

UNDERSTANDING THE COMMANDS OF GOD

A proper understanding of the commands of God is essential to live a successful Christian life as God intends. There must be an understanding of the distinction of the commands of God under the Old Testament Law and those under the New Covenant of Grace. Many Christians make no distinction between the two and thus struggle in frustration in their lives. Before I explain the difference between the commands under the Old Testament Law and those under the New Covenant of Grace I want to give a vivid illustration first of the nature of the commands under the Law.

The commands under the Law can be pictured this way:

God gives you a brand new Lamborghini, but it is broken apart into 613 sections. You are commanded by God to put all 613 pieces together perfectly. If you can do this you may keep the Lamborghini for your own and enjoy all it brings. If you fail to perfectly assemble all 613 sections into one complete unit that functions perfectly then you will be killed. Also, God gives you no tools to do this with and no instructions on how to do it and will not help you do it if you ask Him. It is entirely upon you to make this happen! And one more thing... if you were able to put it all together God provides no gas to make it run!

Would you like to take God up on this offer? Well, the Israelites took such an offer from God when He gave them the Old Testament Law. God gave 613 individual commands. They would have to keep all of them perfectly in order to experience life and the blessings of God.

Gal 5:3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a **debtor to keep the whole law.**

Jas 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and **yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.**

If you decided to take God at His offer you could not just keep the commands you liked and could do, and leave the others undone. You were a debtor to do all the Law. If you stumbled in even one point, you were guilty of breaking all of the Law. The Law was 613 commands but the Law was actually one unit. All 613 commands had to be kept together or it was broken. If one piece of the Lamborghini was missing then the car could not

function. Under the Law if you broke God's law you were deserving of death.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It was the mercy of God that He allowed each person under the Law to sacrifice an innocent animal in their place when they sinned. An animal died in place of you. These sacrifices all pictured Jesus being our perfect sacrifice. He took all our sins and gave us His righteousness at the cross.

It is important to note that God offered no assistance in keeping the 613 commands. You had to do it yourself by your own will-power and resources. God gave no assistance whatsoever in keeping all the commands. You had to come up with that. **He would give you no help in keeping the Law if you asked Him. This is why there is not one single command to pray in the entire Law. Not one of the 613 commands is to pray!** From Exodus to Deuteronomy not one time does God tell the people to pray to him for assistance. The only one who prayed during this time was Moses and He prayed that God would not kill the whole bunch of them! God told the Israelites that if they would keep all of the Law then they would live.

Deu 30:16 in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that **you may live** and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

The most the Law could do was to keep you alive if you kept it. If you failed to keep it you would be sentenced to death. The problem with the people of the Old Testament was that they were already dead spiritually but did not know it! The Law could not impart life, it could just maintain life.

Gal 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! **For if there had been a law given which could have given life,** truly righteousness would have been by the law.

Gas for the Lamborghini is like having life. It makes the car come alive. It provides the spark! The Law could not provide life. It could not give you gas! It gave no spark! Living under the Law was not difficult; it was impossible! Just like putting together the Lamborghini perfectly without any

tools and trying to operate it with no gas is impossible, so is trying to fulfill God's Law perfectly in order to experience His life and blessings. God has a better way- a sure way for us to experience His life and blessings.

Rom 4:16 Therefore *it is of faith that it might be according to grace*, so that the **promise might be sure** to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

God provided grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was born of a woman born under the Law. He lived for 33 years and lived as our representative. He perfectly fulfilled all of the Law by His perfect life. When this was accomplished, Jesus went to the cross and took all our sins, trespasses, and offenses and paid for them by His shed blood. He took the wrath and penalty for them by dying in our place as the Lamb of God. We can receive Christ's perfect righteousness as a gift by our faith. **We do not achieve righteousness before God; we receive righteousness from God as a gift of grace.**

I am now going to give an illustration of commands under the New Covenant of Grace.

Commands under the New Covenant of Grace are like this:

God gives you a brand new Lamborghini totally complete and intact with a life-time supply of gas. He gives it as a sheer gift with no strings attached. Along with this wonderful gift he gives you a complete directions manual on how to use it, operate it, and handle what has been given to you. The directions in the manual are not for the purpose of obtaining the Lamborghini, but what to do with it, how to maintain it, and what it will do for you when you operate it correctly. **The New Covenant commands are directions on how to use what has already been given to you!** Many Christians fail to see the distinction between the commands of the Old Testament and the commands of the New Testament and therefore live in failure and frustration.

There are many commands in the New Testament. They are in the imperative mood in the Greek which is the Greek command. Here are some examples-

Rom 12:9 *Let love be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

Rom 12:10 *Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

Rom 12:11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

Rom 12:12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

Rom 12:13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

Rom 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Rom 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Rom 12:17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

Rom 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Rom 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

Rom 12:20 Therefore "IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM; IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD."

Rom 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Eph 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "LET EACH ONE OF YOU SPEAK TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOR," for we are members of one another.

Eph 4:26 "BE ANGRY, AND DO NOT SIN": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,

Eph 4:27 nor give place to the devil.

Eph 4:28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Eph 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

1Th 5:15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.
1Th 5:16 Rejoice always,
1Th 5:17 pray without ceasing,
1Th 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
1Th 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit.
1Th 5:20 Do not despise prophecies.
1Th 5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.
1Th 5:22 Abstain from every form of evil.

Now if you did not know the distinction between Old Testament commands and New Covenant grace commands you will think you have a more strict set of rules in the New Testament than you do in the Old! It would be just as impossible to have or maintain a right standing with God and get God to bless you under the New Testament as the Old. Many Christians struggle under guilt, condemnation, fear, and failure because they do not understand the nature of these New Covenant commands. It is important to note that in the New Testament epistles [letters to the church] that each book can be divided up into two parts. The **FIRST** part of each letter describes what God has done for us and given to us because we are in Christ. It describes the gift of grace given to us when we got saved. It reveals to us the Lamborghini given to us [Christ and His righteousness]. This is an indescribable gift. The **SECOND** half of each letter tells you what to do with what has been given to you. It gives you directions on how to use the grace given to you. We are told to love others because the love of God has already been shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit of God. **The commands are given not for us to obtain grace, but they are given as directions on how to use the grace given to us.** We have been given life, righteousness, and the blessings of God freely by the finished work of Christ.

Eph 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,

2Pe 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

God in the New Covenant gives us a Lamborghini and then tells us how and where to drive it! He provides a never ending supply of gas to empower the Lamborghini. All you have to do is get in and drive it! It does all the work! If we trust in Christ, He will live His life in and through us! [Gal. 2:20]

God makes things simple in the New Covenant. God took all the various commands in the New Testament letters and boiled them down to one command.

1Jn 3:23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

God boils down the commandments to one single commandment-Believe on the name [person and finished work] of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another. It is interesting to note it is called His commandment [singular] but lists two - believe and to love. **Actually loving others and all other commands will be fulfilled by trusting in Christ who lives within us.** As we trust in Christ who is Love to love FOR us we will be able to live a supernatural love walk. When we love others we will keep all the moral laws of God. However, we must have Christ to have this love. One day an expert in the Law come to Christ and he asked Jesus was the most important commandment was. Jesus asked him for his opinion. He said to him.

Luk 10:27 So he answered and said, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND,' and 'YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'"

Luk 10:28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

This lawyer said to love God with all your being and to love others as YOURSELF. His focus was on our ability to love God perfectly and to love others with the love we have within and for ourselves. Jesus said to the man-do this and you will live! He told him what the Law said. If you can do this on your own, then you will live. But the problem was that this man could not do this himself. He did not have the right kind of love to love God perfectly and to love others. God calls us to higher place in the New Covenant. We are not called to love God with our own love or others as **OURSELF**.

Joh 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Jesus gives a new commandment of grace. He commands us to love others with His love, not with our own love or how we love ourselves. If we will but place our trust in Christ and His finished Work then we will find ourselves loving God and loving others by His Spirit within us!

The key to fulfilling the commands of God in the New Covenant is found in trusting [having faith in] Christ doing them FOR us, IN us, and THROUGH us. When we do this His Spirit empowers us to walk in His life and for us to live a God honoring life. He gives us the Lamborghini, the gas to drive it, and most importantly He helps us know how and where to drive it! What a great God we serve!