

# Are You “Under the LAW,” or “Under GRACE”?

*Millions have been asked this question — never realizing that the question itself can be totally MISLEADING! Did you know that millions who think they are “under grace” are actually “under the law” — and don’t know it!*

by Garner Ted Armstrong

“FOR by GRACE are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast . . .” (Eph. 2:8-9.)

How many times have you seen or heard these words quoted? Perhaps dozens, or even hundreds! But are you sure you really UNDERSTAND these inspired words of the Apostle Paul?

First, what do WE believe? Perhaps some few have thought we of the WORLD TOMORROW program, and of the staff of *The PLAIN TRUTH* magazine, believe in salvation BY WORKS! So, at least, it has been said of us!

But we DON’T! WE BELIEVE, THOROUGHLY, EVERY LETTER of that scripture you just read!

What’s more we DO NOT believe any individual can EVER be saved by keeping any law — whether Ten Commandments, or ANY OTHER law!

## What Do YOU Believe?

But what about YOU? And how can you be sure? How can you come to really KNOW the answer to this vitally important question — one that has aroused almost endless controversy among professing Christians!

There is only ONE SOURCE to which you can go! There is only ONE way you can really be sure! That way is to check up — YOURSELF — in YOUR OWN BIBLE!

So right now, at the outset of this article, make up your mind to DO JUST THAT! Perhaps you don’t really bother to “check up” on most of what you read — either in *The PLAIN TRUTH* or anywhere else! But just this once — for your OWN satisfaction — CHECK UP!

The Apostle Paul urges, “Prove all things, hold fast that which is good!” (I Thes. 5:21). “To the LAW, and to the testimony,” orders God through Isaiah, “if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).

Be sure you READ each scripture you see quoted in *The PLAIN TRUTH*, and, for that matter, ANY publication! That way you’ll know your belief and your faith does not rest in men, but in the Holy Word of God!

## Just What IS Grace?

The place to begin is to understand the meaning of the terms with which we are speaking! What IS GRACE?

This is a vitally important question! Important because your Bible plainly foretold there would be a great conspiracy to deliberately change the meaning of this simple word — make it become CONFUSING to most people — UNCLEAR! Today, there is ENDLESS argument among many religionists over the meaning of the term “grace!”

What does it mean to you? Does it imply PERMISSION TO SIN? “Certainly not!” you might answer! Well, then — does it mean you DO NOT HAVE TO KEEP GOD’S LAWS? “OF COURSE!” many would immediately reply!

But wait a minute! What IS sin? “Sin is,” the Bible answers, “THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW” (I John 3:4). Well, then — if that’s what sin IS, if sin IS the BREAKING OF GOD’S LAWS! — SIN is, then, FAILING TO KEEP GOD’S LAWS!

Well, then — IF THAT IS TRUE — and your Bible SAYS it is — and IF “grace” means you DO NOT HAVE TO OBEY

GOD’S LAW — then does not grace mean to many of you that you may SIN?

“OF COURSE NOT!” you might answer — but then — isn’t it all a little CONFUSING?

It certainly is! Satan and his ministers (II Cor. 11:13) have CONFUSED the meaning of grace in most men’s minds! This whole world, according to your Bible, has been DECEIVED (Rev. 12:9; 20:3).

Just what, then, IS grace?

Grace IS, according to *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, “Favor, kindness, MERCY, etc.,” and, the ecclesiastical usage, “DIVINE MERCY OR FORGIVENESS!”

Yes — that’s just it! Grace is FORGIVENESS! Grace is MERCY! Grace is PARDON!

But forgiveness from what? Why, what IS a Christian, but one who has, through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, obtained MERCY and PARDON from his past sins? It is through the blood of Jesus Christ we must obtain GRACE! Christ died, then, to show GRACE toward us — didn’t He?

“Of course,” you would answer. Well, if this is true, and the Bible certainly SAYS it is — then may we go on sinning after Christ has shown us GRACE?

Let’s let the BIBLE answer — NOT the ideas of men!

Paul was inspired to write, “What then? Shall we SIN [that is, shall we BREAK ANY ONE OF GOD’S TEN COMMANDMENTS] because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!” (Rom. 6:15). There is the BIBLE answer! Paul plainly reveals that we must not think we may SIN, that we can ignore, or live contrary to God’s Ten Commandments, just because God has

shown us some of His great MERCY!

WHY did God have to show us His MERCY? Why did we NEED “GRACE?”

God answers, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that *all have sinned!*” (Rom. 3:23.)

Yes — every human being has BROKEN God’s HOLY LAWS, the Ten Commandments! Remember, it is the breaking of *these laws*, as they are applied in *principle*, and as they are *magnified* by Christ in His teachings, that IS SIN (I John 3:4).

Every human being has, because of his very *nature* of basic hostility toward God’s laws (Rom. 8:7), been convicted of God’s law as guilty of SIN! The *penalty* of sin is DEATH (Rom. 6:23). Christ DIED in order to ERASE OUR PAST SINS! (Rom. 5:8).

THAT IS WHAT GRACE IS! It is the unlimited *mercy* of our God — the unearned, unmerited PARDON of our God, when we totally *repent*, of our past sins!

Notice it! “In whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the *forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of HIS GRACE!” (Eph. 1:7).

Grace, then, is God’s loving willingness to forgive us of our past *sins!*

### The Modern Deception

Even before the close of the New Testament canon, Almighty God inspired Jude to write, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the *common salvation*, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the *faith* which was *once delivered* unto the saints. For there are *certain men crept in unawares*, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, *turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness*, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3, 4). The actual HISTORY of *what happened* from that time to this is now available! Remarkable, almost unbelievable discoveries are rapidly being made which shall amply PROVE that, *true to the prophecies of your Bible*, certain men DID creep in “unawares” — men who DELIBERATELY, with planned forethought, attempted to undermine the pure truth of God which was once delivered to the saints.

This, remember, was a prophecy of

many centuries ago! Jude went on to describe these men as those who had a basic resentment and hostility toward all government, and the symbols of government, *those in authority!* “Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, DESPISE DOMINION, and *speak evil of dignities!*” (Jude 8).

What IS in the minds of most professing Christians concerning their relationship to God today?

Basically, it is simply this: they have become convinced that a person should live a “righteous life!” They have become convinced that they have been a “sinner” — which *usually means* a person who has lived an “*unrighteous life.*” To most, an “unrighteous life” merely means having various “worldly” habits and interests, perhaps attending motion picture theatres, dancing, drinking, or playing cards. It may even involve the various modes and styles of apparel. There are dozens of different categories in the minds of men as to what actually constitutes SIN! But whether it involves various of these habits, indulgences, or “worldly acts” — most professing Christians would say that conversion, to them, means “living for God.” It means living a “good” life, rather than an “evil” life. It means to think “good” thoughts, rather than thinking “evil” thoughts. In a sort of vague, nebulous way, most professing Christians realize there must be a certain *change* in their lives when they “repent” or receive, or accept Christ.

To most — GRACE is the STATE of a *Christian who is “living for God!”* GRACE has come to falsely mean, to most professing Christians, a CONDITION of the INDIVIDUAL, rather than a QUALITY of God!

In other words, instead of understanding the true meaning of the word *grace* as revealed in *your Bible*, MANY of you have come to feel that GRACE is merely a Biblical term which vaguely means the Christian is in a “saved” condition! It means that God has smiled on the individual, “chosen” him, put him “under grace” and made him a “Christian.”

How have YOU thought about it?

Have you ever really been *clear* on the subject? Have you ever been able to really *track down*, in your own Bible, your beliefs regarding your present state? Have you ever really *proved*, in your *own Bible*, the true meaning — that is, the BIBLE meaning — of SIN?

Let’s clear the air! Let’s not be confused! Let’s come to understand!

### What Repentance Is

“REPENT YE therefore, and be *converted!*” (Acts 3:19), said the Apostle Peter. To be converted means to be CHANGED!

This change of which the Bible speaks is *far* from a nebulous or vague sort of change. It is a very definitely described change, a complete and total change, a change that God requires in every facet of your individual lives! Jesus said, “Except you REPENT, ye shall all likewise perish!” (Luke 13:3, 5).

To repent means to be deeply broken up and *sorry* over having SINNED! Peter continued, as you read in Acts 3:19, “. . . and be converted, that your SINS may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

Surely everyone of you know that Jesus Christ died for the express purpose of taking upon Himself *our sins?* Surely you all know, as a matter of basic, practical, Biblical FACT, that the SINNER must call upon Almighty God to apply the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in order to FORGIVE his sins?

David, experiencing the real depths of repentance, cried out, “Have mercy upon me, Oh God, according to thy loving kindness, according unto the multitude of thy *tender mercies* BLOT OUT my transgressions.

“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and *cleanse me from my sin!*” (Ps. 51:1, 2.)

David was calling for the MERCY of God. He was pleading with God to extend GRACE because of his past sins. Later, David said, “Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day” (Ps. 119:97).

When you REPENT — you repent of having SINNED! And to repent from sin means not only to be totally broken up and sorry over *having sinned* — it means to come to a deep resolve and determination, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, NOT TO SIN AGAIN!

Never forget — what is sin? “Sin IS the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4).

WHEN you have totally repented and *been forgiven*, then God says, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lust there-

of. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin but yield yourself unto God . . . for *sin shall not have dominion over you*, for you are not under the law but under GRACE” (Rom. 6:12-14).

Do you see? A repentant person is a person who has been SORRY that he has sinned! That means he is totally convicted of having broken God’s law, is *sorry* that he has broken God’s law, and has now determined, with God’s help, never to break God’s law again!

Paul goes on to answer a question which might immediately arise in the minds of some who do not KNOW the meaning of the term “grace.” He says, in the scripture *immediately following* the one you just read, “What then? Shall we SIN because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!” (Rom. 6:15).

Can you now really begin to *see*?

When your Bible speaks of being “under the law,” it means, by its very *context*, under the “PENALTY OF” the law! — not obedience to the law. To obey the law is to be “within the law.” To sin — disobey — is to become “under the law.”

### How Sinners Are Justified

Another very important clarification of terms is to come to understand the meaning of the word “justified.”

Why is it that many of you have not really KNOWN the *plain truth* about such terms as “grace,” “justification,” “sanctification,” “redemption,” “conversion,” “dedication,” “confirmation,” and other such “theological-sounding” terms?

Simply because there has been a GREAT CONSPIRACY to deliberately CONFUSE these terms in the minds of people — keeping the precious truth of Almighty God about the most important subject in your life — that of your personal SALVATION — obscured behind spiritual drunkenness!

To many people, JUSTIFICATION means vaguely the same thing “grace” has meant to so many thousands of deceived persons. It means, to many deceived ones, a “condition” PERMANENTLY attributed to a Christian.

Many people think once a person is “justified” he is “MADE RIGHT” from then on! But this is simply untrue.

Again, let’s go to the only SOURCE to understand these all-important points.

“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the *doers of the law* SHALL BE justified” (Rom. 2:13).

But how could this be? Simple. It is just as Almighty God says. It is *only* those who not only *hear*, but actually DO and PERFORM the laws of Almighty God, just as Jesus *said they should* in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:19), who *shall be* justified!

I have heard my father, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, say many times, “God will not save a single person he cannot GOVERN!” While there is no scripture which says these words directly — there are *many* scriptures which uphold this basic principle by direct inference. The one you have just read is a very good example. Those who have now come to stand in awe and in fear of the holy LAWS of God, and do now realize they have been convicted of sins in the sight of those laws, have now become totally REPENTANT of having *broken* those laws, shall BE — *as a result of their repentance* — justified!

Justification is not a *permanent* “condition” of a Christian. It has to do with the removal and the forgiveness of *past guilt*.

### Justified by LAW?

God plainly says that the works of the law, the works and the deeds of the law — *any law* — whether the Ten Commandments or ANY OTHER law, will not *justify anyone!* “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28).

Of course! God did not say in Romans 2:13 that it is *by* the doing of the law that individuals can be justified. He merely said that those who *are willing* to DO His holy laws, are those who are now *eligible* for such justification!

Justification comes as God’s free loving gift, through the quality of God which is called “grace.”

Notice it: “Being justified freely BY HIS GRACE through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

But neither justification nor grace are a “condition” of a Christian which shall be perpetually attributed to him. The Apostle Paul, foreseeing this confusion and deliberate conspiracy to obliterate the plain truth of this simple doctrine, went on to say “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteous-

ness for the REMISSION OF SINS THAT ARE PAST through the forbearance [grace] of God” (Rom. 3:25).

Could anything be plainer? GRACE is not a PERMANENT “condition” of a Christian, but is a *quality of Almighty God*, expressed *toward* a repentant sinner who now realizes his guilt before God’s law, and now wants, with all his heart, soul and mind, to OBEY God’s laws and principles!

Justification *is not a permanent “condition”* of a Christian, but is the *immediate condition* at the exact TIME of his total repentance and surrender to God; that is, justification is the “CONDITION” of the newly repentant sinner which is the RESULT of God’s grace!

Neither grace nor justification comes BY the works of God’s law. They do not come by obedience to *God’s* law, or to *any other* law.

Rather, your Bible *plainly shows*, that God *will extend* His unmerited pardon, His GRACE to those who have been totally REPENTANT because they have DISOBEYED. They have now *resolved* to begin OBEYING! Once they have *made this resolve* in their minds, God says such persons can *BE justified!* Once Almighty God ascertains that basic *attitude* of total surrender toward God, He will now extend His righteous and merciful GRACE toward that sinner, by *forgiving* him of all his past sins!

Now return to the scripture I quoted at the beginning of this article. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”

This is where most theologians always end the quotation. But let’s read *all* of it. “*For we are his workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus [the “new man” as a result of God’s Holy Spirit] UNTO GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should WALK in them!” (Eph. 2:8-10.)

Of course! We are the handiwork of God, created as new creatures, once we have been *converted*, “in Christ Jesus” for the express purpose of LIVING by every word of God! Living by every word of God means living in OBEDIENCE to God’s laws. It means living in humility. It means living a “good” life — but Almighty God is the One who tells us what a “good” life is!

He tells us by the perfect example of the life of Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ

OBEYED, *PERFECTLY*, all His Father's commandments!

Peter says, ". . . because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example*, that ye should follow His steps, who did NO SIN, neither was guile found in His mouth" (I Pet. 2:21-22).

Did you notice it? Jesus Christ, by doing NO sin, DID obey all of God's Ten Commandments. He set you, and He set me, an example! Are you willing to FOLLOW His example?

### **God's Law Must Be OBEYED!**

Now read these plain scriptures, and come to your own private decision as to what you shall do with them. Jesus said plainly, ". . . but if you will enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS!" (Matt. 19:17). Paul wrote, "Wherefore the law is *holy*, and the commandments *holy* and *just* and *good*" (Rom. 7:12). Paul went on to say, "For we know that

the law is SPIRITUAL, but I am carnal, sold under sin . . . if then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that *it is good*" (verses 14 and 16). "For I delight in *the law of God* after the inward man" (verse 22). "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself SERVE the *law of God*; but with the flesh the law of sin" (verse 25). "If you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' ye do well, but if ye have respect to persons ye COMMIT SIN, and are convinced of *the law* as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the *whole law*, and yet offend in *one point*, he is GUILTY of ALL!" (James 2:8-10).

"And hereby do we know that we know Him, *if we keep his commandments*. He that saith, 'I know Him,' and keepeth *not* His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:3-4).

Finally, read the definite description of the end-time remnant of God's *true Church* at the precise *moment* of their persecution in the wilderness, just immediately prior to the second coming of Christ!

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, *WHICH KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, AND HAVE THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST!*" (Rev. 12:17).

Can you now come to see? The truly converted Christian is not "under the law OR under grace!" Rather, he is living WITHIN God's law, and has experienced God's loving GRACE in being granted forgiveness for his past transgressions of God's law.

May God help you to come to *see*, in *your own Bible*, these plain truths. Be *honest with yourself*. What will you DO about it? □

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