

GRACE TO YOU

ROMANS 6:12-14

# NOT UNDER LAW BUT UNDER GRACE



**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

"We're not under law, but under grace." This is one of the most misunderstood and misused lines in the whole Bible. I've lot count of the number of times I've heard someone say this, or I've read it online. Usually the context is one Christian telling another Christian that they've done something wrong, they've sinned, they've broken one of the commandments. The offender then replies "I'm not under law, but under grace." They're basically saying that they no longer have any relationship with God's law, no obligation to keep God's law. Instead, grace has freed them from any and all obligation to the law: "I'm not under law, but under grace" they assert.

They are quoting Scripture and they seem to be quoting Scripture rightly. Romans 7:14 does say "We're not under law but under grace" and that contrast seems to indicate that grace has freed us from all connection to the law. So are they right? Does grace free us from all and every relationship to the law of God? **Does grace free us from the law?**

## BACKGROUND

The first step in interpreting any words is to look at the context. When we do that we discover that whatever this line means, it cannot mean that Christians have no relationship to God's law.

- **What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? (1-2).**
- **We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin (6).**
- **So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin (11)**
- **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions (12).**
- **Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness (13).**
- **For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace (14)**
- **What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! (15)**

Whatever this disputed line means, it clearly cannot mean grace frees from all obligations to God's law, or that grace gives us a license to sin. So what does it mean? It teaches that grace changes our relationship to the law, but in what way? Let's look at the context again for some of the broader themes.

**Romans 5:3-5:** Grace frees us from the **law's penalty for sin**

**Romans 6:1-23:** Grace frees us from the **law's powerlessness over sin**

**Romans 7: 1-24.** Grace frees us from the **law's provocation of sin**



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# 1. THE LAW IS POWERLESS OVER SIN

## Under law

To be "under law" (14) is to be ruled by the law as a way of salvation and sanctification. Your only hope of heaven and holiness is your obedience to God's law. The law is your master, your ruler, your ever-demanding never-satisfied dictator. It cannot share the throne with grace because they are mortal enemies. You are either under the law or under grace (14).

## Sin reigns in our body

**"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (12). "For sin will not have dominion over you, since you are not under the law" (14).** If the law is our master, sin is our master. If the law reigns over our hearts then sin reigns in our bodies. If the law is our heart-master, sin is our body-master. They are joint monarchs and unite to exert their joint reign over our souls and bodies.

## Our passions obey sin

**"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions" (12).** When the law is our master, sin controls our body, and our passions are out of our control. As sin works in our bodies, it stirs up sinful desires, urges, and passions.

## Our members are presented to sin

**"Do not present your members to sin" (13).** As these sinful desires, urges, and passions grow in power, we eventually end up presenting the members of our bodies to sin. When the law controls us, sin reigns, our passions boil over, and we turn around to sin and say, "Here are the members of my body for you to use as you wish." Have my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my hands, my feet, my sexual organs, my brain, my imagination. I present them all to you my master."

## Our members are instruments of unrighteousness

**"Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness" (13).** Sin then plays our members as an orchestra of instruments that produce a cacophony of disharmony in ours' and others' lives.

## CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Do you recognize yourself in this story? Start at the beginning and work your way forwards through the chapters to figure out the ending. If law is in any way your hope of salvation and sanctification, of heaven and holiness, then your story is going to end in a discordant bedlam. Or start at the end and work your way backwards to figure out what's wrong. You'll trace it all back to the fundamental problem in your life. The law is on the throne of your hopes for salvation or sanctification.

WHEN THE LAW REIGNS OVER YOUR LIFE  
SIN WILL RAIN DOWN ON YOUR LIFE



How do I change this story to a better ending?  
You need a better beginning.



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## 2. GRACE IS POWERFUL OVER SIN

### Under grace

To be "under grace" (14) is to be ruled by grace as the only way of salvation and sanctification. What Christ did for you is on the throne of your heart and shares no space with what you did, do, or will do for him. Grace has dethroned the law as your master and sits on the throne alone. As verses 1-11 made crystal clear, grace means Christ has done it all. Instead of a throne that has the banner "Do and Don't" it has the banner "Done." You are under that grace.

### God reigns in our body

If "under law" means that sin reigns in our mortal body (12) and that sin has dominion over us (14), then "under grace" means the opposite. God reigns in our bodies and God has dominion over us. Grace is the throne that God sits on. From there, he claims our whole body as his and refuses to allow any space or second to the law as a way of salvation or sanctification.

### Our passions obey God

When God sits on the throne of grace in our hearts and claims ownership of us, then we no longer obey our sinful passions, emotions, desires, feelings (12). Most of them are still there, but they are weakened and aging and gradually being replaced by more orderly passions that love to please God.

### We present ourselves and our members to God

**"...present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness"** (13). We not only present our members to God, but our whole selves. We unreservedly give our whole being and whole body to God because he brought us from death to life. We say, "Here are the members of my body for you to use as you wish." Have my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my hands, my feet, my sexual organs, my brain, my imagination. I present them all to you my master."

### Our members are instruments of righteousness

Present yourselves and your members to God **"as instruments for righteousness"** (13). God plays our members as holy instruments which result in a beautiful harmony of righteousness. It's God's finest symphony to take old abused instruments and turn them into a holy and heavenly sound.

## CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Do you recognize yourself in this story? Start at the beginning and work your way forwards through the chapters to figure out the ending. If grace is your only hope of salvation and sanctification, of heaven and holiness, then your story will have a beautiful tune and vocals. Or start at the end and work your way backwards to figure out what's made such a difference to your words, actions, etc. You'll trace it all back to the fundamental Master of your life, the reigning principle. You are under grace. Grace is at the controls of your life.

WHEN WE ARE UNDER GRACE  
WE ARE OVER SIN.

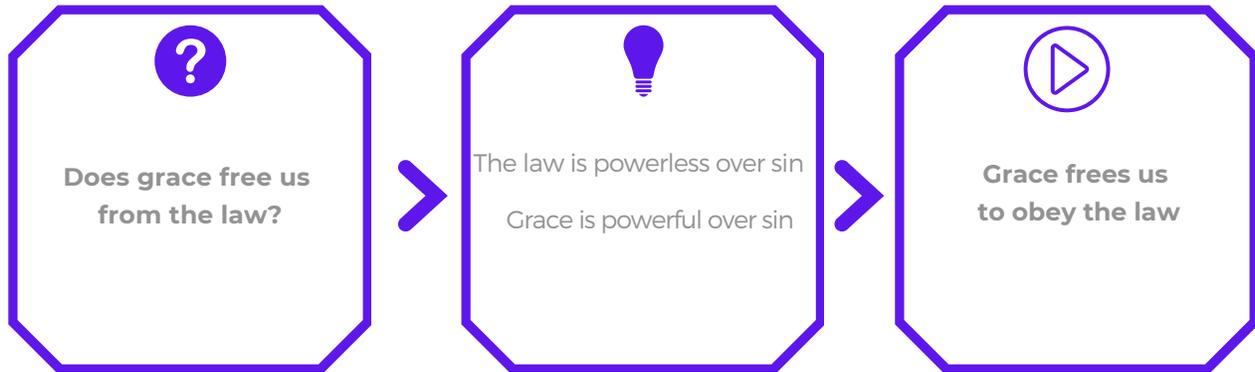


Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



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## SUMMARY



## A NEW CHAPTER

**We are not under the law.** Praise God because the law can only produce sin, disobedience to the law. The law binds us to ungodly living that grates on God.

**We are under grace.** Praise God because grace alone can produce holiness, obedience to the law. Grace frees us from the law as our hope of salvation and sanctification and fills us with hope of full salvation and sanctification.

**Prayer.** God of all grace, thank you that being under grace means I am free to be holy, able to obey the law, and produce a God-like sound with my life.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did you understand this verse before this sermon?
2. Where have you heard it used to excuse sin before? How did you respond?
3. What story do you recognize yourself in?
4. How will you use this verse to promote holy choices in your life?
5. Does your life sound like a cacophony or a symphony? How can you change the music?
6. How does grace produce more holiness than the law?

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