

John 15:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

These things I command you, that ye love one another.

Analysis

These things I command you (ταῦτα ἐντέλλομαι ὑμῖν, tauta entellomai hymin)—Jesus uses the verb entellomai, meaning to order authoritatively, not merely suggest. This is divine imperative, apostolic commission. **That ye love one another** (ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, hina agapate allelous) presents agape love as the purpose and substance of His commands (plural, verses 12-17). The reciprocal pronoun allelous (one another) emphasizes mutual, community love among disciples.

This verse crystallizes the vine discourse: abiding in Christ (v. 4-5) produces obedience (v. 10), obedience centers on love (v. 12), love finds its model in Christ's self-sacrifice (v. 13), and friendship with Jesus means keeping His commands (v. 14). The circle completes—chosen by Christ (v. 16) to love as He loved. This isn't natural affection but supernatural agape, the Spirit's fruit (Galatians 5:22), the fulfillment of law (Romans 13:10), and the mark distinguishing true disciples (John 13:35).

Historical Context

Jesus delivered this command in the upper room on the night before His crucifixion, preparing His disciples for His departure. His emphasis on mutual love addressed the coming challenge of maintaining unity under persecution. The early church took this seriously—Acts depicts believers sharing possessions, meeting daily, caring for widows. The epistles repeat this command constantly (Romans 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, 1 Peter 1:22, 1 John 4:7-21). Augustine later wrote that

love is the soul of Scripture—all commands reduce to loving God and neighbor. The Reformation emphasized that love evidences genuine faith—James 2 insists faith without works is dead.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' command to love differ from mere human affection or tolerance, and how does it flow from abiding in Him?
2. Why does Jesus make mutual love among disciples the central, summarizing command rather than doctrinal precision or spiritual experiences?

Interlinear Text

ταῦτα	ἐντέλλομαι	ὕμῖν	ἵνα	ἀγαπᾶτε	ἀλλήλους
These things	I command	you	that	ye love	one another
G5023	G1781	G5213	G2443	G25	G240

Additional Cross-References

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

1 Peter 2:17 (Love): Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

