

# Way to Be Holy

by Charles Finney

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*In 'Way to Be Holy', Charles Finney explains how Christ fulfills the law and empowers believers to achieve true righteousness through faith.*

**Scripture:** Romans 8:1, Romans 10:4

**Topics:** "Faith and Righteousness", "The Role of Christ in the Law"

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## Description

Charles Finney emphasizes that Christ is the fulfillment of the law for righteousness, clarifying misconceptions about the law's abolition and the nature of justification. He argues that the moral law remains obligatory and that Christ's role is to inspire true obedience through faith, rather than merely providing a legal justification. Finney explains that faith in God's character is essential for genuine obedience, as it fosters love and confidence in Him. Ultimately, he asserts that the way to holiness is through belief in Christ, who transforms believers and enables them to fulfill the law's requirements.

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## Transcript

'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' Rom. 10:4.

In this lecture I am to show,

I. WHAT IS NOT INTENDED BY THE ASSERTION THAT CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

II. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THIS ASSERTION.

III. HOW CHRIST BECOMES THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

I. What is not intended by the assertion that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.

1. Not that He abolishes the law in respect to believers. I am aware that some antinomians in the Church, affirm this, but it cannot be true for the following reasons.

(1.) The moral law is not founded in the arbitrary will of God, for if it were He would have no rule of conduct, nothing with which to compare his own actions. But every moral agent must have some rule by which to act. Again, He must have no character at all, for character implies moral obligation, and moral obligation implies moral law. Again, unless the law is obligatory on Him, benevolence in Him is not virtue,

for virtue must be compliance with obligation. Nor should we have any standard with which to compare his actions, and by which to judge of them, so that we could know whether He is holy or unholy. Moreover, if He is capable of Benevolence, it is impossible that He should not be under a moral obligation to be so, and if so, the law cannot, of course be founded in His arbitrary will. Furthermore, He could, if the law were founded in his arbitrary will, by willing it, make benevolence vice, and malevolence virtue, right wrong, and wrong right. But this is absurd and impossible.

(2.) The moral law is founded in God's self-existent nature. He never made his own nature, and consequently never made the law, and it must therefore be obligatory upon Him, by virtue of his own nature which imposes it. It is as really obligatory on Him as on us.

(3.) He requires benevolence of us because it is naturally obligatory on us. He made us in his own image, that is, with a nature like His own, and therefore He could not discharge us from obligation to keep the law if He would, for our own reason would still reveal and impose it on us. We should perceive its obligation.

(4.) If He could and should abolish the moral law, then we could have no moral character. We could neither be sinful nor holy any more than brutes can. Observe then, Christ cannot be the end of the law in the sense that He abolishes it.

2. It is not intended that He abolishes the penalty as it respects believers, so that they can sin without actual condemnation. Some have this view of justification, that at the first act of faith, God so sets aside the penalty that it never afterwards attaches to the individual. But this cannot be, for:

(1.) If the penalty is set aside, the law is repealed, for law consists of precept and penalty.

(2.) If it were so set aside, then Christians, when they sinned would not need pardon, and could not, without folly, and even wickedness pray for forgiveness. It would be nothing else but sheer unbelief. But every Christian knows that when he sins he is condemned, and must be pardoned or damned. Christ, therefore, is not the end of the law in this sense.

3. Nor is He the end of the law for justification merely, for,

(1.) He does not obtain for them a legal justification. Legal justification is the act of pronouncing one just in the estimation of law. This Christ cannot do in respect to any transgressor. Gospel justification is pardon and acceptance. But it never was the end or object of the law to pardon sinners. In this sense, then, it is impossible that Christ should be the end of the law, for the law never aimed at pardoning transgressors. The word righteousness sometimes means justification, but cannot mean that here, as Christ never aimed at legal justification, nor the law at pardon. He cannot, of course, then, be the end of the law in this sense.

4. Nor is He the end of the law in the sense of procuring a pardon for those that believe, for this was never the end proposed by the law. The law knows nothing of pardon.

5. Nor is it intended that He imputes his own righteousness or obedience to them. Some suppose that Christ was under no obligation to obey the law Himself, and that He can, therefore impute his obedience to believers. But,

(1.) The law never aimed at imputation. This was no part of its object. Did the law require Christ's righteousness or personal holiness to be imputed?

(2.) The doctrine of imputed righteousness is founded on the absurd assumption that Christ owed no obedience to the law. But how can this be? Was He under no obligation to be benevolent? If not, then his benevolence was not virtue. He certainly was just as much bound to love God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and his neighbor as Himself, as you are. How holy should God be? As holy as He can be. That is, He should be perfectly benevolent, as the Bible says He is.

(3.) This doctrine assumes that Christ's works were works of supererogation. Is this what the Apostle means when he says--'For such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners?'

(4.) This doctrine is a mere dogma of Popery, born, bred, and supported amid its darkness and superstitions. The sufferings and death of Christ were for us, and constitute the Atonement. His obedience was necessary to his making an atonement, as a condition, since none but a holy being could make it. Holiness is benevolence, and Christ must of necessity have been benevolent, in order to make the Atonement which is a work of benevolence.

(5.) The doctrine of imputed righteousness represents God as requiring,

(a) That Christ should render a perfect obedience for us.

(b) Then that He should die just as if no such obedience had been rendered.

(c) That, notwithstanding the debt is thus paid twice over by our substitute, we must repent as though it were unpaid.

(d) Then that we must be forgiven.

(e) And after all this, that we must ourselves obey, or be personally holy.

(f) And finally, that we must count it all grace.

What a jumble of nonsense is this! Is this the gospel of the blessed God? Impossible!

(6.) The doctrine of imputation utterly sets aside the true idea of the gospel. The true idea of pardon does not enter into it. It is rather a fivefold satisfaction of justice. We are not restored to the favor of God, according to this doctrine, by a free pardon, but by imputed righteousness. It is not at all wonderful that thinking men, when they hear such slang as this, say, "O, nonsense!--If that be the gospel, we can have nothing to do with it."

(7.) Imputation is not, and never was, the end or object of the law. The end which it seeks is righteousness or true obedience.

II. What is intended by the assertion that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.

The text affirms that he is the end of the law for righteousness. Righteousness is obedience to the law. He is, then, the end of the law for obedience. He secures the very end aimed at by the law; that is, He makes Christians holy; as it is said--'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the

righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'What have we here? Why, an express assertion of the Apostle, that Christ, by his Atonement, and indwelling Spirit, had secured in Christians, the very obedience which the law required.

### III. How Christ becomes the end of the law for righteousness or obedience.

1. Confidence or faith is essential to all hearty obedience to any law. An outward conformity to its requirements may be secured by fear, but not love.

2. Christ, then, must secure love or true righteousness by inspiring confidence in the character and government of God. God had been slandered by [S]atan, and the world believed the slander. Satan represented to our first parents that God was insincere in forbidding them to eat of the tree of knowledge, and that the result of their eating of it would be just the reverse of what God had threatened. Said he, 'God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil!' This was a most taking temptation! 'And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did\* eat.' Now the thing to be done, is to remove this prejudice which has existed in all ages. How shall it be effected?

3. Christ came to reveal the true God and the true character of his government for this express purpose. He came not only to teach, but, by his example, to give an illustration of what the law meant; and to possess the human mind of the idea that God is love. He knew very well that confidence was the thing needed; and that to reveal the character of God, so as to beget confidence, He must hold it out in strong relief, in a life of love before them. There was a greater necessity for this, because many of the dispensations of God, towards mankind appeared severe. He had poured out the waters of the flood upon the old world, and destroyed it; He had frowned upon the cities of the plain, and sent them down to hell; and in many other instances, He had been obliged to resort to such measures as were calculated, in the circumstances, to beget a dread, and slavish fear, rather than to inspire confidence and love. It was, therefore, necessary to adopt measures of a different nature, adapted to beget faith.

4. The nature of faith, renders obedience certain, so far as it is implicit. A wife, for example, is always perfectly under the influence of her husband, just so far as she has confidence in him. Suppose he is a business man; if she has confidence in his business talents, she does not concern herself at all in his business transactions. So, if they are going a journey, suppose she knows him to be careful, and attentive to his affairs, she will not be in a fret; she will never ask whether he has taken care of their baggage, and whether he has procured tickets, and accommodations. She expects all this, as a matter of course, and is happy in her reliance on him. But suppose we turn this over, and she has no confidence in his character. If he is a man of business, and she lacks confidence in his judgment, she will be all the time in distress for fear he will take some step which will ruin their affairs. If they are going on a journey, she will, perhaps, fear that he will start off without his pocket-book, or forget some of his baggage, or that he will lose them on the way. It is easy to see, that so far as this lack of confidence extends, its tendency is to diminish her affection, and if it extend to his whole character, she cannot love him. I might illustrate this in a thousand ways. If you call in a physician, and you have confidence in him, you will take any medicine which he may prescribe. I recollect a case, which, perhaps some of you are familiar with. A certain king was sick, and sent for his physician. The physician examined his symptoms and found his disease a dangerous one, and requiring a peculiar treatment. He told the king he would go home and prepare a certain medicine, which would make him very sick, while in its operation, but would remove the disease. While he was gone, the

king received a letter, warning him against the physician, as tho'he designed to poison him. When the physician returned and presented him the medicine, he immediately swallowed it, and then handed his physician the letter he had received. That was faith; and it placed him entirely under the control of his physician. It is easy, therefore, to see, that if Christ could only restore faith among men, He would, of course, secure obedience.

5. Faith in God's character, is the foundation of faith in his promises. Many people seem to go the wrong way to work. They try to exercise faith in the promises, with[out] faith in his general character. But Christ takes the opposite course, revealing the character of God as a foundation of faith in his promises.

6. He baptizes them by his Spirit, and actually works in them to will and to do. How wonderfully Christ seems to work, to get the control of believers. Unless He can get into their confidence, He cannot do this, but so soon as He can inspire faith, He has them under his control. We see the same law among men. See a human pair, by securing mutual confidence, wind imperishable cords around each other's hearts. Then, for one to know the will of the other, is to do it. They do not need to be bound down nor driven by the force of penalties. This is the way of the seducer, who can "smile and smile and be a villain still." He lays his foundation deep in the confidence of his victim, until he may laugh at all her parents may say and do against him. He gains such an ascendancy, as to control the will more absolutely than if he could wield it by his hand. Such is the natural result of getting into the confidence of another. They will, and do, at our bidding. Thus Christ gains the heart, and works in us to will and to do, of his good pleasure.

7. The way to be holy, then, is to believe. 'Then said they unto Him, what shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.' 'That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.' 'This only would I learn of you; received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain? He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God it is evident; for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.' 'What shall we say, then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith; But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; As it is written, behold I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone; and rock of offense, and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.' In Christ, then the believer is complete; that is, He is all we need. His offices and relations meet all our necessities, and by faith we receive their redeeming influence.

REMARKS.

1. From this subject, we may see why the gospel lays so much stress on faith. It is the only way of salvation.
2. This method of saving men is perfectly philosophical. And as we have seen, Christ thus works Himself into the very heart of believers.
3. It is the only possible way, in the very nature of the case, to secure love. God might command, and back up the command with threatenings. But this would only fill the selfish mind with terror, leaving its selfishness unbroken, and even grasping at its objects amid the roar of its thunders. In the very nature of mind, then, to secure obedience, He must secure confidence. Why, look at Eve. The moment she doubted, she fell. And so would all heaven fall if they should lose confidence in God. Yes, they would fall! They would no more retain their obedience, than the planets would retain their places, if the power of gravitation were broken. Every one knows that if the power of attraction were destroyed, suns, and stars, and planets would run lawless through the universe, and desolation would drive her ploughshare through creation. So, break the power of confidence in heaven, and every angel there would fall like Lucifer, and universal anarchy prevail.
4. What I have said, does not represent virtue or holiness as consisting in mere emotions of complacency; or in loving God merely for his favors; but the exhibition of his character in Christ begets in us real benevolence. It shows us what benevolence is, and stimulates us to exercise it. Nearly all preachers and writers, of the present day, confound religion, with mere complacency in God for his favors. Both gratitude and complacency may, and often do, exist in the impenitent mind. It must, therefore, be a fundamental mistake, to confound these with true religion.
5. Christ, by exhibiting his benevolence, begets his own image in them that believe; that is, they are naturally led to yield themselves up to the transforming tendency of this view of his character. This, the law could never secure in a selfish mind.
6. I said the doctrine of imputed righteousness, is another gospel, or no gospel at all. And here I would ask, is not this quite another way of salvation? According to this way, instead of imputing righteousness to them, God makes them righteous.
7. The gospel is not an evasion of the law. It comes in as an auxiliary to accomplish what the law aims at, but cannot effect, because it is 'weak through the flesh.'
8. We see who are true believers. Those who love God supremely and their neighbor as themselves; and unless your faith begets obedience, it is not the faith of the gospel.
9. We can see the sustaining power of faith. This is not well considered by many. If the head of a family secures its confidence, he controls it easily; but if not, there is a perpetual tendency to resist him. The same principle operates in state governments. They are firm, just so far and no farther, than they are based upon the confidence of their subjects. So it is in the business world. Every thing is prosperous, so long as confidence is secured. This gone, and the tide immediately sets forth the other way. Why are so many houses in this country, which were once supposed to be perfectly stable, tumbling down around the heads of the merchants? Because confidence is destroyed. Restore that, and immediately things will assume a different aspect. Every merchant in New-York will feel the impulse; and ships from abroad will come freighted down with merchandize. This principle is equally efficient and necessary in the divine government. This, the devil well understood. Hence his first effort was directed to its overthrow. But

ministers too often put it in the back ground, and hence the reason of so much failure in the work of reforming the world. Christ, on the other hand, always put it foremost, and his declaration, 'He that believeth shall be saved,' is the unalterable law of his government.

10. Unbelievers cannot be saved, for their want of confidence, necessarily keeps the soul from hearty obedience.

11. Do you ask, "How can I believe?" I turn on you, and ask, "How can you help believing?" Christ has died for you to win your confidence. He stands at your door, offering blessings, and assuring you of his good will. And can't you believe! What! And the Son of God at the door! But perhaps you stand away back, and say, Christians can believe, but how can I? a poor, guilty wretch. And why not you? Come, let your anchor down upon the character of God, and then if the winds blow, let them blow; if the ocean tosses itself, and yawns till it lays bare its very bottom, you are secure, for God rules the wind and the waves. But I hear some one say, I am such a backslider. Yes, and you are like to be. Unless you believe, you will continue to go right away from God. Come, instantly, and believe. Come all you professors; come, all you sinners; come now, and He will write his law in your hearts; and it will no longer be to you a law on tables of stone. Can't you believe it? Yes, O yes. Then let us come around the throne of grace, and receive Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness.

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