

## THE GREAT COMMISSION – TO GO???

“The Great Commission is not an option to be considered, but it is a command to be obeyed.” – Hudson Taylor

“If our Master returned to-day to find millions of people un-evangelized, and looked, as of course He would look, to us for an explanation, I cannot imagine what explanation we should have to give. Of one thing I am certain – that most of the excuses we are accustomed to make with such good conscience now, we should be wholly ashamed of then.”<sup>1</sup>

Although an exact date is not known, the phrase “The Great Commission” was popularized in Christendom during the latter half of the 1800’s. This phrase is a reference to the final instructions that Christ gave to the Apostles just prior to His Ascension (Mt. 28:16-20, Mk.16:14-20, Lk. 24:44-53, Acts 1:1-9). The passages related to “The Great Commission” have been used as proof texts to galvanize evangelistic and missionary efforts and are also considered by many to be the “marching orders for the Church”.

Unfortunately, most teaching on the “Great Commission” fails to consider the following: the unique distinctions found within each account of Christ’s commission to the Apostles, the lack of evidence for “The Great Commission” as the “marching orders” for the Church in the New Testament epistles, and the overwhelming evidence of the importance of the New Commandment to the Church in these same epistles. There has been a failure to “rightly divide” the Word of God and understand the purpose of the “Great Commission” and what the Church’s “marching orders” are for today and, “as a result of an overemphasis on this subject, believers have been very active in evangelization without being spiritual, working from carnal zeal.”<sup>2</sup> Sadly, this system of works has led to many spiritually stunted believers trying to “win” the lost through human wisdom and effort. An exposition of each passage related to the “Great Commission” as well as an analysis of what the epistles emphasized for the Church, will provide a clearer picture of the Church’s “marching orders” and how that is intertwined with evangelizing the lost.

## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Mar 16:14-20 – “Afterward *he appeared unto the eleven* as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

And he said unto them, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel* to every creature.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

And *these signs shall follow them that believe*; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

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<sup>1</sup> James Heywood Horsburgh, “Do Not Say”: Or the Church’s Excuses for Neglecting the Heathen (Chicago: F.H. Revell, 1892), quoted in Daniel L Akin, Benjamin L. Merkle, George G. Robinson, “40 Questions About the Great Commission”, ed. Benjamin Merkle (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2020), 55.

<sup>2</sup> David K. Spurbeck Sr., “Me! A Priest?: The Priesthood of the Grace Believer” (Forest Grove, OR: Know to Grow Publications, 2000), 465.

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with [them], and ***confirming the word with signs following***. Amen.”

- I. Context
  - a. The Resurrected Christ addresses the eleven Apostles prior to His Ascension
- II. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel
  - a. “Go ye” – Aorist Passive Dependent Participle
  - b. “Preach” – Aorist Active Imperative
  - c. “Gospel” - The good news regarding God’s promise of forgiveness for sins and acceptance through the cross work and resurrection of Jesus Christ - 1 Corinthians 15:1-4
- III. The Promise of Signs Accompanying the Gospel Message
  - a. “Signs” – *semeion* – “a sign, mark, token’ (akin to *semaino*, ‘to give a sign;’ *sema*, ‘a sign’), is used of ‘miracles’ and wonders as signs of Divine authority; - *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*
  - b. “Follow” – *parakoloutheo* – “so to follow one as to be always at his side” – *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*; “to follow close up, or side by side,” – Vine
    - i. “Follow” – Future Active Indicative
    - ii. Christ states a fact that miracles would accompany the Apostles evangelistic efforts – *see Appendix A*
- IV. The Purpose of Signs and Miracles
  - a. “Confirming” – *bebaioo* – “make firm, establish, make sure” and “to prove its truth and divinity” – Thayer
    - i. “Confirming” - Present Active Participle
    - ii. The signs and miracles promised by Christ served to validate that Gospel message, presented by the Apostles, had a divine seal of approval

If the “Great Commission” was to the entire Church, where are the attending signs and miracles today?

- V. The Temporary Gifts of Miracles
  - a. Observations regarding signs and miracles<sup>3</sup>
    - i. “Signs and wonders” is a linguistic category referring almost exclusively to the Apostles with exceptions of Stephen and Philip
    - ii. The 3 terms (wonders, signs, and miracles) used to describe the miraculous events around the presentation of the Gospel are only used in the first half of the Book of Acts
    - iii. The only time the gift of healing is mentioned in the Epistles is in Corinthians (one of the earliest letters written)

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Jerry Hullinger, “The Acts of the Apostles,” (Lecture Notes, Pensacola Theological Seminary, 2007)

- b. “After the ascension of Christ into heaven, miraculous works continued in the early church, on many occasions attending the preaching of the Word and constituting proof that it was indeed from God. With the completion of the New Testament, the need for such miraculous evidence in support of the preached Word seems to have ceased and the authority and convicting power of the Spirit seem to have replaced these outer manifestations.”<sup>4</sup>

VI. Conclusion

- a. The miraculous signs, that Christ promised the Apostles would accompany their preaching of the Gospel, were to establish the Divine authority of their message to the lost. The signs ceased to exist when the Gospel message had been established by the Apostles. An element of the fulfillment of the “Great Commission” was the presence of these miracles.

## THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke 24:44-53 – “And he said unto them, These [are] the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and [in] the prophets, and [in] the psalms, concerning me.

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

And that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

And *ye are witnesses of these things.*

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

And they worshipped him, and *returned to Jerusalem* with great joy:

And *were continually in the temple*, praising and blessing God. Amen.”

- I. “Repentance and remission of sins”
  - a. Christ stated that a change of mind about Him was necessary for one to be forgiven of their sins
  - b. Jesus Christ was not simply a vagabond Jewish carpenter but God the Son, who bore God the Father’s wrath for mankind’s sin while on the cross and arose from the dead three days later
- II. “Ye are witnesses of these things”
  - a. “witnesses” – *martyrs* – historical: “one who is a spectator of anything; ethical: “those who after his example have proved the strength and genuineness of their faith in Christ by undergoing a violent death.” – Thayer
  - b. Witnesses of What?

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<sup>4</sup> John F. Walvoord, “Spiritual Gifts Today” Bible.org. <https://bible.org/seriespage/4-spiritual-gifts-today> (accessed June 8, 2020).

- i. Luke 24:46 – the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ
  - ii. In Acts, the term “witness” is used almost exclusively of those who had seen the Resurrected Christ – *see* Appendix B
  - iii. In the Epistles, the term “witness” is primarily used to describe those who had observed the lifestyle of or heard teaching from other believers
  - iv. The term witness is used differently in Luke and Acts than it is in the Epistles
- c. Conclusion
- i. The men to whom the “Great Commission” was given had experienced something that no one in the history of the world had experienced. They had been eyewitnesses of the crucifixion of the Son of God and had personally interacted with the Resurrected Christ prior to His Ascension to heaven.
  - ii. No believer today can function as a “witness” in the manner prescribed to the eleven as part of the “Great Commission” since no one alive today was at the cross or has seen the Resurrected Christ
  - iii. Believers today are not “witnesses” in the same way that the Apostles were during the early years of the Church

Luke’s statement that the Apostles, “returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple...” brings up an interesting question. If the Apostles understood the “Great Commission” as a command to “Go!!!”, then why did they demonstrate so little hurry and initiative to “go” to the nations?

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Matthew 28:16-20 – “Then *the eleven disciples* went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ***Go ye therefore, and teach all nations***, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen.”

- I. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations”
  - a. “Go ye” – Aorist Passive Dependent Participle
    - i. There is debate among Greek grammarians regarding how to accurately translate passive dependents
    - ii. The “go ye” could carry the idea of “as ye go”, “being gone”, or even “having been made to go at a point in time”
  - b. Those who point to the “Great Commission” as the “marching orders” for the Church to evangelize the world place a great deal of emphasis on the word “Go!”, but the Apostles did not seem to share the same sense of urgency – *see* Appendix C

- i. There is historical evidence that the Apostles were still fixtures in Jerusalem twenty years after Christ gave the “Great Commission”
- ii. There is no scriptural evidence that the Apostles were knowingly being disobedient to Christ’s command
- iii. There is no indication that God reprimanded the Apostles for remaining in Jerusalem so long
- iv. Other than Paul’s missionary journeys and Philip the evangelist, most evangelism in Acts takes place after believers were persecuted and forced to flee from Jerusalem and Judea – they had been made to go
- v. Only Mark and Matthew included the phrase, “go ye” in their Gospels. In his Gospel and in Acts, Luke simply conveys a statement of fact that the Apostles will preach to the Jews and the Gentiles, while John completely omits the “Great Commission” in his Gospel
- vi. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, the historian Eusebius claimed that the Apostles divided up the known world among themselves for evangelization around the time of the fall of Jerusalem, which, if correct, would place the Apostles “going to all nations” approximately 35-40 years after the “Great Commission” was given by Christ

## II. Conclusion

- a. It appears that the Apostles understood that Christ was commanding them to preach the Gospel but that they had a different understanding of what he meant by “go ye”. Could it be that they were waiting for God to show them when it was time to evangelize beyond the confines of Israel?

What evidence is there that the “Great Commission” was given to a select group of believers chosen by Christ himself rather than the Church at large?

## THE BOOK OF ACTS

Acts 1:1-9 – “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Until the day in which he was taken up, after *that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:*

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

And, being assembled together with [them], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, [saith he], ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and *ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria*, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

- I. “that he...had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen”
  - a. “apostles” – *apostolos*– “one sent forth” – Vine’s
  - b. Requirements for Apostleship
    - i. They had to have been chosen by Jesus Christ himself – Luke 6:13-16
    - ii. They had to have followed Christ from the time he was baptized by John the Baptist up until the Ascension – Acts 1:21-22
    - iii. They had to have seen the Resurrected Christ – Acts 1:3
    - iv. They had to have received divine revelation – Acts 1:3, Eph. 3
    - v. They had the ability to perform miracles – Hebrews 2:3-4
- II. “ye shall be witnesses unto me”
  - a. Christ is stating that the Apostles would be eyewitnesses of His life, death, and resurrection as they preached the Gospel in these areas
  - b. Only the Apostles could fulfill all the requirements necessary to be the type of “witness” He referred to in the “Great Commission” – *see* the Gospel of Luke
- III. Peter’s Statement Regarding the Exclusivity of the “Great Commission”
  - a. Act 10:39-43 - And ***we are witnesses*** of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: ***Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, [even] to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God [to be] the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.***
    - i. Peter makes the admission to Cornelius that the command to preach (“The Great Commission”) was given unto those that “did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.”
    - ii. Peter’s statement demonstrates the the “Great Commission” was a command to the Apostles to preach the Good News
    - iii. Interestingly, Peter does not mention that the Apostles were commanded to “Go!”
- IV. Conclusion
  - a. “The Great Commission” was given to a small select group who, had been called by Christ from the beginning of His earthly ministry, had experienced Christ’s crucifixion, and had personal interaction with the Resurrected Christ.

If the “Great Commission” was intended by Christ to be the “marching orders” for the Church, despite the obvious distinctions that exist in each of the passages related to the “Great Commission”, one would expect....

The Apostles and other New Testament authors to instruct and emphasize to the Church to carry out the “Great Commission.

To see the New Testament authors commending or rebuking local churches depending on whether or not they carried out the Commission.

The Apostle John, the individual believed to be “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, to include the “Great Commission” and its overarching importance for the Church in his Gospel and epistles.

In actuality, there is a glaring absence of references to the “Great Commission” in the New Testament after Acts 1. This absence would be expected if the commission to “go ye into all the world and preach the gospel” was given specifically to the Apostles and not to Church at large.

It is interesting that Peter does not refer to the “Great Commission” in either of his epistles although he often mentions the future judgment of the lost. Those that promote “The Great Commission” as the Church’s primary function today often emphasize the need for evangelistic zeal because countless individuals have yet to hear the Gospel and are awaiting God’s eternal judgment. Peter also refers to this future judgment of the lost but he instead pointing believers to the “Great Commission”, he focuses believers on the quality or character of their lives. Peter’s letters begin to provide insight into God’s plan for the Church and how that leads to evangelism during the Church Age – see Appendix D

## CONCLUSION

Eph 2:19-22 - Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

***And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets***, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone];

In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Christ’s final instructions to the Apostles on the Mount of Olives before His Ascension, popularly known as “The Great Commission”, was a task given specifically to a select group of individuals who had been eyewitnesses of the Resurrected Christ. They were given the charge to aggressively preach the good news that faith in Christ’s death for sins, his burial, and resurrection was the only means by which man can be forgiven and accepted by God. God promised to validate the Apostle’s new message with miraculous signs. There is no scriptural evidence that the Apostles instructed the Church at large that they were responsible to fulfill this commission as well, nor is there evidence that it is the Church’s “marching orders” today.

The Apostles obedience to “The Great Commission” provided the foundation for the Church to be built upon, but the New Testament Epistles point to Christ’s New Commandment, given in the Upper Room Discourse, as actually being the “marching orders” for the Church today. The New Testament lays out how God’s emphasis for the Church today is growing spiritual believers who love each other the way Christ loved the Church. As these believers edify and build each other up within the Church, God will provide these believers with opportunities to share their faith in Christ as they live Spirit-filled lives in the world. The second section of this paper will cover how God’s primary focus for the Church today is “that ye love one another; as I have love you”. Christians can trust that God will bring evangelistic opportunities when they direct their attention to being spiritual believers.

## THE GREAT COMMISSION – TO LOVE!!!

If the “Great Commission” was intended specifically for the Apostles and was not intended to be the primary function of the Church today, then what is? And, what is God’s plan for evangelizing the lost during the Church Age?

### THE NEW COMMANDMENT

John 13:34-35 – “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

- I. Definitions
  - A. New – *Kainos* – “denotes ‘new,’ of that which is unaccustomed or unused, not ‘new’ in time, recent, but ‘new’ as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old.” – Vine’s
  - B. Love - *Agape* – “In respect of *agapao* as used of God, it expresses the deep and constant "love" and interest of a perfect Being towards entirely unworthy objects” – Vine’s
    - i. “used often in the First Epistle of John of the love of Christians toward one another; of the benevolence which God, in providing salvation for men, has exhibited by sending his Son to them and giving him up to death” - Thayer
    - ii. a love that seeks to do that which is in the best interests of others even to the point of personal sacrifice
  - C. One another – *Allelon* – from *allos* – *Allos* expresses a numerical difference and denotes "another of the same sort;" – Vine’s
  - D. Know – *Ginosko* – In the NT *ginosko* frequently indicates a relation between the person "knowing" and the object known; in this respect, what is "known" is of value or importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship
  - E. Conclusion: Christ provided the Apostles with a brand new kind of commandment. This new kind of command transcended the Great Commandment of the Mosaic Law. The Great Commandment’s love was the best a man could do in his own strength while the source of the New Commandment is Christ’s love.
- II. The Importance of The New Commandment in the NT Epistles – *see* Appendix E
  - A. There are at least 28 direct references to the New Commandment in the Epistles
  - B. There are 0 direct references to the Great Commission in the Epistles
    - i. Churches and Individuals are specifically commended by NT writers for their love for one another
    - ii. Peter, Paul, and John all reference the importance of the New Commandment in their writings
      1. 1 Peter 4:8 – *above all things...*
      2. 2 Thess. 1:3 – *thank God always...*
      3. 1 John 3:23 – *this is his commandment...*

- III. How Can Believers Love Like Christ?
  - A. Galatians 5:22-25 – This type of love can only be produced by the Holy Spirit when a believer walks in the Spirit
  - B. Romans 8:2-6 – A believer walks in the Spirit when they frame their minds on the things of the Spirit
  - C. Conclusion: When a believer is intentionally mindful about what they now possess as a result of their position in Christ, the Spirit of God produces Christ’s character in their life. One of these defining characteristics is love. This is what defines a spiritual believer.

Believers have the opportunity to fulfill the New Commandment in a variety of ways. Some ways found in scripture are service, hospitality, financial giving, and the use of spiritual gifts...

- IV. Spiritual Gifts
  - A. Overview
    - i. 1 Peter 4:18 – Each believer has been given a spiritual gift at the moment of salvation
    - ii. Ephesians 4:7, 11-16 - The reason God chose to give spiritual gifts to believers was to build up the entire Body of Christ
    - iii. Conclusion: When the church is operating according to God’s plan, believers will be building up other believer by using their spiritual gifts. This will result in spiritual believers being prepared to live Christ-like in the world

If the primary focus of the Church today should be, “that ye love one another of the same kind, as I have loved you,” does that mean that the Church should insulate itself from the lost and remain callous to their eternal judgment? How does the New Commandment correspond with a God who, according to 2 Peter 3:9, is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

- B. The Gift of Evangelist
  - i. Ephesians 4:11 – certain individuals within the Body of Christ were graciously given the gift of evangelism at the moment of salvation for the benefit of the Church.
  - ii. Definition – “The gift of evangelism directly involves the aggressive presentation of the Gospel...One who has the gift of evangelism has a special ability to present the Gospel to the unbeliever effectively. A part of the gift involves an ability to search for and to find the unbeliever in order to give him the Gospel...” – Spurbeck, *Me! A Priest?*, p. 466-7
  - iii. Example – Philip the Evangelist - Acts 8
    - 1. Acts 8:5, 6 – continuously preached to the people of Samaria
    - 2. Acts 8:26-29 – Philip was redirected from Samaria to evangelize to one man in the desert
    - 3. Acts 8:39-40 – Philip redirected by the Spirit to Azotus and then on to Caesarea

- iv. Conclusion: The Church should be emphasizing the importance of all believers knowing and using their spiritual gift for the benefit and growth of the Body of Christ. Those with the gift of evangelism should be encouraged to use their gift in the world. A spiritual believer with the gift of evangelism will have an effective ministry among the lost.

Does that mean that only those who have been provided the gift of evangelism are responsible for sharing their faith in Christ?

- V. How Does the New Commandment Impact the Lost?
  - A. John 17:13-18 – At salvation, the believer takes on a new relationship to the World. Now that they are in Christ they are no longer at home in or loved by the World. Christ prayed to the Father that believers would remain in the World.
  - B. John 13:35 – The World will gain an experiential knowledge of the reality of Christ and the power of the Gospel when believers love one another with Christ’s type of love.
  - C. John 17:21-23 – The believer has the potential to live a life that is consistent with God’s reputation because they are indwelt by the Godhead. When the believer lives out this life, which is also known as Eternal life, the World will believe that Jesus is God
  - D. John 16:7-11 – The Holy Spirit will use spiritual believers and the Word of God to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment
  - E. Conclusion: It is God plan for believers to remain in the world so that the lost might observe spiritual believers living their lives by the power of God and be convinced by the Holy Spirit that Jesus is God, that they are sinners, that they are not good like God is good, and that they deserve judgment
- VI. The Impact of a Spiritual Believer’s Life on the Lost
  - A. The Believer’s Life Emphasized
    - i. 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 – believers should consistently live a life that’s appropriate for one delivered by the Gospel
    - ii. 1 Timothy 3:7 – pastors should have a inherently good witness and reputation among the lost
    - iii. Philippians 2:14-15 – when the believer lives life free of complaining they are made to shine in a dark and sinful world. This manner of life is a living demonstration of the power of the Gospel
  - B. Specific passages regarding one’s opportunity to share their faith with the lost
    - i. 1 Peter 3:1-4 – Spiritual wives have the potential to win lost/carnal husbands by their lives rather than their words
    - ii. 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 – The supernatural transformation that occurred in the lives of the Thessalonian believers was sufficient advertisement for the power of the Gospel
    - iii. Colossians 4:6-7 – The believer is encouraged to understand how to make full use of the opportunities they have been presented among the lost and how to respond when the lost question them regarding their faith
    - iv. 1 Peter 3:15 – Peter instructs believers set God apart in their hearts and be in a state of readiness to respond to any questions regarding their faith

VII. Conclusion: The primary focus of the Church today is to love other believers the way Christ has loved the Church. This is only possible when believers are living in their position and relying on the Spirit of God to produce the character of Christ in their lives. It should be the Church's main goal to see believers live this type of Spirit-filled life. The New Testament writers exhorted believers to be spiritual in order to have an effective ministry to the lost. Believers with the gift of evangelism should be encouraged to be sensitive to the Spirit's leading in the use their gift while other believers should be in a state of readiness to respond to unbelievers' questions regarding their faith as a result of observing their Spirit-filled lives. The New Testament emphasizes that when the believer is focused on living according to God's plan for the Church, He will provide opportunities for them to share their faith in the world rather than believers having to aggressively force opportunities on the lost through their own efforts while motivated by the rationale, "I've got to go!"

## **APPENDIX A**

### **SIGNS AND WONDERS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS**

Acts 2:4-6 – At Pentecost, the Apostles miraculously began to speak in other known languages.

Acts 2:43 – Following Pentecost, many signs and wonders were performed by the Apostles.

Acts 3:7 – Peter healed a lame man in the Temple.

Acts 5:12, 15-16 – The people observed the Apostles perform many signs and wonders.

Acts 6:8 – Stephen was credited with many wonders and miracles among the people.

Acts 8:6, 7, 13 – Philip performed many miracles during his evangelistic efforts in Samaria.

Acts 9:32-34 – Peter healed Aeneas of palsy and many were subsequently saved.

Acts 9:38-41 – Peter raised Dorcas from the dead and many people believed on Christ.

Acts 10:45 – Cornelius and other Gentile converts spoke in tongues following their salvation.

Acts 13:11 – Paul blinded the sorcerer Elymas and the deputy believed the Gospel.

Acts 14:3, 9 – Paul and Barnabas were given the ability to perform signs and wonders.

Acts 15:2 – At the Council of Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas recounted the signs and wonders they had performed during their missionary journeys.

Acts 19:11 – Paul performed special miracles.

Acts 20:9-12 – Paul raised Eutychus from the dead.

Acts 28:3-6 – Paul miraculously survived being bitten by a poisonous snake.

Acts 28:8, 9- Paul healed the father of Publius.

## APPENDIX B

### THE TERM “WITNESS” AS USED IN ACTS AND THE EPISTLES

#### LUKE AND ACTS

Luke 24:33 – “And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, *and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,*

Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

And they told what things [were done] in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace [be] unto you...”

Luke 24:45 – “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:*

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Luke 24:48 - *And ye are witnesses of these things.*”

Acts 1:1 – “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Until the day in which he was taken up, *after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:*

*To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:*

And, being assembled together with [them], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, [saith he], ye have heard of me...”

Acts 1:8 – “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: *and ye shall be witnesses unto me* both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Acts 1:21 – “Wherefore of *these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,*

*Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*

And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all [men], *shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,*

*That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship,* from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

Acts 1:26 - And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; *and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*”

Act 2:14 – “But *Peter, standing up with the eleven*, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all [ye] that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

Men [and] brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

Act 2:32 - *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*”

Acts 3:1 – “Now *Peter and John went up together into the temple* at the hour of prayer, [being] the ninth [hour]...”

Acts 3:12 – “And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

And when Peter saw [it], he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let [him] go.

But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

Act 3:15 - *And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.*”

Acts 5:29 – “*Then Peter and the [other] apostles answered* and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

*The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.*

Him hath God exalted with his right hand [to be] a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Acts 5:32 - And *we are his witnesses of these things*; and [so is] also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.”

Acts 10:34 – “Then *Peter opened [his] mouth*, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:”

Acts 10:39 – “And *we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:*

*Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;*

*Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, [even] to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.*

*And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God [to be] the Judge of quick and dead.*

Acts 10:43 - To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

Acts 13:16 – “Then **Paul stood up**, and beckoning with [his] hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience...”

Acts 13:26 – “Men [and] brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled [them] in condemning [him].

And though they found no cause of death [in him], yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took [him] down from the tree, and laid [him] in a sepulchre.

**But God raised him from the dead:**

Acts 13:31 - **And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.”**

Acts 22:12 – “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt [there],

Came unto me, and stood, **and said unto me, Brother Saul**, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

And he said, **The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.**

Acts 22:15 - **For thou shalt be his witness unto all men** of what thou hast seen and heard.”

Acts 26:15 – “And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for **I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;**

Delivering thee from the people, and [from] the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

Acts 26:18 - To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

## **THE EPISTLES**

### **Peter**

1 Peter 5:1 – “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, **and a witness of the sufferings of Christ**, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:”

### **John**

1Jo 1:1 – “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

1Jo 1:2 - (**For the life was manifested, and we have seen [it], and bear witness**, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)”

3John 1:4 – “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers...”  
3John 1:6 – “***Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church:*** whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:”

### **Pauline Epistles**

1 Thessalonians 2:10 – “***Ye [are] witnesses***, and God [also], how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:”

1Timothy 6:11- “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, ***and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses***.

I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and [before] Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

1Timothy 6:14 - That thou keep [this] commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:”

2Timothy 2:1 – “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2Timothy 2:2 - ***And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses***, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

## APPENDIX C

### THE APOSTLES' TIMELINE IN JERUSALEM

#### AD 30

Acts 2:46 – [all that believed] “And they, *continuing daily with one accord in the temple*, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,”

Acts 3:1 – “Now *Peter and John went up together into the temple* at the hour of prayer, [being] the ninth [hour].”

#### AD 35

Acts 5:12 - And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (*and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch...*)”

Acts 5:18 - “And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, *Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people* all the words of this life....”

Acts 5:21 – “And when they heard [that], *they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught*. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought....”

Acts 5:28 - “Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, *ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine*, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.”

Acts 5:42 – “And *daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*”

Acts 8:1 – “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and *they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*”

- The church’s motivation for spreading into Judaea and Samaria was to flee persecution (being made to go) and not because they were heeding a call for an evangelistic crusade.
- The Gospel was still not being transmitted to the Gentile nations
- The Apostles remained in Jerusalem

Acts 8:5 – “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them...”

Acts 8:14 – “*Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem* heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:...”

Acts 8:25 – “And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, *returned to Jerusalem*, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.”

- Philip the Evangelist (deacon, not an Apostle) went as the Holy Spirit directed him
- Peter and John’s stay in Samaria is brief and is concluded by their return to Jerusalem

Acts 8:40 – “But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.”

### AD 36

Acts 9:1-2 – “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, ***that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.***”

- Paul was looking for Jewish Christians (not Gentile Christians) as far north as Damascus

Acts 9:31 – “***Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria***, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”

- Sixteen years after Pentecost the Church was entirely comprised of Jewish believers, geographically relegated to the areas surrounding Jerusalem

Acts 9:32 – “And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all [quarters], he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.”

- Peter travels to Lydda – on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa (22 miles from Jerusalem; 9 miles from Joppa)

### AD 40

Acts 10:19-20 - “While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

***Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.***”

- Following a vision from God related to his acceptance of that which was “unclean”, Peter is instructed by the Holy Spirit to go with Cornelius’ servants (he was made to go)
- Cornelius went to Peter, not the other way around
- The first Gentile is saved 10 years after the “Great Commission” was given

Acts 11:1-3-18 – “And ***the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea*** heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

And when ***Peter was come up to Jerusalem***, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.”

- The apostles were still in Judea and Peter returned immediately to Jerusalem following Cornelius’ conversion
- The Church in Jerusalem criticized Peter for sharing the Gospel with a Gentile

Acts 11:12 – “And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:...”

Acts 11:17 – “Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as [he did] unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?”

When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

- Peter’s defense rested on the Spirit’s command and disobedience would be resisting God’s prompting
- The Church recognizes the legitimacy of Gentile evangelization

### AD 43

Acts 11:19-20 – “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, ***preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.***

And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, ***spake unto the Grecians***, preaching the Lord Jesus.”

- Persecution resulted in Jewish believers leaving Jerusalem and the surrounding areas but there evangelization was still directed at the Jewish communities in their cities of refuge
- Saved Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene seeking refuge in the city of Antioch were the first to evangelize the Gentiles

Acts 11:22 - “Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.”

- The Church in Jerusalem sends Barnabas, but not the Apostles, to see what was occurring in Antioch.

### AD 45

Acts 12:1-3 – “Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth [his] hands to vex certain of the church.

And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)”

- Persecution continues in Jerusalem

### AD 48

Acts 13:45-47 – “ But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

For so hath the Lord commanded us, [saying], I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.”

- Paul in Antioch of Pisidia; first evangelizes the Jews until they persecute him

### AD 50

Acts 15:1-2 – “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, [and said], Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, ***should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.***”

- Twenty years after the Church began the apostles were still fixtures in Jerusalem

Acts 15:22-23 – “***Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch*** with Paul and Barnabas; [namely], Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

And they wrote [letters] by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren [send] greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:”

- At the conclusion of the Council of Jerusalem, some 20 years after Pentecost, the Apostles send a select group of believers to Gentile believers in Antioch but they remained in Jerusalem

### AD 51

Acts 16:3-4 – “Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, ***that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.***”

- The Apostles remained in Jerusalem providing instruction to the churches sprouting up along the Mediterranean.

### AD 58

Acts 21:17-18 – “And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. ***And the [day] following Paul went in with us unto James;*** and all the elders were present.”

- Only James is mentioned as being at Jerusalem

## APPENDIX D

### PETER AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

#### 1 Peter 1:18-22

Peter provided believers great detail about their salvation and what Christ had accomplished in their lives so that, “through the Spirit to brotherly love unfeigned, out of a pure heart one another love ye earnestly...”

- Reference to the fulfillment of Christ’s New Commandment as being the purpose of their salvation

#### 1 Peter 2:9-11

Peter explained the believer’s privileged position and then called on them to refrain from the desires of the sin nature. The believer’s life, which will lead the lost to say evil things against them, will also be used of God that, “they [unbelievers] may glorify God in a day of visitation.”

- Emphasis is placed on the way the believer demonstrates God’s character leading the lost to glorify God when He visits in the future

#### 1 Peter 3:1-5

Peter stated that believing wives have the potential to “win” their disobedient husbands by their manner of life rather than their speaking.

- Focus placed on the inward attitude of the heart rather than verbal correction

#### 1 Peter 3:15-16

Peter stated that believers ought to set God apart in their hearts and always be on the lookout for opportunities to provide a defense in response to questions regarding the confidence they have within themselves

- The spiritual believer’s manner of life will provide opportunities to share the Gospel in response to the unbeliever’s questions.

#### 1 Peter 4:1-6

The Gospel is preached so that believers no longer live according to the flesh. Peter then states that the end is coming near. In light of this truth, he calls on believers to be sober minded (have a saving frame of mind) and watch unto prayers (worship). But most importantly he calls them to, “have fervent charity among yourselves”. Peter then provides two practical ways to demonstrate this love to fellow believers.

- The fervent charity is demonstrated by hospitality and the use of spiritual gifts for the benefit of other believers
- Peter reminds these believers of the preeminence of Christ’s commandment to love each other sacrificially in light of God’s future judgment
  - Peter does not mention the Great Commission in this passage

### 1 Peter 4:18

Peter encourages believers to suffer graciously and to consider their lives in light of the future judgment of the Lord. He then contrasts the believer's salvation and the unbeliever's future judgment but then instructs them to commit their souls in good doing to the Creator.

- God's promise of a future judgment should result in believer's entrusting their souls to Him

### 1 Peter 5

In Peter's conclusion, he addresses the elders and instructs them to feed the flock with a proper motivation. Peter then instructs the younger believers to submit to the elders and to demonstrate humble minded service with an emphasis on unity.

He then encourages believers to stand against the trickery of the Devil.

- In his final admonitions there is no mention of the Great Commission

### 2 Peter 3:10-14

Peter describes the coming future judgment and then writes, "...what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness". The apostle also writes that believers should be looking forward to the day of God taking place and with that in mind, "...be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

- Once again, with God's future judgment in view, Peter emphasizes the believer's character and quality of life rather than emphasizing a need for evangelism
- Peter's concern was that these believers would not be deceived by false teachers but rather grow in grace

### Summary

At a time when Peter knew his life was coming to a close (2 Peter 1:14-15), he spent considerable time talking about the future judgment that will occur when Christ will return. In light of this truth, he states that believers ought to be living an authentic Christian life that honors God, particularly in regards to loving one another with a mind towards unity amongst the Body of Christ. Peter's letter provides numerous opportunities for him to exhort these believers to fulfill the "Great Commission" in light of impending death and the coming judgment of the lost, and yet each time he focuses the believer on living a life that reflects the life they now possess in Christ.

## APPENDIX E

### THE NEW COMMANDMENT IN THE EPISTLES

Romans 13:8 – “Owe no man anything, *but to love one another*: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”

Galatians 5:13 – “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh *but by love serve one another*.”

**Ephesians 1:15** – “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, *and love unto all the saints*, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;”

Ephesians 4:2 – “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, *forbearing one another in love*;”

Ephesians 4:16 – “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body *unto the edifying of itself in love*.”

Ephesians 5:2 – “And *walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us*, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

Ephesians 5:25 – “Husbands, *love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church*, and gave himself for it;”

Philippians 2:2 – “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, *having the same love, being of one accord*, of one mind.”

**Colossians 1:3-4** – “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, *and of the love which ye have to all the saints*,”

Colossians 2:2 – “That their [believers with whom Paul had no contact] hearts might be comforted, *being knit together in love*, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;”

1 Thessalonians 3:12 – “And *the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another*, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:”

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 – “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for *ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another*. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;”

**2 Thessalonians 1:3** – “ We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, *and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;*”

**Philemon 1:4-5** – “I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, *hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;*”

**Philemon 1:7** – “For *we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee,* brother.”

Hebrews 10:24 – “And let us *consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*”

1 Peter 1:22 – “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit *unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:*”

1 Peter 2:17 – “Honour all men. *Love the brotherhood.* Fear God. Honour the king.”

1 Peter 4:8 – “And *above all things have fervent charity among yourselves:* for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.”

1 John 3:11 – “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, *that we should love one another.*”

1 John 3:14 – “We know that we have passed from death unto life, *because we love the brethren,* He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”

1 John 3:16 – “Hereby perceive we the love of God, *because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*”

1 John 3:23 – “And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, *and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*”

1 John 4:7 – “*Beloved, let us love one another:* for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”

1 John 4:11-12 – “*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”

1 John 4:21 – “And this commandment have we from him, *That he who loveth God love his brother also.*”

2 John 1:5-6 – “And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, *that we love one another.* And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.”

**3 John 1:5-6** – “Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; *which have borne witness of thy charity before the church*: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:”

*\*\*\* Churches and individual believers specifically commended for their love towards one another are designated by the highlighted references.*