

John 13:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

Analysis

Jesus issues 'a new commandment' (entolen kainen), though the command to love is ancient (Leviticus 19:18). The newness lies in the standard: 'as I have loved you' (kathos egapesa hymas). The aorist tense egapesa points to His completed act of love - supremely the Cross. The command is 'that ye love one another' (hina agapate allelous), using agapao, the verb of self-giving, sacrificial love. Jesus establishes His own love as the measure and model for Christian community. This transcends general neighbor-love by specifying the quality and extent - the self-sacrificial love Christ demonstrated. The repetition 'that ye also love one another' emphasizes both the importance and the mutuality required. Christian community is to be distinguished by love patterned after Christ's self-giving. This is not mere affection but costly commitment to others' good.

Historical Context

Spoken in the Upper Room during the Last Supper, this command immediately follows Jesus washing the disciples' feet (13:1-17) - a vivid demonstration of humble, serving love. Within hours, Jesus would demonstrate ultimate love through crucifixion. The 'new' commandment transforms love from legal obligation to gospel imitation. Early Christian communities were noted by pagan observers for their extraordinary mutual care - 'See how these Christians love one another' (Tertullian). This verse became foundational to Christian ethics, distinguishing the faith from surrounding honor-shame cultures that valued status and power. The Johannine epistles develop this theme extensively (1 John 3:11, 4:7-12). Church

discipline historically has appealed to this verse - Christian community requires sacrificial love, not merely doctrinal agreement.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What makes this commandment 'new' when the Torah already commanded love of neighbor?
2. How does Christ's love as the standard transform our understanding of what love requires?

Interlinear Text

ἐντολὴν	καινὴν	δίδωμι	ὑμῖν	ἵνα	ἀγαπᾶτε	ἀλλήλους
commandment	A new	I give	unto you	That	I have loved	one another
G1785	G2537	G1325	G5213	G2443	G25	G240
καθὼς	ἀγαπᾶτε	ὑμᾶς	ἵνα	καὶ	ὑμεῖς	ἀγαπᾶτε
as	I have loved	you	That	also	ye	I have loved
G2531	G25	G5209	G2443	G2532	G5210	G25
						one another
						G240

Additional Cross-References

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.

Leviticus 19:18 (Love): Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

John 15:17 (Love): These things I command you, that ye love one another.

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:

Galatians 6:2 (Word): Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

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.

James 2:8 (Love): If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

1 Thessalonians 3:12 (Love): And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

Romans 12:10 (Love): Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Galatians 6:10 (Parallel theme): As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.