

The New Commandment New Standard for Love

Sam Soleyn
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In **Revelation, chapter 12**, the apostle John, looking forward to that time from his place before the throne of God, observed the following: **“They over came him (that is the evil one) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”** (Inserted – **Revelation 12:11**) Now, most people consider an experience in which perhaps you are imprisoned or you are being tortured and in that moment, somehow, you find the courage to just stand up for the truth. But one would have to wonder if God doesn’t have a more reliable way of preparing us to stand in that day because what John is observing here is from the standpoint of being in Heaven which means he is out of “time” and he is seeing the events that are to come in “time” and he is seeing them *before* they have occurred. And he is not observing that perhaps one or two people, pressed to the wall, decided to maybe stand firm for their faith. He sees an entire *people*, pressed to the wall, standing firmly in their faith. They overcame, he said, by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony *and* that they did not shrink back from death.

How, exactly, does God intend to prepare an entire people, not just a few, not an isolated incident, but an entire people for this event? It would seem that such a thing represents not an accidental occurrence, but in fact the triumph of God’s preparation. I would like for us to begin a series of messages entitled “The New Commandment”. I believe that it is necessary for every generation to be taught the truth all over again. For many of you who were taught by great teachers from another era you have come to know, almost as second nature, some of the great truths of the Bible. But sometimes we do not realize that *since* these great teachers of many decades ago, another entire new population of believers has come in, many of whom do not even know the names of some of these great teachers from another time.

It is incumbent on the leadership of the Body of Christ to teach every generation the foundations of the truth but when you do that you are not simply rehashing what was spoken at another time. That which is true remains true no matter what epoch it is in but there is a continuing revelation regarding that which is already known. The Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever because His point of view is an eternal point of view, but in “time” he continues to reveal more and more of what He has previously spoken. (Inserted-actual verse-**“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”-Hebrews 13:8**)

It’s sort of like: because God knows the end from the beginning there is nothing about any aspect of what He does that is really new, in the sense that where He is going is *known* to Him. The revelation of the new things represents merely the unfolding of a greater understanding of what God already knows. So, for example, the Passover Lamb, or even before that, the lamb of Abel is a type. Now, the Passover Lamb is another type. In between them is the ram of Abraham—that’s another type. But what are all of these pointing to? And each one adds more than the previous example. It is not that God is changing, it is that He is unfolding and revealing that perfect sacrifice which would come at Calvary—that sacrifice was known before the foundations of the world, for the Lamb of God was slain before the foundations of the world. (Inserted-actual verse-**“...all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.”-Revelation 13:8b**)

It is therefore true that God is the same yesterday, today and forever because He begins knowing the complete matter. Everything that appears to be a change or a difference is in fact a great expansion upon the previous types and shadows as “the perfect” that God foreknows—and begins by foreknowing—begins to be unfolded. In that sense, every generation needs to be taught again the foundational truths but the foundational truths taught to every generation will reflect the *new* things that are the revelations that move toward the perfection of these things as they come. In such a fashion then we would like to unfold or unveil what is called “The New Commandment”.

Now I’d like to begin with a reading from the book of **John**, the **13th chapter**, at **verse 34**. Jesus is speaking and says,

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”(Inserted-**John 13:34,35**) Now the new commandment is simply this: “Love one another.” That’s the new commandment. Now He describes the quantum of love in this commandment, the extent to which this commandment is applicable when He says, **“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”** So He qualifies what He means by “loving one another.” The *standard*

then is: “As I have loved you...” The one speaking is Jesus and He calls this “the new commandment” So He says, “Love one another.” and the measure of that is the *same* measure: “to which I have loved you.” So, **“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”** Now He repeats that and He gives as His understanding of *why* this new commandment this, the following sentence: **“By this** (that is, when you love one another as I have loved you) **all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**

So He gives us an inherent understanding of the reason for the new commandment, which is: this will determine, in the eyes of all men, that you are my disciples. In short, you will be like me, when you love as I have loved you. Then He concludes in **chapter 13, verse 34** and then all the rest in between are red-letter statements which means that this is a continuing conversation. Then in **chapter 15, verse 12**, as bookends to this statement: **“A new command I give you...”** and then, **“My command (John 15:12) is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”** Now He runs the two together, both the standard and the command: **“My command is this:** (it’s one command now) **Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this,** (In other words, “The way that I have loved you is the maximum that is intended by the word “love”. In other words, you cannot love another more than I have loved you.) **Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.”**(Inserted-**John 15:12-14**) In other words, “I have preferred you over my own life.” That’s what happens when you lay down your life for another.

It is not that you love them *as* you love yourself because the matter of laying down your life, of quite literally giving up your rights for another, would be stalemated if it were, “Love me as I have loved you.” That’s a conditional love. “Love me as I have loved you,” means, “to the extent that you’ve experienced my love for you, then in that same way I expect you to love me.” That’s not what He is saying at all. He is saying, “I have loved you more than I have loved myself.” Why? “Because I have foregone my own rights, including my right to live, to actually be alive. So in the sense that I have foregone my right to my own life, in preference to your life, in this way I expect you to love others, and in this manner you are my disciples.” Then He goes on to say, **“You did not choose me, (this is verse 16) but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.”** Then in conclusion He said, **“Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”** Verse 17, He concludes it, **“This is my command: Love each other.”** (Inserted-**John 15:16,17**) And inherent in that is, “As I have loved you,” and inherent in that is, “In this manner all will know that you are my disciples.”

At this juncture it is helpful for us to compare between the old commandment and the new. The reference to a “new” commandment by implication implies that there was an “old” commandment. So what is the “old” commandment? The “old” commandment is found in **Matthew, chapter 22**, beginning at **verse 34**, **“Hearing**

that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’” (Inserted-Matthew 22:34-36) Now, you’ll note that. Indeed, a lawyer, under the law could only ask Him a question about the law. He couldn’t ask Him about the new commandment; he was unaware of the new commandment. So the context of this question and the answer, both have to do with the law. What is the greatest commandment? **“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”** (Inserted-Matthew 22:37-40)

Therefore, Jesus, in His answer, summarized the teachings of the Law and the Prophets and in *this*, His answer is solidly to be found in the Law. This is the very thing that is to be replaced. But today most people think if you keep the 10 commandments and if you love your neighbor as yourself then you have done everything that God could have required. Now if you look at these two commandments you will immediately observe that they foundationally different. Why? Because the standard is different. In the first case the “new” commandment has *this* as the standard: “...as I have loved you, so you should love one another.” The “old” commandment has *this*: “With all of your capacity to love so you should love God and so you should love one another.” Well you will notice that the standard of the “old” commandment is, of course, appropriate for the Law because the Law can only require you to do as much as it is possible for you to do. The Law has what might be termed an objective standard. Objectively and theoretically it is possible to keep the Law because it does not require any more than *all* that you are capable of doing. It doesn’t say, “All that you *feel* like doing,” nor does it say, “All that you *want* to do.” It says, “All that you are *capable* of doing.” So it is to maximize the design capability. So when the Law says, “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart...” all of your heart means all of the capacity that lies within you to do. All, in fact, means all. It doesn’t say, “All that you want to do, all that you feel like doing, all that on certain occasions you may be inclined to do.” No, it requires *all*. So in that sense the Law and the standard of the Law is not haphazard but it does point out that it is all that is humanly possible.

This is an appropriate standard for the Law because if the Law asks of anyone more than *all* then by the existence of the Law you’ve been made lawless. In other words if it is all plus ten percent or if it is *all* twice then the Law makes you lawless because it has exceeded your capacity to respond. But the Law begins and ends with what you can do. And it has a lesser standard for loving your neighbor. Its *objective* standard regarding loving God is all that you are capable of doing. Its lesser standard in regards to loving your neighbor is, “...as you love yourself.” The presumption is that you love yourself pretty thoroughly. Now what if you didn’t love yourself? The Law simply requires you to love your neighbor in the same fashion, to the same extent.

What is the standard of the new and how is that different? The standard of the new is: "...as I have loved you." Who is the "I" that is the measurement of this standard? The "I", of course, is Christ, the one speaking. He is also the Living God. So the standard is: as Jesus has loved us so we are to love one another. Now what if you don't love yourself? Well that is an irrelevant standard. He didn't say, "as you love your neighbor, so you should love one another..." or "as I have occasionally loved you so you must love each other." "As I have loved you" means "I, as God, have loved you perfectly; therefore I require you to love as God loves." This is a fascinating standard because it's the same standard for God as it is for man. The standard of love is the same for God as it is for man. That standard of the new commandment makes God and man equal on the matter of love. That's an incredible observation. On the matter of love, God and man are equal.

Now don't take my observation for that. Look at this: this is from the book of **Matthew**, which is the Beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. In **Matthew chapter 5, verse 43**, Jesus is speaking. Actually let's go to *verse 48* and we'll work back to **43**. Now this verse of Scripture is very troubling. **Matthew 5:48** says, "**Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**" What we've done is we've read that verse out of its context and we have inferred meanings to it that it does not mean. For example we've inferred that it means "be perfect in power" and so people come up with thoughts like, "if you're not healed it's your fault; you don't have enough faith, you do not exercise enough power." So if things go badly it's your fault. God has given you all power, God has given you all faith, and so on, and if you do these things less than perfectly then it is your fault. Well that's rubbish because God would not require us to be perfect in power inasmuch as whatever power we have is His power delegated to us. Therefore we could only operate in whatever measures of power He has given us. This Scripture is not about being perfect in power; it's about being perfect in love.

Note the context: **verse 43** now let's backtrack and we'll come forward, "**'You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies...**" (Now that's the context there, it's the context of love) "**Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...**" Now why should you do that and how is this different? You must do that so that you can be sons of your Father in heaven. (Inserted – actual verse-"**Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.**"-**Matthew 5:44,45a**) It means that just as natural children resemble their natural parents and the nature of natural children is like the nature of their natural parents, so the nature of the children of God is like the God Who is perfect in love. So it's not surprising to us that the same standard would apply to God as would apply to us... in the matter of love. So that you will be as sons of your Father in heaven and then He gives us some examples of how he loves His enemies and does good for those who persecute Him. "**He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous...**"(His friends and His

enemies like that), then He contrasts and He says, **“If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even the pagans do that?”** In short, to be like your Father in heaven it means that you do not simply love your enemies as you love yourselves or you love your neighbor as yourself; it is that you would love your enemy by preferring them over your own life and in that sense, and within that context it says, **“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”** (Inserted-Matthew 5:43-48)

Now in this first of several broadcasts on “The New Commandment” we only have time to define and to contrast the “old” commandment and the “new”. The “old” commandment, under the Law, basically required you to love the extent of your capacity to love... to love God with all of your heart, to love God with all of your mind and soul and so on and to love your neighbor as you are inclined to love yourself. That’s the “old” commandment. The “new” commandment says, “...as I have loved you.” And it establishes Christ as the standard for love. Christ being the Living God, the standard is the same for God as the standard is for man. Now the reason why the standard is the same is because, according to **II Peter, chapter 1, verse 4**, the intent of God is that we be made to be, “partakers of the divine nature...” (Inserted—actual verse—**“Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”** – II Peter 1:4)

The divine nature, the nature of God, is to love and to love perfectly; to love by preferring the life of another over your own life. Now what’s left unanswered for us is: why? And furthermore, how does this prepare us to overcome the evil one? “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony *and* that they did not prefer their own lives, they did not shrink back from death.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”-Revelation 12:11**) In this respect we are meant to be exactly as God—perfect in love—the *same* standard that applies to God applies to us and *this* is the measure that determines the reality that we are partakers of the divine nature. Now you’ve heard every kind of message on love before but I promise you that these messages on love will be like nothing you have ever heard. So I’d like to invite you to continue to discuss with us what exactly is the “new” commandment. I have only shown you in this program the distinction between the “old” commandment and the “new”. By this it is abundantly clear that the “new” commandment is not simply the “old” commandment rehashed. It has the elements of a totally different standard—the same standard for God and man. Let’s pursue it together. I’ll see you next time, God bless you.

Scripture References:

Revelation 12:11

Hebrews 13:8

Revelation 13:8b

John 13:34,35

John 15:12-14

John 15:16,17

Matthew 22:34-40

Matthew 5:43-48

II Peter 1:4

Revelation 12:11