

# Letter: 24f 48 G v Wigram, Lausanne, January, 1842

by John Nelson Darby

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*Christians are not under the law because they are dead to the law and united to Christ, and they can use the law against the wicked because they have the divine nature.*

**Scripture:** Romans 7:4, Galatians 2:19

**Topics:** "Grace vs. Law", "The Resurrection of Christ"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the distinction between being under the law and living in grace, explaining that Christ's death and resurrection freed believers from the law's condemnation. He argues that while the law reveals our responsibility, it does not define our relationship with God, as we are united with Christ who fulfilled the law. Darby warns that many Christians mistakenly place themselves under the law, which hinders their peace and understanding of redemption. He also reflects on the Epistle to the Philippians, highlighting the apostle's afflictions and the importance of grace in the church's struggles. Ultimately, he encourages believers to grasp the significance of Christ's resurrection to fully enjoy their new life in Him.

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## Transcript

p48 [From the French.] G V Wigram, To apprehend aright the place of the law is a difficult thing, because we must be fully led by the Holy Spirit in order not to be ourselves, in some sort, under law, as to our feelings at least. We must have rightly seized the power of the work and resurrection of Jesus, otherwise one would be lawless if one were not under law. We are in nowise under the law. Grace does not recognise any participation of the law in our hearts; but how is this, if we acknowledge the law as good? Because Christ exhausted it in His death. He was under the law up to His death, and in His death; but evidently He is not so now; He may employ the law to judge those who have been under the law, but we are united to Him. As Adam was not head of the old race until after his fall, so Christ is only Head of the new race as risen from among the dead. He places them in His own position as a risen Man; they begin with Christ there. They quite acknowledge the power of the law, but in that it has put Jesus to death, there where it has lost all its power, and its dominion over the soul. We belong to another.

We can employ the law, if there be need, against the wicked, because, having the divine nature, we can handle the law, and it cannot inflict its mortal wound upon the divine nature from which it has emanated. We can shew where man is if under the law, in order thereby to bring out the perfection of redemption; it is

what the apostle does in Romans and Galatians, in order to make it clear that we are no longer under the law, because we are dead with Christ. Through the law we are dead to the law; we are crucified with Christ. A Gentile was never really under the law. In becoming a Christian he takes Christ at a point where He has done with the law; but, having received the Spirit of Christ, he has no longer need of the law to discern the perfection of redemption: he has intelligence to understand the things accomplished in the history of the Messiah - His perfect work. But this is far from being clear in the mind of Christians, for in fact, the greater part among them have made of Christianity a law, and have put themselves under the law. They must come out thence in order to enjoy peace; but for them, the discussion as to what the law is is a very important thing, and very opportune on that account. Besides, the human heart so naturally places itself under law, that it is very important for every soul to be well enlightened on the subject. The law, let us always remember, reveals to us nothing of God, except that a law implies a judge; it gives the measure of our responsibility: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God and thy neighbour;" that is the law. It may be said that the gospel gives new motives for our fulfilment of the law; but these motives are drawn from a fact which gives to Christ all that right over our hearts to which the law could lay claim, and by death puts an end to the power of the latter, for we are dead and risen with Christ. We shall do or avoid many of the things found in the law, and the summary of it which has been given us remains the principle, or rather the fruit of the life of Christ in us. It is now fulfilled in all that flows from that life, but we are in nowise under the law, for we are one with Christ, and Christ is not under the law.

The law not only condemns conduct, but men. The law does not only say, "Cursed is everything," but "Cursed is every one who continueth not." Thus we must be under the curse if we are under the law. But it is because we are not under the law that we can make use of it, if needs be. The Jews attempted to employ it against the adulterous woman, but they were under the law, in the flesh. The law pierced their hearts to death and condemnation. Christ made use of it, or at least allowed it its efficacy, because, although He was born under the law, it could not touch Him for condemnation, the life of God in Him being perfect. United to Him in resurrection we can make use of it, because we are beyond its reach by the death and resurrection of Christ, enjoying His life in our souls. This is why people are always more or less under the law, until they have understood the resurrection of Christ, and also whenever the flesh obscures the power of our redemption. I hope that you will be able to understand these few remarks.

With regard to the Epistle to the Philippians, it presents another very interesting feature - the affliction and the personal experience of the apostle. He looks at the church as deprived of his care, and he himself is oppressed for the time by the power of Satan. Thus, in a very touching and very powerful manner, he enters into all that concerns the conflict of the church, and all that is important for it during the period of its abandonment: he also presents the graces which would prevent it from falling into those troubles which sprang up consequent upon the absence of the apostle. Hence the great value of this epistle for the present time. They were beginning to preach Christ in a spirit of contention, not to be of the same mind, to murmur. He shews in what the riches and graces of Christ consist, especially necessary for such a state of things, a state, alas! which has ripened much since then. Why should I say, Alas? for all this will turn to salvation, and shews that the coming of Jesus is nearer.

Lausanne. January, 1842.

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