

A New Commandment

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Date: 06 August 2023

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[0 : 00] 1 John 2, we'll read verses 7 through 11. This is God's Word.

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command, but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard, yet I am writing you a new command.

Its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in darkness.

Whoever loves his brother lives in light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness.

He does not know where he's going, because the darkness has blinded him. Let's pray as we're about to hear God's Word preached. Our great God, we thank you so much that we have your Word written down so that we can read it, we can know your mind as you reveal it to us in your Holy Spirit.

[1 : 23] Thank you for how much we benefit from your Word, how it just realigns our thinking and lets us know what's true in this world that we live in.

It lets us know what's in our future. Let's us know our true condition before you. And Lord, we praise you that we have the opportunity to come together and to sit under your Word.

And Lord, that's what we want to do now. We want to sit under it. We want to accept it as our authority for living. And we pray that you will bring it to us in power.

Help Pastor Colin as he preaches it. Give him clear thinking and help him to proclaim your Word and truth. And Lord, it's our desire to obey it and to honor you in that obedience.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. When Casey and I first got married, we went on our honeymoon to Monterey, California.

[2 : 41] And the first thing that we did as a married couple was this. We bought a Garmin GPS. What a terrible purchase.

First purchase of our marriage, a Garmin GPS. We got married in 2014. Smartphones existed. Google Maps existed.

20-somethings weren't buying garments. But we did. We didn't have smartphones. And we needed a way to get around in Monterey to get up to where my parents lived.

And so we bought a Garmin. That was mistake number one. Mistake number two was that we also printed out directions from MapQuest. Okay, we had the Garmin.

Then we also had these printed directions. And we followed both. We consulted both as we traveled. Sometimes, though, they contradicted each other.

[3 : 37] One would say, take this exit. And the other would say, keep going straight. And that created all sorts of confusion and misunderstanding and probably our first argument in marriage.

Are we listening to the GPS? Are we listening to MapQuest? We're asking those questions over and over. And we're not coming to a conclusion. We just keep consulting both. But they were pulling us, at times, in two different directions.

Because they were telling us two different things. It might feel like the same thing is happening here in 1 John. Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment at the same time.

It is a new commandment that I am writing to you. John, it feels like you're pulling us in two different directions. Which is it? New commandment or not new commandment?

And so we need to know what John is saying. Because John is not contradicting himself. We can sort this out together. So to begin with. To begin, we see that this not new but at the same time new commandment is one commandment.

[4 : 49] John is not saying, I write you one commandment that is not new and another commandment that is new. He's not giving us two commandments here.

Remember, the not new commandment, which he also calls an old commandment, it is a new commandment at the same time. It, the not new commandment, it is a new commandment. Both not new and new, all at the same time. So one commandment. Now what is this not new but at the same time new commandment? It's to love one another.

The commandment is to love one another. Now you might be asking, how do we know this? We don't see that spelled out right away. John doesn't just say, the commandment that I'm talking about here is love one another.

But the context here helps us. Look at verses 9 through 11. We'll read those again. 9 through 11 of chapter 2. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

[5 : 55] Whoever loves his brother abides in the light. And in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

So here's the logic of John's letter. Those who truly know God will obey God. We saw it last week. We see it again in these verses.

Those who say that they are in the light, they will also walk in the light. The passage a couple weeks ago finished with verse 6. Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

So John is stating this principle again. If you say that you are in the light, you will obey this commandment in these verses.

And John is unpacking that commandment here for us. It's the commandment to love one another. If you're walking in the light, if you're abiding in the light, then you will obey the commandment.

[7 : 00] You'll love your fellow believer. But if you're walking in the darkness, if darkness has blinded your eyes, then you'll hate your brother. It's as simple as that.

So the context helps us here in John's letter. The larger context of the New Testament also helps us. In John's gospel account, which we just actually read some of together in the opening of the service, chapter 13, John records the words of Jesus to his disciples in verse 34.

This is what he says. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. And we've got to remember, John, who wrote this letter, he was there with Jesus. When Jesus said those words, he was called the beloved disciple.

So he heard those words. They were in his mind as he wrote this letter. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. And if we're still not convinced, one more verse from John's second letter.

2 John, verse 5. And now I ask you, dear lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

[8 : 12] So the not new, but at the same time new, commandment is to love one another. That we can establish from verses 9 through 11, from Jesus' words in John 13, from 2 John as well.

We ought to love one another. And we have good reason to do it. We have good reason to love one another. John gives us three reasons that we obey this commandment.

That's the thrust of the sermon this evening. Three reasons we obey the not new, but at the same time new, commandment. Here's the first. Reason number one. Because the law demands it from us.

Reason number one. Because the law demands it from us. We'll look at just verse 7 again.

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning.

The old commandment is the word that you have heard. So this commandment to love one another, it's old. But not like something old and needing to be set aside.

[9 : 21] Or something old and needing to be replaced. It's not like the old couch that you see on the side of the road, sitting out in the rain with a sign on it that says free. And you think, who in their right mind would take that?

We hear old, we think broken down. We think outdated. We think no longer relevant. Out with the old and in with the new. But that's not how John was thinking.

And that's not how we should think either when it comes to biblical truth. Now the culture of our day always wants something new. New ideas. New products.

New ways of thinking. Because our society is built on the promise that the latest will be the greatest. That's something that I'm selling you.

It is going to outperform whatever you currently have. The latest iPhone. The latest makeup line. The latest water bottle design gets us. The latest book promoting the latest solution to the latest problem of our day.

[10:24] This is what every ad that we'll ever see is saying in some way or another. This is new. Therefore, it's better. Better ideas. Better answers. Because it's the newest innovation.

The newest product. The newest way of thinking. But that's not the thinking of the Bible. In fact, even the culture of John's day didn't operate that way.

If something was new, especially in the realm of ideas, then it was probably not all that great. If you had a new way of thinking or a new way of living, you would be pretty quickly written off.

You see, in John's day, whatever was new, it was met with skepticism. Not blind optimism like today. Because something old is tested. It's proven.

It has stood the test of time. It's endured. And so if it has endured, then it should be esteemed. It's worth listening to.

[11:24] It's worth obeying. And so that's the meaning that's infused into this word old in 1 John. We love one another because it is an old commandment.

And that means it's a good commandment that we still have. Like old hymns rich in theology that we continue to sing. So the fact that it's old gives it credence.

This is a commandment that we've had from the beginning. John didn't come up with this commandment. It's not some new idea that he's pitching saying, hey, maybe we ought to love one another. The roots of this commandment can be traced all the way back to the law of Moses.

Way back in Leviticus chapter 19 beginning in verse 17. Listen to what God says. You see, John clearly has this commandment in mind from the law of Moses when he says, I'm writing you no new commandment.

And it is a commandment. Did we hear that in Leviticus 19? God gives the word and then what does he say? I am the Lord your God. We do what God says because he is our Lord.

[12:48] So John is saying, you know this commandment. He's drawing out the parallels. God says in Leviticus, you shall not hate your brother in your heart. God says in 1 John, whoever hates his brother is in the darkness.

God says in Leviticus, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. God says in 1 John, you are to love one another. So the commandment that's given to us in 1 John is the same commandment that God gave way back in the law of Moses.

And this isn't some obscure law from the Old Testament. It's not a civil law that was particular to the nation of Israel. It's not a ceremonial law that Christ fulfilled in his death.

It's a moral law. And so we're to keep this commandment that was given in the Old Testament.

Jesus was asked, which commandment is the most important of all?

And his answer? First this, love the Lord your God with all that is within you. And second this, love your neighbor as yourself.

[13:57] This is a law that demands obedience from God's people in all ages. It demands obedience from us. We love one another because the law demands us to.

And that law, to love one another, really does even predate the law. It was codified in the law, but it was grounded in God's eternal character.

The triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each person of the Godhead loves one another and always has and always will.

And the triune God made humanity in his image to love one another in the same way. We see that in the Garden of Eden. That's how Adam and Eve were to operate. Now, they didn't have the law.

They didn't have the written instruction God gave to the people of Israel from Mount Sinai. But they were to love each other. Eve was brought from Adam to be his companion, to help him.

[14:57] Adam was to hold fast to Eve. They were to be one flesh. They were to work the garden together. They were to be naked and unashamed. This is a picture of a loving relationship.

And so this commandment we see lived out in the garden. We see it lived out in the Godhead. And we see it put in writing in the law. We love one another because it is an old commandment.

We love one another because the law demands it from us. That's the first reason. Here's the second. We love one another because the Savior demonstrates it for us.

We love one another because the Savior demonstrates it for us. Verse 8. Back in 1 John chapter 2. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. So in what sense is this old commandment also new? It's new in that Jesus Christ showed us what it looks like to love.

[16:13] We were commanded to love in the law, but Christ shows us in his incarnation what that looks like. He teaches us to love through his life. If you wanted to build a desk and you had no experience building a desk, you could find some instructions online.

15 steps for how to build a desk. That's good. That's helpful. But how much better is it when you have pictures and a video to go along with those instructions?

So not only do you have the written words, but you actually have someone who is showing you how to build the desk. That's what Jesus does for us. He shows us how to love.

The law tells us and the Lord shows us. So this good old commandment is given fresh expression through the life and death of our Savior.

It is a commandment that is true in him, John says. Or your Bible might say its truth is seen in him. It's seen in him because he's the true light.

[17:20] The true light has come into the world. The true light is already shining. The light flooded this dark world when God took on flesh. And the true light that is already shining shows us how to live.

By his light we see. Turn over in your Bibles to John 13. We're going to spend just a bit of time in John 13. So this is the last night of Jesus' life before he would be betrayed and killed by the hands of lawless men.

And listen to how John introduces the events of that last evening that Jesus spent with his disciples. So we're going to start right in verse 1. Or sorry, we're going to be in verse 2.

Nope, verse 1. I'm going to get it straight. John 13, verse 1. Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

So what is it that the true light put on display for us? It was love. The true light loved his who were in the world, and he loved them to the end.

[18:36] He put on display what it looks like to love, and he did it to the very end. Jesus didn't stop loving his disciples. He continued to do it to the very end.

And how did he love them? Let's keep reading. Verse 2. During supper, when the devil had already put it in the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and, taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Have you ever been over to somebody's house for like a dinner party? And many of the guests you didn't know. And so to get the conversation started around the table, the host begins asking hypothetical questions.

Some of us perhaps love this exercise. Others of us hate it. Some of those questions might be, if you had a million dollars, what would you do with the money? Or if you could have any superpower, what would it be?

[19:51] Here's another. If you knew the world was ending tomorrow, what would you do? And that's kind of a bucket list sort of question. We maybe think, I'd go skydiving, or I'd ride in a hot air balloon, or I'd empty my bank account and buy up all the ice cream at the store.

And whatever comes to our minds first is probably pretty self-serving. I want to do something exciting that I'll enjoy. It's my last night on earth.

I've got one day to live, so I'm going to make the most of it. For Jesus in John 13, the world wasn't ending tomorrow, but his life was. And he knew it.

In those last hours, Jesus was as purposeful as ever with his love. He didn't say to the disciples, why don't you wash my feet tonight? He didn't serve himself.

He washed his disciples' feet. He served his disciples. He loved his disciples to the end. He spent part of his night doing the job of a servant.

[21 : 01] So if you knew that you would die, how would you spend your last night alive? Jesus said, I'm going to love my brothers. I'm going to love my brothers. Now Peter didn't want Jesus to love him in this way.

He thought that Jesus was above doing this. He thought that he was too worthy for this task. So Peter resisted. He said, you shall never wash my feet. He didn't want Jesus to serve him because love demonstrated in humility was a totally foreign idea to Peter.

Humility, that betrayed weakness. That showed weakness. Humility was to be avoided. And here Jesus is showing that humility is a virtue in God's kingdom.

It's commendable. It's how we're to love one another. We walk according to the light. And what does the true light do? The true light humbly looked to the needs of his disciples.

He served them in love. And then he said to them a short while later, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

[22 : 10] You also are to love one another. So we are called to love just as Jesus loved. The commandment itself to love one another isn't new.

We've seen it was given to us in the Old Testament law. But Jesus shows us in a new way how to live out this commandment. As the true light has come into the world, he demonstrates it for us.

So we humbly look to the needs of each other. We love each other by serving one another just as Christ loved us. And of course, the love of Jesus far surpassed the washing of his disciples' feet.

That was just a hint of what was to come. That was just a sneak peek of the depths of Christ's love. He loved them to the end. He loved them even to death.

He showed his love for us when he went to the cross for our sins. The greatest demonstration of his love. He laid down his life in our place.

[23 : 16] And so he said in John 15, 13, greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. What motivation that is for us.

We love each other because the Savior demonstrated it for us. And finally, our third reason. We love each other because the new creation is displayed in us.

We love each other because the new creation is displayed in us. So flip back to 1 John 2, and we're going to read that verse 8 one last time together.

At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

So we've been given the commandment to love one another, and the truth of this commandment is seen in Jesus. The truth of this commandment is also seen in us.

[24 : 20] It is true in him and in you, John says. So how is it true in us? Well, you remember that desk that we talked about building.

Let's go back to that desk. You have those instructions. And then even more helpful to you, you have pictures and a video that shows you how to build that desk. And typically, not always, typically, though, the person in the video building the desk is pretty skilled.

They're crafting a pretty nice desk. Occasionally, you find somebody like me, doesn't know what they're doing, and they decide to make a video about it. But most of the time, they know what they're doing. They are very good at whatever skill they're demonstrating.

They are crafting a beautiful desk. Now, imagine with me for a moment. That they can somehow transfer their skills to you.

Not just show you how, but they can actually give all of their skills and abilities to you. And so it's not just that you have the written instructions.

[25 : 21] It's not just that you have the pictures and the videos, but you've also been infused with the very skills to do it. That is what God has done in us.

God has put His love in our hearts. So this new commandment is true in Jesus, and we can also say it is true in us.

That is a crazy thought. Christ's love, the love that He demonstrated by going to the cross, the immeasurable love of Jesus is in us. Its truth is seen in us.

Because the true light has shown into our hearts. God has made us new creations. The new creation is displayed in us.

Meaning our lives are a picture of what is to come. They're a picture of the future. God has promised there is a future in which the darkness will be no more.

[26 : 21] When the light of God will fill all of creation. No more darkness. Only the brilliance of the light of the glory of God. But that day isn't here quite yet.

The darkness is passing away, but it hasn't entirely passed away. The true light is already shining, but not in all of its fullness. It hasn't filled all of the earth.

The kingdom of God has arrived in the person and work of King Jesus. The kingdom of darkness, it is sure to fall away.

And yet, for now, it is still at work in our present world. But the light has pierced that darkness.

Christ's future final victory, it is sure because of His death and resurrection.

His kingdom is advancing. And we are proof of that. Not our righteousness on display, but the goodness and the mercy of God in our lives.

[27 : 21] So Colossians 1 verse 13 says, God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We are citizens of God's kingdom. God has caused His light to fill our hearts. And so we shine as lights because the true light, Jesus Christ, has shown into our hearts.

We demonstrate that the true light is already shining and the darkness is passing away. Now that is an incredible theological truth. But if we stop there, we would be perhaps a bit vague, a bit general.

We shine as lights because Christ has shown in our hearts. How do we take that truth with us this week? It's one thing to say that we shine as lights. It's another thing to do it.

How do we do it? What does it look like? John gives us a very practical answer to this. We love one another. The new creation is displayed in us as we love one another.

[28 : 28] And as we do that, we broadcast to the world. What God has started, He will finish. The kingdom of light has arrived and it will win the day.

Our love for one another, it's proof of that. And so as we love each other, we help each other. We exhort and we encourage each other to press on, to continue to walk in the light, to continue to put all of our hope in God.

Brothers and sisters, what God has started, He's going to finish. What God has promised, He will bring to pass. The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

Our love for one another spurs us on to continue to walk in the light. And so as we love each other, we help each other to remember, the true light has come.

And as we love one another, we also help others to see. We help unbelievers to see. The true light has come. Don't you see Him shining in us?

[29 : 32] How we live testifies to the reality that Jesus Christ has come. Remember John's words in John 13, 34? A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.

Here's the very next verse. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. So there's an apologetic angle to Jesus' words.

There are all kinds of ways that we can contend for the faith. All sorts of defenses that we can make. Some are more intellectual.

Some are more philosophical. Some more relational. This is a relational apologetic of sorts. Look at our lives. See how we live. The love we have for one another, Jesus says, is unique.

The world will know you belong to me by your love for one another. Now why is that? Why will people know that we belong to God if we love one another?

[30 : 37] What's so special about our love? The world does not love as a Christian would love.

Sure, we hear love talked a lot about in the world, but the self-sacrificing, humility-infused kind of love, that is foreign.

We can talk about love, but often what does love come back to? Love for myself. In fact, sometimes we'll even talk and we'll hear ways of talking about love as though maybe you need to actually hate somebody to love yourself.

Maybe you need to hate that person. Maybe you need to cut them out because you need to love yourself. What does God say? We love each other. We don't hate each other. Flips it on its head.

We don't live for ourselves. We die to ourselves. We live to Christ. And then we obey his commandment to love one another. John is going to keep talking in his letter about what it looks like to love one another.

There is much that he has to say about it. So for tonight, we're just going to leave with three brief final takeaways. Not going to go into great depth, just three quick hit takeaways.

[31 : 52] So here's the first one. Love for one another is an ongoing pattern in our lives. So in verses 9 through 11, each of these takeaways we're going to see on display.

And in verses 9 to 11, John helps us to understand what it looks like to love or to hate one another. And everything he says is lifestyle language. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light or lives in the light.

Whoever hates his brother walks in the darkness. So we are living in a certain ongoing sort of way. We aren't being called to love one another on occasion.

It's not like flipping a light switch on and off. Sometimes I'm in the light. Sometimes I'm in the dark. We're characterized by love for one another. Now it's easy to fall in a very different pattern of living. A pattern of isolating ourselves from one another. And not in like a personality kind of way. We're not here to talk about extroverts versus introverts. And how extroverts, they're the ones doing all the love.

[32 : 57] That's not the case. I can love being around people. But I can still be far from them in love. I can love to talk to somebody but still be far from them in caring about the things that matter.

And so we can turn in on ourselves. We can keep others out to the things that matter most. It's easier. It's less messy. It's certainly more comfortable.

Reaching out to others in love takes work. And sometimes we can justify ourselves. Well, I'm keeping my relationship with God more private.

Or I don't want to bother others about their walk with the Lord. Or I don't want to intrude on their lives. But the reality is that we have been called to love one another in an ongoing fashion.

To continually be seeking each other out in love. Caring for one another. Investing in each other. Not dabbling in the light. We don't flip the light on every once in a while.

[34 : 00] John says, abide in the light. Have a pattern of our lives in which we love one another. So what kinds of patterns characterize your life?

And do you need to make changes to those patterns to obey the commandment to love? Okay, that's the first quick hit takeaway. Here's the second. Love for one another helps each other's pursuit of holiness.

Love for one another helps each other's pursuit of holiness. Verse 10 says, Whoever loves his brother abides in the light. And in him there is no cause for stumbling.

Or your translation could also say there is nothing in them to make them stumble. In the darkness, we'll stumble around. Because we can't see. And we can easily become a stumbling block to others.

If I'm not living in obedience to God's commandment to love my brothers and my sisters in Christ, then I'm going to be hindering my own pursuit of holiness. And I'm not going to be helping you either.

[35 : 07] Kids, do you like Legos? I like Legos. I enjoy building Legos with my kids. Do you ever sometimes have your parents ask you to clean up your Legos before you go to bed at night?

And then maybe you don't. You don't obey their commandment to clean up your Legos. And then you get up in the middle of the night and you need to maybe go to the restroom. And you step on your Legos.

Oh, there is nothing like stepping on Legos. It is the worst feeling in the world. It hurts so bad. And you think, I'm stumbling around in the darkness now. And then your sibling who shares a room with you gets up and they need to go to the restroom.

And they step on your Legos too. Now, not only am I stumbling in the darkness, but my brother or my sister is stumbling in the darkness too. Because those Legos, they hurt.

We should have obeyed mom and dad and cleaned up our Legos. Would have avoided a lot of pain. I don't want to cause myself to stumble. And I don't want to be the cause of your stumbling.

[36 : 08] I don't want to be an obstacle in your way that can make you stumble in the darkness. But if I'm walking in the light, if we're walking in the light and being obedient to the commandment to love one another, then we can help each other pursue holiness.

Not hinder each other. That's the second takeaway. Here's the third and last. Love for one another is never lukewarm. Love for one another is never lukewarm.

So John here says that we love each other and we show that we're in the light. Or we hate each other and we show that we're in the darkness. John doesn't let us live in the gray.

We can't just be kind of okay with one another. Or put up with each other. Or tolerate each other. We can't be indifferent towards each other. So let's press on towards living in the light. Not sometimes. Not at a minimum. We're doing a pretty poor job of obeying the commandment if our thinking is, how can I obey by putting in minimal effort?

[37 : 18] That's missing the point that John is making. So let's not be complacent. Let's get after it. Let's walk in the light more and more.

We've been given the commandment by John. The commandment to love one another. And we've been given good reason to obey it. The law demands it from us. The Savior demonstrates it for us. And the new creation is displayed in us. Let's pray together. Father God, we need your help.

We need your spirit to be at work in us. Father, thank you that your spirit unites us together as brothers and sisters. Thank you that you have brought us into your family.

God, we need your spirit. God, we need your spirit to be. God, we need your children because of your son who went to the cross for our sins. And so now we pray that you would, by your spirit, help us. Help us to love one another.

[38 : 14] Help us to seek to be a blessing to each other. to care about each other, to follow up with each other. Help us to do good work that sometimes can feel really hard. We pray that as we go into our week, we would have minds set on, how can I love my brother or my sister?

Give us that help, we pray, by your Spirit. And it's in Christ's name that we pray. Amen.