

A New Commandment

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[0:00] John chapter 13.

We've got a short lesson tonight. I hope that doesn't offend anybody.! We've got a nice moon to look at. Get you home with your families. You know, there are a lot of people on this earth that claim to be Christians.

That very word has become confusing. It means different things to different people. And over the generations, some people try and demonstrate their Christianity, and a lot of that translates into what they wear.

And over the years, you know, we've seen lapel pins, jewelry of all kinds of types, clothing. Something that may have a Christian theme.

Bumper stickers are really popular and effective, I guess. I say effective in quotation marks. You know, coffee mugs.

[1:15] You can drink your coffee out of. That's one of the reasons I don't drink coffee. They'll have crosses and everything else. Believe it or not, if you go back a few hundred years, and maybe a year shorter, some men wore certain types of haircuts.

I don't know what they were, but people identified them as Christians because of the particular haircut that they had. And there's nothing wrong with that.

There's nothing wrong with any of these things if that's what you want to do. I mean, there's no biblical prohibition for an across necklace or whatever.

I've always thought you need to come up with an empty tomb. That would be the more appropriate fruit for us. But none of those, obviously, in and of themselves, guarantee that a person is a follower of Christ.

The one test as to whether or not we're in the body of Christ is, always has been, always will be obedience. The Word of God is very clear that if we truly love the Lord, we want to be in a right relationship with Him, then we will keep His commandments.

[2:33] Now, the sad and frightening thing in our day is those who claim to belong to Him and can't even describe any commandments.

I've always wanted to give a test. I'm not going to do it tonight. And the assignment is, write down 100 commandments found in the Bible, those that the Lord gave us.

And if you can't do that, write down 50. If not that, write down 25. I'm not even sure in some of the groups that I've been in that we could do it collectively and come up with 25 collectively.

I couldn't. I'm confident I couldn't. But there are hundreds of them, of course, in the Bible.

Obedience is crucial to any claim to be His followers.

Here's what John had to say in his first epistle, taught by Mr. Lee and Bing taught. I think by the pastor. By this, we know that we've come to know Him if we keep His commandments.

[3:39] The one who says, I have come to know Him and does not keep His commandments is a liar. John should not shade it. He should really be a little more foul. He's a liar and the truth is not in Him.

Whoever keeps His word in Him, the love of God has truly been perfected. By this, we know that we're in Him. The one who says He abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

Now, we've got to be clear. It is not that by keeping His commandments, the Lord rewards us with eternal life.

If I'm dependent upon my eternal relationship with the Lord through keeping His commandments, I'm most to be pitied. I haven't done it for one minute.

One second. Salvation is by grace alone, but obedience is the evidence that that salvation is real, that it has really occurred in that person's life.

[4:46] And it's really, I'm not talking about some sterile sort of obedience. We're not robots and programmed to obey. This is an obedience that comes from the overflow of a grateful heart.

Because He loves us and we love Him, because of what He did for us, we want to obey the Lord. Now, the Bible does contain stern warnings to those who are false disciples, false converts. In Matthew 13, you remember the Lord talked about the various seeds that fell, and only one of those were true disciples of His.

The writer of Hebrews, whomever it was, says, there are many who fall away. Lost people in Israel during the time of Christ were largely from the religious elite.

There are even those within the church who do some great things, give tremendous sums of money, and the Lord one day looks at them and says, I never knew you.

[5:58] If you go to the courthouse and look up the older churches in Bartlesville and go back years, you'll discover that every one of them that had a mortgage payment, at one point, Frank Phillips paid off.

paid them all off. And my dad worked for him and knew him well, and I think it was clear he's wanting to earn some points. And knowing what I do know about Mr. Phillips, he needs to earn some points.

But in spite of what people do, the Lord never knew them in a saving sense. We've recently studied a man who no doubt thought he was saved, thought he was in a right relationship with God, named Judas Iscariot.

He walked with Jesus. He ministered alongside him for three years. In the end, he was cast into utter darkness. So terrible was his sentence that Jesus declared it would have been better if that man had never been born.

Boy, what a stinging rebuke. Now, this evening, I'm going to do a little review, and then we'll get into the heart of what we want to talk about.

[7:07] But we haven't been here in a while. So as we come to this portion of Scripture, we see Jesus approaching the cross from John 13 through 17.

I mean, when 17 ends, He goes to the Garden of Gethsemane. The cross is looming. The cross is a matter of hours away when we come to this part of Scripture.

And as we go through these chapters, the Lord gives a farewell address to His disciples. We've been looking at those. And it's really kind of a final charge that He's going to give to them.

So they'll carry on the work after He's gone. And He began by describing the love that is to characterize true believers. And therefore, when He'd gone out, Jesus, that's Judas, now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.

If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself and will glorify Him immediately. Little children, I am with you a little while longer.

[8:14] You will seek Me. And as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, where I'm going, you cannot come. The highest expression of love, of course, is self-sacrifice.

The greatest love, as described by Jesus, was that committed by one who was willing and did die for His friends.

Well, who does that describe, of course? The Lord Jesus Christ. The cross on which Jesus died brought glory to Him. We talked about the last time we met.

It was the glorious climax of His life on earth. The death of Jesus was an accomplishment, and we have problems with that.

The world certainly has problems with it, not so much Spirit-led believers. But it was an accomplishment. It was in total accord with the will of the Father.

[9:12] I remember when Paul Worsher, I hope you know that name, but Paul Worsher got up to preach like a seven-day thing at visiting a church, and his first message was on when God the Father sent Jesus to the cross.

And when the service was over, that was a Sunday morning, and he was due to be there for like next Saturday. And the pastor got him aside and said, did you say that God put His Son on the cross?

He said, yeah, I did say that. He said, well, you don't need to come back this evening. You're through. And he packed his bags and went to the airport. And he didn't preach anymore.

And we remember this, that Jesus did not begin His farewell message until Judas had departed the group in order to carry out the final stages of the betrayal.

The words that Jesus is now speaking are reserved only for true believers, and Judas was never part of that circle.

[10:19] And the Lord began, and we looked at this two weeks ago, now is the Son of Man glorified, a direct reference to His death on the cross. It was only about a day away, but the vehicle of death, or by this vehicle, Jesus destroyed the work of the devil, including the power of sin that so gripped the human race.

It also destroyed the power of Satan, who really is the ultimate terrorist on this planet. Talk about terrorism. Talk about ISIS, and Al-Qaeda, and all those guys.

Satan is the ultimate terrorist. So we have Jesus being glorified through the act of sacrificial death, agape sacrifice, the highest form, agape love.

And the Scriptures also tell us that God the Father was glorified as well. We saw God's nature displayed on the cross. On the cross, a crucial instrument, a very cruel instrument of torture and of death.

We saw a demonstration of God's power, His justice, His holiness, His faithfulness, and His love.

The cross demonstrated all of those qualities of God.

[11:37] And only a Spirit-filled believer can understand that. I mean, the ultimate blasphemy that I've heard in our generation is that God is a child abuser because He put His Son on the cross.

And that's blasphemy. There's no other way to put it. So we have all that demonstrated on the cross. The Lord also told us if God was glorified, He would return that glory back to the Son.

So here we see pass the cross to the exaltation of the Lord as He ascends into glory, takes His rightful place at the right hand of the Father. Jesus knew that at the end of the cross lay His glorification.

Eternal glorification. But for Jesus to be glorified, something had to happen. Jesus was going to leave behind the disciples and ascend into heaven.

And they had real trouble with that. They didn't want that to happen. And He described them as little children, very endearing term in Greek.

[12:52] And He says, I'm going to be leaving you shortly. He tells them that they cannot come with Him at this time. All very painful. Very painful to them. And unlike Judas, they wanted to be with Him.

They wanted Him to remain and they wanted to be with Him. But He was the Good Shepherd. And the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

That's what the Shepherd will do. And here we see love demonstrated at a level that has no parallel in human history.

I mean, there's no other event we can look at that even approaches the cross, the sacrifice of Christ. The God of the universe, the Creator God, is willing to lay down His life for His followers. And you look at any religion of the world's religions, Christianity is not a religion. You look at any of the world's religions, you're not going to find that. You're not going to find that. The God of the universe is willing to lay down His life for His followers.

[14:01] And He's not only dying for the disciples around Him at that present time, but for all of those who would bear His name throughout history.

This comes down to even our generation. And if there's another generation, I don't know if there will be or not, but if there is, it'll pass on to that generation. Well, the Lord then is going to give a mark. He wants to mark out His believers. I'm going to put a mark on that. And at every age, God has marked out His people.

Abraham, in that era, it was circumcision. The men were circumcised. Moses, they had all these guys traveling around the desert and they would stop and worship on the Sabbath.

I love our Seventh-day Adventist guys. They say, we worship on the Sabbath. Well, wait a minute. What did you do from 6 o'clock Friday to 6 o'clock Saturday? That's Sabbath. So we've had these marks over the years.

[15:13] And now we are under the new covenant and the Lord Jesus reveals the mark that He sets on His people who are going to carry on after He's gone and carry His name throughout the world and reveal the Father and be filled with the Spirit.

So He's going to set the mark on us tonight. John 13, verses 34-35. A new commandment I give to you that you love one another even as I have loved you that you also love one another.

There's the mark. We're to love one another. And then He says, most important, by this, by what? By the mark that I'm giving you, loving one another, by this mark, all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another.

There's the mark. Really, the visible mark. Not cut like a tattoo or like a scar or something. But it's the mark that the Lord has put on His church, His believers.

[16:37] That we would have love one for another. And may I say that that love carries over into the world of the lost and into other, you know, the nations of the world and everything.

But primarily, the focus here is we have love one for another. The body of Christ has love one for another. Now here's the interesting thing. When the world sees the church loving one another, they can conclude that we belong to Jesus.

It says it right there. And they can draw a conclusion and they may say, boy, if you really want to know a good church, that and over there, they love one another.

Or they may say, hey, there's some real wackos over there. Hey, they love one another. I mean, you don't know how the world's going to react to that, right? But, when the world sees us loving one another, demonstratable love, not just in word, but in action, and when they see that, they can conclude, hey, those guys belong to Jesus.

because Jesus said they would have love one for another. Pretty simple. Not rocket science. Even I can understand it. But, flip side of that.

[18:09] What about when the world looks at the church and sees that we're not loving one another? And let's be honest, that's happened in some churches, hasn't it?

That's happened in some Baptist churches, hasn't it? That's happened in this Baptist church, Mike. Haven't. Going back over the years, Jared, others.

When the world sees us not loving one another, God gives the world the right to make a judgment call.

The world can say, I don't think those guys belong to Jesus. I don't think they belong to Jesus.

Because Jesus said they'd love one another and they split over the color of carpet.

How many times has that happened? Now, if the world makes a judgment call and says, I don't think those guys love one another, I don't think those guys belong to Jesus because they don't want one another, the world may be wrong.

[19:21] You understand that? They may be making the wrong call. It doesn't automatically mean we're not Christians, but it does mean we're not demonstrating to the world and to each other the mark that the Lord placed upon us.

So the world can certainly be wrong, but it still has the right to make that judgment call and arrive at that conclusion based upon observable evidence or lack thereof.

Lack thereof. I won't mention it, but there was a church in this town, not a Baptist church. This was, oh my gosh, 30 years ago, more than that. the city needed to, some frontage road to complete 75 and to do a loop.

And they needed like five feet but for 40 feet. That church fought them in court for three or four years.

Project delayed, all that. And finally, under eminent domain, the city, the state got it, but paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for that little chunk.

[20:48] And they paid them. And I remember our pastor in that day when we heard about that said, you know, if they had to cut a deal out here, we'd give it to them. We'd give it to them as a demonstration of our love.

We wouldn't demand money. Something like that. Five feet wide, 40 feet long. Not going to destroy that. It was less to mow. Yeah, yeah.

150 feet from the church building. And it didn't fold. I spoke in it two weeks ago as police chief on a weekday.

so the world may be wrong but it still has the right to be wrong. And worse, when the world can't see love among the members of the body of Christ, it can even draw a conclusion, well, maybe Jesus isn't real.

Maybe He didn't exist. Maybe He's a fraud. After all, He said, well, they're going to love one another. And then we're not.

[21:56] And when we don't, are we then, can we then be accused of making Jesus out to be fraudulent?

Scary thought, isn't it? Based on our actions within the walls of this church. The level of love that we're talking about here that's mentioned in Scripture here can only be achieved through the transforming power of the new birth.

No other way to achieve that. It's a birth that comes from above. And apart from that, such love is impossible to achieve at that level.

In addition to loving one another, we are to extend that love to the world of the lost. Go to the uttermost parts of the world. In this manner, all men, regardless of their position, in or out of Christ, will know, boy, those guys, they came to my country, they came to my area, and boy, they love God.

They're serious about loving God. When we love in this manner, we are assuring others that we are genuine and that Christ is available to them just as He was to us.

[23:18] So you see the importance of all this. See how important it is. And not to worry about color of carpet. And I pick on that because that's maybe one of the most prevalent reasons a church split.

We built this building and some people didn't like the color. They were calling me and I was on my way to Scotland or London or somewhere and they were calling me. What are we going to do about the color of that church? We changed the color to accommodate them and the funny thing is they're all gone.

Within five years they all lived. Just what is the extent of Christ's love? Peter would know the reality of such love before the next 48 hours were over or the week was over.

Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered and said, where I go you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later.

Well, that's comforting. Of course, you know Peter. Peter said to him, Lord, why can I not follow you right now? He said, I will lay down my life for you.

[24:34] In another gospel, he really gets further. He says, even if these guys abandon you, I'm not going to abandon you. All these guys are going to run away. Well, thanks, Peter. I appreciate it. He said, but I'll never abandon you.

He said, I'll lay down my life for you. And Jesus answered, will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny me three times.

Can you imagine the Lord of heaven creator putting his hand on your shoulder and say and stick your own name in here.

You're going to deny me three times. That had to just spiral down into the very gut of Peter. Wow. Wow. how powerful and how great was the love of Christ. It was powerful enough to guarantee forgiveness and reconciliation for all who would believe.

[25:48] It was great enough to forgive Peter who denied the Lord at his most needful hour. Judas betrayed him, but he never denied him.

Peter denied him. He just didn't betray him. Peter could not stand the thought of the Lord leaving. Hence, he says to him, where are you going?

Where are you going? Couldn't stand the thought that he would leave. Jesus had told the disciples before that he was going away, but that was more than they could comprehend.

They just couldn't comprehend it. Peter even rebuked Jesus for saying such a thing. Being Jewish, they could not reconcile the death of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom.

How's he going to establish the kingdom if he's laying in a grave? They couldn't figure that out. Because they still had the Jewish messianic view.

[26:59] That was really the downfall of Judas. He couldn't abide by it. Why haven't you established your kingdom? Didn't realize there was a 2,000 year parenthesis called the church age where he would turn to the Gentiles.

God's not through with the Jews. Read Romans 9, 10, 11. He's not through with the Jews yet. Peter could not stand the thought that the Lord was leaving.

You can't leave because you've got to establish your kingdom. And Jesus was very precise about his journey. To the unbelieving Jews, he said he was going away and they would die in their sins because they're unable to follow him.

But to the believing Jews, the minority, he said he was going away and they could not follow now but they would follow him later. all true believers will follow him later one day into heaven.

I think it was when he went out on the mountain and began to ascend there were 500 believers which apparently represent all the believers on earth at that time. And looking up thinking, you know, he said I'll follow him someday.

[28:13] And my prayer is that the rapture is going to be really fast because I don't like heights. The idea that we're going up about a foot a second or a foot every five seconds that kind of bothers me.

I mean, I'll just close my eyes but going up, I don't like heights. If I'm in an airplane, I'm okay. Peter was in absolute denial that he was capable of denying Christ.

He denied the ability to deny Christ. It was unthinkable to him. He couldn't fathom it. But from Christ's knowledge, he knew that Peter's departure was temporary temporary, it was going to be hard on him, but it was temporary, and would teach both him and the other disciples a great lesson about love and forgiveness.

Peter would then be equipped to teach others down to our generation about so great a love as this. I think there are two tremendous tests here, and that's Peter, and he's given us much in the Bible, and then Paul.

Paul was an instrument in the murder of Stephen, the principal instrument. I don't think Paul ever forgave himself until he met Stephen in glory. I really believe that.

[29:32] But God used that to build the church. Now as we conclude this evening, let me again read, this is a very important command, I'll read again. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another, by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.

And I've already said that when the world sees us not loving each other within the church, God says, you have the right to conclude we don't belong to Jesus.

It may be wrong, but they can conclude that. How horrible to think that people can look at a church, the very bride of Christ, and not see us loving one another for his sake.

But the potential for harm is even greater. And we're actually going to get to this verse of Scripture probably, as I extrapolated forward, probably in 2018.

That sounds pretty far out, doesn't it? I'll be 70. Jerry, I'm catching up to you. You are? Yep. I'll be 70 or 20 at time. So we'll get to it eventually.

[30:59] But I'm going to read it tonight. John 17. We call that the high priestly prayer. It's actually the Lord's prayer. The Lord's prayer was the disciples' prayer.

We'll get to that in a couple years. And here's what the Lord said as He's concluding the high priestly prayer, the Lord's prayer. The glory which you have given me, I've given to them, that they may be one just as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be perfected in unity so that the world may know that you sent me.

Now, did you catch a phrase in there? I hope you did. But if you didn't, don't worry because you're going to have another opportunity. There's a phrase in that passage and it's titanic.

The Lord said, people will look at the church through the ages and based upon the conduct of the church and the demonstrable love they have one for another, the world will know that Jesus came from the Father.

That's what he said, John 17. We'll get to that. And when the world sees the church not loving one another and not putting on display the glory that Christ has given the church, the world can say these people are not Christian.

[32:38] They said they would love one another and this Jesus has got to be a fraud. I hear this term Messiah Christ. He can't be because the Messiah will come from God and his people would be loving one another.

Can you imagine telling the Jews Jesus is the Messiah if they see churches fussing and fighting? They conclude no, he didn't. It would be all different if he really did come from Messiah.

That would be a heavy burden, wouldn't it? It's bad enough people to look at us and say I don't think you're Christians, but what about people looking at Jesus and saying if those guys love one another, I might buy into it.

I can't remember which atheist it was, it might have been Bertram Russell who said if I saw Christians loving each other as Christ loved, I might become one. And he didn't.

That would be a heavy burden, brothers. brothers. We need to be loving one another so that the world will know that we belong to Jesus and Jesus is who he says he is and really did come from the Father.

[33 : 53] That's what we need in this day in the 21st century for this church and every church.