

## CHAPTER 3

### ALL I HAVE COMMANDED (What Jesus expects of His followers)

The conclusion reached in Chapter 2 was that our part in the solution to all the misery, heartache, dissatisfaction and sinful behavior which flows from our thirst for autonomy, is a total surrender of our autonomy-lust and total submission to the absolute authority of Jesus Christ over our lives. That would translate into unconditional obedience to all the commandments of Jesus and the apostles. There can be no doubt that Jesus intends this to be our goal. Right in the middle of His discussion of the commandments in the Sermon on the Mount, He said, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” [Matthew 5:48].

As we “Come unto Him ..... humble ourselves ..... learn of Him ..... take His yoke upon us ..... He will give us rest.” I believe the *rest* Jesus speaks of in that passage is the rest of obedience. As He administers the pain and opposition and testing required to bring us to surrender our craving for independence, we will grow closer to the goal. This is the sanctification process spoken of in Scripture. In my 78 years on this planet, I have seen it miraculously occur in many lives.

This chapter will focus on the commandments, and will include a complete list of those which relate specifically to financial stewardship. As mentioned earlier, I have never seen this focus in any of the books which I have read on the subject of finances.

The day before Jesus was crucified, He gathered his disciples together in a room and delivered to them what has become known as the Upper Room Discourse. It covers John Chapters 13 through 17 in the Bible. During this discourse, he used the word *commandment* nine times, making statements like, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” And, “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love.” Then a few days later, following his resurrection and just before he ascended into heaven, he commissioned his soon-to-be church with its mission in the world. He instructed us to do two things. Go into all the world and preach the gospel (evangelism), and teach the

converts to obey all that He commanded (discipleship). Wouldn't you conclude that keeping all His commandments and teaching others to keep them was a high priority for the church in Jesus' mind?

A friend and I began meditating on this a few months ago. We asked ourselves some questions. How can we be obedient disciples of Jesus if we don't know all His commandments? How many are there? How can we teach others to obey all his commandments if we don't know them all? How well is the church doing today at fulfilling the second half of the great commission? Frankly, we would answer, "miserably," based on our observations. We wonder if a lack of respect for and a lack of obedience to the commandments might not be the number one problem in the church today. We decided to research the New Testament for answers to these questions.

#### THE APOSTLES' COMMANDS VS. JESUS' COMMANDS

One question had to be answered before we could complete our list of commandments and make it a practical study guide to motivate the believer to obedience. That question is, what about all the commandments the apostles gave us in the remainder of the New Testament? Are they part of, equal to, or subordinate to the commandments of Jesus?

Look carefully at the first two verses of the book of Acts, "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given **commandments** unto the apostles whom he had chosen" [Acts 1:1-2 (KJV)].

The word "commandments" there in Acts 1:2 is the same word used to quote Jesus in the great commission when he referred to "all I have commanded." Just before he left this earth, he commissioned the Holy Spirit to give commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, so that as the church age began, these commandments wound up in the remainder of the New Testament. We concluded that all the commandments of the apostles must be added to the commandments Jesus spoke to form a composite "all I have commanded" as referred to in the great commission.

The apostles seem to agree with this interpretation as is clear from passages like the following.

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. You know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus [1 Thessalonians 4:1-2].

[T]hat you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles [2 Peter 3:2 (NASB)].

One of the more interesting things we discovered in our study was that many of the apostles' commandments are commentaries or applications of Jesus' words. This should be no surprise in light of Acts 1:2. For example, "Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" [2 Timothy 2:22 (NASB)]. This seems to be a commentary on Jesus' words, "whoever looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." And notice that Paul adds counsel on how to obey the command. ("Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those .... in fellowship with those .... who call on the Lord from a pure heart.") By the time several apostles have commented on or stated a command of Jesus in their own words, the believer should be better equipped to obey it.

#### IS DISOBEDIENCE EVER IN MY BEST INTEREST?

Our deepest concern is that many of the commandments are being widely disobeyed in the church today. It seems that the church is not taking the commandments seriously. The phrase that describes the church today, we believe, is "selective obedience," and the church in the main is tolerating it.

Remember our discussion in Chapter 2 about our lust for autonomy? The real issue is, do I decide what is in my best interest, or do I let God decide? More accurately, do I accept what God has already revealed to be in my best interest? What is that? His commandments are the simplest and clearest statement of what is in my best interest.

Obedience is always in my best interest, and God gave us no commandments which are impossible for us to keep.

The message of grace, at least in our circles, is well understood and clearly proclaimed, and that is as it should be. But grace invites abuse. Paul understood this and addressed it as an issue in the entirety of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans, which he began with the words, “What shall we say, then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may increase? May it never be.”

Like the Israelites in the Old Testament, most serious Christians today intend to keep the commandments, and often do, until they find themselves in a situation in which they perceive the pain of obedience to be greater than the pain of disobedience. That’s when they are likely to make the fatal misjudgment that willful disobedience of a command will be in their best interest. Sometimes they disobey anticipating that they can later repent and receive God’s forgiveness. This is dealing recklessly with the commandments. God hates willfulness. At best, such a person is saved, but faces severe discipline by the Lord, as Hebrews 12:5-12 clearly teaches. At worst, he has no basis for assurance of his salvation, and may not in fact be saved. Let us not forget that Jesus made it clear that some who think they are saved are in fact not saved, but they will not know it until they stand before Jesus in eternity and hear Him say, “I never knew you.”

But many Christians are convinced that grace eliminates accountability in eternity for our behavior on earth. This is a misunderstanding of what theologians call, “The Law of the Harvest,” taught throughout Scripture, and perhaps best stated in Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” The Law of the Harvest has nothing to do with salvation. And note, this was addressed to Christians.

Paul said, “God will render to every man according to his deeds ...” [Romans 2:6 (NASB)]. Both lost and saved will give an account of their behavior when they reach eternity. Hell will not be the same for all unbelievers, and heaven will not be the same for all believers.

Before you conclude that it might be in your best interest to disobey a command, consider the following:

Jesus said, “But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken” [Matthew 12:36].

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, **whether good or bad** [2 Corinthians 5:10].

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. **Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism** [Colossians 3:24-25].

If you think that God’s forgiveness eliminates accountability in eternity for temporal behavior, you are reading a different Bible than we are.

#### COMMANDS RELATING TO FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

We conclude this chapter with a list of the commandments of Jesus and the apostles relating to financial stewardship. This is only a small percent of the more than 2000 verses which I found on money in the Bible, but they are by far the most important ones, because they give direct instructions and commands on how to manage our finances. We hope you will read them many times, and refer back to them during the course of your study of this book. Just reading and meditating on them will give you a running start toward an understanding of Biblical Economics.

**Important Note:** These “one-liners” for each command are provided in order to get a quick grasp of all of the commands relating to the managing of money. They can be read at a single sitting, which we recommend doing. But obviously, most have been shortened. This involves some paraphrasing and some interpretations. We could be wrong in some of our interpretations, therefore we invite all comments, suggestions and criticism from the body of Christ. And these are not intended to be a substitute for the full text, which we suggest you read from the Scriptures in its context.

**FROM JESUS**

**MATTHEW**

- 5:33-37 Fulfill your promises. Do not make any vows which presume on the future. Such vows are evil.
- 5:42 Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.
- 6:2-4 Do your giving in secret and your heavenly Father will reward you.
- 6:11 Pray this: Give us this day our daily bread.
- 6:19-24 Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal.
- 6:19-24 Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust don't destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal.
- 6:25-34 Do not worry about what you will eat, drink or wear.
- 6:33 Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added as well.
- 22:17-21 Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.
- 25:21,23 Well done good and faithful servant. Come and share your master's happiness.

**LUKE**

- 6:38 Give and it will be given to you, for by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you in return.
- 12:15 Guard against every form of greed, for a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.
- 12:32-33 Don't be afraid. Sell your possessions and give to the poor, which will secure you treasure in heaven.
- 16:1-13 Make friends for yourselves by means of money, that when it fails, they may receive you in eternal dwellings.
- 16:1-13 If you have not been faithful with your money, who will entrust the true riches to you?

## All I Have Commanded

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### JOHN

6:27-29 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which Jesus gives you.

### OBSERVATIONS ON JESUS' COMMANDS

You probably noticed the emphasis on giving. It is one of the primary ways of storing treasure in heaven. Probably the most important command relating to money is store for yourself treasure in heaven, not on earth. That being the case, Jesus put a lot of emphasis on how our earthly needs are to be met. If we are faithful with His money, He will meet our needs. There is a strong implication that our job or profession is our pulpit, our place of ministry. But our employer is Jesus. He will supply our needs. Be a faithful servant and He will meet your earthly needs. And did you notice the heavy emphasis on accountability and reward in eternity based on how we handle our money on earth?

### FROM THE APOSTLES

#### ACTS

4:34-35 Those with a surplus share with those in need that the work may go forward.

20:35 Work hard, helping the weak, remembering Jesus' words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

#### ROMANS

12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS

9:1-14 Contribute to the financial support of those who minister the word to you.

9:24-27 Discipline yourself in such a way that you may earn a maximum reward for your ministry.

16:1-2 As God prospers you, set aside each week your gift toward the offering for the saints in Jerusalem.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS

8:7-8 Just as you abound in all other spiritual gifts, see that you also abound in giving.

## Biblical Economics

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- 8:11-15 Follow through and make good on your giving commitments. Those with a surplus share with those in need.
- 9:6-11 Give what you purpose in your heart to give, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
- 9:6-11 Understand those who sow sparingly will so reap, and also those who sow abundantly will reap abundantly.

### EPHESIANS

- 4:28 Don't steal any more, rather labor to perform what is good, so you can share with those in need.
- 6:5-8 Employees, be obedient to your employers, as unto Christ, knowing that you will receive back from the Lord.
- 6:9 Employers, treat well your employees, knowing their Master and yours is in heaven, and He is impartial.

### COLOSSIANS

- 3:1-4 Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.
- 4:1 Employers, give your employees justice and fairness, knowing you too have a Master in heaven.

### 1 THESSALONIANS

- 4:11-12 Lead a quiet life and mind your own business, that you may behave well toward outsiders, and not be in need.

### 2 THESSALONIANS

- 3:10-12 If anyone will not work, neither let him eat. Some are undisciplined, doing no work, acting like busybodies.

### 1 TIMOTHY

- 5:3-7 Honor widows, but if she has children or grandchildren, let them first care for her.
- 5:8 Whoever fails to provide for his own family has denied the faith
- 5:9-10 To qualify for help, a widow must be 60, the wife of one man, and have devoted herself to every good work.
- 5:11-15 Do not provide for the younger widows, who should marry rather than be idle.

## All I Have Commanded

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- 5:16 If a believing woman has dependent widows, let her assist them.
- 5:17-18 Compensate generously the elders who rule well, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.
- 6:1-2 Let employees regard their employers as worthy of honor, that the name of God not be spoken against.
- 6:1-2 Let those who have believers as employers not be disrespectful because they are brethren, but serve them well.
- 6:11-14 Flee the love of money and the desire to get rich, rather pursue righteousness, faith, love. Keep the commandment.
- 6:17-19 Instruct those who are rich not to fix their hope on their riches, but on God who gives all things to enjoy.
- 6:17-19 Instruct those who are rich to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.

### TITUS

- 2:9-10 Employees, be subject to your employers in everything. Be well-pleasing, not argumentative, showing good faith.

### HEBREWS

- 13:5-6 Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have.
- 13:5-6 He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Therefore, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?
- 13:16 Do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

### JAMES

- 1:9 You who are of humble circumstances, glory in your high position.
- 1:10-11 You who are rich, glory in your humiliation, because like the flowering grass, you will pass away.
- 4:13-17 Do not presume on the future saying, "Tomorrow we will do this or that." You do not know what tomorrow holds.
- 4:13-17 Say, "If the Lord wills, we will do this or that," rather than boast in your arrogance. Such boasting is evil.
- 5:1-6 You who are rich, weep for the miseries which are coming upon you. Your hoarded riches have rotted.

### 1 PETER

2:18-21 Employees, be submissive to your employers, not only to those who are good, but to those who are unreasonable.

2:18-21 Employees, if you suffer unjustly, you were called for this purpose, your example being Christ.

### 1 JOHN

3:16-18 Whoever sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?

### 3 JOHN

1:5-8 You do well to minister to the brethren, especially strangers, and send them out in a manner worthy of God.

## OBSERVATIONS ON THE APOSTLES' COMMANDS

As was the case with Jesus' commands, there is a major emphasis on giving, but we notice the apostles' use of the word *need*, which appears a number of times. Giving is to be based on need (spreading the gospel, feeding the poor, supporting the ministries of the church). The apostles' commands also touch on the work ethic and the relationship between employers and employees. And like Jesus, the apostles focus on the eternal rather than the temporal, and warn strongly against the sin of greed and the desire to get rich.

## A FOUNDATION OF THREE PILLARS

This concludes the first three chapters, which we consider to be the foundation for our study of Biblical Economics. That foundation rests on three pillars. First, we must understand and believe that God is in control and has our best interest at heart. Second, we must surrender our lust for autonomy, independence and self-rule. Third, we must submit to the absolute authority of Jesus Christ, making our goal unconditional obedience to all He has commanded. Only a financial plan which rests on these three pillars will bring honor and glory to God and reward in eternity.

FOR MEDITATION ON THE THREE PILLARS

First Pillar – Square One

Do I really believe Romans 8:28? “God causes all things to work together for good to them who love God, who are called according to His purpose.” Do I believe “all” means “all” in that verse? Review the nine conclusions at the end of Chapter 1. Which ones am I unable to accept? Do I believe that every circumstance of my life, and every person who touches my life, is there by God’s permission, for His purposes and under His control? Read and meditate on Hebrews 13:5-6. It says, “Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have, for He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So that we say confidently, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’ ”

How do you answer that question?

Second Pillar – Surrender of my Autonomy-Lust

Do I understand that I am in a life-long process of sanctification, which is really a process by which I am progressively being brought to surrender my lust for autonomy, my lust for independence and self-rule? Do I understand that God’s role in this process is the administration of pain and opposition, and that my part is surrender, humbling myself under the mighty hand of God? Do I understand the vital role of sorrow and suffering in this process, as expressed in countless passages in the Bible, such as Romans 5:3-5, “We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Do I understand that the ultimate goal of this process is brokenness? I recommend that you read *Don’t Waste Your Sorrows*, by Paul Billheimer, for the best presentation of this truth I have seen.

Third Pillar – Obedience to the Commandments

Do I understand that once I have begun the process of surrendering my autonomy, then my whole duty becomes submission to Jesus, which means obedience to all He has commanded us? It is so easy for us to think of our duty as evangelism, bearing fruit, ministry, the exercise of

our spiritual gifts, or even abiding in Christ. But these are not goals in themselves, but rather results of obedience, as Jesus so carefully explained in His last discourse to His disciples (John Chapters 13 thru 17). Here are some of His statements. “If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in my love, even as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” Do I understand that selective obedience is not an option in the mind of Jesus? Am I familiar with all the commandments of Jesus and the apostles?<sup>1</sup>

In the remaining chapters of this book, you will find truth which will challenge you as you manage your finances. However, it will make little difference eternally if you forget or brush aside this summary. On the other hand, if you copy and memorize these ideas before you proceed, the burdens that can be lifted from you in this present life, and the weight of blessing that can be transferred to your eternal account, will be inestimable.

May God protect and watch over our hearts as we now move into the study of Biblical Economics.

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<sup>1</sup> A complete list of commands of Jesus and the apostles is available free upon request by email to [muff-jd@cox.net](mailto:muff-jd@cox.net). Put “Command List” in the subject line.