

UNDER GOD'S LAW

God's law condemns sin. God's law not only shows clearly what sin is, but it also predicts clearly the punishment of sin, which is eternal separation from God. This is called the "second death." (Rev. 2:11, et.al.) Indeed, the strength of sin is the law (1 Cor. 15:56). That is, the law proves just how strong a hold sin has on the human race. Therefore, according to the law of God everyone stands condemned.

Hello, I am Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Welcome to this program.

When all who have ever lived are gathered into the courtroom of God on that great Judgment Day, there will be shame! "There is none righteous, no not one." (Rom. 3:10, KJV.) What that means is that no one will be able to justify every thought, every behavior, every decision, every omission that a responsible adult person has ever made. That's right! There is no justification for you having behaved the way you did, or lived in sin. How long will you try to hide behind excuses?! Resting your case upon your good behavior, your keeping of the law, you will never be justified nor acquitted of the charges. You will be like that man in Jesus' parable who went up to the Temple to pray. Before God he listed his good deeds. But Jesus said that he went home NOT justified! This is what Paul meant when he wrote: "by deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20, KJV.)

Many of the old Israelites tried to substitute their faithfulness in ritual rather than in moral, godly faith and behavior! That's right! But God would not accept their sacrifices, or their Sabbath-keeping in lieu of godliness. Human Faith and God's own Mercy have always been the basis upon which God has forgiven people. It was true of Abraham and all the other O.T. faithful. David caught that vision when he wrote, "The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalms 51:17, KJV.)

Under Christ's law the same principles apply. We can attend church services on Sundays and put our money in the collection plate, but if we're not faithfully living a repentant life God will hold us accountable for the absence of a living faith!

“Sitting in the hen house won’t make you a hen, and sitting in the church house won’t make you a Christian.” However working in the hen house can be very productive and working in the church will be eternally rewarding!

Friends, if you are thinking that your keeping of the law and your keeping of its ritual will justify God's mercy on Judgment Day, then you do not know the good news. “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified.” The good news is that “Christ is the end of the law for justification.” (Romans 10:4, LM.) That is, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness if you believe that Jesus is the Christ and are living by the faith of the Son of God who loved you and gave his life for you. (Galatians 2:20, KJV.) What does it mean to live by the faith of the Son of God? It means that in Christ you are living **under a new arrangement** with God; a new covenant was established by Jesus whereby God can forgive sin, rather than punish sin according to the requirements of the law. The reason that death is the wage of sin is because that’s the law!

Notice that I said that the Christian is living **under** a new covenant. I recently did a little study of the word “under” as it is used in the New Testament. The opposite of the word “under” is the word “over”! If you are under, then someone or something else is over you. It means that you are under the authority of someone or something.

For example, there was a military man who wanted Jesus to heal his servant. In describing his situation, the Centurion said of himself, “I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, ‘Go’, and he goes; and to another, ‘come’ and he comes; to my servant I can say, ‘do this’, and he does it.” (Matthew 8:9, KJV.) By using the word “under” the Centurion was describing the authority he had over his men, but he acknowledged that he himself had received this power from an authority higher than himself. He too was “under” authority.

Well the Holy Spirit uses this word to describe a person’s situation before God. For instance, Jesus was “born of a woman, born **under** the law, that he might redeem them that were **under** the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” (Galatians 4:4, 5, KJV.) There is a difference between being adopted by

God, being his son, and being **under** the law of God. Paul taught that being under the law was like being under a schoolmaster, a bus driver's authority. "But after faith came [that is, after the complete faith of Christ was demonstrated on the cross] we are no longer **under** a schoolmaster." (Galatians 3:25, KJV.) Paul also teaches this in Romans 6:4, "sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not **under** the law, but **under** grace." (KJV) Being **under the law** means that you are seeking acquittal based on your stand-alone merits. But **being under grace** means that those same merits can be judged through God's merciful eyes. God can judge your merits mercifully because Jesus paid the penalty for your sins.

Under law; under grace. How did these people make the switch? How did they get out from **under** the law, and get in **under** grace? Christ himself secured the switch. He did that by **his** faithfulness to what God sent him to do. God sent Jesus to be the propitiation for the sins of the world. (1 John 2:2, KJV.) Propitiation is the regaining of good will. God loves His children, but our sins caused a falling out between us and God. God has now made a way by which He can be just and the justifier of those who trust His Jesus. "Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3.) We were raised from that watery grave in order to walk in "newness of life." (Romans 6:4) Ah! There's the switch! The repentant believer went from an old life to a new life. He went from the old body of sin which is buried in a watery grave to the resurrected body of a new life. The old body was buried in a watery grave called baptism and was resurrected from that grave to a new life in Christ. In this new life that we have been given, Christians are now servants of righteousness; the penalty for sin has been paid. We have been redeemed. So now, we live **under** new management, a new arrangement has been made; it is called a new covenant or a New Testament.

God's moral law has always been here with humans. It is now incorporated into what is called the "law of Christ." The Law of Christ is the New Testament that is written in our Bibles. Christians live no longer under the law of sin and death. We are now under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:2.) The work of the law, (or what Paul also calls the righteousness of the law), is fulfilled in Christians because we live after the Spirit and not after the flesh. (Romans 8:4.)

Being under this new law is called being “under grace” (Romans 6:15). And this grace is found in Jesus Christ. “Therefore there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1.)

Friends, being justified by “the faith of Jesus Christ” and subsequently by our faith in Him, we have peace with God. Christ has won for us God’s justified forgiveness. Christ has regained for us a place in the presence of God. We have been acquitted; we are counted as innocent, because we have been forgiven; not according to the law were we forgiven, but according to the grace of God and the faith of Christ on the cross. Romans 5:1, 2 says, “Therefore being justified by faith [the faith of Christ], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith [our faith] into this grace wherein we stand.....” Friends, Christians can now rejoice in hope of the glory of God!

By Jesus’ death on the cross God justified Himself for bringing down the verdict, “not guilty.” Our acquittal is on the basis of the faith of Christ; the cornerstone of the faith of Christ is His sacrifice for our sins.

The law of God [that is, His moral requirement] reaches into the human heart enclosed in “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” It is the law of God in the “inward man.” (Romans 7:22.) Jeremiah had prophesied that when the new covenant was written it would be written in human hearts. (Jeremiah 31:30, 31.) When believers live according to the spirit they are fulfilling the just requirements of God’s law (Romans 8:4). But the person who walks after the flesh will be condemned by the law. The person who lives only by the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8); in fact, he becomes God’s enemy (Romans 8:7). It is written that “If any [person] does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” (Romans 8:9.) Paul says, if Christ is in you [then] the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” (Romans 8:10.) Whose righteousness enables you to live free from sin and condemnation? God’s righteousness in forgiving you! That’s right! God could not forgive you without your penalty being paid! Your acquittal from separation from God depended upon Jesus paying that penalty. When Jesus died on the cross and was separated from God’s presence, it gave

God the opportunity to justly forgive you and set you free from the bondage and consequences of your sin.

Not only did God and the faithful Jesus do this for you, but they did it for every human being who has ever lived or will ever live. The redemption is done, neighbor. Salvation is present in the world! The question becomes: what will I do with God's salvation? What will I do with Jesus? Will I receive this grace by believing, repenting, submitting to the burial in water and being raised to a new life in Christ? Will I then conduct my life under the rule of Christ?