

Paul and the Law

Note from *Blow the Trumpet*

The article that follows was written by Dr. Robert J. Thiel, a longtime member of God's church and a well respected authority on a variety of issues effecting God's people today. Dr. Thiel attends the Living Church of God and is the architect of one of the most visited COG websites (COGwriter). Additionally, although Dr. Thiel is not affiliated with *Blow the Trumpet* we feel his writings with respect to Biblical subjects reflect a forceful yet mature perspective. This particular article was selected by *Blow the Trumpet* because of its thoughtful analysis and succinct approach to an issue that profoundly impacts the lives of God's people. The article has been formatted to be consistent with the design of our website. However, virtually no edits of the text were made.

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## What Did Paul Actually Teach About the Ten Commandments?

By Dr. Robert J. Thiel

Most people familiar with the Bible understand that Jesus taught and observed all of the ten commandments. Some, though, try to ignore Jesus' teachings on the ten commandments by saying that Paul said they were "nailed to the cross". Is that what the Bible teaches? This article will quote what Paul actually taught about the ten commandments.

There is only one only scripture that uses the "nailed it to the cross" expression (AV/NKJ), it is Col 2:13-14, in which Paul states, "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross". Were the ten commandments the "requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us"? Let us examine the scriptures to see.

### Commandment 1:

Paul said, "God, who made the world and everything in it...they should seek the Lord" (Acts 17:24,27). Paul also said, "I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law" (Acts 24:14). "But then indeed, when you did not know God, you served those things which by nature are not God" (Gal 4:8). "And what agreement has the temple of God have with idols?" (II Cor 6:16). "you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (I The 1:9). "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 The 2:3-4).

### Commandment 2:

"we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols" (Acts 15:20). "Now while Paul waited for them in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols...Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said...'God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything'" (Acts

17:16,22,24-25). "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four footed animals and creeping things" (Rom 1:22-23). "But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is...an idolater" (I Cor 5:11). "Neither... idolaters...will inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor 6:9-10). "And do not become idolaters as were some of them...Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (I Cor. 10:7,14). "And what agreement has the temple of God have with idols?" (II Cor 6:16). "Now the works of the flesh are evident...idolatry" (Gal 5:19,20). "For this you know that no...idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph 5:5). "Therefore put to death...covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5). "you turned to God from idols" (I The 1:9).

### **Commandment 3:**

"they are all under sin...Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (Rom 3:9,14). "Let all...evil speaking be put away from you" (Eph 4:31). "But now you yourselves are to put off all these:...blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth" (Col 3:8). "they may learn not to blaspheme" (I Tim 1:20). But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be...blasphemers" (II Tim 3:1,2).

### **Commandment 4:**

"Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures...And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 17:2;18:4 see also 13:14,27,42,44). "let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give to him who has need" (Eph 4:28) and "For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: 'If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat'" (II Thes 3:10); (recall that the requirement to work is also part of the Sabbath command, thus even that portion of the commandment is repeated in the New Testament.) "And to whom did He swear they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?" (Heb 3:18). "For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works'" (Heb 4:4). "There remains therefore a rest (literally *sabbatismos*, 'Sabbath rest') for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (Heb 4:9-10).

### **Commandment 5:**

"being filled with all unrighteousness...disobediant to parents" (Rom 1:29,30). "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother', which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (Eph 6:1-3). "the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience" (Col 3:6). "Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord" (Col 3:20). "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be...disobediant to parents" (II Tim 3:1,2).

### **Commandment 6:**

"being filled with all unrighteousness...murder" (Rom 1:29). "You shall not murder" (Rom 13:9). "Now the works of the flesh are evident...murders" (Gal 5:19,21). "the lawless and insubordinate...murders...manslayers" (I Tim 1:9).

### **Commandment 7:**

"being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality" (Rom 1:29). "So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress" (Rom 7:3). "You shall not commit adultery" (Rom 13:9). "But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral" (I Cor 5:11). "Neither... adulterers, nor homosexuals...will inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor 6:9-10). "Nor let us commit sexual immorality

as some of them did" (I Cor 10:8). "Now the works of the flesh are evident...adultery, fornication" (Gal 5:19). "For this you know that no fornicator...has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph 5:5). "the lawless and insubordinate...fornicators...sodomites" (I Tim 1:9,10). "fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb 13:4).

#### **Commandment 8:**

"You shall not steal" (Rom 13:9). "nor thieves...will inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor 6:10). "I have been...in perils of robbers" (II Cor 11:25-26). "Let him who stole, steal no longer" (Eph 4:28).

#### **Commandment 9:**

"You shall not bear false witness" (Rom 13:9). "I do not lie" (Gal 1:19). "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each of you speak truth with his neighbor" (Eph 4:25). "Do not lie to one another" (Col 3:9). "the lawless and insubordinate...liars...perjurers" (I Tim 1:9,10). "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy" (I Tim 4:1-2). "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be...slanderers" (II Tim 3:1,3). "God, who cannot lie" (Ti 1:2). "it is impossible for God to lie" (Heb 6:18).

#### **Commandment 10:**

"being filled with all unrighteousness...covetousness" (Rom 1:29). "You shall not covet" (Rom 7:7). "You shall not covet" (Rom 13:9). "But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is...covetous" (I Cor 5:11). "nor covetous...will inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor 6:10). "we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted" (I Cor 10:6). "you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal 5:16). "For this you know that no fornicator...nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph 5:5). "Therefore put to death...covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5). "For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness" (I The 2:5). "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have" (Heb 13:5).

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Rev 22:14). Since "those who do His commandments...have the right to enter...the city" (Rev 22:14), the ten commandments could not be "contrary to us". So then, if the ten commandments were not "nailed to the cross", what was? What does the Bible say? "having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14). It was the handwriting of requirements. Which requirements were wiped out? It appears that two things were wiped out. One would be the requirements of the Levitical priesthood (Heb 9:1,6-10). And why? "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins...By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all" (Heb 10:4,10). The other (which is related) would be the death penalty, as "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23). It is of interest to note that the expression "the handwriting of requirements" is a Greek legal term that signifies the penalty which a lawbreaker had to pay--through Jesus the penalty was wiped out ("the handwriting of requirements"), not the law! "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them" (Heb 10:16).

Some will argue that you still cannot keep the ten commandments (for "all have sinned"), even if they are all mentioned as being in effect after the crucifixion. Does this mean one should not try? The ten commandments are to be kept since Paul taught that Christians should still keep every one of them (as did the other New Testament writers, for those scriptures, please see the article.

## Paul's Other Writings

Paul wrote "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (Heb 10:26). He also warned that those who break various of the ten commandments will not inherit the kingdom of God (Eph 5:4-5) and then said, "Let no man deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them" (Eph 5:6-7).

Some have been confused about some of Paul's writings, but as Peter warned, "Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the scriptures" (II Pet 3:15-16). Perhaps the most confusing to some is, "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle the wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity" (Eph 2:14-16). It is clear that Paul could not be talking about the ten commandments as he mentions parts of at least eight of them as still being in existence in the same book (see above, the other two are alluded to as well, Eph 5:31--anger, which is like murder according to Jesus; plus the comment about being a prisoner of the Lord also would show the first commandment, Eph 4:1). It needs to be remembered is that the wall of separation that was broken down the middle, was the large veil in the temple that split when Jesus died (Mat 27:50:51). Thus it was the ordinances of the Levitical priesthood which were abolished. This is what Paul also wrote elsewhere (Heb 9:1,6-10).

The entire book of Galatians is confusing to many. Suffice it to say that at least six of the commandments are mentioned in that book, and for violating some of them Paul wrote, "those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal 5:21). Paul is telling people that they cannot earn their salvation through works (Gal 5:4-5) which of course is true. He never tells anyone to violate any commandment (not in Galatians nor any other book) and reminds people that they will reap what they sow (Gal 6:7). Actually, he commended Christians who obey (Phil 2:12).

Paul himself said, after his conversion to the leaders of the Jews, "Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans" (Acts 28:17). If Paul had intentionally violated any of the ten commandments (or advocated this of others) he could not have said this. Look also at this, "On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present...And they said to him,"...Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law" "(Acts 21:18,20,24)--if Paul did not keep the law he should have refused this request, instead he followed it (vs. 26). Paul also said, "Therefore I urge you, imitate me" (I Cor 4:16) and "Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ" (I Cor 11:1); Jesus, as we saw earlier, both kept and taught observance of the ten commandments.

Paul wrote, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin...I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet'...Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom 3:20;7:7,12). **Paul taught each of the ten commandments after the crucifixion** (please see the commandments quoted after the crucifixion). Regarding faith and the law, Paul specifically wrote, "Do we make the void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary we establish the law" (Rom 3:31). Even after his conversion Paul state that he was, "concerning righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phi 3:6).

Paul warned, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col 2:8); Jesus kept the ten commandments! He also warns that "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work" (II The 2:7). Lawlessness is breaking the law. Why would Paul warn about lawlessness if he felt all the law was done away?

### **In Conclusion**

In conclusion, Paul taught that all ten of the commandments. He showed that they were all in effect after the crucifixion. He also specifically taught they were not done away (Rom 3:31). He warned against lawlessness (II The 2:7)! The opinions that state otherwise seem to be "traditions of men" which Jesus warned against (Mat 15:6). It is not interesting that commandment keepers are God's people in the last book of the Bible (i.e. Rev 12) and even in its last chapter (Rev 22:14)? Also, in the last book that Paul wrote before his death, he specifically warns against breaking the first, third, fifth, ninth, and tenth commandments (II Tim 3:1-7) as well as sin in general (v. 6). Therefore, it would not appear wise from a biblical standpoint to teach that Paul or the Bible teach that the ten commandments are not in effect.