

# Keep My Commandments!

by Robert B. Thompson

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*The sermon emphasizes the critical importance of obeying Christ's commandments as evidence of true faith and warns against modern misconceptions of grace and Gnosticism.*

**Topics:** "Obedience To God", "New Covenant Living"

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## Description

Robert B. Thompson preaches about the importance of obeying God's commandments and walking as Jesus did, emphasizing the need to understand the New Testament and the new covenant. He addresses the influence of Gnosticism and Dispensationalism on modern Christian teaching, highlighting the danger of separating belief from behavior. Thompson challenges the notion that grace exempts us from keeping God's commandments, stressing the significance of obeying Christ's teachings to truly know Him and be in Him.

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## Transcript

### Introduction

We know we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. (1 John 2:3-6--NIV)

"Must walk as Jesus did"! Must behave as Jesus did, think as Jesus did, speak as Jesus did, act as Jesus did. The Lord Jesus is our example and our guide.

We Christians do not understand the New Testament. We do not understand the new covenant. We are not walking as Jesus did or obeying His commandments, in many instances.

Whether because of Gnosticism or Dispensationalism, we cannot see what is in front of us, what the New Testament is saying.

Gnosticism is a philosophy that existed in the early Christian era. Gnosticism emphasizes the difference between the body and the spirit of man. Gnosticism points toward the restoration of the spirit of the individual to the heavenly abode and probably is a main reason why the Christian hope has changed from the original coming of the Kingdom of God to the earth to our going to Heaven to live forever. Gnosticism presents specialized knowledge as the means by which our spirit is freed to return to Heaven.

A basic concept of Gnosticism is we can be pious in our spirit while our body indulges in sin. Gnosticism, with its emphasis on spirit and knowledge, while disregarding our bodily conduct, presented a threat to the early churches.

If you will read the Book of First John with the teaching of Gnosticism in mind you will see why scholars believe the Apostle was resisting Gnosticism. The Gnostics, because of their belief, would not bring their bodies under control, and they would never accept the fact that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. The Gnostics would never accept the idea that any aspect of the flesh of man could bring salvation.

Thus we can see clearly that present-day Christian teaching is a watered-down Gnosticism. Its doctrine is correct as regards the redemption that is in Christ, but its goal and methods of operating are clearly Gnostic.

The effect of Dispensationalism has much the same effect on our thinking. The idea of Dispensationalism is that the new covenant is a dispensation of grace such that how we behave is quite secondary in importance. We are saved by our belief system apart from our actual behavior in the body. This again is Gnosticism.

The understanding today is that we do not have to keep the commandments of Christ and His Apostles. As long as we believe the doctrines concerning Christ it is not too important how we behave in our body. This viewpoint is a blending, a syncretism of Gnosticism and the Apostle Paul's teaching concerning Divine grace. The blend is an utterly destructive force in current Gospel teaching.

Yet we say we believe in the full verbal inspiration of the holy Scriptures. Do we? Have we not in fact claimed the Scriptures do not mean what they say when they warn the Christians of the necessity for keeping the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles? Have we become Gnostics?

Do we really believe the Book of First John is inspired?

Let's see what it says:

"We know we have come to know him if we obey his commands."

How do we know we have come to know Jesus Christ? We know that we know Him if we obey His commands.

What if we do not keep His commands? In this case we do not know Jesus Christ.

Can we not know Jesus Christ and still be "saved"? How can we be saved if we are disobedient to God? Do you believe we can disobey God and still be saved? I don't!

"But I am saved by grace." What do you mean? Do you mean you can disobey the commandments of Christ and God will overlook your behavior? Where did you ever get such an idea?

When Christ commands you to do something, do you respond by saying "I don't have to do what you say because I am saved by faith"?

The Bible says the only way we can know Christ is by keeping His commands. If we do not keep His commands we do not know Him and He does not know us.

"The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

What can we say about the Christian who claims to know Christ but does not do what Christ commands?

The Bible says he or she is a liar!

Why would the Holy Spirit inspire the Apostle John to speak in such strong terms? No doubt it was because of the pressure being put on the churches by the Gnostics, who taught that salvation has to do with specialized beliefs one holds and not with our behavior in the flesh.

I have become convinced that the modern Christian doctrine of grace is actually a form of Gnosticism and not the new covenant at all.

All we have to rely on is the written Word. Our current doctrine is not in line with the written Word. Therefore it is incorrect even though believed by the great majority of the blood-washed children of God.

"But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him."

God's love will never be made complete in us until we obey His written Word. This is what the Bible teaches.

The formation of Christ in us depends directly on our keeping the commands of Christ in the Gospels and given through His Apostles in the Epistles.

The idea we are saved by grace (forgiveness) apart from righteous, holy, obedient conduct is a lie, and a very successful one from Satan's viewpoint. It is antinomianism, a teaching compatible with Gnosticism.

"This is how we know we are in him." The only possible way in which we can be certain we are in Jesus Christ is that we are keeping His commandments and those He gave us through His Apostles. When we are not keeping the commandments found in the New Testament we have no guarantee we are in Christ, even though we feel like we are; even though everyone we trust says we are; even though we have taken "the four steps of salvation"; even though we feel like we have God's blessing.

Only those who are "in Christ" will be resurrected and caught up to meet Him in the air. No believer who is not keeping Christ's commandments will be resurrected and caught up to meet Him when He appears. Anyone who says otherwise is deceived. The truth is not in him or her.

"Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."

Jesus walked in righteous, holy, obedient behavior. If we claim to live in Him we must behave as He did. If we claim to be in Him but do not keep His commandments because we believe we are "saved by grace" and our behavior does not matter, does not understand how new-covenant grace operates. We are living in deception.

Are we saved by grace or by works of righteousness we have done?

We are saved by the Divine grace that always results in righteous behavior. When the grace we have does not result in righteous behavior it is not the true grace of God but a form of Gnosticism. It is a false grace. How can we be sure? Because it is not according to the Bible.

Notice what John says at the end of his epistle:

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true--even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (1 John 5:20--NIV)

John apparently was resisting the philosophy of Gnosticism. He states (in the second chapter) that the reason for writing his epistle is that we would not sin. After numerous exhortations commanding us to live righteously John concludes by saying, "He is the true God and eternal life." John said this because the god preached by the Gnostics was not the true God but a philosophy. So it is today the current Christian teaching is not the true God but a philosophy, a philosophy that does not bring forth a new moral creation in Jesus Christ.

Notice the following three statements from the Book of Revelation, the one book bound with a curse on anyone who adds to it or subtracts from it:

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 12:17--NIV)

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. (Revelation 14:12--NIV)

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (Revelation 22:14--NIV)

"Which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Because of the destructive model known as Dispensationalism we suppose that the above three passages from the Book of Revelation are referring to Jews who have the testimony of Jesus Christ, because Christians are not supposed to be keeping any commandments. Dispensationalism resolves the numerous inconsistencies in its doctrine by saying "this passage refers to Jews"; or "this is Jewish ground." What a wretched business this is! Why don't we just refer to any passage that inconveniences us as "Jewish ground"? Why not throw out the whole Bible as "Jewish ground" and be done with it!

The whole New Testament is Christian ground and is to be obeyed!

The true Christian keeps the commandments of God and has the testimony of Jesus Christ according to the Apostle John, who wrote the Gospel of John, three epistles, and also the Book of Revelation from which we are quoting.

"Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Who is John referring to, Jewish Christians? But what about the Gentiles? Can it be said of them that they are the people who have the faith of Jesus but do not keep God's commandments? This is absolute nonsense. If this is the case, the Book of First John is written only to Jewish Christians.

If First John is written only to Jewish Christians, then we Gentile Christians need to cut it out of our New Testament along with the hope of seeing Him and being like Him when He appears. Are you ready to cut First John out of your New Testament? If not, you had better start keeping Christ's commandments if you desire to be found in Him when He returns.

The Lord Jesus said to the Jew, Nicodemus, "You must be born again to see or enter the Kingdom of God." This was said by a Jew to a Jew and recorded by John, the Jew. Is this therefore "Jewish ground"? Are Jews the only people who must be born again to see or enter the Kingdom of God? It is time to wake up. We Christians do not understand the new covenant! We have been deceived royally by the enemy.

Satan desires to prevent us from keeping the commandments of the New Testament because when we do Christ is formed in us. When Christ is formed in us Satan's kingdom has come to an end. Satan has no fear of the Church, only of Christ being formed in the Church. This is why in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelation Satan is attempting to devour not the Church but He who is to be formed in the Church as the members keep God's commandments.

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14--NIV)

You may tell me that you are going to eat of the tree of life and enter through the gates into the new Jerusalem by grace, that is, by forgiveness. I am going to respond to you that you never will enter the new Jerusalem solely by forgiveness. According to God's holy, unchanging, eternal word the only way you can eat of the tree of life and enter through the gates into the holy city is by washing your robes.

How do we get a clean robe?

The next verse tells us.

Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) (Revelation 19:8--NIV)

The only way a believer can wash his robes is by confessing his sins and then turning away from them. The fine linen of the saints is not imputed righteousness but the actual righteousness produced by the righteous acts of the saints.

But what about the Great Commission? Aren't we to go to every nation and tell people they can enter Heaven by grace without keeping God's commandments?

I know this is how the Great Commission is viewed today. But do you know what the Great Commission actually states?

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)

I can hear the Dispensationalists saying, "But this is Jewish ground because we are saved by grace. We do not have to obey everything Christ commanded."

Oh no! We are commissioned to teach the nations to obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian Gospel is not that we do not have to keep God's commandments (out of which bottomless pit was this teaching drawn?) but that God is ready to forgive us and furnish us with Divine assistance so we can begin to keep His commandments.

Grace is Divine assistance--the authority, power, and wisdom to serve God. We have made grace an alternative to righteous behavior. Can you imagine such an error?

Did the Lord Jesus say we are to keep His commandments?

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. (John 14:15--NIV)

Oh, I forgot. "This is Jewish ground. This statement was made by the Lord prior to His resurrection and was superseded by the writings of the Apostles."

Then how about being a room in the Father's house, found in the same chapter? Is this venerable hope of the Christian people also Jewish ground? The hope of being a room in the Father's house also was given by the Lord prior to His resurrection. Was this hope also superseded by the writings of the Apostles? Are the Jews to be the only rooms in the Father's house?

John said:

Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work. (II John 1:9-11--NIV)

Jesus Christ taught us to keep His commandments. The modern Christian teaching is Gnostic heresy, the very doctrine John was resisting.

The Jews do not have the grace of the new covenant to enable them to keep the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only born-again Christians have this kind of Divine enablement.

The modern teaching of grace produces unrighteous, unclean, disobedient behavior--the very opposite of the intended effect of the new covenant.

The solution, and the only solution, for the current distressful condition of the Christian churches is not a "rapture" to Heaven (another falsity of Dispensational theory). It is repentance, that is, a turning to God and the keeping of His commandments.

You cannot build your house on the rock by giving mental assent to the blood atonement and the coming of the Lord. You build your house on the rock only by keeping Christ's commandments.

It is time for a reformation of Christian thinking.

The Commandments of Jesus by Inference

It appears most of the commandments given by Jesus were given by inference, although He issued a few direct commandments.

It appears also that most of the commandments given by Jesus' Apostles were given directly, although a few were by inference.

In any event, whether the commandment was inferred or expressed by Jesus in the Gospels or by His Apostles in the Epistles, every commandment found in the New Testament comes from Jesus Christ and is to be viewed as God's commandment. They are not just suggestions or good ideas, they are commandments.

We cannot keep the commandments of Jesus Christ in our own strength. We have to keep on coming to the Throne of Grace to receive the strength and wisdom necessary to keep the commandments. The Holy Spirit will always help us do what the Word declares. This is why the Spirit of God is here among us!

Let us now look at a few of the commandments Jesus gave us by inference. These are the commandments referred to in the Book of First John.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3--NIV)

Didn't the Lord put this nicely? But we get the point. We by inference are being commanded to be poor in spirit. If we choose to be poor in spirit, and the Holy Spirit will help us if we ask Him, we will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

But what if we are not poor in spirit? We will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Can I be prevented from inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven and still be saved?" I can just hear someone asking this, so determined are we believers to not do what the Lord said.

The answer is, "You will not inherit or enter the Kingdom of Heaven, your eternal abode will be outer darkness."

But what about "grace"? If you call on God in Jesus' name, God will send you the grace to be poor in spirit. You simply cannot use new-covenant grace as a way of entering the Kingdom of Heaven while you remain rich in your own ways.

The Christian churches of today are attempting to use new-covenant grace as a way of getting around the commandments of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine such doctrinal chaos? Such a religious mess? It is no wonder the people of the United States have little confidence in the Christian people or their churches!

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4--NIV)

Aren't Christians supposed to be happy all the time? If you are happy all the time you will not be comforted by the Lord.

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. (James 4:8,9--NIV)

Jesus by inference commands us to mourn. James directly commands us to mourn. Every commandment issued by the Lord Jesus can be found in the Epistles, if I am not mistaken.

Look at these wonderful commandments!

Come near to God.

Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James is addressing Christians.

Grieve, mourn, and wail.

Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

If we ask God to help us keep these commandments He shall. Then He will comfort us, and the comfort of God far outweighs in value any gloom we experience.

I am not suggesting weird behavior at this point. It is, however, a wise and righteous person who shuns the levity and foolishness that so often abounds in the Christian churches. We are living in serious days and we need to be watchful in prayer at all times lest we be deceived by the enemy.

There is nothing wrong with being serious, and the Lord Jesus is commanding us to keep ourselves in a sober frame of mind, always ready to weep with those who are being afflicted.

The Christians of the early centuries had many opportunities to grieve, mourn, and wail. Let us keep in mind that our nation is filled with behavior that is abominable to God, and Divine judgment cannot be far off. Let us always remember this and not conduct ourselves in a frivolous, silly manner. Then we will not be knocked off our feet when disaster strikes. Also we will be able to comfort others. When someone is hurting they do not wish to be approached by gleeful people but by those who weep with them and comfort them.

This is what the Lord is commanding.

Will we be comforted because we are being "saved by grace"? No, we will be comforted because we are mourning.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5--NIV)

By inference the Lord Jesus is commanding us to be meek. Meekness is patience, humility, gentleness, submission to authority and teaching. The opposite of meekness is impatience, pride, harshness, and resistance to authority and teaching.

Who will inherit the earth--those who have "taken the four steps of salvation"? Numerous people who have taken the four steps of salvation and fill the Christian churches are impatient, proud, harsh, and resistant to authority and teaching. Their number is legion.

The question is, Who will inherit the earth? The answer God gave us is: "the meek."

Here is the mammoth Christian misunderstanding. We are looking to Divine grace to provide an alternative to meekness so we can be impatient, proud, harsh, and resistant to authority and teaching and still inherit the earth.

Now I ask you, do you really believe God gave us grace through the Lord Jesus Christ so proud, haughty, arrogant, unteachable believers can inherit the earth?

If you believe this with all your heart, join the majority of Christian people.

Do we realize we are making the words of Jesus Christ of no effect by our traditions? Do we even care this is so?

Am I teaching we can be meek, refuse to receive Jesus Christ, and still inherit the earth?



I am teaching nothing of the kind. The Bible tells us clearly that to refuse Jesus Christ is to refuse the Divine salvation, to choose darkness over light.

Rather, I am maintaining that the purpose of Divine grace is to make us meek, patient, humble, gentle, and accepting of authority and teaching.

If grace does not change our personality in this manner it has been made of no effect.

The Word of Jesus Christ cannot be altered in any manner. It is the meek, and only the meek, who will inherit the earth.

I have heard that Dispensationalism teaches the Jews inherit the earth and the Gentiles inherit Heaven. This is the insanity, corruption, and destruction that proceeds from the teaching of Dispensationalism. The arrogant, haughty Gentile believers inherit Heaven, Paradise, the angels, God Himself, while the arrogant, haughty, quarrelsome Jews inherit the earth.

No, Brother, and Sister, the Jews and Gentiles who are part of the Lord Jesus Christ are the one Seed of Abraham. Christ through His Spirit teaches the Seed meekness. Then we are heirs of Heaven, earth, the angels, the new Jerusalem, the saved nations of the earth, and God Himself.

Jews and Gentiles who are not part of Jesus Christ will be judged by the Lord and receive their proper reward when standing before the White Throne.

If Christians threw away their commentaries and read the Scriptures, I think the world would be a better place.

Whew!

We have mentioned three commandments the Lord gave by inference: that we must be poor in spirit if we would inherit the Kingdom of Heaven; that we must mourn if we would receive the Divine comfort; and that we must be meek if we would inherit the earth.

There are many more such implied commandments found in the Gospels. They are to be read, prayed over, and obeyed as the Lord helps. If we obey them Christ will be formed in us. If we do not obey them Christ will not be formed in us and we will be cut from the Vine, from Christ.

Let us now look to see if Christ gave us any direct commandments in the Gospel accounts.

#### The Direct Commandments of Jesus

The first words of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus were a direct commandment. Both John and Jesus said the same thing:

And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4--NIV)

"The time has come," he [the Lord Jesus] said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15--NIV)

"Repent and believe." "Repent and believe." "Repent and believe."

These are direct commandments given by the Lord Jesus.

Our whole Christians life is to be one of repenting and believing. This is how we enter the Kingdom of God.

You may notice in the Book of Act that the Apostles invariably commanded repentance when they preached the forgiveness available through Jesus Christ.

To repent and believe are one act, actually. True belief always results in repentance.

Since to repent is a "work," repentance is not always preached today. The preaching is "believe and receive" not "repent and believe." There is a world of difference between "believe and receive" and "repent and believe."

To repent is to turn away from the world, the lusts of the flesh, and self will. Each day we are to renew our belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each day will bring to our attention a new area of our personality from which we need, by the Lord's help, to turn away. Each day we press into the Kingdom of God.

Our salvation is not a one-time occurrence. Salvation is always "today." The moment we cease repenting and believing, in that moment the forces of decay and death press into our personality.

The moment we cease brushing our teeth the forces of decay seek to enter. Tooth decay is always present, looking for an opportunity to cause harm. Worldliness, lust, and self-will are always present, looking for an opportunity to bring death into our personality, to drive from us the Kingdom of God.

"Repent and believe." This is one of the greatest commandments of all and the means by which we enter the Kingdom of God.

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." (Mark 1:17--NIV)

It is my personal point of view that one of the most damaging burdens placed on today's Christian believers is that we all are supposed to be personal workers; we all are to go out into the world and get souls saved; we all are to have "a passion for souls."

Whenever there is a damaging burden it has originated with Satan. What does Satan have in mind by oppressing believers with this unscriptural responsibility? It is to get their minds off the Lord and onto their own dead works. It is to keep the believers in guilt and confusion because the great majority of them do not have the Divine grace that will enable them to be a personal worker or to go into all the world and "save souls." Neither do they have the "passion for souls" (where did this unscriptural concept originate?).

It is scriptural to have a passion for Jesus. It is not scriptural to have a passion for souls. I think this expression reveals the influence of Humanism.

This writer has on occasion felt the passion of Christ for particular people and in one instance for an entire nation. I expect to visit that nation in the day of the Lord. That emotionally wrenching experience will probably be vindicated at some point.

But usually I go about my business without any great "passion for souls." I always have a passion for Christ but not always for souls. I must be a heartless believer, although I am giving my life, in obedience to Jesus, to attempt to explain the way the new covenant operates.

The Lord did not command us to go fishing but to follow Him!

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, (I Peter 3:15--NIV)

If we live in Christ and walk as He walked, people will be drawn to us. Then we can respond to their questions. This is what the Bible teaches and what we ought to do.

Christian believers announce with one voice that "we ought to go out and get souls saved; we ought to have a passion for souls; we all have been charged to evangelize; we must bear witness to everyone we meet."

In the meanwhile many such "evangelists" often live like the devil himself with their gossip, slander, backbiting, selfishness, self-centeredness, manipulations to get their own way, divisiveness, covetousness, arrogance, haughtiness, impatience, immorality, spiritual pride, party loyalties, and everything else of evil report. Instead of being peacemakers they bring hatred and division wherever they go.

The Christian churches are bywords in America because of the evil works of the so-called Christians.

The Lord did not command us to be fishers of men, please note carefully. He commanded us to follow Him. When we follow Him He always makes us fishers of men.

First He has to get our personality straightened out. What fish is going to be drawn to a blind, deaf novice thrashing around in the water and using the wrong kind of bait?

This is what we are until we follow the Lord and He makes us a fisher of men.

There are all kinds of fish and all kinds of bait and techniques for catching them.

Each one of us is a unique kind of bait. The Lord instructs us until we are using the right technique, some for trout, some for cod, some for eel.

It may be true for most of us that the "fishing" we do we are not even aware of. It is the fruit of a personality walking continually in the light of the Presence of Christ. There is rest and refreshing in this.

As far as I'm concerned, we could do without the work of proselyting being enjoined on the newly converted!

As Oswald Chambers says, when the people around us sense our desire to proselyte them they smell the gunpowder and are repulsed. Yet Brother Chambers has proven to be quite a successful fisherman!

We are commanded to leave all and to follow Christ. Whoever obeys the Lord's command will be made a unique bait for specific fish that the Lord desires. Let Christ build His own Church. You concentrate on following Him as closely as you can.

Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. (Luke 6:22,23--NIV)

Christ commanded us to rejoice and leap for joy when people hate us, when they exclude us, when they insult us, when they reject our name as evil--all because we belong to Jesus Christ.

This commandment runs directly against our evil, adamic nature. It crucifies us. In order to obey it we have to pray fervently until the fires of the flesh are extinguished. Then the light and the glory of the Holy Spirit enter us and we can rejoice and leap for joy.

All people, including Christians, have a problem when they believe they are being treated unjustly. When we are persecuted unjustly in any manner our adamic nature comes to the front. The desire for revenge is tremendous but the Spirit of God is stronger.

If we avenge ourselves, or develop a bitter, hateful attitude, continually speaking angrily of those who have harmed us, Christ will not be formed in us. If Christ is not formed in us we will be cut from the Vine whether or not our doctrine is correct and we have taken "the four steps of salvation" (actually there are four billion steps of salvation!).

We have not been given an option. If we are to be the children of the prophets, to have a great reward in Heaven, we simply must obey God's commandments.

We have seen then that by inference and direct commandment the Lord Jesus instructed us how we should behave. To ignore these commandments, saying we are saved by grace and do not have to keep them, is to ignore and disobey God. Let no person be so foolish as to believe he or she can ignore and disobey God and then be saved by grace and mercy. This is the great error, the massive satanic hoax of our day.

Let us proceed to the Apostles. When the Apostles issued a commandment, either by inference or direct injunction, it was Christ who was speaking in them. Most or all of the commandments given by Christ in the four Gospels can be found in the Epistles in one form or another. There was no change because we passed from the Gospels to the Epistles! It is all one Christ, one set of commandments. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, not by the Apostles themselves.

#### The Commandments of the Apostles by Inference

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24--NIV)

At this point the Apostle Paul did not directly command us to crucify our sinful nature with its passions and desires, he merely said such an action is true of all who belong to Christ Jesus. A few verses earlier Paul stipulated that if we live according to our sinful nature we will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

But in actuality Paul is commanding us to crucify our sinful nature with its passions and desires. If we do not do so we will not inherit the Kingdom of God, and it will be true of us that we do not belong to Jesus Christ.

If we do not crucify our sinful nature, presenting our body a living sacrifice, Christ will not be formed in us. Will we be "saved" anyway? If one can be saved without inheriting the Kingdom of God, without belonging to Jesus Christ, maybe it is true that we will be saved anyway (whatever that would mean).

The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:8--NIV)

While Paul did not command us in so many words he actually was requiring that we renounce our sinful nature and walk in the Spirit of God. He declared plainly that if we do not do so we will not reap eternal life. Divine grace does not operate to destroy the Kingdom principles of cause and effect--never!

But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast. (Hebrews 3:6--NIV)

The writer of Hebrews does not command us to hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast. He merely warns us that if we do not do so we will not be part of Christ's house.

However the writer by inference indeed is commanding us to hold faithfully to our courage and our hope in Christ. He reminds us of the Jews who were saved out of Egypt and then perished in the wilderness because they did not continue in faith in God.

The Apostles not only issued indirect and direct commands but also portrayed Christ's commandments by their lives of righteousness, holiness, and obedience to God. Paul's efforts to bring material support to the poor believers is an example of the attitude Christ would have us take toward those in need.

We are way out of balance today with our bloated justification, a warped, poisonous doctrine that destroys God's intention under the new covenant. Will the Christian churches of America every recover from the false doctrine that is prevalent?

The Direct Commandments of the Apostles

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. (Ephesians 4:28--NIV)

The above verse is a death blow to the American Christian. He would not dream of working with his hands in order to share with those in need.

He might steal, or he might refrain from stealing. But if he works it is to support himself and his family. If he is making more money than he needs he will store it in the bank or invest it in stocks and bonds.

To work in order to share with those in need is very, very difficult for the American believer--as difficult as leading a camel through the eye of a needle.

What do we do with such an "impossible" commandment? We go directly to God's Throne in Heaven, as we must with every other commandment of the New Testament, and gain the wisdom and strength needed to obey this direct injunction.

The Apostle Paul did not issue this command in order for it to be ignored. He was hearing from Christ and passing on the Word to the Christians of Ephesus.

We Americans worship money, not God but money. The American who does not look to money for security, survival, happiness, success, is quite rare. We are in a culture driven by money, that holds up money as the highest good.

The American believer has a hard time entering the Kingdom of God because of his worship of money. If he does not gain victory over his trust in money, over his worship of money, over his amassing money, Christ will not be formed in him.

No person can serve God and money! Mammon, the god of riches, is the only one of the multitude of Roman and Greek gods that the Lord Jesus mentioned as being a rival of the God of Heaven.

"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." (Matthew 6:24--NIV)

All true Christians are required to come out of the ways of the world, to not touch the uncleannesses of the world. We are in the world but not of the world.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1,2--NIV)

"Offer your bodies as living sacrifices." "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

We Americans are quite worldly. We are conformed to the world by magazines, the newspapers, the television, the motion pictures, by billboards, by our schools, and now by the Internet.

To keep from being harmed by our culture would be impossible if we were not able to go to the Lord continually for the wisdom and strength to rise above the moral pollution.

We are not to go to the motion pictures if there is any profanity, any allusions to sexual activity outside of marriage, any witchcraft, any violence, any drunkenness, any smoking, or any amassing of money. We are not to expose ourselves or our children to that which we have been commanded to renounce.

Does this sound strict to you? It is! We Christians who are members of the royal priesthood are required to be holy as our God is holy. Without holiness no individual will ever see the Lord, will ever be able to serve as a ruling priest.

There are numerous things to do in place of going to the theater that are righteous, holy, and will impress our personalities and those of our children with that which conforms us to the image of God.

The same holds true for television, the Internet, even books. We as Christians have been commanded to come out from the world and cleanse ourselves through the blood of Jesus and the Spirit of God. If we do not, Christ will not be formed in us.

If this appears to you to be excessively strict it is because the Christian churches in America are in a backslidden condition. Our concept of the normal Christian life is skewed in favor of worldly, sinful behavior.

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and

honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; And that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. (I Thessalonians 4:1-6--NIV)

Here are four direct commandments, given by the Apostle Paul by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

"You should be sanctified."

"You should avoid sexual immorality."

"Each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen."

"No one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him."

Are we to keep these directives or is Divine grace an alternative to observing them? The truth is, Christ will not be formed in us if we do not, through the Holy Spirit, keep these admonitions. They are God's own commandments enjoined on us!

## Conclusion

If we love Jesus Christ we will keep His commandments.

Christ has given us the blood atonement, access to the Holy of Holies in Heaven, water baptism, the Holy Spirit, His Substance conceived in us, the body and blood of the new covenant to eat and drink, the Word of God, Christian friends and the assembly of fervent brothers and sisters in the Lord, the gifts and ministries of the Spirit, and sometimes opportunities to serve.

All of these are to help us keep the commandments of God. The Jews of the old covenant did not have many of these supernatural aids; neither did they have commandments as strict as ours. The Jew was commanded to set aside his own life one day a week. We have been commanded to set aside our own life seven days of every week, twenty-four hours of every day. We have been commanded to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow the Lord Jesus.

We have been given much more grace than were the Jews. We have been issued much stricter commandments than were the Jews.

Christianity has suffered incomprehensible harm by the doctrine that Divine grace relieves us from keeping God's commandments. What would be true of the twentieth century if all the believers in Jesus Christ had prayed to God until they were able to keep the commandments found in the New Testament?

America is in a deplorable moral state today--the immorality prevalent in our culture is incredible--and we are going to suffer for it. If enough Christians repent of their sins, turn to God, and pray for righteousness, God may be willing to restore righteousness to the United States. But His way of doing this may not be pleasing to the flesh.

Let us all keep God's commandments. Let us join our prayer with Amos that righteousness will roll on as a continual stream in our government, in our churches, in our schools, in our families and homes, in our own hearts.

But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! (Amos 5:24--NIV)

The righteous Lord loves righteousness. The holy Lord wants us to be holy as He is holy. Our Father requires total obedience on the part of His children.

Iron righteousness, fiery holiness, stern obedience to the Father.

This is the cry of the Spirit today, His call to the churches.

Will you answer that call, saving yourself and those who hear you?

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