

The APOSTLE PAUL— Commandment Breaker, or Commandment Keeper?

Some claim Paul taught Christians to disobey the Ten Commandments. What did the Apostle really teach?

by Eugene M. Walter

MILLIONS of professing Christians assume Paul taught Christians to disobey the Ten Commandments. If you keep the law of God, it is claimed, you are under a curse! Chances are, you, too, have heard this teaching from childhood and have assumed it to be true.

To be sure, many have sincerely *thought* and *assumed* that this is New Testament teaching. But God commands us to *quit assuming*—to “Prove all things” (I Thess. 5:21).

Does it make any difference to God whether you obey Him?

How many have stopped to *personally examine* the writings of Paul—to really **PROVE** what Paul taught concerning the Ten Commandments? Have YOU?

How to Begin

Some of what Paul wrote is admittedly difficult to understand. Peter was inspired to say that Paul wrote “some things *hard to be understood*, which they that are unlearned and unstable **WREST**, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (II Pet. 3:16).

But on the other hand, Paul also wrote much which is *clear, plain* and **EASY** to understand. In those passages it would be impossible to **MISUNDERSTAND** what he is saying.

The logical way to understand Paul's teachings about the Ten Commandments is to go *first* to his plain, clear, straightforward statements on this subject. Only when we first understand these, are we ready to intelligently

study Paul's more difficult passages.

However, because the natural mind of man has a built-in hostility toward God and His Ten Commandment law (Rom. 8:7), men don't follow this logical approach.

Instead of understanding Paul's difficult statements in the light of his **PLAIN, CLEAR, easy-to-understand** words, many do just the opposite. They totally discard, reject and **IGNORE** Paul's direct, straightforward, **UNMISTAKABLE** statements about the Ten Commandments. They then twist and distort his more difficult-to-be-understood statements to their own fancy—and their own **DESTRUCTION**.

Let's not be guilty of such a mistake! Let's examine Paul's direct, straightforward - the - shoulder **POSITIVE** teaching about the Ten Commandments *first*. Only then can we hope to understand those passages which are more difficult.

What Paul Clearly Taught

Now what are some of Paul's clear statements about the Ten Commandments? One such statement is found in I Corinthians 6:9-10. Here Paul warns: “*Be not deceived*, neither fornicators, nor *idolaters*, nor *adulterers*, . . . nor *thieves*, nor *covetous*, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.

In this one short passage the apostle Paul names the breaking of **FOUR** of the Ten Commandments—idolatry, adultery, stealing and coveting—and dogmatically states that any found guilty of breaking these commandments will not inherit God's Kingdom! And he

sternly warns us not to deceive ourselves by thinking otherwise!

Notice another unmistakably clear and easy-to-understand passage: “Now the works of the flesh are these; *adultery*, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, *idolatry*, . . . wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, *murders*, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things *shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*” (Gal. 5:19-21).

This passage repeats two commandments—those pertaining to adultery and idolatry—and adds one more—the command against *murder* or *killing*.

This makes a total of **FIVE** commandments which Paul has specifically and unequivocally stated Christians must keep if they are to inherit or enter God's Kingdom. And since idolatry, which is mentioned in both of these passages, automatically breaks the First Commandment, which is “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3), Paul has actually commanded obedience to six of the Ten Commandments in just *two short passages*!

Now turn to Colossians 3:5-9. This passage reads: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and *covetousness*, which is *idolatry*: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of **DISOBEDIENCE** . . . But now ye also **PUT OFF ALL THESE**: anger, wrath, malice, *blasphemy*, *filthy communication out of your mouth*.

LIE NOT one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds."

This scripture names and *condemns* disobedience to *two more* of the Ten Commandments—*bearing false witness* or *lying*, and *taking God's name in vain* through *blasphemy* and *filthy talk* (See also Eph. 4:29).

Next open your Bible to Ephesians 6:1-2. Here we read, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. *Honor thy father and mother* which is the *first commandment with promise*." This is a direct quote from the Commandment in Exodus 20:12. Yet here Paul explicitly **COMMANDS** Christians to *obey* it!

This makes a total of **NINE** Commandments which Paul has distinctly and separately named as being binding on Christians. Only the Sabbath Command is left. Let's see what Paul taught about it.

Paul and the Fourth Commandment

Every argument imaginable has been advanced against the Command to keep holy the day God made holy (Ex. 20:8). Men want to use time as they please. They don't want God telling them what to do! Men hate this Command more than any other, it seems. It is the Test Commandment to show who God's people really are.

Did Paul obey this Commandment? Did he personally keep the day God made holy—and did he teach others to obey it? Let's not just guess or assume. Let's examine the Scriptures and "prove all things."

In Acts 13 we have the account of Paul and Barnabas coming to Antioch in Pisidia. There they "went into the synagogue **ON THE SABBATH DAY**, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

Then Paul stood up and spoke, preaching Christ to them.

"And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the **GENTILES** besought that these words might be

preached to them **THE NEXT SABBATH**" (Acts 13:14-15, 42).

Now since Paul was preaching "the *grace* of God" (v. 43), here was his opportunity to straighten out these Gentiles. Notice what Paul did.

"And the **NEXT SABBATH DAY** came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God." Here Paul waited a whole week in order to preach to the Gentiles upon the day God made holy!

But this is not the only passage showing that Paul obeyed this Commandment.

In Acts 18:1-11 there is the account of Paul living with Aquila and Priscilla for one and one-half years (vs. 11). During this time we read that he "reasoned in the synagogue **EVERY SABBATH**, and persuaded the Jews *and the Greeks* (verse 4).

Notice it! This passage tells us in plain language that Paul labored the six working days—not just five days—and taught in the synagogue *every Sabbath* for *one and one-half years!*

Likewise in Acts 17:2, Paul "*as his manner was*, went in unto them, and three **SABBATH DAYS** reasoned with them out of the Scriptures."

It was Paul's **MANNER**—his **CUSTOM**—to keep God's day holy. Did he follow Christ in this? Certainly! Jesus, "*as His custom was* . . . went into the synagogue **ON THE SABBATH DAY**" (Luke 4:16).

It was Christ's custom to keep the Sabbath. Paul followed Christ and he commands Christians: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). Paul kept the Fourth Commandment and he commands Christians to follow him in this regard.

For a final clincher of this fact, turn to Hebrews 4:9. Here, according to the original inspired Greek, Paul makes the direct statement, "There remaineth therefore a Sabbath observance to the people of God."

This passage is obscured in the King James Version which reads, "There remaineth therefore a *rest* to the people of God." But the word translated "rest" comes from the Greek word "sabbatis-

mos" and, as the marginal readings in many Bibles show, means "keeping of the Sabbath" or "Sabbath observance." Because the King James translators didn't believe this verse meant what it said they translated "sabbatismos" by the obscure word "rest."

This verse, then, tells us point blank that those who really are God's people will be keeping holy the day He made holy. If you want to know which day is the Christian Sabbath, write for the booklet entitled *Which Day Is The Christian Sabbath?* It's free.

Yes, Paul commanded obedience to the Fourth Commandment just as surely and firmly as he did to each of the other nine.

What Will YOU Do?

The evidence is overwhelming! Paul personally kept **ALL TEN** of God's Commandments. In doing this he followed in the steps of Jesus Christ. This is why Paul could say, "Be ye followers [imitators] of me, even as I also am of Christ."

The question for us today is, are **WE** willing to follow Christ, too? If we, like Paul, are *crucified* with Christ (Gal. 2:20), and Christ lives His life *in* us by His Spirit, Christ **IN** us will still keep God's Commandments, for He is the **SAME**, yesterday, today and forever. This subject is made plain in the booklet *What Kind of Faith is Required for Salvation?*

There are hundreds of additional New Testament passages covering obedience to God and His Law, both from the writings of Paul and others. Space does not permit it all to be included here. We have, however, given sufficient information to prove conclusively and beyond a shadow of a doubt that Paul **DID** teach obedience to the Ten Commandments.

Don't be deceived by those who teach disobedience! Many who hate God's law are very skillful at putting a clever twist on certain of Paul's more difficult passages to make it appear that the Ten Commandments are "done away."

Heed Peter's warning! Don't be deceived!