

The New Commandment Vision for Those in Authority

Sam Soleyn
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As we continue to pursue the understanding of what Paul meant in **I Corinthians 13** when he describes love, we are gaining a greater understanding of the “new commandment” as it is meant to be applied. The new commandment is: “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**) In **I Corinthians 13**, Paul gives, basically, three categories: “what love is”, “what love is not” and “what love is always”. (Inserted – actual verse—“**Love is patient, love is kind. It 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. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.**” – **I Corinthians 13:4-8a**) As he addresses “what love is” he speaks to our abilities to see each other from an eternal point of view, allowing us to appreciate what another is going through at the time on his way—or her way—to fulfilling their destiny. So while that is happening “love is patient and love is kind”. It doesn’t mean love is *always* patient and love is *always* kind but it does mean that within those parameters we can readily see the understanding of the meaning that “love is patient and love is kind.”

As he speaks about “what love is not” he draws our attention back to the understanding of the body of Christ that he had just finished talking about in **chapter 12** where he speaks about all of the parts of the body and the benefit of each part to the whole. So he teaches us to appreciate what others bring, and to receive them in their gifts without competition. Obviously, any part of the human body that sees the rest of the body competitively is a part that does not appreciate the benefits of all the parts to that one part. And Paul was clearly indicating that we should appreciate each other as members of the body and what each one brings and the value of what is brought to the whole and to us personally.

Finally, he talks about “what love is always” and here it is apparent that his context is one of one who has a governmental responsibility for the rest. In other words, if you are in a position of authority in relationship to another what is the appropriate vision that you need to have for that “other”? If you are responsible, if God has placed others under your

care in the body of Christ then what is the appropriate vision that you should have relative to them? If you cannot see them the way God sees them then you are not functioning as an under-shepherd to the one who is the true shepherd. You then begin to “beat the sheep” as Jesus would say and you are unprofitable to the true Shepherd.

This third category that speaks about “what love is always” inherently implies a relationship in which you are an under-shepherd of some kind—you have a position of authority and you stand in the place of Christ relative to those who are under your care. That way you have the attitude and the character of Jesus, who is the true shepherd of these ones that you have under your care. When you look at it that way, here is what “love is always”: “Love always protects, love always trusts, love always hopes, “love always perseveres”—it keeps on, no matter what they are doing, no matter how far from the goal they are, no matter how they are offensive and offending, you keep your heart, you keep going on. And “love never fails” because—concerning those under your care—you have become the visible representation of the Lord who is their true shepherd, and their keeper.

The moment you see the context, suddenly what is meant *appears*. If you don’t see the context try to apply this and see how convoluted and bizarre it gets. That means that if you do not see that there is an existing relationship here in which you have a position of authority and God holds you responsible and will hold you to account for another then, it says, “love always protects” and what that means is if somebody commits murder and runs to you, you will do whatever it takes to protect them from the law or from justice. That’s clearly not what it means, it couldn’t possibly mean that, but it does say, “love always protects.” So what does it mean when it says, “love always protects”? Obviously it doesn’t mean that love always protects. It means that first there is a relationship that helps you understand what is meant by “love always protects.”

In some cases—if this is so—if you take out its context and do not see how it is meant to function the results are pretty bizarre. You could think of a hundred ways in which these results would be bizarre. Now, for example, it says, “love always trusts.” Does that mean that you trust someone who has got a record of stealing from you? Do you just leave things out in the house while they are there, knowing that their record is that of stealing from you? No, that is stupid. That’s not what it means when it says, “love always trusts.” There is a *context* operating here that gives this significance and that’s the context that I’m trying to convey to you. And when it says that “love always perseveres”—you’ve seen this happen so many times—where some husband picks up and goes off with and marries another woman and leaves his wife and children and there is this woman who is saying, “I’m standing for his return.” And they will quote the Scripture, “love always perseveres.” You see if you just take these Scriptures and apply them helter skelter without any sort of category the results are bizarre. No wonder people sometimes think that Christians are “weird” because so often the Believers simply do not understand what God, Himself, is saying.

Now you apply this context that I've spoken to you and see how it comes out. Apply it to this context of "what love is always": a relationship in which someone has been placed in the life of another to watch over them and God holds—the one who has been placed in authority—God hold him accountable for the well-being of those under his care. Apply that context and see how it comes out. I would suggest to you when Paul speaks in **I Corinthians 12** about the fact that there are apostles and prophets and teachers, he is speaking about a governmental function that is inherent within the categories of what things are in the body of Christ. And just as he speaks of the body being of many parts and all the parts bring something of value to the whole, he is also speaking of another category within **I Corinthians 12** of governments—governmental functions. In fact right here, this is where he says it in **verse 27 of I Corinthians 12**, **"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers."**

Now these are governmental functions and Paul clearly knows what he is talking about and knows that these are governmental functions because it is the same Paul who in **Ephesians 4:11** says, "Jesus ascended on high and gave gifts to men" and these gifts—doma is the Greek term—are gifts of governments and he lists five of them: "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints." (Inserted – actual verse—"This is why it says: **'When he [Jesus] ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.'** (What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." – Ephesians 4: 8-13)

These are governmental functions for the equipping, oversight and functionality of the people of God. It is the same Paul who is writing in **Corinthians** and who refers to "in the church God has appointed..." and he uses exactly the same language of **Ephesians 4** where he says, "First of all apostles, second, prophets, third, teachers." Then he says, "... workers of miracles and so on." So he speaks of governments and helps and he gives representations of the two categories. Neither governments nor helps are presented exhaustively. He presents three of the five gifts of government here and he presents a number of the other gifts of helps, and not exhaustively. He is not categorically putting things together and giving lists. He's giving you flavors and concepts and he knows that the Holy Spirit is the one who will reveal what is written so he doesn't have to say everything that might be said.

Now we know—because the Holy Spirit has given us the revelation—what Paul is doing. **Chapter 12** precedes **chapter 13**, obviously, so we are stuck with the context that has just immediately preceded **chapter 13** and these three categories of “what love is”, “what love is not” and “what love is always” reflect these understandings that he has just gotten through telling us about. Now, when you apply—to the third category “love is always”—when you apply a certain context—the context is that of government—suddenly it makes perfect sense. But if you do not see this context and simply apply it vicariously it goes all over the map just like I’ve suggested. Now the role of government, in the life of the believer, is for the benefit of the one *governed*, not for the benefit of the one who has the authority to govern because the one who has the authority to govern is simply a delegate of Jesus Christ set in place to take care of that which belongs to the Lord.

We are not the sheep of any man; we are the Lord’s sheep so in that sense the Lord is my shepherd. However, the Lord assigns under-shepherds to watch over us and to make sure that our progression becomes consistent with the will of God for us. In this progression we are meant to grow from childhood and infancy—as Paul said in this same **I Corinthians chapter 3**—to maturity. (Inserted –actual verse—**“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?”** – **I Corinthians 3:1-3**) A carnal Christian is not a Christian who is living in sin. A carnal Christian is a Christian who is immature. We have used the term “carnal” to mean living in sin almost as a way of excusing all of the normal practices of the world making their way into the body of Christ. No. When Paul spoke of “carnality” in **I Corinthians chapter 3**, the clear context is that of immaturity.

He said, “When for time you ought to be teachers you still have need that one should teach you again the basic principles. You have a need for milk when you should be on strong food. Strong food, or strong meat is for the mature,” he says, “whereas milk is for the immature.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”** – **Hebrews 5:11-14**) He coordinates the term “carnality” and the term “immaturity” and references it to the matter of drinking milk. So he’s not speaking about living in sin and living lawlessly; he’s speaking about being immature.

When the government of God attends you its intent is to take you from immaturity to maturity. The Word says that when you were young you were subject to tutors and

governors until the time set by your Father. (Inserted – actual verse—**“What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.”** – Galatians 4:1,2) When you apply the concept of an under-shepherd—someone whom God has set in place to watch over you—you immediately see that the person who has been set to watch over you. He doesn’t come between you and Christ. His role is actually under you, to *present* you to Christ.

Paul said, “I labor that everyone might be made complete in Christ—to bring you to maturity.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“We proclaim him [Jesus], admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.”** – Colossians 1:28,29) The action of that person [the under-shepherd] should remind you of Christ himself. That person in your life should be the visual reminder of who Christ is. As an example: my children need to see, in my actions, the clarity of the presentation of the Father who loves them. They are under my oversight while they are children and until they leave my household. In that context I am the under-shepherd whose role is to present them to Christ.

Consider *that* as we look at these categories: “love always protects.” As the father, who represents God to my children, they need to see and learn—at my knees—they need to learn that God protects them *always*. That’s where they’re *supposed* to learn it. That is why it is such a terrible, unspeakable crime—it’s a crime that almost takes a place of a special category of crime—where you have priests abusing children because these people are supposed to be teaching (they even call the priests “father”). When you call the priest “father”—I mean the Scriptures say not to do it, but when that is done—it is that if these people are any sort of father, the father they are supposed to be is that which reminds the people of God, the Father. And these are children. That is why it is a sin that is so wicked as to be unconscionable.

You have to have a seared conscience to violate children as these priests have so routinely done and the sin of this being so widespread. I’m not looking for an opportunity to pummel priests, I’m saying that the context of *this* shows that there is no conscience in relationship to the understanding of what this Scripture means when it says, “love always protects.” My children are supposed to learn *from me*—in my protection—that God the Father protects them. So when they leave my household they understand that they are not vulnerable to the enemy because there is One who protects them. They should have learned that—not as an intellectual exercise primarily—but as an experiential reality because I’m showing them the Father. Against that background I think you can readily see that the actions of the priests cannot in any way be confused with loving and it’s a foundational violation of basic trust and it’s an abandonment of the role of presenting God as Father in the most basic way. In spiritual terms, these criminal activities are unconscionable. You should not think about them in any other way. It’s

not “being intolerant” of activities of people; it’s to understand how wicked and depraved this heart is that will transcend and break loose from what God intended to be shown by the ones who say that God put them there to show these very things.

Within that understanding then, look at this: “love always protects, love always trusts...” It’s not that you trust that they will always do the right thing or they will always tell you the truth. Love trusts that you know what God told you about that child. When you cannot look at their situation and have hope, you trust God; you trust what God told you about that child. It’s one of the reasons why we prophesy over children when they are small. It’s one of the reasons why God sent an angel to tell Mary who Jesus was so that when she would see her son dying on the cross that she would not just become catatonic with grief because God had prepared her by telling her who He was.

In the same way, God will tell you who your children are or He will tell you who the people that He has placed under your care are. And even if they are not *that* at the moment, you trust—this is not about trusting everything they tell you, that’s called naiveté. When somebody lies to you pretty routinely you are foolish to trust what they tell you. This is not about that. It’s about your trusting what God told you about those under your care so you do not lose your perspective because your perspective needs to be the same perspective as God Himself because you are standing in the place of God in relationship to the care of these others. So not only should your words be that, your attitude and your convictions should know and express exactly what God knows about these under your care and what God shows you about those under your care.

It requires this context for “love is always” to suddenly become available to us as a point of understanding. “Love always hopes.” What does that mean? That means that you have seen the goodness of God—hope, here, is not wish; hope is the certainty of having seen the goodness of God again and again and again and you are standing firm when the winds of trial are blowing in every direction. You know that what God told you is true and will occur because, whatever else God has always told you, you’ve always seen it happen. So when you’re waiting for the thing that God told you He will do to happen, you do not wait as if it’s not going to happen you wait in the certainty that what He has told you *will* happen.

You see how that suddenly raises the bar for how you care for the people who are under your care? If you know that what God told you about them is sure to happen then what is the result? You live—not in their vacillation, you’re not tossed back and forth by their ups and downs—you hold a steady course because you know what God told you. “Love always perseveres.” What does this mean? It means that no matter how the others “flake out”, no matter how those under your care treat you, you hold to the course because *God* appointed you to your place... *they* didn’t. My children did not choose me to be their father, to use my example. God chose me. So it doesn’t matter what my children do I am always their father and how I treat them should always be the representation of the

Living God, no matter what they do. If they want to run away from home, if they would prefer another father, the truth still is that you hold your course because that's who God made you to be.

What, then, do they see as a result of all of this? They see a God *whose love never fails* because it doesn't depend upon anything they do. When we speak about unconditional love *this* is actually what we are speaking about. It's not that you always believe everything they tell you when they are conning you. It's not that you are a sucker once and again and then again. It's not that at all. It is understanding the appointed place of an under-shepherd—the place of responsibility and the place of authority—realizing that out of this place God is going to require *you* to be accountable for those whom He has put under your care and standing firm in *that*. The conclusion of all of that is, of course, “love never fails” because your stance is the prosecution of the position that God has given to you. This is what love is. We'll continue our discussion and wrap it up in a final broadcast. I'm Sam Soleyn and God bless you.

Scripture References:

John 13:34

I Corinthians 3:1-3

I Corinthians 13:4-8a

Hebrews 5:11-14

I Corinthians 12:27

Galatians 4:1,2

Ephesians 4:8-13

Colossians 1:28,29