

Romans 6:11-17 NASB

“Living 2021 free in Christ “

“Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.

Theme:

Christians live by God's grace and Christ's love, not laws.

Keeping laws troubled our first ancestors.

God gave Adam and Eve only one law; they quickly botched it.

The recent behavior of many politicians reveals how those in charge often don't live by rules they make.



Governments world-wide creak and moan under their inability to bring true justice.

Christian leaders find difficulty explaining the relationship between law and grace.

Early Christians also had trouble grasping the sense of: “we are not under the law but under grace.”

That truth still bothers several 21st believers.

Many think the Apostle Paul conceived the idea: we're not under law, but under grace.

The idea of living without Law seems inconceivable to some.

**Does that notion make you wonder?
How can a person live apart from law?**

Most folks think we need laws like the Ten Commandments and denominational rules.

Preachers and denominational leaders especially seem to like making rules and insisting that others keep them.

The Bible’s books of Romans and Galatians clearly teach:

“We are not under law, but under grace.”

Paul didn’t originate this freedom concept; the Lord did.

Jesus taught the gist of it in the Gospels.

His plan upset lots of leaders.

At the thought of it,

folk still scratch their heads

If that’s what the Lord wants, how do we make the change from law to grace?

Times of transition always bring difficulty.

The years immediately following the Revolutionary War in this country must have been tough for most people, especially the ones who’d been faithful to the British.

Washington’s government was relatively weak and unstable.

Numerous people probably complained:

“We should have been faithful to the Crown.”

Newlyweds often discover the difficulty of transitions.

Before they marry, couples often dream: “It’ll be great when we can be together all the time.

After the marriage, some think differently.

The wife didn’t reckon on doing his laundry —didn’t foresee loads of soiled shorts, smelly t-shirts, and sweaty jerseys.

He may be handsome when he’s awake, but he snores like an asthmatic goat.



The new husband never realized the importance of his presence to her.

But he discovered his import the first time he wanted a “night out with the guys.”

Neither did he think about needing to share his paycheck.

He’d also never seen her in the AM without her makeup; the first time, he thought that she was another woman.

Change of any kind challenges us.

In the early 1980s, I performed a wedding ceremony for a loveable elderly couple.

He was 76 year-old widower.

She was 80, and had never married.

As they stood up before me for the ceremony, she crisply stated:

“Speak into this side, this is my good ear.”

As I counseled them beforehand, I couldn’t help wondering:

“How are they going to adjust?”

In those times, I did my best to follow-up within a few weeks on couples whose ceremonies I officiated.

I visited this couple’s home for what I called, **“a 1000-mile checkup.”**

She greeted me at the door with a big grin, saying: “I have to share something with you. On the day of the wedding, I was so excited to get to the church, I forgot to put my false teeth in.”

The Lord granted that couple numerous happy years of marriage.

In most situations, altering belief systems brings great challenges.



First century A.D. Jewish Christians achieved the task by jumps and starts.¹

For about 14 centuries, the same legal system governed Jacob’s (Israel’s) descendants.

The same set of regulations based on the Ten Commandments covered everything. The Law of Moses regulated family life, religion, trade, health care, and government.

The Law contained their dress code, marriage laws, tax laws, religious ritual, and how to care for animals.

Moses’ law covered all aspects of life.

By fulfilling all its requirements, and dying to pay the penalty for others’ failure to keep it, Jesus brought that law to a close. The Mosaic Law was a great legal system, yet cumbersome, and difficult to keep.

Its demands were so high that no one could fully obey them (I refer to the Law of Moses here, including the Ten Commandments).

You’d think that people living under an unworkable system would gladly give it up.

¹ Acts chapters 6-15 relate some of the challenges the early church faced.

But think how reluctantly we quit old habits and lifestyles.

For 1400 years, the Jews and their ancestors tried to keep the Law of Moses.

None of them succeeded.

Jesus came teaching,

“You don’t have to keep the Law anymore.

Believe in me and follow me.

I’ve fulfilled all the Law’s requirements for you.

Just trust me, follow me, and do as I do.”

Yet people prefer to live by law.

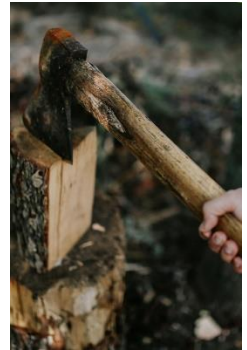
They hold tightly to law as if it were a childhood teddy bear.

Many religious leaders gladly oblige these folks and make up all kinds of laws for them.

You might find the following an interesting read:

“No person shall prune, cut, carry away, pull up, dig, bore, chop, saw, chip, pick, move, sever, climb, molest, take, break, deface, destroy, set fire to, burn, scorch, carve, paint, mark, or in any manner interfere with, tamper,

mutilate, misuse, disturb or damage, any tree, shrub, plant, grass, flower, or part thereof, nor shall any person permit any chemical, whether solid, fluid, or gaseous, to seep, drip, drain or be emptied, sprayed, dusted or injected upon, about or into any tree, shrub, plant, grass, flower or part thereof, except when specifically authorized by competent authority; nor shall any person build fires, or station, or use any tar kettle, heater, road roller or other engine within an area covered by this part in such a manner that the vapor, fumes or heat therefrom may injure any tree or other vegetation.”²



Would you prefer a printed set of rules that contains 650 laws and wordy explanations?

Or would you want a reliable, knowledgeable, honest, flesh and blood leader-role model?

Galatians 6:14 tells us: “The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²“National Park Service policy statement 36 CFR 50.10.” From *Creative Writing*, by Kathryn Lindskoog, p46

Three love tests in 1 Corinthians 6:12 help us.

- 1) **It must be beneficial**—not just for me, but for the church community.
"Everything is permissible for me" —but not everything is beneficial.

The Corinthians reasoned: **If we're free from law, we can do anything we want.**

Too many people think only of their own profit or benefit.

If I think of my own benefit, I'm hitting on every female I meet, and trying to make a buck off of every relationship.

I'll lie and scheme to get my way.

If I'm given authority, I use it to benefit me.

But the “profit” Scripture means **benefits the church** as a whole.

Churches resemble bodies.

Healthy body parts don't work against the other parts or organs.

That occurs only in sick bodies.

When I'm eating, my left hand doesn't grab the fork out of my right hand crankily complaining,

“You always want your way!”

In a well person, all body parts work in harmony with the others.

In a healthy churches, all work to help others grow stronger in the Lord.

Each one also considers how what she/he does affects others.

"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial.

Here's the second principle.

- 2) We can't let things master us.
Food, television, sports, hobbies, the Internet, iPads, movies, music, and fear master many of us.



If anything in your life becomes bigger and more important to you than God, you're headed toward major disappointment.

"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything.

Principle three.

- 3) We belong to Jesus body and soul.

Many people say:

“It’s my body; I can do what I want with it.”

Some Christians regard their souls as belonging to Jesus, but their bodies as their own.

They can do what they want with them.

Unbelievers and unscrupulous preachers perpetuate that myth.

These bodies that we tattoo, fill with Miller Lite, alter with drugs, and gorge with corn chips, don’t belong to us.

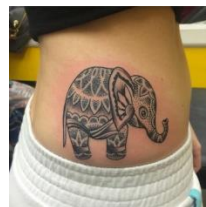
We Christians do well to remember this about our bodies:

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”

Those things being true, I need to be careful about the way I think and act—about the way I use my body.

It’s the Lord’s, not mine.

Imagine Jesus saying to God:



“Father, look at Bob down there. Despite his fancy pretense, the devil has him and he’s on his way to hell, body and soul. I’ll go down and pay the price for him. Perhaps he’ll repent, change, trust us, and try to please us. We’ll forgive him and clean him up so the Holy Spirit can live in him.”

If we know that Jesus did that to save us body and soul, why would we want to pollute, degrade, or harm our bodies or souls in any way?

Why also would we consider degrading, harming, or abusing anyone else’s body?

- **These bodies don’t belong to us.**
- **Jesus paid an awful price to persuade us to love God and love one another.**
- **God wants us to be his temple.**

“We are not under law but under grace.”

I pray the we and all those around us will submit fully to God and honor Him in Christ.

Otherwise we have no future!

Facts about the Ten Commandments.

- They were the basis of the covenant laws God gave the new nation Israel to govern them in the land He prepared for them.
- He gave the Ten Commands only to Israel: see Exodus 20:1, 2.
- Israel broke the covenant God made with them thus nullifying the agreement. The covenant they failed to keep included the Ten Commandments and about 620 supporting laws: See Deuteronomy 9:4-21.
- God promised a new type of covenant: see Jeremiah 31:31-34.
- On the cross, Jesus fulfilled all the Law’s requirements. His words: “It is finished,” indicate a job or obligation completed-fulfilled-accomplished: see John 19:30, Galatians 3:10-14, Ephesians 2:13-22, Colossians 2:18-23.



The Ten Commandments as given to Moses with the Hebrew letter representing that number beside the command. Because one reads Hebrew right to left, the First Command is located upper right with the first letter *aleph* beside it, followed below it with the Second Command and letter *beth* beside it. Next come *gimel*, *daleth*, and *heth*.

Recall that God wrote the original on two stone tablets. When Jesus said that not one jot or tittle will be removed from the Law until all is fulfilled. Jot is the English equivalent of the Hebrew letter yod, the fifth or last letter above left. In Hebrew, yod is the smallest letter.

Some scholars think **tittle** referred to a slight mark that distinguishes one alphabet letter from another similar letter. The fourth letter down on the right side, the *daleth*, is similar to the letter *resh*; the only difference being a little extension of the horizontal part of the letter that projects to the right side of the vertical mark as illustrated:

Resh ר

Daleth ד

Two letters in the Ten Commandments (as seen) also show a similar slight difference. Can you locate the one having a **tittle**?

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