

A New Commandment



The Goal Is Love (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

Now, in John chapter 13 Jesus, I would say, related His teaching to what had gone before, to the Law of Moses and the Old Testament. And in John 13:34–35 Jesus said to His disciples:

> "A new commandment I give you..."

Moses had given them ten commandments plus a whole set of regulations. Contemporary Judaism has 613 commandments, if you want to know. Jesus said, "I'll only give you one commandment. That's all. If you fulfill this that's all I ask."

> "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

What is the commandment? To love one another the way Jesus has loved us.

And then He goes on to say:

> "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

One thing I like about Good News Crusade is they have a powerful vision for evangelism. I share that vision. I have evangelized many ways in many places to many people. But I recognize one thing: that no evangelist and no evangelism will ever reach the whole human race. There's only one thing that will reach the whole human race.

> "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."

That is the testimony that will reach the entire world, it is the love of Christians for one another.

And then I want to turn to one of my favorite scriptures which isn't often quoted in 1 Timothy 1:5–6.

> "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk..."

So Paul says the commandment, whether you take it's the Law of Moses or you take it's the one commandment Jesus gave, the purpose of the commandment is summed up in one word, LOVE. And three conditions are given for having that kind of love: a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.

I like the New American Standard Version of that verse, it says:

> "The goal of our instruction is love..."

And when I first read that it caused me to pause and think. I've been a preacher for goodness knows how long, 50 years probably, at least, and I asked myself what has been the goal of my instruction? What have I aimed to produce in the people that listen to me? I had to say if it has been love I have often failed.

To those of you who are preachers, teachers, Sunday School teachers or whatever you are that in some way has an active ministry, I want to ask you this question: What is the goal of your instruction? What is it that you are aiming to produce in the people who listen to you? If you're a pastor, what are you aiming to produce in your church? Because if you're not aiming to produce love, Paul says everything else is idle talk or vain discussion, the NASB says. That's a very searching thought. I suggest to you that a great deal of contemporary Christian activity is misdirected because it is not aimed at producing the one thing that has to be our objective. And if it is aimed, frequently it's missing the mark. If you were to talk to the people who were not Christians in this country and say, "What is the attitude of people who call themselves Christians to one another?" very few people would answer love. Very few. The unsaved, in many ways, are more observant than the saved. We get so used to a kind of religious procedure that we call Christianity that we take it for granted this must be the right thing. This is the way everything is done, this is how people do it; how could we do it differently? I want to say it to you, and I say it first and foremost to myself as a preacher, if I am not producing love in the people who listen to my teaching, hear my tapes, read my books, whatever it may be, it's all idle talk, it's vain discussion, it's empty words, it's wasted time. I think it's a shocking consideration. How much time is wasted in churches because it doesn't produce the one thing that is required of us? The righteous requirement of the law is summed up in one word, love.

In 1 Peter 1, Peter gives us the primary evidence of being born again. Now many of you here this evening would claim to be born again. I have to confess I'm almost tired of hearing the phrase born again. My citizenship, well I have two citizenships, one in Britain, one in America—I have a third, too, in heaven. But, I've lived most of my past thirty years or so, most to it but not all of it, in the United States. It is frequently claimed in America today there are 40 million born again Christians in America. My response is where are they and what are they doing? Because the country is going downhill with incredible rapidity. I think the words born again have become a cliché that have been used by people that want to be respectful but don't want to change their lifestyle. They don't want to undergo any radical transformation but want to think of themselves as nice people who are headed for heaven. But this is what Peter says about the new birth:

> "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."

What is the evidence that we have been born again in one word? Love I didn't hear you. LOVE Thank you. Peter says you couldn't love the way you love if you've been born again. But that's not enough, he says go on and purify your hearts till you love one another with a pure heart fervently. And that is directly associated with the new birth. A whole lot of teaching about the new birth absolutely misses the mark and deceives people. I'm afraid that there are a lot of well meaning people who think they will get to heaven who will be disappointed. They use the term born again as a sort of passport.

Being saved is more than a change of a label. You used to sit in the church and you had on your back the label "sinner." Now you sit there and you've got on your back the label "saved" or "born again." Salvation is not just going forward in a church, shaking the pastor by the hand, going forward in a crusade, signing a decision card, or going through any other kind of religious rigmarole. Being saved is a total life transformation which takes you from darkness to light and makes you no longer a slave of Satan but a slave of God. If there's one truth that needs to be emphasized today in Britain and in the United States and in other countries with a long Christian heritage, it is that salvation isn't what a lot of people call it. And some of you here tonight who call yourselves saved, frankly, you are not saved. You're mildly religious,

you're a little better than some of your neighbors but your relationship with God is very insecure and shaky.

Then in 1 John 4, the passage that Ruth and I quoted, we have the evidence that a person knows God. We'll just read two verses, 7 and 8:

> "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

If you plumb that statement to its depths, it's remarkable because it means there is a kind of love that a person cannot have unless he's been born again. Only those who have been born again can have that kind of love. If all you have or I have is the kind of love that is known around the world, it's no evidence that we've been born again.

Then John goes on to say:

> "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

What's the evidence that you know God in one word? Love I didn't hear you. LOVE! That's right.

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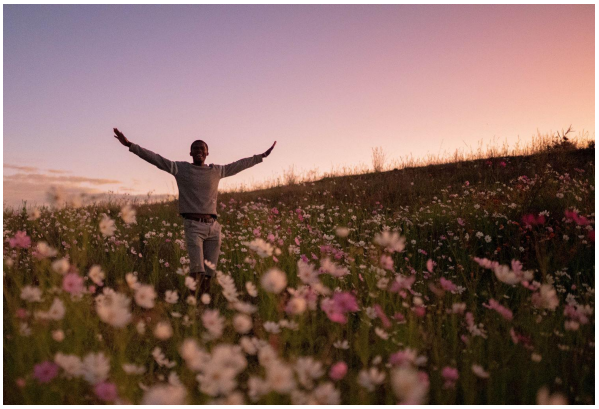
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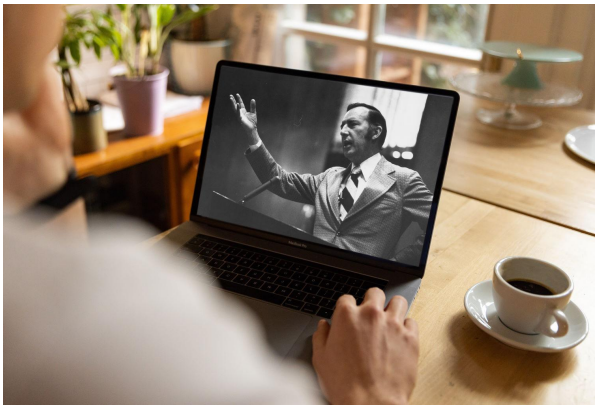
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