

## The New Commandment A Creature in God's Likeness

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As we've been considering the practical applications of the new commandment—"Love one another as I have loved you..." (Inserted – actual verse—" **'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.'**" – **John 13:34**)—we are continuing our discussion in **I Corinthians**, the **13<sup>th</sup> chapter**, which in practical part speaks about "what love is", "what love is not" and "what love is always". Inherent in these three categories of love are certain underlying realities: the first is a recognition that everyone has a destiny in God and before you were in your mother's womb God knew who you were in light of this destiny that you've come here to live out. So while you are living out this destiny God sees the end from the beginning and He knows exactly where it's going to go.

So we see elements of "**Love is patient, love is kind.**" recognizing that you have a destiny. (Inserted – **I Corinthians 13:4a**) Then in the elements of "love is not" he says, "It [love] does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, etc." (Inserted—actual verse—" **It [love] does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.**" – **I Corinthians 13:4b-6**) In that category of discussion there is the understanding of what it means to be the Body of Christ—that is: to belong to each other, to be integrated with each other and, in a sense, to be mutually dependent on each other—and we'll speak at greater length about each of these categories. The third category—"love is always"—where he says, "it always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres, and love never fails." (Inserted—actual verse—" **It [love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.**" – **I Corinthians 13: 7,8a**) There is a distinct element of one who has a responsibility to another and sees the "other" going through the processes of life and knows what God has told them concerning this "other" and holds on to the things God has told them.

So let's go back now and establish more concretely this particular concept. As I mentioned in earlier broadcasts, Paul—when he speaks of love here—is not giving an exhaustive listing of all that love might be. On the other hand, he is showing us how to

measure and how to understand when we are living the life of love that's based upon yielding our persons and having God love another through us. This excuses us from the patterns that relate to, on one hand, whether we determine beforehand love is "tough" or love is "tolerant". It is what happens when *love* becomes our *method* of life. Love is not only our goal, it is also our method... it is how we are and it is how we move through life; it is how we see each other. But in order to grasp this we have to move away from these preset decisions about how we're going to relate to another person. These things have a very linear point of view to them in that we do not see who the person is beyond the circumstance, whereas an eternal point of view allows us to see who the person is *in* the circumstance.

It may be that some of you have already been experiencing this thing that I'm talking about which is that sometimes you can actually see yourself as a person talking to another in a situation but then who you are is also this person *removed* from the situation. It's almost as if you are two persons, one above the situation and one *in* the situation, and you will know—because you know yourself so well—you will know what you are apt to say to the other with whom you are speaking or with whom you are interacting, and you will know whether or not that's the right thing to say or that's the right thing to do. It's almost like you are outside of yourself and you can inform yourself as to what you should do or what you should say in that particular situation. The proof that this is commonly *so* is the fact that if you ignore the counsel that the one who is above the situation speaks to the one who is *in* the situation—the you that is out of the situation that is speaking to you in the situation—if you ignore *that* counsel, when the words come out of your mouth, you know what effect they are going to have upon the other and you know exactly what response they are going to have and you know what to do. And sometimes when you let go of the words that you know are *not* the right approach you say to yourself—as you let go of these words—you say, "I know that it's going to have this effect and that's pretty irresponsible of me to do that." It felt good at the moment but you pay the consequence later.

The more mature that you become, the more you rely on the person who is removed—that sense of yourself removed from the situation—the more you rely on *that* voice speaking to the one who is actually interacting. And the truth is that you really are these two persons. The invisible person is your spirit; the visible person is your body and soul, together. The invisible person that is advising the one that is interacting is one who is in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is telling you what to say and you hear it with great clarity and you attempt to speak it to the soul that's involved in this very close connection. As you do that—as your spirit speaks to your soul—you hear words coming out of you that are very different and the impact of these words upon the person to whom you are speaking is strangely different. That's the time at which you really are allowed to see the person's heart. You are allowed to measure the reactions of the person to hearing what is true as opposed to hearing what you really want them to

know.

The person—the “you” that’s involved immediately with this “other”—that “you” tends to want to be sure that they hear what’s on your mind. That “you” tends to want to be sure that you use every skill you have in manipulating the “other” to come to that certain result. That “you” that’s involved wants to be sure that that person knows how they have hurt you. The “you” that is involved face-to-face wants that person to know how angry you are, how upset you are, how disappointed you are, how you don’t expect that this would happen again, how you want to be sure that you put up a barrier between “you” and “the other”. All of these things are the interaction and that’s why the “you” in this situation wants to make sure that you speak the things that are in your heart so that the other person knows exactly what you are thinking.

The “you” that is *removed* sees the person, sees who they are, sees why they did what they did, sees what they are thinking, sees what they expect you to say and when you come off saying something totally unexpected, you catch them by surprise and their hearts are exposed. Now the more mature you come to be in the Lord the more you will listen to the voice that is the “you” outside of you—the “you” outside of the situation—and the more profitable will be your relationship with all kinds of people. This is the situation in which—it’s not that you are in control, it is that you have risen *above* the situation—and now you have not a linear point of view, but you have an eternal one. Now here is why this is the better way: every person has a destiny in God. God gave every person who was born into this world a destiny and they come into this world to live out that destiny. Now they may know this or they may not. Whether they know it or they don’t, God has made them able to live out this particular destiny, but at times—and especially those times when you have to be in conflict with them—they may not be living out their destiny at that time. In fact they may be involved in situations that are meant to teach them the things they need to learn in order to be able subsequently to fulfill their destinies.

When you see who they are in the Lord, even if they don’t see who they are, the “you” that is above the situation is in fellowship with the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God shows you who they are. When you begin to speak to them out of that place of destiny, your communication reaches them at a level well beyond anything that they expect and it uncovers the depths of their disappointments, their fears, their anxieties, their worries, their hatreds, their anger and all of these things. In that way you actually become the voice of God speaking to them and that voice, whenever it speaks to them, has the capability of redeeming them even if they are in the worst of situations. On the contrary, if you allow yourself to be caught up in the circumstance in which they are, then your soul to their soul is a mess and you come away feeling robbed, you come away feeling frustrated, angry and so on and at that point there is only one thought on your mind: how do I put distance between this person and me? But then you come back and you read the Scriptures that say, “**Love is patient, love is kind.**” And you say, “No... love is tough.”

And so you justify the confrontation that expressed your frustration, expressed your anger, expressed *your* anguish and disappointment in them and you expressed the terms and conditions under which you would have a relationship with them. So you've immediately withdrawn, you've set up new parameters and this relationship is on its way to failure.

That's why you can't rely on the categories of "tough love" or "tolerant love" because they are nose-to-nose in the trenches and there is no information, there is no speaking into the situation from a point of view above the linear. In a sense, you are in the natural and "the flesh profiteth nothing." (Inserted – actual verse—"**The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.**" – **John 6:63a**) That's why relationships that are at this level, even though everybody talks about unconditional love, no one truly understands what unconditional love actually means. Unconditional love is to see somebody else exactly the way God sees *them*—that's the only meaning of unconditional love—and when you see someone the way God sees them you may know exactly why you should be patient with them while they are "messing up for the hundredth time". I mean, how do the "tough love" people explain this that Jesus said—when Peter said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Jesus' response was, "No, until seventy times seven" which means as often as he sins against you and as often as he repents, forgive him even if seventy times seven in one day. (Inserted – actual verse—"**Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'**" – **Matthew 18:21-22**)

Now, "tough love" can't handle that... "tough love" has to label Jesus' statement on that occasion as "enabling". Why would Jesus say, "Forgive your brother seventy times seven in one day"? That's because He is operating from a different plane. His point of view is eternal. He sees the person struggling with being or becoming who that person is supposed to be and he says, "Don't break a bruised reed or put out a smoldering wick." (Inserted – actual verse—"**A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory.**" – **Matthew 12:20**)

On the other hand, this same Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple and referred to the Scribes and the Pharisees in some of the most scathing language in the Scriptures; a generation of vipers and a brood of evildoers are not hardly terms of endearment. (Inserted – actual verse—"**Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves.**" – **Matthew 21:12**)(Inserted – actual verse—"**You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.**" – **Matthew 12:34**) Yet these are the choice phrases that Jesus employed in describing the Scribes and the Pharisees. Why? Because He sees them also from an eternal point of view and He understands that

they represent a structure of religion that has entrapped the people and they are the past masters at the maintaining of the structure of religion. And yet these Scribes and Pharisees were among the most acceptable people socially; they were the movers and shakers of society. They were the leaders, they were the arbiters, they were the people to whom society deferred.

If you do not see Jesus in this way then you will evolve a theology that runs something like this: love the poor and the downtrodden because by being poor and downtrodden you somehow have a greater status in life in relationship to God than the people who are upscale and who are well-established in society. You can see this current in religion today. There is no self-respecting evangelical who can afford *not* to have an orphanage in Haiti. The reason is that this sort of linear perspective on what Jesus is saying has colored the point of view of what Jesus meant. Jesus wasn't talking about the poor being spiritual because they are poor... rubbish. Nor was He saying that the established ones were unspiritual because they were the leaders; that's equally rubbish.

What He was seeing was individuals who had a destiny and were wrestling with that destiny. He saw among the Scribes and the Pharisees certain religious leaders. He saw *them* as the impediments to people entering their destinies by establishing and maintaining religious structures that had the effect of entrapping people and preventing them from coming to this place in the Lord. On the other hand, He saw how frequently this system brutalized people and made them poor and impoverished. Now He wasn't accepting the condition of one and rejecting the condition of the other. He saw both from an eternal point of view. When you see another from an eternal point of view you can tell exactly where they are in the process and when you see them the way they are then you will know when you need to be patient with them; when you need to be kind to them.

A classic example of this is found in the story of the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well in **John the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter**; in fact, let's look at it for a few moments. Now this is not a very acceptable woman socially. Jesus meets this woman—and I'll read enough of the story to set it up in your mind—Jesus meets this woman at the well, His disciples have gone into the city; this is **John 4:7**. A Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus asks for a drink. The Samaritan woman says to Him, “Well, you're a Jew and I'm a Samaritan, why are you asking me for a drink? Jews do not associate with us.” Jesus' response was to say to her, “If you knew the gift of God and He who asked you for a drink, you'd ask Him and He would give you living water.” She said, “Well, you don't have anything to draw water out of this well with, where are you going to get this living water from?”

She's missed the point already because she is thinking of natural water and living water being *deep* in the well and she says, “You don't have anything to get water out of the deep part of the well. Where will you get this living water from?” His response is to

say, “Anyone who drinks this natural water will be thirsty again but whoever drinks the water I give will never be thirsty. Indeed, what I will give him will become a spring of water welling up into eternal life.” And she misses the point totally. She said, “Well, that’s pretty nice. Give me some of this water so that I don’t have to come out here again and ever draw this water.” In other words, “Give me a spring in my back yard.” [She is] clearly missing the point, and Jesus, now, sets her up and says, “Go and call your husband.” She says, “I don’t have a husband.” Jesus said, “You’re right, you are just living with the guy but you used to have five husbands.” (Inserted – actual verse —**“When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.’ ‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?’ Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.’ He told her, ‘Go, call your husband and come back.’ ‘I have no husband,’ she replied. Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.’ ‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.’ Jesus declared, ‘Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.’ The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I who speak to you am he.’ Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, ‘What do you want?’ or ‘Why are you talking with her?’ Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’” – John 4:7-29)**

Now what does that tell you about this woman? Well, we’ll come back to that in a moment. When Jesus prophesies to her so personally and the Living God touches her,

she runs off into the city and tells everybody, “Come and see a man who told me my whole life.” Now all He said to her was, “You’re right, the man you’re living with now is not your husband but you’ve had five other husbands, so when you say that you don’t have a husband you are right.” Having said that to her, she runs off and tells *everybody*, “Come, see a man who told me my whole life.”

What kind of woman do you have here? Well here is how you would see her in a linear way: you would see her as a woman who is nothing but trouble—five former husbands and living with a man. This is a woman whose morality is seriously in question. So you wouldn’t have a serious conversation with a woman like this. This is a woman who—if you were any kind of a religious figure—you want nothing to do with her. Why does Jesus even engage her in conversation? Here is a woman whom He saw as one looking for love and approval and she’s gone through five husbands and hasn’t found love and approval... is with another man now and is a little bit flirtatious with Jesus. Otherwise she would have said, “I’ll go get him.”—meaning the man she’s living with. But she says, “I don’t have a husband.” What does that mean? That means she’s opened herself to some possibilities with this Jewish fellow who is sitting with her at the well.

He *knows* who she is. He doesn’t go for that line but in fact He affirms her in the Lord. Why? Instead of seeing a woman of loose and questionable morality He sees a woman who has been repeatedly disappointed in her pursuit of love. That’s the difference in how God sees people and in *this* case Jesus was both patient and kind to her. The moment she is acceptable by Him... all He says to her is, “You’re right, the man you are with is not your husband but you’ve had five husbands.” He doesn’t condemn her, he just tells her her life, at least her marital history. She sees it as Him telling her her whole life. What does she see? She sees that He has affirmed her life by knowing who she is... *personally*. Affirming doesn’t mean that He agrees with her, it means that she has “being” in this world and He knows it and He is a prophet. Well in her mind, who must He be? He has to be right so she goes and becomes this evangelist because for once in her life, the Living God knows her personally, warts and all. That’s all she was ever looking for in her life: to know that she mattered. Six men later—who knows how many men—but six of record later, and a seventh man sets her on the right track.

Now you notice what the religious fellows would have done. The disciples did that, they said, “Lord, why are you talking to this woman?” But Jesus spoke to her out of who He saw her heart to be and in that case love is patient and in that case love is kind. Now there are other categories of love which we’ll come to and which we’ll discuss in ensuing broadcasts. There are three distinct categories: one is “what love is”, the other is “what love is not” and the third is “what love is always”. One has to do with seeing a person’s destiny, the other is to see you involved with people as the Body of Christ and the third is to have responsibilities for people. We’ll discuss these categories as we practically lay hold of what the Scriptures mean when they say, “Love one another as I have loved you.” Continue with me in this discussion. I’m Sam Soleyn and God bless you.

## **Scripture References:**

John 13:34

I Corinthians 13:4-8a

John 6:63a

Matthew 18:21-22

Matthew 12:20

Matthew 21:12

Matthew 12:34

John 4:7-29