

Do Christians Have to Obey the Commandments of Jesus Christ In the Gospels?

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The traditional theological position has been that Jesus Christ is both Lord and God, that He has all authority in Heaven and on earth, and that his commandments are binding upon Christians and that we are to follow them; and that the Holy Spirit is given to all believers to remind them of these commandments and to empower them to live them out in daily life.

Lately, however, I have been hearing both on social media and in a Bible study I once attended (I won't say where) that obedience

to Christ's commandments is *completely unnecessary*. Their extremely mixed up arguments seem to go along these lines.

1. God loves us just as we are, and nothing we can do can make Him love us any more, or any less.
2. Therefore, obedience to Christ's commands does not increase God's love for us by even the tiniest fraction.
3. Therefore, we do not have to obey God.
4. Obedience is just legalism and is the sign of an orphan spirit trying to please the Heavenly Father and such pleasing of God is totally unnecessary because He already loves us with infinite love.
5. We are saved by faith, not works and so works are unnecessary and obedience to God is just works salvation.
6. The commandments of Jesus Christ were primarily or exclusively for the first-century Jews and do not apply to us Gentiles in the 21st Century.

7. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, and so we follow Paul not Christ.

These views are a mixture of New Age mysticism, some forms of Dispensationalism which make a difference between Israel and the Church, and the extreme Radical Free Grace teaching of Zane Hodges.

Hodges taught that: Salvation is received simply by believing in Jesus for eternal life (John 3:16, John 6:47). Repentance (turning from sin) is not necessary for salvation, as he believed it was a separate issue related to discipleship, not eternal life. There is no requirement for obedience to Christ's commandments to be saved. A person who believes in Jesus even for a moment is eternally secure, even if they later reject the faith or live in sin. Someone could live an entirely sinful, unrepentant life after believing and still be saved. According to Hodges, if a person sincerely believes in Christ today but later becomes an atheist or commits grave sins without repentance, they would still have eternal life. (I think this is flat-out heresy!)

This came to a head for me in a Bible study when the issue of forgiveness was raised and the proponent of this view said loudly and with great force: "We don't have to forgive anyone, if someone murders your wife, you don't have to forgive them, we don't have to do anything for God, because God loves us just as we are." He then went on long tirade about how Matthew 6:14-15 did not apply to Christians today:

Matthew 6:14-15 *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, (15) but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

I was startled and tried to argue, however I was shouted down. What I should have said is this: "Is Jesus Lord? If Jesus IS Lord, then obey His commandments! If Jesus is not Lord, then why are you a Christian?"

Let's examine some Bible verses about obeying God's commandments:

John 14:15 *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*

John 14:21 *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.*

John 15:9-10 *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. (10) If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have*

kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

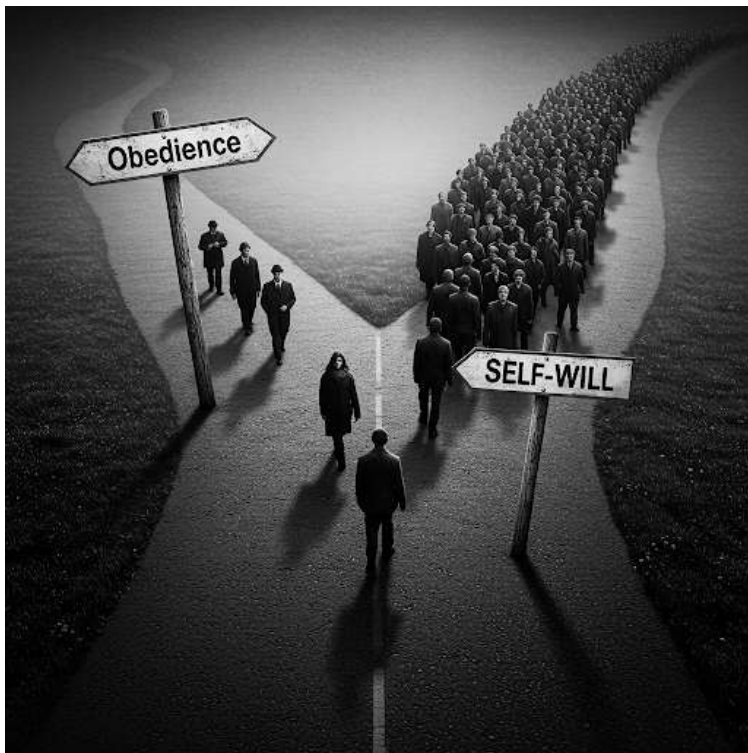
John 15:14 *You are my friends if you do what I command you.*

1 John 5:2-3 *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. (3) For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

1 John 2:17 *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

1 Corinthians 7:19 *For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.*

Romans 13:8-10 *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. (9) For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (10) Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*



To summarize the verses above:

- If believers love God they will keep His commandments and we demonstrate our love of God by keeping His commandments. (John 14:15, 15:9-10, 1 John 5:2,3)
- Those who keep Christ's commandments are the ones who truly love God and in turn they are the ones who are loved by the Father (John 14:21)
- We are friends of Jesus IF we keep His commandments (John 15:14). We

will abide in His love, IF we keep His commandments. (John 15:10)

- Keeping God's commandments is the most important thing in the Christian life (1 Corinthians 7:19) especially the commandment to love one's neighbour which

fulfills all of God's expectations of us (the whole law).

- The result of doing God's will is that we abide forever. (1 John 2:17)

So, do we have to forgive our neighbor? Yes!! That is the royal law of love and the commandment of Jesus Christ and we must obey it.

Colossians 3:12-13 *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, (13) bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; **as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.***

There is a deeper issue here and it is the question of the authority of God in the life of the believer. Can God tell us what to do? Can God reward us for being good and punish us for being evil? Is Jesus God? If Jesus is God, then can He tell us how to live our lives?

Jesus often referred to Himself as the Son of Man, so let's look at the relevant passage from Daniel chapter seven:

Daniel 7:9-14 *"As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. (10) A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. (11) "I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. (12) As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. (13) "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. (14) And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*

There is absolutely no question of the authority of God, the recording of our lives in the books of Heaven, the judgment of the wicked, or the powerful reign and rule of Jesus Christ in that, "all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him."

God has the last word. We cannot flick God away. We must not invent theology that minimizes the authority of God in the life of the Christian. Jesus is God, Jesus issues

commandments, and we must obey them!

Apostasy is a falling away from Christian thought and practice. The apostle John was trying to deal with an apostasy of Christians in Ephesus who were leaving the faith for a philosophical belief called Gnosticism (similar to New Age beliefs). The church was now a mixture of false believers who had fallen way and true believers who were still keeping the faith:



1 John 2:3-6 *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. (4) Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, (5) but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: (6) whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

For the apostle those who obeyed the commandments of Jesus were the true

Christians who authentically knew God, but those who did not obey were false Christians and liars, and the truth was not in them. We are to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6), which means that we are to live an obedient Jesus lifestyle of agape love!

Grace applies, but grace is there to help us become holy! Yes, our sins are forgiven. The apostle John makes that very clear. However, they are forgiven so we can walk in the light (that is, in obedience).

1 John 1:5-10 *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (6) If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. (8) If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say we*

have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

One of the signs of a true Christian is that they walk the talk, they actually practice righteousness of a consistent daily basis:

1 John 2:29 *If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.*

Therefore, the practice of righteousness and obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ is compulsory for the true authentic Christian, who is actually born of God. Zane Hodges is wrong!

For those who say that the Gentiles are to follow Paul, and not Jesus Christ, did Paul die for you? Paul confronted this very error in the city of Corinth:

1 Corinthians 1:12-13 *What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." (13) Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

Paul was writing to Corinth, a Gentile city, and he told them to follow Jesus Christ, not Paul! I am utterly sure that if Paul was to hear people say "We don't obey Jesus, we obey Paul, because we are Gentiles!" he would rend his garments, pull out his hair and cry "Anathema!".

We are true Christians if we follow Jesus and walk as Jesus walked, if we practice righteousness, if we obey His commandments, and if we live in love, as He loved us. Yes, Christians MUST obey the commandments of Jesus Christ!



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