

1 John 3:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Analysis

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. John summarizes God's essential commands. "And this is his commandment" (kai autē estin hē entolē autou)—singular "commandment" with two inseparable components. First: "That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (hina pisteusōmen tō onomati tou huiou autou Iēsou Christou). Faith in Christ is commanded, not merely suggested. "The name" represents the full revelation of who Christ is—God's Son, Savior, Lord. Saving faith involves trusting in Christ's person and work.

Second: "and love one another" (kai agapōmen allēlous). Faith and love are joined—genuine faith produces love; genuine love stems from faith. These aren't sequential (first faith, later love) but simultaneous aspects of Christian life. "As he gave us commandment" (kathōs edōken entolēn hēmin) refers to Jesus's teaching (John 13:34, 15:12, 17). Christ commanded both faith in Him and love for one another.

This verse is remarkable—belief is commanded, not merely invited. This challenges the notion that faith is merely human decision; it's divinely commanded response to revelation. Yet God also enables the obedience He commands, granting faith (Ephesians 2:8) and love (Romans 5:5) to those He regenerates. The linking of faith and love shows Christianity's irreducible dimensions—vertical relationship

with God through faith, horizontal relationship with others through love. Both are essential; neither alone suffices.

Historical Context

Judaism emphasized Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5): loving God with all one's being. Jesus added loving neighbor as second great commandment (Mark 12:28-31). John's formulation includes faith in Christ as the foundation for both loving God and loving others. This was Christianity's distinctive claim—faith in Jesus the Messiah was not optional extra but central command.

For first-century Jews considering Christianity, believing in Jesus as God's Son was the crucial hurdle. For Gentiles, monotheism and moral transformation were challenging. John presents both faith and love as divine commands, not human innovations. This grounds Christian ethics in divine authority—we love not merely because it's nice but because God commands it. We believe not merely because it seems right but because God commands it.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding faith in Christ as a command (not merely an option) affect your evangelism and discipleship?
2. What's the relationship between believing on Christ's name and loving one another—can you truly do one without the other?
3. How do you obey the command to believe when faith itself is God's gift (Ephesians 2:8)?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	αὕτη	ἐστὶν	ἡ	ἐντολὴν	αὐτοῦ	ἴνα	πιστεύσωμεν
And	this	is	G3588	commandment	his	That	we should believe
G2532	G3778	G2076		G1785	G846	G2443	G4100
τῷ	ὄνόματι	τοῦ	υἱοῦ	αὐτοῦ	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ	καὶ
G3588	on the name	G3588	Son	his	Jesus	Christ	And
	G3686		G5207	G846	G2424	G5547	G2532
ἀγαπῶμεν	ἀλλήλους	καθὼς	ἔδωκεν	ἐντολὴν	ἡμῖν		
love	one another	as	he gave	commandment	us		
G25	G240	G2531	G1325	G1785	G2254		

Additional Cross-References

John 13:34 (Love): A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

John 6:29 (Faith): Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

1 Peter 1:22 (Love): Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

John 15:12 (Love): This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

1 Peter 4:8 (Love): And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

1 John 3:11 (Love): For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

1 John 4:21 (Love): And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

1 Thessalonians 4:9 (Love): But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

Ephesians 5:2 (Love): And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Mark 9:7 (Love): And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

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