

Chapter VIII

DID PAUL DISOBEY HIS LORD?

One of the most revealing features of Paul's character, and one that surely challenges its integrity, is his response to the commandments of Jesus. He referred to Jesus as "Lord" or "our Lord" not once but many times, almost too many times to count. Typical is this quotation from Philippians:

Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (3:8).

More than anything else, lordship means obedience to the commandments of the one who is lord; otherwise it has no meaning (Well, yes, there is hypocrisy). So Jesus posed this plaintive question to those who did not obey:

Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," and not do what I tell you (Luke 6:46)?

And in John's Gospel he issues this condition:

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

So, Paul's obedience to the Lord will test not only the sincerity of his submission to the Lordship of Jesus, but also his love for him. Sad to say – when we apply this test to Paul, he fails.

Call No Man Father

I have pointed above to an incident in which Paul calls God to witness to his truthfulness; he did this not once but repeatedly, all in direct disobedience to the commandment of Jesus: "Swear not at all." Here are more examples of disobedience:

Jesus said, Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven (Matthew 23:9).

Paul committed several infractions of this commandment, not only continuing to refer to the Patriarchs as "father", but even establishing himself as the father of his converts. The most specific evidence of this comes from I Corinthians:

For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel (4:15).

Then, in Romans 4:16, he speaks of Abraham as the father of us all.

You Are not to be Called "Teacher"

Jesus commanded, from the same context as above,

But you are not to be called rabbi (teacher), for you have one teacher (didaskalos), and

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you are all brethren (Matthew 23:8).

Ignoring this command completely, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, defining the different offices in the church:

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers (didaskalos). (I Corinthians 12:28).

Then, in both letters to Timothy, he specified his own appointment as preacher, apostle, and teacher (I Timothy 2:7, II Timothy 1:11). This is actually a very good indicator that Paul authored these two letters, though the scholars do not generally accept this. But is God going to appoint anyone as teacher, when his spokesman, Jesus has expressly forbidden that we should be called such?

Go Into Your Room and Shut Your Door

Jesus commanded,

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:6)

Paul obviously ignored this command, as revealed in his instruction to the Corinthian church concerning public worship:

What am I to do? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how can any one in the position of an outsider say the "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?

It is clear that Paul's disciples engaged in public prayer in their worship together, even as those whom Jesus called "hypocrites" loved to stand praying in the synagogue. Of course, we know of no church that pays any attention to Jesus in this matter, but that should not surprise us. They haven't given him much attention in anything crucial to their salvation. They are much distracted through listening to Paul!

Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

In defining Paul's faulty logic above, I quoted his use of a line from Epimenides regarding the character of his fellow Cretans. According to Epimenides, Cretans are "always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Then Paul follows with this conclusion:

This testimony is true (Titus 1:13).

Thus Paul has stereotyped, or labeled, all Cretans as poor characters. A white man does precisely the same when he says of blacks, "All niggers stink, are immoral and of low intelligence." I mention this coarse example because it is a line I have heard many times in the racially segregated culture of my youth. Just as the whites displayed their prejudice by such words, so Paul was displaying his prejudice – a fact thoroughly inconsistent with the commandment of Jesus to "love your neighbor as your self." Such generalizations are hurtful. They hurt the person who issues them and they hurt the person(s) so described. I would be hurt were they spoken of me, and such expressions about me would not be acts of love. No, these expressions are manifestations of hatred and are contrary to the commandments of Jesus. Paul is again found to be disobedient to his Lord!

These many infractions of the commandments of Jesus show conclusively that for Paul, Jesus

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was Lord in name only. He was in fact disobedient, therefore Jesus was not his Lord.