be glad that it does. Otherwise we would be unaware that we need Christ. We could say we do, but it would just be a formula of words. The law is what drives the point home.

Do the commandments remain?

Many, even of our opponents, do not deny what we have been saying here. It is obvious that human society cannot function without some sort of moral principles to give it direction, so many Christians freely admit that nine of the commandments are restated in the New Testament after being done away on the cross. Here is a list of the ones that remain:

1.

Matthew 4:10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

1 Corinthians 10:20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

2.

1 Corinthians 10:14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

1 John 5:21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

3.

Matthew 6:9 "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, . . ."

4.

[No allusions to this one. Or that's the claim.]

5.

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother"- which is the first commandment with a promise-

6.

Matthew 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

1 John 3:15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

Revelation 21:8 "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

7.

Matthew 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

1 Thessalonians 4:3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

8.

Matthew 5:38-42 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'³⁹ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. [Here Christ does not say, Don't steal. Instead He says, Give. This is a comment on the eighth commandment.]

Ephesians 4:28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

9.

Matthew 5:33-34 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.'³⁴ But I tell you, Do not swear at all:" [This is the ninth commandment – the one that deals with our use of words.]

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

10.

Matthew 5:43-48 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. [Coveting takes place secretly in the heart. When Christ says don't be incomplete in the way you think toward people, be perfect, mature, complete – like your heavenly Father – that's a comment on the tenth commandment.]

Luke 12:15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

In the above list notice that three of the commandments (1, 3, and 10) are restated before being done away, i.e., they are restated before the cross. To me this sounds like simple continuity rather than abrogation and restatement, but for whatever reason nine of the ten commandments are supported by the New Testament. Only the fourth is missing. Or is it?

Does the Sabbath remain?

What would a reference to the fourth commandment look like in the New Testament, or elsewhere? To answer this question we need to know what it says. Here is the commandment, then, as given in the New International Version:

Exodus 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Does any part of this passage appear in the New Testament? Yes! Of course it does. But we have to know what to look for and be willing to recognize it when we see it. Below I offer a list of passages that make more or less direct reference to the fourth commandment of the law. Apart from **Exod 20:11**, there are seven references in the Old Testament and seven in the New Testament. So what are we looking for? We're looking for the words "heaven(s)," "earth," and "sea" all in the same verse. When these three words appear together in a way that suggests a literary allusion, that is a reference to the Sabbath commandment. Here's the list:

Old Testament

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

Psalms 69:34 Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that move in them,

Psalms 96:11 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it;

Psalms 135:6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.

Psalms 146:5 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶ the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— the LORD, who remains faithful forever.

Amos 9:6 he who builds his lofty palace in the heavens and sets its foundation on the earth, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land— the LORD is his name.

Haggai 2:6 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.'

New Testament

Acts 4:24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.

Acts 14:15 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.

Revelation 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Revelation 10:6 And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay!

Revelation 12:12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth— to every nation, tribe, language and people. ⁷ He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

Please bear in mind that the words "heaven," "earth," and "sea" do not come together like this in the creation story itself. The first time they all appear together in one verse is in the fourth commandment of the law. When these three words appear together, that is not a reference to the creation story as such, but rather to the Sabbath commandment.

Someone will object that the above writers aren't quoting the Sabbath commandment. There's even a question whether they are referring to it.⁴ What is very clear is that they are identifying who God is. They're directing attention to God as the Creator of all things. So what does the Sabbath commandment do? It also identifies who the true God of heaven is. It directs attention to Him as the Source of our being and the Creator of all things. That is why it is so important to "remember the Sabbath day" and not forget what it stands for. The Sabbath commandment goes beyond providing for worship on the seventh day. It provides the only biblically sound basis for worshiping God at all. As such it is a safeguard against idolatry in all its forms. Is this something we want to set aside?

If the first commandment is based on God's act of delivering Israel from Egypt long ago ("I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other Gods before me" [Exod 20:1-2]), and we consider that one binding, how much more binding should the fourth commandment be when it points out that this same God called all of mankind into existence in the beginning – before there was an Egypt to deliver people from?

⁴ Actually Acts 4:24 and 14:15 are quoting the Septuagint translation of the fourth commandment word for word. Even the accent marks are identical. I'll discuss this in a separate paper.

The Meaning of the Sabbath

The commandments don't end at the cross. In one sense they begin there. The love of Christ that He demonstrated for us on the cross constrains us and makes us want to obey Him from our hearts. In this way His law becomes written on our hearts. When we see what Christ has done for us we will no longer want to dishonor our parents, or kill, or commit adultery, or steal, or lie, or covet. We won't want to have any other gods before Him, or make idols, or misuse His holy name. And all agree on this much.

So if we love Him this much, why wouldn't we enjoy spending time with Jesus as well? Every Friday evening at sunset He comes to us where we are and says, "If I were to take a whole day to spend with you, would you like to spend that day with Me? It will be our special together time." Those who reject this invitation don't realize what they're saying. They know not what they do. If we can't spend so much as a day with Jesus now, how could we ever spend eternity with Him later? He won't force us to do that. But if we're going to take a position that leads to such a conclusion, we should be very sure we know what our words imply.

Conclusion

God's law is eternal because He is eternal. His law is a transcript of His own character and that is something that needs no changing. It is already holy and just and good. It was no part of Christ's purpose on the cross to change His status, in union with the Father, as our Creator or to change any part of His own holy character. It was every part of His purpose, however, to change us – to separate us from our sins so we would not perish with them, i.e., to separate us from our sins by drawing us to Himself. What better way to do this than spending time together? The Sabbath is the perfect summing up of that process. So no, the standard has not changed. It would not be possible to change it and in view of its inherent goodness, why would anyone want to?

The Sabbath is the birthday of the world celebrated on a weekly cycle. Nothing we do later in life can change our birthday or the identity of our parents. In this context it would be radically impossible to think that any one of the commandments could be changed or done away with, and this is all the more true in the case of the Sabbath which tells us who our heavenly Father is, i.e., the One who brought us into existence originally, and that He continues to supply all our needs now. We can rest in this knowledge only if we believe it. And so rest and faith correspond perfectly.

What we have said about the commandments not coming to an end has an opposite counterpart. If they have no end, do they have a beginning? Did the commandments only come into existence when they were written down? Writing our name down on a birth certificate implies that we have a name to write. Writing our name does not make us who we are, and writing the law on stone does not make the law what it is. We can only understand the law when we understand the law Giver and we can only love it when we love Him. Here is the "end" of the law that Paul was referring to in Rom 10:4. It is the great Object (*telos* "end") of the law to lead us to Christ in humble submission to His will.