

Living Under Grace

- *The first time the Law is mentioned in the New Testament is found in Matthew 5:17-18 when Jesus clearly indicated the importance and immutability of the Law. “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”*
- *When Jesus referred to the “Law and the Prophets” He was speaking about the Old Testament which the Jews refer to as the Tanakh. The Tanakh is made up of the Law which is found in the first five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) and the Prophets which can include all the other books in the Tanakh.*
- *Even though Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, as well as the historical biblical books such as Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are not purely prophetic they can be included in the term “the Prophets” because they carry strong prophetic elements that point us to Jesus.*
- *Apostle Paul used the phrase “under the Law” ten times in the New Testament. In each case he was referring specifically to the Mosaic Law contained in the first five books of the Bible.*
- *In 1 Corinthians 9:20 Apostle Paul expressed his earnest desire to reach unbelieving Jewish people, those who were still under the Mosaic Law, so they might come to a saving faith in Christ and no longer be under the Law. “and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law.”*
- *Apostle Paul pointed out that the Law was incapable of freeing anyone from either the penalty of sin or the power of sin, not because the Law was flawed, but because we were flawed and enslaved to sin. “For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.” (Romans 7:5).*
- *Jesus came to save us and free us from the condemnation that the Law brings to those who transgress the Law. “But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” (Romans 7:6).*
- *Some Christians misunderstand the Law and its purposes and think that the Law is bad or is something to be looked down upon. However, the Law was essential for us to come to Christ because the Law revealed our need for salvation. “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would*

- not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”” (*Romans 7:7*).
- *God gave the Law not to deal with sin but to reveal sin! The Law exposed our lost and sinful state. “But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.” “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.”* (*Romans 7:8, 11*).
 - *The Law is spiritual and holy and reflects God’s righteous standard. “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”* (*Romans 7:12*).
 - *The Law also reveals our carnal and lost state. “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.”* (*Romans 7:14*).
 - *The Law produced death in us not because it is sinful but because we are sinful. The Law showed unequivocally that we were completely lost and under the power of sin. “Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.”* (*Romans 7:13*).
 - *The Law was not able to save us because it could only declare someone righteous if they lived righteously. The Law was incapable of saving us because of the weakness of our sinful flesh. “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.”* (*Romans 8:3a*). *Therefore, the Father sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins in order that we may be made righteous. “God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.”* (*Romans 8:3b*).
 - *The Law had another very important and significant function. The Law actually pointed to Jesus Christ and revealed that salvation is received by believing in Jesus the Messiah and not by trying to keep the Law. “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (*Romans 3:21-23*).
 - *This is an amazing fact! Believers who try to keep the Law misunderstand and ignore what the Law is actually saying—that the Law is impossible to keep, and it cannot save or transform us. We are transformed and made righteous only if we put our faith in Jesus Christ and are led by the Spirit.*
 - *The Law provides several important functions in regard to salvation:*

- *The Law revealed God’s righteous and holy standard.*
- *The Law revealed our sinful and unholy condition.*
- *The Law revealed that salvation comes by putting our faith in Christ and not by trying to keep the Law.*

- *In these verses, Paul clearly states that as believers we are not under the Law. “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” (Romans 6:14-15).*

- *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.” (Titus 2:11).*

- *Sin is not our master. The Law is not our Master. Jesus Christ is our Master. We live not under condemnation, but under grace.*

- *Paul pointed out that as believers, freedom from sin is not found by vainly trying to keep the Law but by the grace of God. “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”*

- *However, Paul warns us not to think that since we are not under the Mosaic Law that this is an excuse for us to live unholy and unrestrained lives. “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!”*

- *Just because we have received Christ and are no longer under the Mosaic Law does not mean that we are lawless. We are now under a higher law—the Law of Love. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (John 14:15 ESV).*

- *One of the religious leaders asked Jesus which is the greatest commandment in the Law. Some may have thought He would have said keeping the Sabbath, or not taking the name of God in vain, or not committing murder, but instead He spoke of love. “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37, 39-40).*

- *The purpose of the Law was to lead us to Jesus so He could save us and reveal God’s heart of love so we could also learn to love. The Law showed us our need for Jesus’ sacrificial death. The Law provided the legal means by which Jesus could die in our place for our sins in order to save and redeem us. In fact, all of the Old Testament sacrifices point to Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice.*

- *Sometimes Christians mistakenly believe that because we have received Christ and His saving grace we no longer need to be concerned about the way we live.*

However, when we are under grace God's standard for holiness doesn't decrease—it increases! The bar isn't lowered, it's raised!

- *Sin is destructive to one's life whether he is under the Law or has been saved by grace.*
- *Those who desire to be under the Law focus only on their outward actions. They may think they are keeping the Law by their actions but their hearts are far from God. "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me." (Matthew 15:8).*
- *The Mosaic Law dealt with only outward actions because the Mosaic Law was powerless to transform us. Under grace the Holy Spirit not only changes our actions, but more importantly our hearts! "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28).*
- *Under the Law we were prohibited from murdering but under grace we are prohibited from hating anyone—including our enemies! In fact we are commanded to love, pray, and even do good to our enemies!*
- *Once we realize that as believers we are not under the Law, it begs the question, "What then is the purpose of the Law and the Old Testament to believers?"*
- *There are two extremes in which believers can misapply the Old Testament to their lives. Some try to keep the Law and others ignore the Law. The ones who ignore the Law say that today the Old Testament is irrelevant to believers. Both extremes reflect a misunderstanding of the purpose of the Law of Moses.*
- *When we misunderstand God's grace, we tend toward either legalism and self-effort or disobedience and self-indulgence. Freedom from the Law doesn't give us the right to live as we please but to live as God pleases.*
- *Keeping the law can be interpreted in a broader sense than trying to keep the Mosaic Law. It can also refer to any man-made religious system where we strive to find favour with God through self-effort.*
- *The early Church did not have the New Testament. They had only the Tanakh, the Law and the Prophets. However, the Apostles were able to preach effectively and prove that Jesus is the Messiah. They were able to instruct believers on how to live a holy life based on faith and the grace of God.*
- *The New Testament is interwoven with Old Testament references and quotations. By ignoring the Old Testament, we will miss or misunderstand*

portions of the New Testament. The Old Testament is the foundation upon which the New Testament is built.

- *The New Testament unlocks the secrets of the Old Testament and the Old Testament enriches and deepens the truths found in the New Testament. Jesus alluded to finding treasures in both the New and the Old Testaments. “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.” (Matthew 13:52).*
- *Both the similarities and the differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament shed light on God’s marvelous plan of salvation and the Gospel.*
- *It is very significant to note that in the entire Old Testament there are only a handful of references to the resurrection. Heaven is not mentioned even once! This is in contrast to the New Testament which is filled from beginning to end with references to both the resurrection and to Heaven.*
- *The reason for such a stark contrast between the Old Testament and the New Testament in regard to Heaven is because the purpose of the Law and the Prophets was not to instruct people about how to receive salvation and get to Heaven but to point to Jesus who would bring them salvation. The New Testament reveals Jesus and the fulfillment of His sacrificial suffering and death at Calvary and His glorious resurrection. The New Testament is all about the eternal life we receive through faith in Jesus Christ!*
- *We find two extremes in the Body of Christ in relationship to the Law: some insist we must keep the Law and others ignore the importance of the Law.*
- *One of the primary reasons that Paul wrote the epistle to the Galatians was to deal with these two extremes and to provide the correct balance in understanding and applying the truths found in the Old Testament.*
- *Paul began the epistle by expressing a primary concern he had for the church in Galatia—their desire to turn away from relying on the grace of God found through faith in Jesus Christ and turning back to a works based religion that seeks righteousness through keeping the Law. “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel.” (Galatians 1:6).*
- *The Greek word translated as “turning away” literally means “to transpose two things, one of which is put in place of the other.” Paul is shocked that not only were they willing to exchange the grace of Christ for legalism, but that they were willing to do it so quickly after receiving salvation. They transposed their faith in Christ with faith in their own good works—legalism.*

- *In the following verse Paul pointed out that what the Galatians were doing would result in turmoil and confusion by trying to follow a false gospel “which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” (Galatians 1:7). The Gospel means “the Good News” but a works based salvation that sows uncertainty and confusion is far from good news.*
- *The Greek word translated as “pervert” (the gospel) means “to turn around.”*
- *They were turning the gospel around.*
- *Instead of being saved by God’s righteousness, they were seeking to be saved by their own righteousness.*
- *Instead of God first seeking us, they thought they were the ones who sought God.*
- *Instead of faith in Christ, they were putting their faith in their works.*
- *Instead of basing their faithfulness on God’s unwavering faithfulness to them, they thought God’s faithfulness was conditional on their faithfulness to God.*
- *If the Galatians’ Gospel was based on faith in Christ it would have produced peace and joy in their hearts. They substituted the true gospel for a false gospel that produced uncertainty, insecurity, and self-effort.*
- *In making his argument that believers in Christ are not under the Law, Paul built his entire case based on the Old Testament. Paul either referenced or literally quoted from the Old Testament eleven times in the epistle to the Galatians citing Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Habakkuk. This shows how vitally important the Old Testament is to understanding the New Testament. It also illustrates the correct way in which the Old Testament is to be used by believers.*
- *Paul made it abundantly clear that salvation is not received through keeping the Law but by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” (Galatians 2:16).*
- *Paul points out that it is the Law itself that releases us from being under the Law through Jesus’ death. According to the Law once a person dies they are no longer under the Law. “For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:19-20).*
- *Of the ten times the New Testament uses the phrase “under the Law” five of those occurrences are found in the epistle to the Galatians. It appears that these five occurrences coincide in the same order with the first five books in the Bible that make up the Law.*

- *The first time the phrase “under the Law” is used in Galatians is: “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.” (Galatians 3:23).*
- *Before we received Christ we were under the condemnation of the Law because the Law pointed out our failures and sins. The Law didn’t produce freedom but bondage. Whether a person is Jewish and under the condemnation of the Mosaic Law or a Gentile condemned by their own conscience the result is the same—a recognition that we are all sinners in need of a Saviour.*
- *That is why Paul also described the Law as a tutor who reveals our lost state and points us to Jesus so we could be saved. “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:24).*
- *The first time “under the Law” is found in Galatians corresponds to the first book of the Law—Genesis. Genesis begins with Adam’s sin, the fall of mankind into the bondage of sin, and man’s attempt to flee from God because of the shame and self-condemnation they experienced as they realized they had sinned.*
- *The book of Genesis concludes with Jacob and his family going to Egypt to endure 440 years of captivity. Although Israel was led into Egypt, God’s ultimate purpose was to redeem them not only from the slavery of Egypt, but from the slavery of the sin in their hearts.*
- *The second time “under the Law” is found in Galatians is in reference to the birth of Jesus. “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.” (Galatians 4:4). The Saviour is born!*
- *Mankind had sold himself into sin and was under the condemnation of the Law. Jesus was born as a man so He would be under the Law to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law by living a perfect life and fulfilling the sacrifice that was required by the Law so mankind could be redeemed.*
- *The second time “under the Law” is found in Galatians corresponds to the second book of the Law—Exodus. Exodus begins with the birth of Moses, the man God would use to lead Israel out of the cruel oppression and slavery of Egypt.*
- *God is never late. His timing and His timetable are perfectly synchronized. Moses was born at exactly the right time. He came to lead Israel out of Egypt and all those willing to listen to his voice would be led to freedom. Similarly, Jesus was born at the perfect time to be the Saviour of all mankind and as many as would chose to obey His voice and put their faith in Him would be saved.*

- *The third time “under the Law” is found in Galatians it speaks about redemption. “to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:5). Redemption is more than just being saved and born again. Redemption also speaks about learning to live a life of freedom as sons and daughters of God.*
- *Redemption is being freed from the regrets of our past failures and from the habits and sins that once ruled our lives. The Law brings shame and condemnation to those who have sinned. Christ came to redeem us so that we are no longer under the Law. Now we can live a life filled with love, peace, and joy.*
- *The third time “under the Law” is found in Galatians corresponds to the third book of the Law—Leviticus. Leviticus is the book of instructions. It instructed the priests and the people how to serve God. Leviticus gave every necessary detail of how they were to serve God in ways that were pleasing to Him. It dealt with every type of offering from dealing with their sins to giving offerings of thanksgiving and praise.*
- *Christ redeemed mankind so we are no longer under the Law. Freed from the Law, we can worship Him in Spirit and Truth. Our worship is not to be only lip service but in true freedom and joy and not from compulsion or obligation but birthed out of our deep love for Jesus.*
- *The fourth time “under the Law” is found in Galatians, Paul is bewildered and questions why they would want to bring themselves back under the Law. “Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?” (Galatians 4:21).*
- *When Paul asks, “do you not hear the law?” he turns our attention to a prophetic analogy found in the Law regarding Abraham’s two sons, one the product of self-effort and the other the result of faith in God. “For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one (Ishmael) by a bondwoman, the other (Isaac) by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman (Hagar) was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman (Sarah) through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants.” (Galatians 4:22-24a).*
- *Paul even described the type of bondage to which they wanted to be subject. “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years.” (Galatians 4:9-10). The carnal mind is drawn to religion and religious rituals which not only become a distraction from our relationship with Christ, but also distort the Gospel message.*

- *Paul was alarmed by their desire to return to the Law and concerned that all the time and energy he poured into them might have been fruitless. “I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.” (Galatians 4:11).*
- *Paul’s warning and rebuke to the Galatians was so strong that he used the prophetic picture of Ishmael, as one who represented trying to serve God through self-effort by coming under the Law by saying, “Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.” (Galatians 4:30-31).*
- *The fourth time “under the Law” is found in Galatians corresponds to the fourth book of the Law—Numbers. Numbers is the book that details Israel’s journey through the wilderness and the many times they rebelled and murmured against God and Moses. It describes the numerous times the people desired to return to Egypt and come back under the yoke of slavery. “whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt.” (Acts 7:39).*
- *Trying to keep the Law actually causes us to be more carnal and more sin-conscious. The Law stirs up the flesh and produces contention, strife, selfish ambitions—in short the works of the flesh. The Law says, “Don’t do it” and the flesh reacts by saying, “I want to do it!” That is why Christians who are legalistic and under the law are often engaged in secret sins to which they are held in bondage.*
- *Christians may be under the law without realizing it. We may not be under the Mosaic Law but we may set up a belief system that hinders us from seeing Jesus. One sign that we are under the law is we are plagued by shame and condemnation. Instead of being drawn closer into fellowship with God we withdraw.*
- *Another sign of being under the Law is that we are judgmental toward others. We find it difficult or even impossible to forgive those who have hurt or wronged us, because we have judged them according to our standard and not God’s. We don’t understand we need to extend the same degree of forgiveness and mercy that God extended to us.*
- *When we are under the Law we become insecure in our relationship with Christ because the Law makes us sin-conscious and not Christ-conscious. Joy and thankfulness are replaced by discontentment, complaining, fear, and doubt.*

- *Paul then exhorted the believers not to mistake the message of grace as a call to cast off restraint and indulge in fleshly impulses that result in bondage. Paul called the believers to embrace the heart of the Gospel and come under the Law of Love. “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”” (Galatians 5:13-14).*
- *The fifth and final time “under the Law” is found in Galatians points out the correct way to serve God and to be free from the trap of being under the Law or man-made religion—learning to be led by the Spirit. “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” (Galatians 5:18).*
- *A natural outcome of being led by the Spirit is that we will produce and experience spiritual fruit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23).*
- *The way we are led by the Spirit is to occupy our time with things that draw us closer to Jesus and cause us to meditate on eternal things. The more we are captivated by God’s love and the wonder of the salvation the weaker the pull of the flesh becomes. “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:24).*
- *The fifth time “under the Law” is found in Galatians corresponds to the fifth book of the Law—Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is the book that details Israel recommitting their lives to the Lord. The name Deuteronomy in the Greek means, “second law” and in Hebrew it is called “a copy of the Law.” As Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land, they again rededicated themselves to serve God according to His patterns and ways and not their own.*
- *Deuteronomy is the book where Israel recognized their past failures and how they had strayed from the truth. Through repentance Israel turned back to God and refreshed their commitment to put their trust in Him.*
- *Let us come to Jesus, the High Priest of the New Covenant, who is full of tender mercy and is there to forgive, strengthen, and heal. “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16).*