

THE COMMANDMENTS OF CHRIST

A few years ago, W.W.J.D. was popular. The slogan was printed on T-shirts, necklaces, bracelets, automobile decals ... nearly everywhere you saw 'religious' people. The letters stood for the words "What Would Jesus Do?"

Folks were trying to pattern their reactions according to how they imagined Jesus would respond to life's situations.

The focus was on the ministry of Christ while He walked among men.

So let's begin our study there during the earthly life of Jesus.

Be careful to notice in the scripture we will read that the Law Principal was in effect when Christ came to earth. That's the system He operated under.

Gal 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

Jesus told His disciples:

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Following Jesus' commands were a proof of their devotion:

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

The commands of Christ assured them that they would dwell in HIS care:

John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

The more we read from John the stiffer the facts get.

Keeping God's commands was in 'Times Past' (and will be in the 'Ages to Come')
a test of knowing God:

1 John 2:3-4 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

They were given an amazing promise --- if they maintain works:

1 John 3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Their assurance rested upon their obedience:

1 John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

The issue of 'keeping God's commands' was what John had been preaching from the start:

2 John 1:6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

Here's the Golden Rule.

Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you. Let's read it in the scripture:

Matt 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Notice the question --- in this next passage.

Then look carefully at the answer.

Jesus was clearly teaching the commandments of God FOR eternal life.

We would certainly NOT answer this question today the way Jesus did then:

Matt 19:16-17 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing **shall I do**, that I may have **eternal life**?

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, **keep the commandments**.

So, now, let's move OUT from under the LAW

and move INTO the dispensation of grace.

Under the grace program we're **BEGGED** to do what we SHOULD do:

1 Thess 4:1-2 Furthermore then we **beseech** you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as **ye have received of us** (there's Pauline authority) how ye **OUGHT to walk and to please God,** so ye would abound more and more.

2 For ye know what commandments **we gave you** (they came through Paul) by the Lord Jesus (but they originated with Christ -- they are the Commandments of Christ for US Gentiles).

Jesus Himself gave further revelation to a man known as the Apostle Paul:

1 Cor 14:37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that **I** write unto you **are the commandments of the Lord.**

That means we're supposed to recognize

accept

admit

own up to

confess

concur

concede

to the fact

that **Paul's writings are NOW the Commandments of Christ**

in the dispensation of grace.

So if you are ever accused of 'following Paul'

that's just what we're supposed to do -

because what he wrote --- are Christ's Commands --- not his own.

God is the authority.

Under the Law Program -- Israel was God's chosen people.

They had a distinguished position above the Gentiles.

2 Sam 7:23 And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?

Rom 3:1-2 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?
2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

'But now' --- Israel no longer enjoys avored nation status with God:

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:
for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

There is no longer a 'JEWISH' superiority and Gentiles don't have one either:

1 Cor 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing,
but the keeping of the commandments of God.

Now, realize here that we are NOT to GO BACK

to the Commandments of Christ during His earthly ministry.

The commandments WE are supposed to keep

are the ones that Christ gave Paul - for the dispensation of grace.

What's important --- is to follow God's instructions to YOU ---
not what He gave to Israel in 'Times Past'.

As far as the commandments of the law are concerned --- in THIS dispensation,

Christ took care of them for us:

Eph 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

We have no reason to allow men to put us under religious laws:

Col 2:20-22 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, **why**, as though living in the world, **are ye subject to ordinances**,
 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;
 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) **after the commandments and doctrines of men?**

The conclusion of the law today is LOVE. But some men (who are actually MIXED UP and CONFUSED themselves) want spiritual jurisdiction lording the law over others:

1 Tim 1:5-7 Now **the end of the commandment is charity** out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:
 6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;
 7 **Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.**

People should be called down for steering others away:

Titus 1:13-14 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;
 14 **Not giving heed to** Jewish fables, and **commandments of men**, that turn from the truth.

The SUMMARY of the commands we live by today is to love others:

Rom 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to **love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law**.

Love ought to be the governing rule for our lives:

Gal 5:14 For **all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love** thy neighbour as thyself.

Typically, we see Paul pleading with the saints to do the right things:

Rom 12:1 I **beseech** you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Paul begged the believers in Rome to pray for him:

Rom 15:30 Now I **beseech** you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the **love** of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

Paul sincerely asks his brothers to 'get out their 'Sharpies' --

so they can POINT OUT the ones who oppose his message of right division

no matter how smooth and persuasive they may talk
no matter how nice a show they put on

--- or else --- they will trick the slow-thinkers:

Rom 16:17-18 Now I **beseech** you, brethren,
mark them which **cause divisions and offences**
contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned;
and **avoid them.**

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly;
and by **good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.**

Y'all know what '**avoid**' means. Here are some synonyms:

- evade
- elude
- dodge
- avert
- sidestep
- skirt around
- keep away from
- shun
- steer clear of
- refrain from.

Don't go throwing rocks at them.

Simply avoid them

if they are supporting, financing, and attending unsound doctrine

and all the while --- completely unwilling to discuss doctrine with you.

It's time to dismiss yourself when they basically tell you to 'shut up'.

It's not like you can't 'give it a rest' for awhile

but if the subject of the Bible is strictly off-limits --- then you should be, too.

Here's another marking we need to do

We should NOTE those folks who follow Paul:

Phil 3:17-18 Brethren, **be followers together of me,**
and **mark them** which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby **he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.**

There our conference theme was mentioned again:

In His day, Christ will conquer and subject all things to Himself.

Let's look at another command Christ gave to the Body of Christ.

We already read about 'avoiding' people who promote doctrine contrary to Paul's.

Well, the church at Corinth had a similar issue ---

They were instructed to **avoid people who 'profess' to know Christ,**

but live like the devil:

1 Cor 5:11-13 But now I have written unto you **not to keep company,**
if any man that is **called a brother** • be a fornicator, (**sexually active before marriage**)

or • covetous, (**greedily desire and lust**)

or • an idolater, (**worshipping religious images**)

or • a railer, (**hollaring angrily, ranting & raving**)

or • a drunkard, (**too much strong drink, wine, liquor**)

or • an extortioner; (**like blackmail or hush money**)

with such an one **no not to eat.**

12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without?

do not ye judge them that are within?

13 But them that are without God judgeth.

Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

These commandments of Christ were given to the Body of Christ through the church at Thessalonica:

2 Thess 3:6 Now we **command** you, brethren, (Paul issued the rule because he was directed to do so by Christ's command) in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that **ye withdraw yourselves from every brother** that walketh disorderly, (As we read through the passage it appears that 'walking disorderly' has to do with not having a JOB.) and **not after the tradition which he received of us.**

7 For yourselves know how **ye ought to follow us** (follow Paul): for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you (Paul did work, he made tents-Acts 18:3);

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought (Paul didn't 'mooch off' of anyone); but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you (Paul paid his own way):

9 Not because we have not power, but to **make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us** (again, follow Paul).

10 For even when we were with you, this we **commanded** you, that **if any would not work, neither should he eat.** (That's as plain talking as you can get.)

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you **disorderly, working not at all**, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we **command** and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, **that** with quietness **they work**, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

14 And **if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man,**

and have no company with him, (Why? For what purpose?)
that he may be ashamed. (Restoration is the reason for it.)

15 Yet **count him not as an enemy,** but **admonish (or warn) him as a brother.**

In his earlier epistle, Paul had urged the saints to show even more love toward each other, and he had also commanded them to WORK:

1 Thess 4:9-11 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and **to work** with your own hands, **as we commanded you;**

Paul pleaded with the Corinthian saints. People are wrongly divided when the word of truth is not rightly divided:

1 Cor 1:10 Now I **beseech** you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 • **that ye all speak the same thing**, and
 • **that there be no divisions among you**; but
 • **that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

They, too, were instructed to follow Paul:

1 Cor 4:16 Wherefore I **beseech** you, be **ye followers of me**.

By following Paul's example, they would learn to be workers not loafers.

Even though they were not under the LAW

Paul didn't want them to waste their grace:

2 Cor 6:1 We then, as workers together with him, **beseech** you also **that ye receive not the grace of God in vain**.

Neither did Paul want his own work among them to be scrapped.

Paul demonstrated that he could still carry on the ministry,

even despite physical ailments.

They should follow his lead as should we:

Gal 4:11-16 I am afraid of you, **lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain**.

12 Brethren, I **beseech** you, **be as I am**; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.

13 Ye know how **through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you** at the first.

14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

Paul made request that to both the Corinthians and the Thessalonians

.... that the brethren yield themselves to people they know

- who minister to them,
- those who help in the ministry

and • those who work in the ministry:

1 Cor 16:15-16 I **beseech** you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the **ministry** of the saints,)

16 **That ye submit yourselves unto such,**
and to every one that **helpeth** with us, and **laboureth**.

Paul wants them to recognize the servants of the Lord:

1 Thess 5:12-13 And we **beseech** you, brethren,
• **to know them which labour among you,**
and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And • **to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.**

And • **be at peace among yourselves.**

It's an honor to serve the Lord by spreading His word to folks who need it ---
as we maintain harmony in one accord as His body:

Eph 4:1-3 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, **beseech** you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We will close this message with one of Paul's prayers for the saints ---
which is our prayer, as well:

2 Thess 1:11-12 Wherefore also we pray always for you,
that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

12 **That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you,**
and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is David Dowell, saying, "Think about it!"