

Earlier this month we recognized the freedom that we possess in this nation. I know it's not the fourth of July, but I wanted to talk about freedom today.

We live in a country where we have real freedom. Not everyone in this world has the kind of freedom we have here.

We live in a country where we have certain rights.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

We have the freedom to say what we want to say. We have the freedom to go where we want to go. We can travel freely from one state to another. We can own property. We can build. We can do.

Most importantly we can practice our faith freely without fear of persecution.

There was most definitely a cost to those freedoms.

But! There are things that we can do to lose those freedoms. There are actions we can take, decisions we can make that can cause us to lose those freedoms. How? Because we are a nation of laws. Even though we have all of these wonderful freedoms, it is possible to take for granted our freedom and lose it. We can lose freedom temporarily or we can lose it permanently. It all depends on how we violate the law.

For instance, if you run a stop sign or run a red light and get pulled over by the police, you are not free in that moment. You have violated the law, therefore you are under the power of the law. You are not allowed to leave until you are either given a verbal warning and told not to do that again and the officer tells you that you are free to go, or you are issued a summons at which time you are to appear in court or pay a fine. It's possible to even lose that privilege drive.

But, if you violate a greater law, if you murder someone unjustifiably then you could go to jail or even be put to death yourself.

Law is good. We are told what we can and cannot do in our society. If we did not have law there would be disorder. Law gives us a lane to travel in. Quite literally.

Think of I-35. Imagine there is no jersey barrier, no speed limit sign, no lane markers, just a paved road. That would be chaos.

The law creates a division in the road. North from south, east from west. Lane markers, speed limits, jersey barriers, road signs, and traffic signals allow cars to travel orderly and safely.

Our lives in this nation are governed by laws. Our laws create the freedoms we have.

Isn't that an interesting thought? Law creates freedom. It's only when we violate our laws that we are not free.

If we did not have the laws we have in this nation it would be complete and total chaos. It would be anarchy. That is not freedom.

And so it is with God. He gives us laws to live by. With the Law of God there is liberty. There is freedom as it states:

Psalms 119:44-45

So I will keep Your law (Torah) continually,  
Forever and ever.  
And I will walk at liberty,  
For I seek Your precepts.

James echoes that sentiment in James 1:25

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Just like the laws here in the United States of America that grant us freedom, the Bible provides us with God's Laws. Those laws give us freedom. God's laws are not a prison. They are not traps set by God. God did not set the Israelites free from slavery in Egypt to trap or imprison them. That idea is ludicrous. There is nothing in scripture to support that idea. If the Law of God is a prison, or if the Law of God is a trap, there would be lamenting over keeping it. Instead, in scripture we find the opposite is true.

Psalms 1:1-2

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! **But his delight is in the law of the Lord**, and in His law he meditates day and night."

That does not sound like prison.

Psalms 19:7

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;  
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

Psalms 119:1-2

How blessed are those whose way is blameless,  
Who walk in the law of the Lord.  
How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,  
Who seek Him with all their heart.

All of Psalm 119 is about the Torah and how much of a blessing it is to both know and perform.

The entire Bible has nothing negative to say about God's Law whatsoever.

So what happened?

Why does Christianity as a whole have such a negative view of God's Law?

There is such an aversion to keeping the Law of God within Christianity that when it is discovered that there are those who do try and keep God's Law perfectly, it is automatically assumed that they are trying to earn their salvation or they are trying to add to their salvation. Talk about presumptuous....

There is even an aversion to studying the "Old Testament". I've heard it numerous times. There's an aversion to even hearing messages explicitly from the Old Testament. Do we not realize that it was the same voice from Sinai that also manifested in Jesus.

Think about that for a moment. The same God who spoke from Mount Sinai also walked this earth and spoke to and lived among His creation.

Nothing changed. He's the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. Amen and Amen.

Also, I have never met a single person that is trying to earn their salvation through keeping the Torah. Even the Jews recognize that salvation is grace through faith. You see it all through their writings.

It is all about obedience. Obedience to God results in reward.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

What I hear oftentimes is some variation of the following regarding God's Law.

The main one I hear is:

We don't do that anymore. Jesus fulfilled it so I don't have to.

That does not make any sense.

Jesus was obedient, so you don't have to be? That logic does not work for me.

Matthew 5:17 gets read as if Jesus intended to do away with the Law of God, even though the context doesn't fit that idea.

It reads:

Matthew 5:17

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

It gets read as, when something is fulfilled it means it is done away with or completed. The opposite of abolish isn't complete to abolish.

The BDAG Greek Lexicon addresses Matthew 5:17 directly and says this about the Greek word for fulfill:

Mt 5:17; depending on how one prefers to interpret the context, πληρόω (plēroō) is understood here either as fulfill = do, carry out, or as bring to full expression = show it forth in its true meaning.,

(For me any of those interpretations will work great.) Jesus was not coming to abolish the Law He was coming to carry it out, He was bringing it to full expression, He was showing its true meaning.

That definition works perfect for that context.

or lastly BDAG says it can mean, fill up=complete

That does not fit the context.

Why do so many commentators go with, complete as in, this has been completed so it is no longer applicable?

The rest of the passage does not fit that interpretation. The rest of the passage states:

Matthew 5:18-19

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Not all has been accomplished. Jesus has yet to return. Even the festivals have not been fully completed. We readily see how Passover was fulfilled, but what about the Day of Atonement? That day is all about judgement. What about the feast of Trumpets? That day is all about the coronation of the King. What about the feast of Tabernacles? That festival is all about God dwelling with us. It's all about ruling and reigning on earth. Has any of that happened? NO!!!

The second thing I hear is we no longer keep the ceremonial and judicial laws of the Torah. We only keep the moral parts. That is something that John MacArthur of blessed memory espoused. The problem with that idea is that the Torah does not work that way. It is one unit. It is referred to as the Torah not the Torot, which is Torah plural. There are many laws yes, but it is one unit, one thing. There is nothing in scripture to support the idea of breaking apart the Torah. In fact, James says

James 2:10

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

The third position that I hear and also what was taught to me in the one seminary class that I took on Biblical hermeneutics was that the Law of God has been rendered inoperative. Meaning, it is no longer in effect as a whole. We are no longer "under" the Torah, we are now "under" the Law of Christ.

The problem with that is what Law did Christ teach and keep? It was always the same Torah. If He would have taught something different, if He would have changed the Law in any way He would have been deemed a false prophet by the Deuteronomy 13 standard for a prophet. Jesus taught the Torah and He kept the Torah perfectly.

Also, is there anything in the New Testament that says there is a "Law of Christ"? The short answer is no, but I'll get to that later.

So where did all the confusion come from?

PAUL!!!

Paul was the one who was misunderstood. Peter says in

2 Peter 3:14-16

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Even Peter said that some of the things that Paul taught were difficult to understand. So, maybe what Paul says doesn't always have an obvious meaning.

I would argue that the number one thing that Paul said that has been so misunderstood is that we are no longer "under the law."

Paul is the only Apostle who used this phrase of "under the law." In our culture we view under the law as being subject to the law. However, is that what Paul meant?

He uses this phrase a total of 11 times in his letters.

Romans 6:14

Romans 6:15

1 Corinthians 9:20 x4

Galatians 3:23

Galatians 4:4

Galatians 4:5

Galatians 4:21

Galatians 5:18

The Greek phrase is "hupo nomon" - It means, under law, or under the law.

Hupo - (BDAG)

1. a position below an object or another position, under
2. marker of that which is in a controlling position, under, under the control of, under obligation in ref. to power, rule, sovereignty, command,

Nomos - (BDAG)

1. a procedure or practice that has taken hold, a custom, rule, principle, norm
2. constitutional or statutory legal system, law
3. a collection of holy writings precious to God's people, sacred ordinance

Under the law is a good translation, however **does it mean what we think that it means?**

Are there any verses that can point us to a different meaning?

Are there any verses that might lead us to believe that our cultural idea of under the law might be different than what Paul had in mind?

I think that there is. Depending on your translation that you are using, the phrase, "under the law" actually appears more than 11 times. It has everything to do with, I believe, how these translators are wanting you to interpret the actual phrase hupo nomon, under the law. They want you to view it as subject to the law of Moses. I will argue that it does not mean that. Paul has another phrase that he uses to convey that idea. He also uses it more than once.

The first one occurs in the NASB

Romans 2:12

For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned **under the Law** will be judged by the Law;

This phrase here is "en nomos" which is also unique to Paul.

Here you can see that his way of saying subject to the law is "en nomos". It is not "hupo nomon". That should really give us pause to consider the meaning of his phrase that actually reads "under the law".

The next one occurs in

Romans 3:19-20

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

The phrase is not hupo nomon. It is not under the law. That is an incorrect translation for both of those verses. The NASB even has a note telling you what it actually says. It says en nomos, which means "in the law." It does not say under the law and that is very important.

Other translations get closer to the idea here.

The HCSB says:

Romans 3:19

Now we know that whatever the law says speaks to those who are subject to the law...

The Young's Literal Translation reads:

Romans 3:19

And we have known that as many things as the law saith, to those in the law it doth speak

Here Paul is saying that those who keep the Law are in the Law. They are literally "in-lawed" and it is through the Law that there is a knowledge of sin.

This idea of the Law being done away with, rendered inoperative, or fulfilled in the sense of it is no longer applicable does not work. Paul even anticipates this reasoning.

Romans 3:31

Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

Right here there should be no confusion. The Torah in its entirety is still applicable. Having faith in Jesus is supposed to produce a new relationship to the Law. There should be such obedience that the Law is established in all of our lives. In fact it is supposed to be a new way of life for



everyone, especially Gentiles because the New Covenant is all about having the Torah written on your heart.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Paul's whole point is that salvation does not come through Law. It is grace through faith, but there has to be obedience. The other part of all of his arguments is that Gentiles have a different relationship to the Law than the Jewish people do. The Gentiles are not obligated to keep the whole Law. But!!!! As you grow, as you learn, there are more commandments that you can take on as a Gentile.

Isaiah 56:6-8 is a beacon to that idea.

“Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,  
To minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord,  
To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath  
And holds fast My covenant;  
Even those I will bring to My holy mountain  
And make them joyful in My house of prayer.  
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar;  
For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”  
The Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares,  
“Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.”

This whole passage has a future fulfillment in mind because the dispersed of Israel have not been gathered. Also, the idea of the Temple being called a house of prayer for all peoples. We have not arrived at that ever in history.

So what does under the Law, hupo nomon, mean in the context of Paul's writings?

Let's look at a Christian resource called Five Views on Law and Gospel. Douglas Moo, who is a prominent Christian theologian and commentator, gives his thoughts on this topic. He presents 3 ideas for the phrase under the law.

Page 361

"We do not presume that 'under the law' must connote the same idea in each of its occurrences, although the stereotypical flavor of the phrase may point in this direction. Three general meanings of the phrase are popular: (1) under the condemnation pronounced by the law; (2) under a legalistic perversion of the law; and (3) under the law as a regime or power in a general sense."

Douglas goes on to say immediately afterward that he believes that it is only the third option that does any justice and that the second does not work at all and the first one "may be included along with the third in some places."

I disagree with what he is saying. I think it is the first option that fits like a glove in every place that Paul uses the phrase "under the law." I would even add to the meaning a little bit. I would add, subject to the condemnation of the Law.

It's interesting that he acknowledges that it can mean under the condemnation of the law, but he opts for the idea of the phrase meaning a regime. If Paul is saying that we establish the Law through our faith that means that the Law is very much still applicable today.

In fact, there is another place where Paul uses "hupo nomon," under the law and it really supports the idea of under the law meaning under the condemning power of the law. I'll get to that in a second.

I just want to reiterate that you can't say you are establishing the law while at the same time say you are not subject to the law... Right??

To recap what Paul's phrase "hupo nomon" or "under the law" means.

It means under the condemnation or subject to the condemnation of the Law or Torah. If you plug that into every place Paul uses that phrase not only does it make sense, it helps understand the context of how he is using it.

Paul has a phrase that definitely means subject to obedience to the law or the law as a regime as Moo puts it, and that phrase is "en nomos" - in the law or in-lawed.

Let's look at some of the places Paul uses "hupo nomon."

The very first place "hupo nomon" or "under the law" is actually used is:

Romans 6:12-19

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as **instruments of righteousness** to God.

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law (hupo nomon) but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law (hupo nomon) but under grace?

In other words, should we sin because we are no longer condemned by the Law?

**May it never be!** Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been **freed from sin**, you **became slaves of righteousness**. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to **lawlessness**, resulting in **further lawlessness**, so now present your members as **slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification**.

Later Paul defines what he means by righteousness. He says in Romans 7:12:

So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and **righteous** and good.

A major part of the giving the Law was for sanctification. The book of the Law is all about holiness. Keeping God's Law results in sanctification.

The next place Paul's unique phrase of "under the law" is used is:

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are **under the Law**, as **under the Law though not being myself under the Law**, so that I might win those who are **under the Law**;

Here Paul is explicitly saying that he is NOT under the law. Does that mean that he doesn't have to obey the Torah? The Torah no longer applies to him? It's been done away with? It has been fulfilled so he does not have to keep it anymore?

Or does it mean that he is no longer subject to the condemnation the Law brings about. What is the condemnation the Law brings? Death. The soul that sins shall die.

What about what it says in

Acts 21:17-26

After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the **Jews** of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. What, then, is to be done?

They will certainly hear that you have come. Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law. But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication." Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

If Paul walks orderly keeping the Law, then under the law cannot mean subject to the Law as a regime. It has to mean something else. I am contending that it means under the condemnation of the Law.

The text continues in 1 Corinthians 9

to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

The text does not say "under the law of Christ." That seems to speak of Jesus having a different Law than the Torah.

Young's Literal Translation nails it perfectly.

to those without law, as without law--(not being without law to God, but within law to Christ)--that I might gain those without law;

Here is that same phrase that I mentioned earlier, except it is written as one word, not two. Instead of "en nomos" it reads "ennomos." If Paul meant under the law to mean subject to the Law he would have written "hupo nomon Christou", under the law to Christ, but he doesn't.

This whole passage is about Paul meeting people where they are at. He is not some chameleon where the ends justify the means in presenting the gospel. That is an evil idea and should be rejected, yet there are many who espouse just that.

The bottom line is that we who are in Christ Jesus are set free of the prison we created due to our sins. We were set free with a price. We were set free to no longer sin. Sin is a violation of God's Law. If you do not know God's Law how can you know what sin is? This is a major problem in the church I have found. Most Christians that I know do not study the first five books of the Bible, nor do they want to, so they do not know God's Law.

I have asked many people about their definition of sin from a pastor to the laity and I usually get a very nebulous answers.

Very simply, sin is a violation of God's commandments. He told you to do something and you did not do it or He told you to do something and you did not do it.

Still others might say, we are no longer under the Law of Moses, but we are under the Law of Christ. Well I just showed that the phrase, Law of Christ, doesn't exist, and even if it did... Let's say that it does exist. What Law did Christ follow? If we are to follow Christ, doesn't that mean we do what he did? Paul says in

Romans 10:4

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

The word for "end" is goal. The Greek word "telos". It's where we get the prefix for words like television, telephone, or telescope.

All those things have a goal

Signal sent for TV

Your voice - reach out and touch someone

Telescope you are viewing things from a distance that you could not otherwise see.

So a rewording of that verse could be

For Messiah is the GOAL of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

The answers for us are there in scripture. Sometimes we have to read past all the dogma in our translations and understand that those who are doing these translations are conditioned by doctrine and dogma. If you have been taught your whole life that the Law of God is a prison or a trap and it's been done away with and you do not understand that freedom is defined by Law then you are going to translate in a way that reflects how you were taught. No more Moses.

My challenge to you this week is to read Romans 6, 7, and 8 and when you get to chapter 8 look at how Paul's culminates in the phrase

Romans 8:1

**Therefore** there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.