

Eternity Daily Bible Study

"Walking As He Walked": Living By Christ's Commandments

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Topic: What Is A Commandment?

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Jesus gives us commandments and a commandment is a "command or edict, an authoritative direction or instruction to do something" (Free Online Dictionary). It is the precise opposite of an option or a suggestion. A commandment is direct, clear and compulsory and not obeying one generally invokes some kind of punishment.

For example when your superior officer in the military "commands" you to do something you MUST do it. You do not have any option. To disobey it is "disobeying the command of a superior officer". Here is a part of the regulation from Article 90 of the military code (USA):

Anyone who willfully disobeys a lawful command of his superior commissioned officer; shall be punished, if the offense is committed in time of war, by death or such other punishment as a court-martial may direct, and if the offense is committed at any other time, by such punishment, other than death, as a court-martial may direct.

Jesus did not give us a list of nice optional spiritual suggestions. He gave us commandments and He expected them to be obeyed:

Matthew 28:18-20 ISV *Then Jesus came up and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Therefore, as you go, disciple all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you each and every day until the end of the age."*

So we see from these verses that Jesus:

1. Has all authority in Heaven and on earth
2. Wants all of us to be made into well-instructed and baptized disciples
3. Who obey all of His commandments on a continuous basis

We cannot just decide to obey Jesus "when we feel like it". We cannot say "Well I don't like these bits so I won't obey them" or "I Like these three commandments so they will be the one's I take on board". Obedience is not optional.

In the Christian life obedience receives an eternal reward and disobedience receives an eternal punishment or loss of reward. In fact obedience is to be one of the goals of Christian ministry and instruction. There are well over 30 references to obedience and disobedience that I can find in the New Testament.

Paul often says the purpose of his ministry is "the obedience of the faith in word and deed" (Romans 1:15, 15:18,16;26) and rejoices when Christians are obedient (Romans 16:19, 2 Corinthians 7:15). An obedient church was the goal of apostolic ministry and obedience features strongly in the epistles, here are just a few examples:

2 Corinthians 10:5-6 MKJV ... and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ; (6) and having readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Philippians 2:12 MKJV Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, cultivate your own salvation with fear and trembling.

1 Peter 1:13-16 MKJV Therefore girding up the loins of your mind, being sober, perfectly hope for the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, (14) as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, (15) but according to the Holy One who has called you, you also become holy in all conduct, (16) because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

1 Peter 1:22-23 MKJV Purifying your souls in the obedience of the truth through the Spirit to unfeigned love of the brothers, love one another fervently out of a pure heart, (23) having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living Word of God, and abiding forever.

There is a terrible tendency to lawlessness in some quarters, as if Christianity was a comfortable club and we could sit down and vote on the club-house rules and change them at whim. Commandments from God cannot be overturned by men. Much modern teaching makes light of disobedience and can fool us into taking sin lightly. Paul warns us against this:

Ephesians 5:1-7 MKJV Therefore be followers of God, as dear children. (2) And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor. (3) For let fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness not be once named among you, as becomes saints, (4) neither baseness, foolish talking, jesting, which are not becoming, but rather giving of thanks. (5) For you know this, that no fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous one (who is an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. **(6) Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience. (7) Therefore do not be partakers with them.**

The Christian life is to be lived "with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12 above) as people who imitate and follow God (Ephesians 5:1). As we have seen not even social sins such as baseness and coarse jesting are allowed (let alone fornication or covetousness). Crudeness, vulgarity, obscenity and uncleanness are a direct contradiction to the attitude of grace and holiness that should be exuded from the born-again believer.

Grace is given so that we might become holy (not so that we can sin endlessly). Grace is both the opportunity and the strength to become righteous and to "get back on the bicycle" and pursue sanctification without being unduly blamed or condemned for "falling off". Grace however does not mean that we can lie there in the mud! We must get up!

As Romans 6 says: **Romans 6:1-2 MKJV** *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound? (2) Let it not be! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*

What about grace then? Indeed God loves you into an unconditional salvation, Jesus does not wait until you become "good enough" before offering you eternal life. But eternal life is not a lawless life! It is a life of ever-increasing holiness and obedience. God loves you just as you are, but God also loves you too much to leave you as you are.

The purpose of all the commandments is to make us conformed to the image of God's beloved Son. The commandments of Christ are not just there for our good or our protection. Indeed we may even be killed or persecuted for obeying them! Rather the purpose of the commandments is for our eternal glory. They are there so that by obeying them we become a new, holy and glorious saint of God!

1 Timothy 1:5 MKJV *But the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned,*

The Christian life is to be a life that is obedient to the commands of Jesus Christ just as a soldier is obedient to the commands of a superior officer. There is to be the kind of respectful obedience that the Scriptures call "fear and trembling" - just as if a General or an Admiral or the Big Boss of your company was to walk into the room. You would not want to be caught asleep at your desk then! So God does not want to find you "asleep" spiritually (see the parable of the ten virgins).

In the gospels there are many stories, sayings and parables about people who took orders - soldiers, centurions, servants, stewards, husbandmen and so on. Their fate was often determined by their attitude to their orders. These range from very positive "Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master!" to that of stern rebuke "You lazy and wicked servant!" - indeed the rebellious husbandmen who refuse Christ's rule over their lives are even "cut into pieces".

What is your attitude to Christ's orders? Do you live as a "bond-servant of Christ Jesus"? Are you looking to God for His next order, His next command to you - and are you eager to obey it?

Psalms 123:2 MKJV *Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters; as the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait on Jehovah our God, until He shall have mercy on us.*

Blessings,

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