

# 2 John 1:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

## Analysis

**And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.** John transitions from commendation to exhortation with "I beseech thee" (Greek *erōtō*, ἐρωτῶ), a term suggesting earnest request rather than authoritative command, reflecting pastoral sensitivity. He emphasizes that mutual love is "not a new commandment" (Greek *ouk hōs entolēn kainēn graphōn*, οὐχ ὡς ἐντολὴν καὶ νὴν γράφων) but one "we had from the beginning" (Greek *hēn eichomen ap' archēs*, ἦν εἴχομεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς).

"From the beginning" refers to the inauguration of the Christian faith—the commandment to love existed from the gospel's first proclamation. Jesus called love the "new commandment" (John 13:34) not because the principle was novel (Leviticus 19:18) but because He embodied and redefined it through His sacrificial death. For believers, this "new" commandment became foundational "from the beginning" of their Christian experience. John stresses its antiquity to counter false teachers who promoted novel doctrines, suggesting the apostolic teaching was insufficient or outdated.

"That we love one another" (Greek *hina agapōmen allēlous*, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους) uses *agapaō* (ἀγαπάω), denoting self-sacrificial love modeled on Christ's love for us (John 13:34-35, 15:12-13). The present tense indicates continuous action—love is not an occasional gesture but a defining characteristic of Christian

community. "One another" (allēlous) emphasizes mutual reciprocity; this is not hierarchical condescension but communal commitment where all members actively love fellow believers. This love distinguishes authentic Christianity from counterfeit expressions (John 13:35, 1 John 3:14).

## **Historical Context**

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First-century false teachers often promoted novelty as a virtue, claiming new revelations, secret knowledge, or progressive insights that supposedly surpassed apostolic teaching. They portrayed themselves as intellectual pioneers and cast the apostles' message as elementary or incomplete. This strategy undermined confidence in the gospel and opened believers to deceptive innovations.

John's insistence that he teaches nothing new but only what believers "had from the beginning" directly counters this tactic. The apostolic gospel is not preliminary teaching to be transcended but final revelation to be preserved. Any supposed "advance" beyond it is actually regression into error. This principle became crucial as the church defined the relationship between apostolic tradition and later theological development.

The commandment to mutual love addressed specific first-century issues. Christian communities faced internal tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers, slave and free, wealthy and poor. Additionally, doctrinal controversies tempted some to harsh, loveless treatment of those they considered heretics. John reminds them that love—genuine, costly, sacrificial love—has always been central to Christian identity. Sound doctrine without love perverts Christianity just as surely as love divorced from truth. The historical church maintained both: fierce loyalty to apostolic truth expressed in genuine love for fellow believers.

## **Related Passages**

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. Why does modern culture value novelty over tradition, and how should Christians respond to this bias?
2. In what specific ways might we fail to love fellow believers while maintaining correct doctrine?
3. How did Christ's example redefine what love means, and how should this shape our relationships in the church?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ	νῦν	ἐρωτῶ	σε	κυρία	οὐχ	ώς	ἐντολὴν
And	now	I beseech	thee	lady	not	as though	commandment
G2532	G3568	G2065	G4571	G2959	G3756	G5613	G1785
γράφω	σοι	καινὴν	ἀλλὰ	ἢν	εἴχομεν	ἀπ'	
I wrote	unto thee	a new	but	that which	we had	from	
G1125	G4671	G2537	G235	G3739	G2192	G575	
ἀρχῆς	ἴνα	ἀγαπῶμεν	ἀλλήλους				
the beginning	that	we love	one another				
G746	G2443	G25	G240				

## Additional Cross-References

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

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

**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.

**1 John 3:23** (Love): 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.

**1 John 4:20** (Love): If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

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

**Hebrews 13:1** (Love): Let brotherly love continue.

**2 Peter 1:7** (Love): And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

**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.

**Galatians 5:22** (Love): But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

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