



Authority by Direct Command

By Jeff Smith

The divine use of direct commands is by far the simplest means of establishing and understanding authority in the spiritual realm.

Whether stated positively by a "Thou shalt," or negatively by a "Thou shalt not," the direct command is difficult to misinterpret without the aid of a lawyer and a not-so-hidden agenda of circumventing the divine mandate.

God used the direct command in his communication with Adam and Eve, telling the couple to tend the garden and enjoy the fruit of every tree, except the tree of knowledge. Thus, they had both positive and negative commands--"Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." The tempter, however, also understood the nature of direct commands and the enticement of rebellion. He simply convinced Eve that there would be no consequence for disobedience, and she felt free to ignore God's direct command. She discovered, as all today will also, that grave consequences await those who rebel against God's commands, for transgression is sin (1 John 3:4), and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

The direct command's simplicity makes it eminently understandable. Man's challenge, then, is not comprehension, but conformity and curiosity. Satan is able to make transgression seem pleasant, harmless, and even worthwhile, until clear commands become hazy in our weakened estimation.

Moses received Ten Commandments. Only two were stated positively, but those two gave the Jews of Christ's day the most trouble. They were to remember the Sabbath to

keep it holy, but through their traditions and hedges, they corrupted it. They were told to honor their parents, but even for this commandment, they discovered, via the Corban dodge, what they considered to be a loophole. And so Jesus condemned them, saying "These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9).

Again, man's challenge, when it comes to Bible commands, is generally not comprehension, but conformity. We understand well enough, and that is the problem. We would prefer a little confusion that might allow us some wiggle room now and then.

The New Testament commands us to sing praises to God (Colossians 3:16), but many would also like to play. Therefore, they create confusion from clarity and teach as doctrine the commandments contained in their creeds.

The New Testament prohibits forsaking the assembling of the saints (Hebrews 10:24-25), but some who like to take vacations from the Lord go about creating loopholes. It is modern-day Corban when one claims he cannot give the day to the Lord because it is already dedicated to the kids' Little League, or the night is consumed with board meetings or some cherished recreation. The command is clear, but our consciences are seared.

Recently, the Baptists skirmished over whether or not a wife must be in submission to her husband. But God's word speaks plainly: "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord"(Colossians 3:18). The command is clear, and that is what some hate about it. Don't blame God if you don't agree. The trouble is you, not God or His command.

Paul predicted that strong delusions would descend on those who did not love truth but found pleasure in unrighteousness. "And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be

saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." {2 Thessalonians 2:10-12} The only way to explain the justification that some feel while they trample on God's Holy Writ is by attributing it to lack of love for truth and the strong delusion that always follows a pattern of indulgence and willful rebellion.

Some would cast doubt on the concept of law within Christ's testament, arguing that the New Testament is a love letter, not a legal code. Yet, the Holy Spirit extols the New Testament as the perfect law of liberty. "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." {James 1:25} Christ does have a law."Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." {Galatians 6:2} It is a law given by the Spirit. "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." {2 Corinthians 2:10-12}

The law of Christ contains ordinances, promises rewards, and warns of punishment. It cannot be transgressed or disregarded with immunity. The New Testament is as much law as the Old, only it factors in the element of grace. The grace, however, extends only to the genuinely penitent, not to the willfully rebellious (Hebrews 10:26- 31).

The attitude of a humble servant toward God's commands presupposes glad submission (1 John 5:3). Even under the Old Law, God demanded that His children keep the law. "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." {Deuteronomy 4:2} Today, God's child does not think that his obedience puts God in debt to him, but that trust and discipleship require him to be a follower. God's child makes no attempt to overthrow or ignore his father's commands, whether positive or negative. Commands are simple, black and white, and we must obey.