

## **Not a New Commandment**

by Tricia Berg

*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. And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. 2 John 1:5-6 (Also see 1John 2:7.)*

“This is the commandment” refers back to what John just said: “Love one another,” in the same way that Jesus’ instructions to His disciples (on the night He was arrested) to obey His commands were clarified in the same discussion—John 14-15. He was not referring to the Old Testament law. He previously explained in Matt. 5 that obeying the spirit of the law is actually a higher calling than obeying the letter of it. Paul explained that the law was a sort of trainer to teach us right from wrong until the time when justification would come through faith in Jesus. (Gal. 3:23-29, Rom. 7:6-11)

The phrase “from the beginning” is repeated in the passage to emphasize that this is what Jesus taught during His ministry (to those who were with Him “from the beginning,” who would BE the beginning of the Church, His body.) (Acts 1:21-22, Luke 3:23) This has always been what God desires of us. (Lev. 19:17-18) Love God first and love your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:25-28, Mark 12:28-34, Matt. 22:36-40) Love one another so that others will know you are my disciples. (John 13:34-35, John 15:12-17) Paul explained in great detail that we are not under the law, but that not all things are helpful or desirable. (Gal. 5:4, Rom. 7:6, Col. 2:16-23, 1Cor. 6:12-13, 10:21-24)

The fruit of the Spirit is love. (Gal. 5:22-25) The one walking in the Spirit and in love will not harm their neighbor—love fulfills the law because the whole law is summarized by “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Rom. 13:8-14, Gal. 5:13-14, Jam. 2:8) That necessitates being truthful with them—not just telling them what they want to hear so that they continue being deceived, but being honest with them about what pleases God and what does not. (Eph. 4:15-25, 1Tim. 2:1-4, 2Tim. 4:3-4, Jam. 5:19-20)

Getting back to our passage from the top, John followed Jesus from the beginning of His ministry. (Luke 5:10-11) When Jesus explained in John 13:34-35 that love was a “new commandment,” it was new in that it summarized what is required of us by God during this age after His redemptive work was finished and before He returns with the called, chosen and faithful to reign and rule. (Rev. 17:14, 20:6) Jesus explained that we are to worship in

spirit and truth, not at a specific place prescribed in the Bible as in the Old Testament, not by rote and ritual. (John 4:21-26, Matt. 15:7-9, Mark 7:6-9) We called-out-of-the-world believers ARE the Church. (Eph. 5:23, Col. 1:18) We don't "go to" church (whether that is meant as a building or a service), but we gather together AS the Church, which God Himself is building out of believers. (1Cor. 14:26, 1Pet. 2:4-5)

As a side note, I don't think that Luke's and Paul's references to the first day of the week were meant to suggest that is the only day of the week they met. (Acts 20:7, 1Cor. 16:2) In Acts it says that the early Church gathered on a daily basis. (Acts 2:46-47) They were continually sharing the gospel and doing good works to glorify our Father in heaven. (Matt. 5:16)

We are repeatedly warned not be deceived by others, or even by ourselves. (1Cor. 3:16-18, 6:9-20, 15:33-34, 2Cor. 11:3, Gal. 6:7-8, Eph. 5:5-12, 2Tim. 3:12-13, Jam. 1:12-16, 21-27, 1John 1:5-10, 2:26-29, 3:4-10, 2John 1:7) Anyone who thinks that God only sees them when they're "at church" is deceiving themselves. (Acts 5:1-11, Psa. 94:8-15, Isa. 29:15-16, Psa. 139) (We don't need to be paranoid about this. With all that God knows about us, and He knew it before we ever even existed and still chose to die on our behalf to pay for our sins, He has perfectly demonstrated that His love for us is genuine, and that He is full of grace and mercy. 1Tim. 2:3-4, 2Pet. 3:9-10, 1John 4:7-13)

Anyone who thinks that it's not worth giving up "fun" in order to obey God will be filled with unbearable regret when they find out in the end how wrong they were, just as Esau was when he indulged his appetite rather than treasure his firstborn inheritance. (Gen. 25:29-34, 27:38, Heb. 12:14-29, 12:1-13, Matt. 13:22, 1Cor. 3:12-18, Col. 3:23-25, 1Cor. 2:9-16, Heb. 12:22-29, 2Pet. 1:3-15, Rev. 21:7-8, 22:14-15) The Bible says that all of creation groans while waiting for the Sons of God to be revealed. (Rom. 8:19-25) Our earthly lives are nothing compared with the eternal glory that awaits the faithful. (2Cor. 4:16-18, Phil. 1:27-30, 3:8-21, Rom. 8:16-18, Heb. 10:32-39, Jam. 1:12)

Anyone who thinks that it's drudgery to serve God, or that is only for those who are called to special ministry roles is mistaken. ALL believers are given gifts by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the Body of Christ, the Church. (Rom. 12:6-8, 1Cor. 12:4-11) It's an unimaginably great privilege to belong to our great and glorious God as His treasured possession. (Titus 2:11-3:8, 1Pet. 2:9-10, Mal. 3:15-4:3, 2Cor. 6:14-7:1) All else will fade away. (1John 2:15-17, 2Pet. 3:7)

These bodies we inhabit are not "us." We are inside of our bodies, which are "tents" that we live in and vessels that we control. (2Cor. 5:1-5, 2Pet. 1:13-15, 1Cor. 9:24-10:14, 1Thess. 4:3-8, Gal. 5:23, 2Tim. 1:7, 2Pet. 1:6) We have free

will to decide whether we will use our bodies to honor and glorify God, or to indulge ourselves. (2Cor. 5:9-10, Gal. 5:13, 19-25, Rom. 2:6-11, 8:13, 1Pet. 2:16, Rom. 12:1-2, 1Cor. 6:18-20, Matt. 16:27, Jer. 17:10) We have been set free FROM sin, not TO sin. (Rom. 6:12-23, John 8:31-36) We have the power of God within us to resist temptation, but the free will to make our own choice that shows we value more. (Gal. 5:25, 6:1, 4, Rom. 8:13-14, 1Cor. 10:13, Rom. 14:12, 2Cor. 5:14-15)

Let's make our choices wisely, according to our knowledge of God through the Bible, not according to popular trends and peer pressure. What we decide and act upon will matter for eternity. All sins can be forgiven and washed away upon repentance, but let's not be deceived into believing that God can be fooled that we have "repented" even though we deliberately continue living in our sins. Repentance doesn't just mean "sorry." It means to TURN from your sin. Anyone who thinks that God believes their lies has no idea about God's omniscience (complete knowledge) and omnipotence (absolute power). We know that it's often possible to trick our fellow humans, but God is not a human. He made humans. He's so far above us that we can't even conceive of it. (Isa. 55:8-9, Num. 23:19)

We {true} believers are just sojourners during our time here on earth. (Heb. 11:13-16, 1Pet. 2:11-12) Our true citizenship is in heaven. (Phil. 3:20-21) We need to testify by the way we live our lives who we really are—children of God. (John 1:12-13, Rom. 8:15-19, Gal. 4:4-7, Eph. 1:3-14) There will be tests and trials to pass (with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit) so that our faith can be proven to be genuine. (2Tim. 1:14, Eph. 4:30, Phil. 2:12-16, 1Pet. 1:6-9, 2:19-21, 3:13-17, 4:12-19, 5:6-11, Jam. 1:12, Heb. 4:12-13, 6:11-12, 12:1-2, 2Tim. 3:12-13, Matt. 5:10-12, Luke 6:22-23, Matt. 13:20-21, Prov. 17:3) If we really are who we say we are, then we need to stop listening to those who oppose God and stop going along with their worldly ways. (1John 4:5-6, 5:19, Eph. 4:17-5:17, 2Thess. 2:9-12, 2Cor. 4:2-4, 12:20-13:2, 2Tim. 3:1-7, 1Pet. 4:3-5, 2Pet. 3:1-3, 14-18) Why would we cooperate with enemies of God?

God has instructed from the beginning of time that we should walk in the way He tells us. (Gen. 2:15-17, Jer. 6:16-17, 17:9, 1John 2:6, Prov. 14:12, 16:25) This is an ongoing thing, not a moment in time that guarantees we won't go to hell no matter what we do with the rest of our lives from then on. Even if we don't perish, there will be loss of reward for all eternity in exchange for worthless junk during this short lifetime. Obeying God isn't "earning salvation." It's showing that we truly believe and that we're not imposters who are only pretending to be saved. Don't be tricked by those who are fleecing God's sheep ("wolves in sheep's clothing"). (Jude 1:3-23, 2Pet. 2:1-3, 17-22, 2Cor. 11:13-15, Titus 1:11, 16, Matt. 7:15-29) We were warned that they would

“tickle our ears” in the end times. (2Tim. 4:3-4) If we really believe, then we need to put our faith in God and treasure His opinion more than the world’s—trust Him, not people. (Acts 4:18-20, 5:27-29, Matt. 10:26-28, 16:24-27, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 12:2-5, 12:32-40, Matt. 6:19-21)

Everyone has probably heard the saying “Pretty is as pretty does.” What does it mean? It means that what’s on the outside is not nearly as important as what’s on the inside. Outward appearances can be deceiving. Does Jesus live inside you? If not, you’re not saved. If so, then it will show on the outside. (Matt. 12:33-35, 15:18-19, Mark 7:20-23, Luke 6:43-49, Gal. 5:19-23, Rom. 8:9, John 3:3-8—you can see the effect of the wind even though you can’t see the wind itself.) The devil is the “father of lies” and his children take after him. (John 8:44, 2Cor. 11:13-15)

Be sure to compare the cultural messages you hear to the Bible (for yourself—remember, false teachers have infiltrated the church as Paul predicted—they LOVE money and fame—Acts 20:26-35, Rom. 16:17-18, 1Tim. 6:3-10). Sometimes people use language that sounds biblical and good, but they don’t mean what it sounds like—often what they really mean is the opposite. They mix in just enough truth with their lies to fool unsuspecting people. Be careful what you support. Be careful what you expose yourself to—you can’t “unsee” anything. (Rom. 16:19) Protect your children from people who want to teach them evil all the while calling it good. (Isa. 5:20-21) The devil is prowling around looking for someone to devour. (1Pet. 5:8) Don’t let it be you or your loved ones.

If you haven’t been reading your Bible and don’t know where to start, you could begin by looking up all of the Bible references I have given you in this brief article. You can also look up the cross-references that you find in the small print behind the verses and in the footnotes in your Bible. While you’re at it, look at the verses before and after what I’ve referenced for more context. God’s word is NOT boring! Think of the profound miracle of it that He would take the trouble to inspire men to write down what He wants us to know, revealing Himself to us and preserving His words through all generations even up until now. It’s amazing!

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