

# Law or Grace?

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*Does being under grace excuse Christians from obeying the law?*

## Part 1

Some people think that Christ abolished the law at the cross, and now we are not under the law but under grace. In the first segment of our broadcast we will see from the Bible that the law was not abolished, and is still binding on Christians. In the second segment we will look at the historical origin of the notion that Christians don't need to keep the law. Finally, in the third segment, we will see that grace is not just serial amnesty—it is the power to live a victorious life.

Jesus could not say it any clearer. He did not abolish the Law.

**Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. [Matthew 5:17-19 NIV]**

Jesus said that people who set aside the commandments, and teach others to ignore them, are reviled by the heavenly hosts—but people who obey, and teach obedience, are praised in heaven. What do you want the inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven to say about you?

Not only that, Jesus said people who disobey the commandments will be lost.

**“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ [Matthew 7:21-23 NIV]**

There are many people who think they are saved, but are not. The Pharisees certainly thought they were saved, but Jesus condemned the Pharisees for substituting human traditions for God's commandments.

**Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ they are not to ‘honor their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:**

**““These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.  
They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are merely human rules.” [Matthew 15:3-9 NIV]**

Do you really have to keep the commandments to be saved? Matthew, Mark, and Luke all quoted Jesus' answer to that question.

**Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"**

**"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."**

**"Which ones?" he inquired.**

**Jesus replied, "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" [Matthew 19:16-18, also Mark 10:17-19 and Luke 18:18-20]**

Jesus didn't list all ten—He just quoted five to make the point. He didn't mention the other five commandments; but that doesn't mean it is OK to have other gods, worship idols, take God's name in vain, violate the Sabbath, or covet your neighbor's things.

Since so many Christians don't keep the commandments any more, one can't help wondering if many people won't be saved. Jesus was asked this question, point-blank, and he gave a direct answer.

**Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"**

**He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'**

**"But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'**

**"Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.'**

**"But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'**

**"There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. [Luke 13:23-28 NIV]**

Not only are you supposed to keep the Ten Commandments, Christians have been given the Great Commission to teach others to keep them.

**"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." [Matthew 28:19-20 NIV]**

How could Jesus have said it any more plainly? How could anyone say that Jesus abolished the law at the cross?

The Pharisees in Jesus' day replaced some of God's commands with human traditions. He told them:

He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

“These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.  
They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are merely human rules.’

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)—then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.” [Mark 7:6-13 NIV]

Jesus was perfectly clear that everyone who really loves Him will keep His commandments. By the way, did you notice that Jesus calls them “my commands,” not “my Father’s obsolete commandments?”

Furthermore, Jesus promises supernatural help to keep them.

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. [John 14:15-24 NIV]

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ... You are my friends if you do what I command. [John 15:10, 14]

The apostle John was well aware of Jesus’ teaching. In his first letter, John says,

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. [1 John 5:1-5 NIV]

Some modern Protestants might be surprised that Paul told the Corinthians that keeping the commandments is what counts.

**Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. [1 Corinthians 7:19 NIV]**

Peter predicted that false teachers would come and promise freedom from the law, and his prophecy has obviously come true.

**For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.” If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. [2 Peter 2:18-21 NIV]**

Peter said you will be worse off than someone who has never heard the Gospel if you turn your back on the commandments. John calls people who disobey the commandments, “liars.”

**We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. [1 John 2:3-4 NIV]**

John then goes on to say that the commandments can be kept.

**This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. [1 John 5:2-4 NIV]**

Jesus appeared to John on the isle of Patmos, and told him that true Christians will be keeping His commandments right up to the second coming.

**Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus. [Revelation 12:17 NIV]**

**This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus. [Revelation 14:12 NIV]**

So the very pointed question Jesus asks you is,

**“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? [Luke 6:46 NIV]**

In light of all this, why do so many Christian denominations call Jesus, “Lord,” but teach that Christians don't need to obey the law. We will tell you, right after Josh and Mary Hanson, accompanied by JoAn Witzel, sing “Trust and Obey.”

[music – Josh and Mary Hanson with JoAn Witzel, “Trust and Obey”]

## Part 2

In the first part, we quoted seventeen New Testament passages which very clearly state that Christians must keep the Ten Commandments, and will be lost if they don't. Not only that, there are many more passages which imply the fact that obedience is necessary for salvation, but don't say so explicitly. The entire New Testament emphasizes the importance of obeying God's law; but some people still insist that the law was abolished at the cross.

How did Christians get that idea? Generally speaking, Paul gets the blame—but Paul had nothing against the commandments. In fact, Paul said,

**So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. [Romans 7:12 NIV]**

There are a few passages in Paul's letters which can be twisted to make it appear that Jesus abolished the law if taken out of context. For example, he wrote this to the Ephesians:

**For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. [Ephesians 2:14-16 NIV]**

The phrase, “has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations” is taken out of context to support the false doctrine that there was a barrier, a dividing wall of hostility, between God and man, which Jesus destroyed by dying on the cross. But, read in context, it is clear that Paul is saying that it was the wall between Jews and Gentiles that was destroyed at the cross. It was the command for Jews not to associate with Gentiles that was abolished—not the Ten Commandments.

Luther discovered Righteousness by Faith. It was the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation. It needs to be proclaimed today with the same intensity that it was back then. Unfortunately, the secular doctrine of Unrighteousness by Faith has committed identity theft, and masquerades as Righteousness by Faith in many Protestant churches today.

Unrighteousness by Faith is the doctrine that one can be unrighteous and still be forgiven if one simply claims to be a Christian and has a “relationship” with Him. Unrighteousness by Faith is a doctrine that itching ears want to hear. It seems comforting to hear that all of God's laws have been abolished, obedience is no longer required, and salvation is free for the asking. It is comforting—as long as one lives in that dream world. When one comes back to reality, and discovers that it is a lie, then it becomes very uncomfortable—especially if the realization comes too late.

Preachers of Unrighteousness by Faith try to excuse sin by quoting verses like these out of context:

**As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: [Romans 3:10, KJV]**

**But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; [Isaiah 64:6, KJV]**

It is true, there is “not one” righteous man—there are too many righteous men to list them all! Here is an abbreviated list, taken from the Bible.

**This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. [Genesis 6:9, NIV]**

**Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. [Luke 2:25, NIV]**

**... Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. [Mark 6:20, NIV]**

**... he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— [2 Peter 2:7-8, NIV]**

**Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. [James 5:16, KJV]**

**For verily I [Jesus] say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. [Matthew 13:17, KJV]**

**A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. [Psalm 37:16, KJV]**

**I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. [Psalm 37:25, KJV]**

There are lots more verses like these, talking about righteous people, so clearly the statement that nobody is righteous must be false.

**Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. [1 John 3:7, KJV]**

**He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous; he will surely live, declares the Sovereign Lord. [Ezekiel 18:9, NIV]**

The Bible is perfectly clear—you can be righteous. To be righteous you have to keep God’s laws. But people who aren’t righteous, and want to excuse their unrighteousness, claim that it is impossible to keep God’s laws. They twist verses like Romans 3:10 and Isaiah 64:6 to excuse their failures. Let’s look at them in context.

In the midst of Paul’s proclamation to the Romans that Jews aren’t intrinsically better than Gentiles, he says,

**What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written:**

**“There is no one righteous, not even one;  
there is no one who understands;  
there is no one who seeks God.**

**All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one.” [Romans 3:9-12, NIV]**

He is quoting the opening verses of Psalm 14.

**The fool says in his heart,  
“There is no God.”  
They are corrupt, their deeds are vile;  
there is no one who does good.  
The LORD looks down from heaven  
on all mankind  
to see if there are any who understand,  
any who seek God.  
All have turned away, all have become corrupt;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one. [Psalm 14:1-3, NIV]**

Paul’s point is that anyone, Jew or Gentile, who acts as if “there is no God,” is not righteous. Paul did not tell the Romans that nobody can be righteous. In fact, the letter to the Romans is filled with exhortations to be righteous. This is clear if you read the whole letter; not just one verse taken out of context.

When Isaiah made the remark about righteousness being like filthy rags, he was confessing the sins of a society that had fallen into apostasy. He was praying on behalf of the people who “continue to sin against [those who gladly do right].” Here’s what Isaiah said in context:

**You [,God,] come to the help of those who gladly do right,  
who remember your ways.  
But when we continued to sin against them,  
you were angry.  
How then can we be saved?  
All of us have become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;  
we all shrivel up like a leaf,  
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.  
No one calls on your name  
or strives to lay hold of you;  
for you have hidden your face from us  
and have given us over to our sins. [Isaiah 64:5-7, NIV]**

Isaiah says that when we continue to sin, we have become unrighteous, covered in filthy rags. He isn’t saying that good deeds are filthy rags, as some teachers say.

When Isaiah says “all our righteous acts,” he is being sarcastic. The “righteous acts” they are doing are things God expressly prohibits. As the subsequent verses say, they are being “righteous” by sacrificing to idols in gardens, burning incense on brick (not stone) altars to foreign gods, consulting mediums to contact the dead in graveyards, eating unclean food, and sacrificing to idols on mountains. And then they have the gall to claim to be holier than God! Isaiah tells them what God thinks about their “righteous acts,” which really are filthy and disgusting. Isaiah quotes God as saying,

**All day long I have held out my hands  
to an obstinate people,  
who walk in ways not good,  
pursuing their own imaginations—  
a people who continually provoke me  
to my very face,  
offering sacrifices in gardens  
and burning incense on altars of brick;  
who sit among the graves  
and spend their nights keeping secret vigil;  
who eat the flesh of pigs,  
and whose pots hold broth of impure meat;  
who say, ‘Keep away; don’t come near me,  
for I am too sacred for you!’  
Such people are smoke in my nostrils,  
a fire that keeps burning all day.  
“See, it stands written before me:  
I will not keep silent but will pay back in full;  
I will pay it back into their laps—  
both your sins and the sins of your ancestors,”  
says the LORD.  
“Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains  
and defied me on the hills,  
I will measure into their laps  
the full payment for their former deeds.” [Isaiah 65:2-7, NIV]**

The Bible is perfectly clear. God demands obedience. It isn’t impossible to obey God. He will give you the power to obey.

That isn’t a popular message. Instead, people want their preachers to tell them that obedience is impossible, and that God knows this, so He excuses sin. They want to believe in Unrighteousness by Faith. Lawless teachers (who emphasize that Christians are “freed from the law”) were called out prophetically by Paul.

**Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you,  
brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—  
whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has  
already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the  
rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will  
oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets  
himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.**

**Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know  
what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of  
lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is  
taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will  
overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of  
the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of**

**power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. [2 Thessalonians 2:2-12, NIV]**

**For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. [2 Timothy 4:3-4, NIV]**

Paul warned us, “God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” Unrighteousness by Faith is the powerful delusion that God sends to separate those people who really love God and are willing to obey Him, from those who just want to get salvation without works by claiming to love God. Anyone who preaches Unrighteousness by Faith is “the lawless one.”

Too many Protestant preachers have become experts at taking isolated Bible verses and twisting them to support that powerful delusion Paul warned us of. For example, they love to quote,

**I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ... For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ... Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! [Romans 7:14-15, 18-19, 21-24, NIV]**

Verses like these in Romans Chapter 7, in which Paul was having a flashback to his life before conversion, are used to justify a life of continual sin. If Paul couldn’t stop sinning, how can you expect to stop sinning? But if you read Romans 6 and Romans 8, it is clear that Paul did get the victory over sin, and was insisting that the Romans could gain that same victory through Christ.

Paul gave a similar letter of encouragement to the Galatians.

**You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.**

**So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**

**The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. [Galatians 5:13-26, NIV]**

**Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. [Galatians 6:5-10, NIV]**

Unfortunately, many people do mock God. They deride obedience, calling it “legalism.” They accuse anyone who obeys God’s law of trying to earn salvation. They flaunt their disobedience, calling it “Christian liberty.” They proudly point to their Sunday worship as proof of their freedom from the Ten Commandments.

People who are truly led by the Spirit will obey God’s commands. Let’s take a short break now as the Ridgecrest United Methodist Church Choir sings, “Led by the Spirit.”

[music – Ridgecrest United Methodist Church Choir, “Led by the Spirit”]

### **Part 3**

In the first segment of the broadcast we saw that God expects, even demands, Christians to obey His law. In the second segment we saw that, as predicted, some false teachers infiltrated the church and taught that because Christians are not “under the law, but under grace,” they don’t have to keep the law. In this last segment we will see that the true message of Righteousness by Faith is that God will give His children the desire and power to obey His law.

The true gospel is a message of victory—not failure. You can be righteous. God will give you the victory over sin, if you have faith. Don’t believe for a moment that sin is stronger than God’s power to overcome sin. Paul’s message to us today is the same as the message he wrote to the Romans.

**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. [Romans 6:12-14, NIV]**

Grace is the *power* God gives you to enable you to live in obedience to the law. Grace is not license to disobey the law without consequences. Grace is not serial amnesty. John said,

**Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. [1 John 3:4-9, NIV]**

Conversion is not a temporary fix, which fails after 24 hours. The sinner really is born again and becomes a new creature who is not a slave to sin. Those who would like to excuse sin claim that Paul never got the

victory over sin because he said, “I die daily,” presumably meaning that every day his sinful nature has to die again. The phrase, “I die daily,” occurs only once in the King James translation. It is found in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. But, when read in context it is clear that Paul isn’t talking about a daily conversion process. He is talking about daily persecution for his faith.

**And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. [1 Corinthians 15:30-34 KJV]**

The New International Version makes it even clearer by more accurately translating Paul’s words as “I face death every day.” Here’s the NIV translation of that passage.

**And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,**

**“Let us eat and drink,  
for tomorrow we die.”**

**Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame. [1 Corinthians 15:30-34 NIV]**

Similarly, false teachers quote Paul’s description of how he felt before he was converted in Romans 7:19.

**For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. [Romans 7:19 KJV]**

They claim this is evidence that Paul died an unconverted man, ignoring the victory he told the Romans he got in chapter 8.

**Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.**

**You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. [Romans 8:5-9 NIV]**

The Spirit of God is immortal. If the Spirit of God lives in you, it doesn’t die every day. Paul’s message is consistent. He told the Galatians the same thing he told the Romans.

**You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.**

**So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**

**The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. [Galatians 5:13-26, NIV]**

You are not under the law because you don't break the law. By faith you have "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." You have righteousness by faith, which gives you victory over sin. The ancient words in the Bible are true. They have the power to change you.

[music – Dave Pogge, "Ancient Words"]