



PASSIONFORTRUTH

WHERE NEW LIFE BEGINS

DECODING ROMANS CHAPTER 6

by Jim Staley

UNDERSTANDING PAUL'S TEACHING: ARE WE NO LONGER UNDER THE LAW?



The Apostle Paul's statement that we are "no longer under the law, but under grace" has sparked centuries of debate and misunderstanding within Christian theology. Modern interpretations often filter Paul's words through a Greco-Roman, Western lens, leading to a conclusion that contradicts the very foundation of biblical instruction. However, when

we return to the first-century Jewish context from which Paul was writing, we discover that his message was far different from what many assume today.

In this study, we will explore Romans 6 in light of its original Jewish-Hebraic framework, uncovering how Paul's words align with the consistent biblical theme of God's law. We will also address one of the most misinterpreted phrases in all of Paul's writings—"under the law"—and determine what Paul truly meant.

SETTING THE CONTEXT: PAUL AND THE LAW

As Paul concludes Romans 5, he anticipates a crucial question from his audience: Does his teaching on grace mean that he opposes the law of God? He immediately addresses this in Romans 6:1:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!"

To understand this passage properly, we must define sin according to Scripture. First John 3:4 states:

"Sin is the transgression of the law."

With this in mind, we can rephrase Romans 6:1 as:

“Shall we continue to break God’s law just because grace has been given to us by Christ? Certainly not!”

Paul makes it clear that God's law remains relevant. The difference under the new covenant is that righteousness no longer comes through legalistic adherence but through faith in Christ. However, this does not mean the law is abolished; rather, it is written on the believer’s heart (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

BAPTISM: A JEWISH UNDERSTANDING

Romans 6:3-4 introduces another important concept: baptism into Christ. Paul writes:

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

To grasp the full significance of this, we must understand baptism from a first-century Jewish perspective. The Greek word *baptizo* does not merely mean to dunk; it refers to a process of transformation. Consider how a cucumber becomes a pickle—it must be fully immersed in brine and fundamentally changed. Similarly, first-century Jewish communities, such as the Essenes at Qumran, practiced ritual immersion (mikveh) as a sign of transformation.

When a disciple was baptized into a rabbi’s name, it meant they adopted his teachings, interpretations, and way of life. Thus, being "baptized into Christ" means immersing oneself into His character, His way of understanding Scripture, and His obedience to God’s law.

"UNDER THE LAW" VS. "IN THE LAW"

One of the most misinterpreted phrases in Paul’s writings is "under the law." Many assume this means the law is obsolete, but a closer look at the Greek text and Paul’s context tells a different story.

Romans 6:14 states:

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

The Greek word for "under" here is *hypo*, meaning "under the jurisdiction of" or "under the penalty of." This phrase does not mean the law is irrelevant, but rather that believers are no longer under its condemnation.

Paul contrasts "under the law" (*hypo nomos*) with "in the law" (*en nomos*), which means living within the framework of God's instructions. Romans 3:19 illustrates this:

*“Now we know that whatever the law says,
it says to those who are in the law.”*

Here, Paul is addressing those who were raised within the Torah-based Jewish community. Being *in* the law means following it as a way of life, while being *under* the law means being subject to its penalties.

Paul's message is clear: Believers in Christ are no longer condemned by the law's judgment because Christ has paid the penalty. However, this does not grant license to disregard God's commandments.

PAUL AFFIRMS THE LAW

Some claim that Paul taught the abolition of the law, but his own words contradict this:

- **Romans 3:31** – “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”
- **Romans 2:13** – “For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.”

Clearly, Paul upheld the law. What he opposed was its misuse as a means of salvation apart from faith in Christ.

WALKING IN NEWNESS OF LIFE

Paul continues in Romans 6:6-7:

"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin."

Since sin is breaking God's law (1 John 3:4), Paul is saying believers have been freed from breaking God's law. The Spirit of God empowers them to walk in obedience.

Romans 6:12-13 reinforces this:

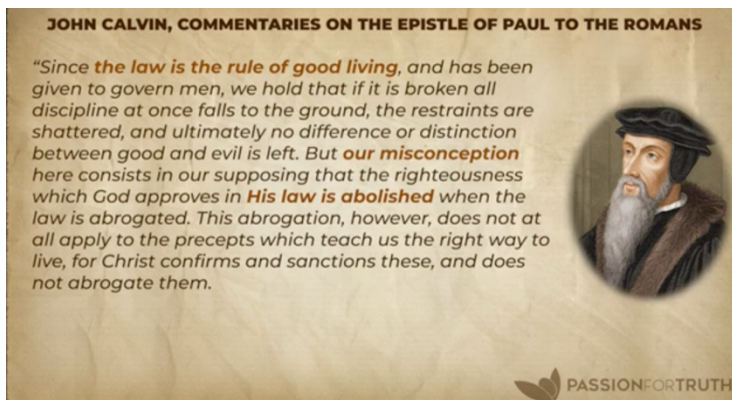
"Do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Rather than living in disobedience, believers are called to align with God's standards, made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

WHAT DOES "UNDER THE LAW" REALLY MEAN?

When Paul says we are not "under the law, but under grace," he is not saying the law is abolished. Instead, he is affirming:

1. **We are not under the penalty of the law** – Christ has redeemed us from condemnation.
2. **We are not under legalistic obligation for righteousness** – Justification comes by faith, not by works of the law.
3. **We are empowered by grace to uphold God's law** – The Spirit enables obedience, fulfilling Jeremiah 31:33.



Far from negating God's instructions, Paul is reinforcing them. Misreading his words has led to widespread misunderstanding, but a return to the first-century Jewish context clarifies his intent.

Paul was never against God's law. He was against its misuse. True faith does not nullify obedience—it establishes it. Those in Christ are no longer "under" the law's condemnation but are called to walk in its righteousness.

UNDERSTANDING THE LAW, GRACE, AND THE CURSE: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the discussion of Matthew 5 and Paul's writings in Romans, a crucial theological question arises: What exactly is being abrogated? Many modern commentaries assert that Christ abolished the Law, but John Calvin and other historical theologians have argued otherwise. Instead, what is removed is the **curse** of the Law, not the Law itself.

THE CURSE OF THE LAW: WHAT WAS REMOVED?

Paul's statement in **Romans 6:14**—"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace"—is often misunderstood. The contrast here is key: If we are no longer under the Law, we are instead under something else—grace. The opposite of grace

(unmerited favor) is merited condemnation. Thus, Paul is saying that believers are no longer under **deserved condemnation** but under **unmerited favor** through Christ.

This idea aligns with **Romans 8:1**, which declares that there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” The removal of the Law’s jurisdiction over believers does not mean lawlessness; rather, it means that its power to condemn us has been removed because of Christ’s sacrifice.

PAUL’S ARGUMENT: THE LAW IS GOOD, BUT IT CONDEMNS

Paul emphasizes that the Law is holy, just, and good (**Romans 7:12**), but it also serves as a judge, bringing condemnation to those who break it. The Jewish people believed that merely having the Torah made them righteous, but Paul challenges this notion. He argues that possession of the Law is not enough—it must be obeyed, and perfect obedience is impossible apart from Christ.

In the Old Testament, the Law prescribed blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (**Deuteronomy 28**). This principle still holds true, but Christ took upon Himself the curse that was meant for us (**Galatians 3:13**). Thus, the curse is abolished, but the Law remains as the divine standard for holy living.

JESUS’ WORDS ON THE LAW



In **Matthew 7:21-23**, Jesus warns that not everyone who calls Him “Lord” will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the Father’s will. He condemns those who practice **lawlessness**, which in the original language implies living **without the**

Torah. This statement contradicts the idea that the Law was abolished; rather, Jesus upholds it.

Similarly, **Micah 4:1-2** prophesies that in the latter days, nations will come to Zion to learn **God’s ways**—specifically, His Torah. If the Law were abolished, why would it be reinstated in the Messianic Kingdom? The argument that the Law is “bondage” contradicts the biblical testimony that it is a source of blessing and wisdom (**Psalms 119:1**).

THE DECEPTION OF THE NICOLAITAN DOCTRINE

Throughout history, Satan’s strategy has been to distort God’s commands. Just as Balaam led Israel into sin (**Numbers 25**), so too did the early Gentile church adopt doctrines that distorted the Law’s role. The Roman church, influenced by anti-Jewish sentiment, reinterpreted Paul’s words to suggest that the Torah was obsolete. This deception led many Christians to believe that obedience to God’s commands was unnecessary, resulting in moral chaos.

THE TRUE MEANING OF “UNDER THE LAW”

To be “**in the Law**” means to follow God’s commandments as a way of life. To be “**under the Law**” means to be under its judgment and condemnation. Paul argues that believers are no longer under the Law’s **authority to condemn**, because Christ has taken that condemnation upon Himself. However, this does not mean believers should live in lawlessness. The Holy Spirit, given under the New Covenant (**Jeremiah 31:31**), enables us to walk in God’s ways and apply His principles to our lives.

THE LAW AND THE BELIEVER

Paul does not teach that the Law is abolished but that the curse of breaking it has been removed through Christ. The Law still serves as God’s moral standard, and the Holy Spirit guides believers in applying its principles. Satan’s greatest deception has been to convince Christians that obedience to God’s Law is unnecessary. But as Scripture teaches, true faith leads to obedience, and grace empowers us to live according to God’s commandments.

As we continue studying Romans and Galatians, we will see how Paul consistently upholds the Law while emphasizing salvation through grace. The new sheriff in town is not lawlessness but Christ Himself—the living Word, the Torah made flesh, who calls us to walk in obedience through His Spirit.

UNDERSTANDING GRACE AND THE LAW: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE



As believers, we are not under the penalty of the law or its jurisdiction in terms of judgment. We are under grace, and through God’s mercy, He grants us a pass when we sincerely repent. The blood of Christ has paid for our sins, ensuring that we do not suffer spiritual death.

Romans 6:15 asks, *"What then? Shall we continue to sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."* Paul immediately answers this rhetorical question by emphasizing that grace is not a license to sin. The modern theological debate surrounding grace and the law often misinterprets Paul's teachings. If the law were abolished, Paul would not have cautioned against breaking it. His words imply that the law still exists, but we are no longer condemned by it when we fall short and seek grace through Christ.

PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE LAW

In 1 Corinthians 9:20, Paul states, *"To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to those under the law, as under the law, that I might gain those under the law."* Here, Paul adapts his approach to reach those who still view the law as their authority. He does not adopt their condemnation but speaks their language to connect with them. In verse 21, he clarifies, *"To those that are without law, as without law, being not without law to God but under the law to Christ."* This means he engages with Gentiles from their perspective while maintaining obedience to God's law through Christ.

GRACE AND THE LAW: A HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP

Galatians 3:23 explains that before faith came, we were kept under the law, confined until the revelation of Christ. This illustrates that the law served as a guardian, keeping people accountable until the Messiah's arrival. Similarly, Galatians 4:4-5 states that Christ was born under the law but remained sinless, qualifying Him to redeem those under its curse.

Galatians 5:18 is often misunderstood: *"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."* Some interpret this to mean that believers are free from observing the law. However, a thorough reading of Paul's writings shows that he never promotes lawlessness. Instead, he affirms that those who are led by the Spirit are free from the law's condemnation, not its moral obligations.

THE CALL TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

Romans 6:16-18 reinforces that obedience to God's ways leads to righteousness. Being free from sin means being free from breaking God's law and its consequences. Paul uses the analogy of slavery to illustrate that we are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. True transformation comes from immersing ourselves in prayer and God's Word, which refines our character to align with Christ's.

Romans 6:23 succinctly summarizes Paul's argument: *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Sin results in separation from God, but grace through Christ provides eternal life.

CONCLUSION

Both Jews and Gentiles need salvation through Christ. The law, while significant, does not save; it reveals sin and points to the necessity of a Savior. Today, we must ask ourselves: Are we

relying on our own knowledge, achievements, or traditions, or are we fully trusting in Christ? Paul's message is clear—only through Christ can we attain righteousness and true freedom. Let us remain steadfast in faith, marinate in prayer, and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in obedience to God's ways.

Watch full teaching here:

<https://youtu.be/BmGHd3ma4AI>



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