

THE COMMANDS OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH PAUL

"If any man thinketh himself to be . . . spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord," I Cor. 14:37.

In the year 1927, on one of my furloughs, I saved the month of June to spend with my mother, then 77. But to my amazement and chagrin, she had no time for me. Her church was unanimously set to read the Bible through in the month of June. Though she had read it through nearly as many times as she was years old, she heartily joined in. So I only saw her at meal time! Disconsolate, I settled down in my loneliness and mused: "Now what shall I do?" At once it came to me: "If everybody else is reading their Bible, maybe you had better read YOURS!" So I began. But I don't like reading the Bible as if all were of equal value. I have read it through repeatedly since a child, straight along. But I care little for those old genealogies. I prefer to STUDY some spiritual masterpiece. So I found myself looking at the Great Commission. My eyes dwelt for a while on the words: "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Finally, there seemed almost to jump at me the dire fact that I had never given five minutes of my life to keeping the climax of what the Great Commission demands of me, and of every one who recognizes its authority in his life. Naturally, I had preached on such commands as "Repent," "Believe," "Be baptized," etc. But I had preached on them incidentally, as subjects, not as units in a total array of the commands of Jesus. I felt stunned, like a renegade.

With a big tablet by my side, I sat down and read the Gospels slowly through and copied every command given by our Lord to any one. There were 182 commands of Jesus in Matthew, 93 in Mark, 148 in Luke and 66 in John's Gospel, a total of 489. Of these, 67 were found in duplicate, more than once in the same Gospel or repeated in more than one of the four. 180 commands were private or purely personal, not of any possible general application. Jesus said that "no man know it," in Math. 9:30; but in 11:4, "Go shew" what they had heard and seen. But they were different commands, to different people, so not contradictory. Our Lord told Thomas to touch him, even

inside the wounds of Calvary, but to Mary he said: "Touch me not," When the abiding commands were all noted I found that 22 were hyperbolic (too strong to be taken literally), 30 evangelical, containing the gospel; 16 moral; 13 ecclesiastical, about church life and discipline; 41 social; 3 civic; 31 practical; 83 devotional; 16 ministerial; 10 missionary; 41 eschatological; and 2 domestic. These I taught, in every possible way and on every proper occasion, the rest of my ministry in Brazil (28 years). I wrote them in a book, in Portuguese and then in Spanish, taught them in many schools and Bible Institutes over South America, and orally in the homeland as opportunity offered.

Things come to you gradually, some times; startlingly as others. The commands of Jesus came on my horizon startlingly that June day. Recently, just as startlingly, it came over me that Christianity was not finished during Christ's lifetime. He promised the Spirit to reveal much else. And again I was shocked to take to heart understandingly the fact that Paul's commands are the divine commands of the revealing Spirit just truly as were the commands of Jesus, the Word of another person in the Trinity.

So I started in to copy the commands of Paul. I found a total of 383 commands of Paul, or 106 less than those of Jesus. But the verse quoted above obliges me to consider them the commands of the Holy Spirit, in a Christianity enlarged and developed far beyond what it was during the days of Jesus on the earth.

Look at the subjects of these commands of the Spirit that were given through Paul, and the number in each category: commands as to apostolic authority (4), abiding in converted state (4), adultery (3), counsel to the aged (1), submission to public authorities (10), brotherly love (3), business acumen and zeal (2), childlikeness (1), a cheerful mien(1), Christian character (69), Christ magnified (4), Christian fellowship (18), imitation of Christ (1), contributions to church or for church members (2), conformity to courteous social customs held proper and urgent (2), church discipline (16), church ideals (20), charity (in modern sense of the word) (4), church ordinances (in the larger sense of the word **ordinances**) (4),

comfort (1), communion with God (1), cooperation of churches (5), conscience (1), conditions of salvation (repentance and faith) (2), doctrine of the churches (6), counsel to an orderly life (1), the duty of conformity to current obsolete social customs, when and where they still prevail (2), church and state (2), contentment (2), commands as to persons of the Trinity with reference to the distinct mission of each (24), against cynicism (2), deceit and ways of deception (1), deacons (1), demons (1), enemies of good (2), Christian fellowship (1), concerning the ignorant of the truth (1), devotion to goodness (2), democratic ideals (3), the duty of considering obsolete the demands of Jewish law, as to worship and customs (1), the duty to work in a faction, where the church, or a majority in control, goes wrong and resists the truth (1), saving faith in Christ crucified and risen (1), faith as belief of the truth (2), the Christian's fall (1), fear of the Lord, reverence (3), fruit of the Spirit (2), spiritual gifts (3), giving or stewardship of money and material possessions (2), home life (4), duty of hospitality (1), humility (5), against idolatry (2), the holy kiss (1), counsels to ministers (6), ideals and work of the ministry (18), intercession (4), the Jews, in the plans of revelation (3), joy (3), demands for justice (1), the Lord's Supper (5), manliness (3), marriage (12), morals (4), obedience of children (10), reverence for the ministry, including cooperation with them, and the fulfilling of one's own ministry (26), as to miraculous gifts (1), Christian morals (4), patience, with all and in everything (2), perils of liberty abused (1), persecution (1), personal counsel (43), peace, peaceableness (4), pastoral responsibilities (4), Paul's personal demands (4), a spoiling philosophy (1), prayer (2), prophecy and its prophecies then (3), reverence for prophecy (4), for administration of justice (1), reverence for the moral law, its permanence in morals (5), repentance (1), reverence for God (1), reconciliation with God and with one another (1), personal responsibility (1), remembering Christ and elements of Christian faith and life (2), recognition of Paul's preaching and mission (2), rest of spirit (1), the way of salvation (1), speaking with tongues (3), the separate life of Christian work (1), the Scriptures, the duty to recognize their authority and to read them, in our Christian life (2), the second coming of Christ (2), self-preservation (1), separation from the world (1), sex (1), sincerity (1), sin rebuked (2), sins of the flesh, "lusts" (1), social life (7), spirituality (2), the stability of the moral law and its preservation in Christianity (1), steadfastness in the Christian life (2), slavery (14), support of the ministry (3), Sunday (1), speech of Christian qualities (1), study of men and measures as a guide to conduct (2), thanksgiving (3), thinking right (1), the Trinity (1), faithfulness to biblical traditions (1), virtues taught (2), unity in mind and life (1), uncomplaining spirit (1), sympathy for the be-

reaved (1), turning away from any religion of mere forms (1), the upward calling (1), uprightness (1), vengeance (2), wise use of time (1), the work of the ministry (1), women (14), wonder (1), widows and conduct toward widows (4) the world and worldliness (3), worship and reverence (2), yieldedness unto God and good (2), youthful lusts (1). Think of the number and variety of these commands and the large number of times some of them are commanded.

Now please do not think that summing these totals up will give the number of commands in Paul's writings mentioned above. A single command may feature in several classifications.

As I numbered the commands of Christ, long ago, I remember how my curiosity grew as to which was the command most numerous to be found in the totals of the commands of our Lord. To my amazement, it was: "**Fear not.**" Likewise Paul's most frequent command, by far, was negative: "**God forbid!**" The difficulty about that is that Paul did not say either "God" or "forbid," in his giving of this command to Christians. These are inventions of the King James' Version. All the Greek has in these passages is *me genoito*, which means "**May it not be!**" Free translation might adopt "**God forbid!**" or "**No, indeed!**" or similar negative words.

Since Paul's most frequent command is "**God forbid!**", we shall have to examine the various meanings which it has in its 14 occurrences in Paul's writings. Here they are: 1. Through Paul, God forbids adultery, I Cor. 6:15. 2. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world, Gal. 6:14. 3. "Is the law against the promises of God?" Gal. 3:21. 4. Is Christ responsible for the sins which those he has saved still commit?, Gal. 2:17. 5. God not to be blamed for partial unbelief of Israel, Rom. 3:4. 6. Is God subject to the charge of unrighteousness in his taking vengeance against evil-doers? Rom. 3:6. 7. God forbid that we should excuse continuing on in sin that grace may abound, Rom. 6:2. 8. Do we make void the Law (O. T. revelation) by accepting the good NEWS of salvation through Christ alone, through saving faith? Rom. 3:31. 9. God forbid the idea of our continual sinning because we are not under the law but under grace, Rom. 6:15. 10. God forbid the idea that the law is sin because it provokes resistance, and consequent sin, in our rebellious natures. A psychological fact does not excuse the fact thus recognized, Rom. 7:7. 11. Was the good law made death unto the sinner saved by grace, Rom. 7:13. No. We are saved once for all, having eternal life the moment we believe on the Savior. 12. Is God unrighteous because he said: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated"? God forbid. The wrath of God is his reaction to our fallen humanity in its sinful nature. 13. Has God cast away his people (all

Jews)? No? All the aspostles and the first churches were Jews and a lot of Jews are saved today by faith in their Messiah, just like we are. 14. The providential fall of Jewry has opened the door of missions to the Gentile world, so it is not to be considered an evil of history.

Thus we see that Paul's "**God forbid's**" condemn adultery, promote morality, justify the providential plans of God, set salvation clear as promoting holiness as well as justification, repudiate the continuity of the sinful life after the break of salvation. In Ephesians, the great classic of all literature on the subject of salvation, three simple words of the Epistle, were they but universally believed today, would end all Catholicism and Campbellism and most Protestant denominations, to say nothing of heathen religions. Those three words are "**NOT OF WORKS.**" No man can for a moment believe those three words and be a Catholic. They nullify instantly all systems of salvation that are wholly or in part by works. "**NOT OF WORKS.**" Salvation's classic makes it clear as the noonday sun the whole philosophy of works in Christianity and the Christian life. We are saved by grace, through faith, **NOT OF WORKS.** Salvation comes first, then good works **AFTER SALVATION.**

God has before prepared that we should **WALK IN THEM.** Works are not in order to salvation. To say they are is as great a lie as to call God the devil. **SALVATION IS IN ORDER TO GOOD WORKS.** In salvation God has made provision, guaranteed, ordained, and made clear that he has beforehand ordained, that we should ever walk, day by day, in them. This is the Ephesian message. It is the revealed program of the Christian life of good works. Preach it. It always works in the intelligent believer.

Look once again at the above array of divine commands through Paul. See how many, how varied, how inclusive, how vast, how deep and discriminating, how related to all life, and throughout the past, the present and the future, they are. And then you will find this knowledge from Paul's writings an education in morality, spirituality and every Christian initiative. And so we see how meaningful is that Scripture of Paul: "If any man thinketh himself to be spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

Heartily yours,

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W. C. T.