

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

“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.” (John 13:34-35)

It had already been a difficult night. Jesus had not only disturbed tradition by washing their feet, but also made the ominous prediction that one of them was going to betray Him. After Judas left, Jesus spoke sobering and words difficult to understand about His glorification. Then He added to their confusion and anxiety by warning that He would only be with them a little longer.

Next, of all things, He gave them a “new command”!

While we cannot know for sure how they felt about this “new command”, it is possible that they heard it with eye rolling incredulity. Their rabbis had already catalogued 613 commands which they were unable to keep, and now it seems that Jesus was going to add # 614 to the list. Peter later described the Law as a heavy yoke that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear (Acts 15:10). Paul would also describe it as a “yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1). Was Jesus now adding another law and additional weight to an already unbearable load? NO! NO! NO!

This “new command” was nothing like the previous 613. It was in a totally different category. At the risk of being too technical, the Greek language has more than one word for “new”. One is “neos” which is “new” in respect to time and is sometimes translated as “young”. The word used in our text, however, is “kainos” which means “new as of a different nature”. This “new command” to love one another was of a totally different nature than the 613 others.

One word used to describe this “new command” is “fruit”. This new love is the “fruit” of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). This love is not produced by hard work or human effort, but by abiding in the Vine. Jesus said it like this: **“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5).**

The same contrast between the “old way” and the “new way” of obeying commands is described by Paul to the Romans: **“But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” (Rom 7:6)**

Fruit is the outward manifestation of the inward nature. You cannot gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. So every branch on a bad vine will produce bad fruit. That’s why Jesus admonished His disciples to “abide” in Him! Branches connected to Jesus produces good fruit!

The power to produce the love which Jesus commanded comes from the Holy Spirit. That’s why Jesus told His Apostles to “wait for the gift my Father promised” (Acts 1:4). They would receive “power” when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:8). Only then would they be able to accurately represent Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The Bible word for “power” in Acts 1:8 is “dunamis” from which we get our English word “dynamo”. A dynamo powered by a river can produce a constant and reliable source of energy. In the same way the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through believers can produce precisely the power needed to produce that special love which Christ commanded. The manifestation, or fruit, of this new commandment in our lives is proof of our relationship with Christ. The analogy of a river is precisely what Jesus referred to at the Feast of Tabernacles: He said: **“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:37-38).**

REMEMBER! CHRIST IN YOU IS THE HOPE OF GLORY (COL. 1:27). HE IS THE VINE, WE ARE THE BRANCHES, AND WITHOUT HIM WE CAN DO NOTHING!