

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

### Summary

The passage of Colossians 3:12-17 is such an integral part of the book that is difficult to divide this section into a smaller unit to study. The context covers most of the book. Yet we learn so much by examining these few verses closely. Upon salvation we “put on a new self.” (Colossians 3:10) Then we put on 6 virtues.

In these verses we clothe ourselves, though with a metaphorical meaning of taking on a new character that includes compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love. We find humility is often misunderstood and frequently done wrong. Additionally, the meaning of gentleness is mostly lost in translation and patients has several meanings and we do not think of it in the correct way.

Once we have put on put on the first 5 virtues, we are able and in fact commanded to improve our relations with others. Putting on love is the frosting on the cake as it is “the perfect bond of unity.” With all of these virtues in our hearts and character “the peace of Christ” becomes our Jiminy Cricket so to speak, guiding us to do the right things to be “one body” even the body of Christ. We are further commanded to have the “word of Christ” within us in abundance, teaching one another, gently keeping each other inline, and singing to God with thankfulness within. All this a summed up in the strong command found in Colossians 3:17

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:17 (NASB95)

We are unable to follow that command without the unity that can only be achieved through love. Yet we are not prepared to put on love until we have put on the previous 5 virtues. This study covers what each of the virtue mean as well as issues we need to be aware of to understand this passage.

### Determining the context of Colossians 3:12-17.

Colossians so cohesive it is difficult to divide Colossians into smaller chunks of context to study. The context our passage spans many paragraphs. If we follow the paragraphs indicated in NASB95 by starting at 3:12 and working our way backwards by the paragraphs indicated by bold verse numbers. Notice several of the paragraphs begin with connecting words like therefore, if, or so indicating a link to the previous verses. We find each paragraph building on the previous one until we get to the paragraph beginning with verse 2:8. The beginning of the context for this passage is Colossians 2:8.

Using this method of evaluating the flow of thought by paragraphs we find then end of the context at 4:6 which concludes the heart of Paul’s letter to the Colossians. Verses 3:12-17 is a one paragraph. Verses 18-21 may appear disconnected from its context, but it is closely tied to 3:16-17, as is 3:22-25 and 4:1. It is possible to conclude the context with 4:1; however, the next

<https://basichurch.org>

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

two paragraphs can be viewed as application of previous verses and conclude the context with 4:6. However, the scope of this study is limited to Colossians 3:12-17 but an attempt is made to be aware of the message contained within the context as we proceed.

### **Christians, the chosen, holy, and beloved**

Paul refers to the Colossians “as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved.” We know we are Chosen of God because we have turned to Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and are Christians. Yet, we are Christians only because God has chosen<sup>1</sup> us and predestined<sup>2</sup> us to be Christians.

Holiness is a quality Christians possess “because of their position before God in Christ and the sanctifying work of the indwelling Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> We are consecrated to God with a purity that only comes through Christ’s forgiveness and our own dealing, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with sins that tries to creep into our lives. Christians are to be holy because God is holy.<sup>4</sup> Holiness is a characteristic of God and Christians although we do not obtain the same level of “holiness” as God. In holiness as in all things, there is a vast disparity between God’s holiness and ours.

“Beloved”, comes from the word αγαπαω (ἀγαπάω). Being in the perfect tense beloved (ἡγαπημένοι) emphasizes our present relationship with God due to what He has done for us in the past. Here it tells of the affection God<sup>5</sup> has for us but nothing about our love for Him. God loved us first<sup>6</sup> and our love for Him came afterwards.

### **“Put on a heart of”**

“Put on” (Ἐνδύσασθε) is said as a command (imperative). It begins the Greek sentence and therefore receives the emphasis. In the literal use of the word it means “to clothe oneself” or to “wear something”<sup>7</sup> as though saying, “dress yourself” or “get dressed”; however when used metaphorically as it is here, it means to take on “characteristics, virtues, intentions, etc.”<sup>8</sup> He is talking about the whole person changing and letting the virtues become part of our core selves rather than simply something that we cover ourselves with.

---

<sup>1</sup> John 15:16, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 2:9, 2 Peter 1:10

<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:29–30, Acts 4:28, Ephesians 1:5, 1:11

<sup>3</sup> Silva, M., & Tenney, M. C. (2009). In *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, H-L (Revised, Full-Color Edition, Vol. 3, p. 185)*. Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation.

<sup>4</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:16

<sup>5</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 5). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 4:19

<sup>7</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 333). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

Paul prefaces the list with “a heart of.” The word used for heart (σπλάγχνα ) is the word for one’s center of emotions or affections rather than the physical heart. Physically it would indicate one’s inward parts, or guts. Even today, guts still carries a definition indicating “the emotional part of a person.”<sup>9</sup> “Only the noun of σπλάγχνα occurs in Paul’s writings, and he uses it not merely to express natural emotions but as a very forceful term to signify an expression of the total personality at the deepest level.”<sup>10</sup> The apostle wants us to internalize these virtues such that they become part of our core character. We are changed by putting on these virtues.

### **The translating and not translating “a heart of”**

There is problem here with a number English translations not translating “heart of” (σπλάγχνα). Pausing to consider why σπλάγχνα might not be translated, we must consider the possibility of textual variances in the Greek manuscripts. Sometimes variances in the manuscripts explain the differences in translations. But not in this case. The textual support for σπλάγχνα in the text is very solid since CNTTS<sup>11</sup> does not list any manuscripts omitting it. CNTTS list 51 manuscripts containing the word, two of the manuscripts misspelled it and a 6<sup>th</sup> century reinked Greek-Latin manuscript (Codex Claromontanus) adds the word “and” (και) after it.

About 60 of the English translations I have, have it translated it as “Heart of” or “bowels of,” the traditional method. Bowels is acceptable and used in older translations. Seven translations translated it differently, some of which fail to capture Paul’s intent.<sup>12</sup> Three translated this noun as an adjective. It seems, a trend began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to leave σπλάγχνα untranslated. I found Eleven translations that take this approach.<sup>13</sup> These translation’s philosophy of translation includes extensive use of either dynamic equivalence or paraphrase and does not convey to us what Paul says.

It is important to translate σπλάγχνα and translated it properly. The translations meaning “a heart of” drive these virtues into the very core of our being and causes them to become our very nature and inseparable from ourselves as part of our character. Leaving σπλάγχνα untranslated renders these virtues as simply something we wear, perhaps allowing us to remove them when it is convenient for ourselves. This virtually chisels away the command to become Christlike which is the finishing touch of becoming a “new self” as we find in verse 10, just a few verses prior to verse 12.

---

<sup>9</sup> Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). Merriam-Webster’s collegiate dictionary. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

<sup>10</sup> Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (p. 1068). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>11</sup> H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies. (2010). The Center for New Testament Textual Studies: NT Critical Apparatus (Col 3:12). New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson - "disposition", CJB - "feelings of", MEV - "a spirit of", NAB-Revised Edition - "heartfelt", NKJB - "tender", Phillips - "nature", The Passion Translation - "endeavor to understand others."

<sup>13</sup> CSB ,GWT ,GNT ,ISV ,The Message ,Moffatt, NCV ,NIV ,NIV84 ,NRSV ,RSV ,TNIV

<https://basichurch.org>

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

A second problem with the translations that do not translate “Heart of” is that they are simply using the literal view of “put on” even though there is a metaphorical meaning that is the intended meaning as evidenced by the context of the verse found in Colossians 3:10, “ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.” They say something like “cloth yourselves with” or simply “put on” while leaving out “a heart of.” With this kind of translation (translation used loosely), there is no internalizing these virtues but simply wearing them with no real internal change in ourselves.

### **Put on a heart of ... compassion**

Having a heart of compassion brings out our concern for others who are experiencing misfortune. Mercy is often involved in exercising compassion.<sup>14</sup> It is compassion that moves us to action in response to the another’s misfortune.

The Bible contains many examples of compassion. Lot and his family received compassion as the destruction of the cities were delayed while they fled to safety.<sup>15</sup> God shows compassion to those he desires to show compassion to.<sup>16</sup> King David failed to show compassion to Uriah the Hittite.<sup>17</sup> Yet he calls on God for compassion in 3 of his Psalms.<sup>18</sup> Jesus felt compassion for people in 8 verses,<sup>19</sup> illustrated compassion twice in His parables,<sup>20</sup> and most of His miracles were exhibited compassion. The Apostle Paul expects us to make compassion a core part ourselves so we will have compassion on others. Just as God has compassion on us, we too as should exhibit compassion on others as a witness of God’s love.

### **Put on a heart of ... kindness**

Putting on a heart of kindness is to be “helpful or beneficial.”<sup>21</sup> It is to have a generous disposition<sup>22</sup> and readily so. The Greek word for kindness (χρηστότης) is usually translated as kindness in NASB but Lexham English Septuagint generally uses the word goodness. The word does not appear in the gospels but is used in the New Testament 10 times and 15 times in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. Kindness is also a fruit of the Spirit.<sup>23</sup> Peter’s catalog of virtues uses a different Greek word meaning “brotherly kindness and does not help

---

<sup>14</sup> James 5:11, Psalm 51:1, 79:8, 135:14

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 19:16

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 33:19

<sup>17</sup> 2 Samuel 11:1–12:7

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 25:6, 40:11, 51:13

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 9:36, Matthew 14:14, 15:32, 20:34, Mark 1:41, 6:34, 8:2, Luke 7:13

<sup>20</sup> Mark 8:2, Luke 7:13

<sup>21</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature (3rd ed., p. 1090). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Galatians 5:22–23

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

us to understand kindness in Colossians 3:12. Paul is speaking of a kindness that becomes part of the very core of our nature and touches everyone we meet from the heart.

### **Put on a heart ... humility**

People often get humility wrong when they try it on their own. Paul contrasts humility<sup>24</sup> against “selfishness” and “empty conceit.” He also cautions against a humility the NASB translates as “self-abasement.”<sup>25</sup> Other translations use “ascetic practices” and “false humility” in these 2 verses. Peter also encourages younger men to “clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.”<sup>26</sup> Sometimes people try to practice humility by putting themselves down and feeling worthless. But Christianity is a source of self-respect as we are adopted as sons of God. The Holy Spirit improves us to make us better people if we let Him by being sensitive to His leading. Humility avoids the pride that gets in the way of our relationship with God as well as other people.

It is often said that God does things upside down. By this it is meant that the things that are important to God are the very things that are not important to humans by our nature. Philosophers tend to disdain humility. Humanism takes pride in being self-sufficient with no need of God or much of anything outside of themselves. “Humility is a virtue to which many other religions accord no honor and even fail to recognize.”<sup>27</sup>

Our humility is important to God and essential to our Christian walk. We must recognize and understand our need of God. We cannot save ourselves from our sins. We are dependent upon God for forgiveness. Our humility goes beyond coming to God for forgiveness. We must be willing to serve even while being unnoticed by those around us. As with the attitude of John the Baptist who could say, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”<sup>28</sup> Or as Christ modeled lowly service for us as he washed the disciple’s feet.<sup>29</sup> V. C. Grounds<sup>30</sup> describes the Christian struggle to be humble.

In short, the faithful disciple fights a continual battle against that pride which is the root of sin, that egoism which breeds self-centeredness, self-exaltation, self-will, self-sufficiency, self-confidence, self-righteousness, self-glorying, and hence self-delusion with its ultimate fruit of self-frustration and self-despair

---

<sup>24</sup> Philippians 2:3

<sup>25</sup> Colossians 2:18, 2:23

<sup>26</sup> 1 Peter 5:5

<sup>27</sup> Silva, M., & Tenney, M. C. (2009). In *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, H-L (Revised, Full-Color Edition, Vol. 3, p. 249)*. Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation.

<sup>28</sup> John 3:30

<sup>29</sup> John 13:5–12

<sup>30</sup> Silva, M., & Tenney, M. C. (2009). In *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, H-L (Revised, Full-Color Edition, Vol. 3, p. 250)*. Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation.

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

(Rom. 10:2). As he keeps on winning the battle against pride and presumption, he matures in that HOLINESS which flourishes only in the soil of humility.

### **“Put on a heart ... of gentleness.”**

Much of the meaning of the Greek word represented by gentleness (πραΰτης) is lost in translation. It is “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance.”<sup>31</sup> It is particularly difficult to be gentle without humility. It is to be considerate of others. Gentleness is well described in Titus 3:1–2.

Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

Titus 3:1–2 (NASB95)

### **“Put on a heart of ... patience.”**

Patience (μακροθυμία) is not just the ability to wait, when we would rather not wait, as many people think of patience. It is “being able to bear up under provocation.”<sup>32</sup> Forbearance, meaning patient self-control, is a good word for it also. It is self-control under control in trying times and not letting someone under our skin so to speak. Patience is also a fruit of the Spirit.<sup>33</sup> This patience is especially important as we live our faith and contend for the faith. It is common for people who argue against Christianity to turn to ridicule once they run out of arguments. We must be able to withstand this onslaught against ourselves and our faith. Yet as we find in Colossians 3:13, these virtues are directed toward the fellow Christian.

There is one other Bible verse that groups together “humility, gentleness and patience.” The word order is the same in both verses. The difference between the two verses are that Colossians 3:12 has an “and” that is not in the Greek but is supplied by the translators because it makes for good English grammar. Where in Ephesians 4:2 the Greek has the word “with” (μετὰ), so it reads “humility and gentleness, with patience.”

### **Questions concerning virtues and explanations.**

Translations vary when it comes to verse 13. Every translation necessarily has some element of interpretation in it. This usually come into play when the structure of the sentence is complicated, or ambiguous. In this verse the question of, where does the list end and the explanation begin, or is there an explanation inserted in the middle of the list of virtues.

---

<sup>31</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature (3rd ed., p. 861). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 612

<sup>33</sup> Galatians 5:22–23

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

Some translations indicate the list's end by using a semicolon, colon, or a period and then Paul makes a comment that applies the preceding list. Other translations use a comma or a conjunction "and" to indicate the list continues. Winer<sup>34</sup> seems to make a case for there being no parenthesis or digression in Colossians 3:12-14, meaning the list continues. But the Greek is somewhat ambiguous because these 3 verses come from a single Greek sentence. The same problem also exists for other lists found in scripture. In these cases, one must study the passage as best they can and go with what seems to make the most sense of the Greek text for themselves because there is no consensus among scholars.

It would be interesting to examine the many lists<sup>35</sup> used in the New Testament, particularly those in Paul's writings to see if there are helpful patterns in the list structure. These lists can end without any indication that the end has arrived, and the explanation or comment has begun; however, an explanation is often begun with "so that" (ὅνα) which clearly indicates the list has ended and an explanation follows.

The issue solidified for me once I realized compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience were all nouns while "bearing with" and "forgiving" are verbs. This divides the verses into separate parts, the list of virtues and the two ways we exercise these virtues within the "body of Christ" ( the church). I am taking the view that all of Colossians 3:13 is a parenthesis.

### **"Bearing with one another"**

"Bearing with one another" means to tolerate others<sup>36</sup> and just put up with them. It is better to just endure the differences of other people and not let things get to you and turn into a problem. That is, the practice of patience as we now understand it. "Bearing with one another" is the agonizing work of putting up with those we disagree with and those that just rub us the wrong way. We can talk with them to try to work out problems. If it is a serious issue, we have the biblical recourse of bringing it to the attention of the elders of the church and leaving it in their hands.

It is our responsibility to have the willingness to generously forgive those who offend us. There is no place in the body of Christ for holding grudges. Just the opposite is commanded of us. We are to release grudges. We are to forgive, following the example of Christ.

---

<sup>34</sup> Winer, G. B. (1882). A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek: Regarded as a Sure Basis for New Testament Exegesis (pp. 707–708). Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

<sup>35</sup> A partial list of list found in the New Testament: Matthew 15:19, Mark 7:21–22, Romans 13:13–14, 1 Corinthians 5:10–11, 2 Corinthians 6:4–10, 12:20–21, Galatians 5:19–23, Ephesians 4:31–32, 5:3–7, 6:14–17, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:5–9, 3:12–14, 1 Timothy 1:9–10, 3:2–3, 6:4–5, 6:11, 2 Timothy 3:2–5, Titus 1:7–8, 3:1–3, James 3:17, 1 Peter 2:1, 4:3–4, 2 Peter 1:5–8

<sup>36</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature (3rd ed., p. 78). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<https://basichurch.org>

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

The word for “forgiving” in the passive form, as it is here, usually means to be “to be agreeable”<sup>37</sup> or to get along with others, showing favor to them. Another lexicon, BDAG<sup>38</sup> takes it a step further with “to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing.” It should be in our hearts to forgive. Some people resist forgiving by saying, “I do not have to forgive them because they have not asked me for forgiveness.” But that is not within the spirit of Colossians 3:13. There is no “if” or “when they ask”, it says, “forgiving each other.” We are to graciously forgive one another to keep the peace and unity within the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:31-32 is a kindred passage.

<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:31–32 (NASB95)

Christians have a special experience with forgiveness through Christ and should understand forgiveness very well. For we have been forgiven of our sins and we should do the same for those who offend us. It is the lesson we learn from the parable of the shrewd house manager (Luke 16:1-8).

### **“Beyond all these things put on love”**

Verse 14 returns to the phrase “put on”, but if we are reading carefully “put on” is italicized to indicate it is added by the translators for clarity and it is not provided by words in the original language manuscripts. However, verse 14 is linked to the previous verse and the word translated “beyond” (ἐπί) is referred to as a “marker of addition.” So Beyond could also have been translated “above” or “additionally” so “put on” still applies to love as NASB reminds us and it appears that Paul is finished with his parenthesis and is continuing with the list of virtues of which we are to put on a heart of.

“These things” refer to the things in the nearby context, which reminds us of the previous 5 nouns in the list of virtues in verse 12. Paul is talking about something additional to put on which is love. Love is a noun so we cannot read, “Beyond all these things love” because that makes love a verb. Love is the 6<sup>th</sup> virtue in Paul’s list. This love is the perfect bond of unity. This “perfect” is not the opposite of imperfect, but rather speaks to a perfection and completeness that cannot be improved upon. It is the highest degree of perfection. One might think of the perfect masterpiece. If you want a bond of unity, something that brings the pieces “into a

---

<sup>37</sup> Conzelmann, H., & Zimmerli, W. (1964–). *χαίρω, χαρά, συγχαίρω, χάρις, χαρίζομαι, χαριτώ, ἀχάριστος, χάρισμα, εὐχαριστέω, εὐχαριστία, εὐχάριστος*. G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 9, p. 375). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

<sup>38</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 1078). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<https://basichurch.org>

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

unified relationship”<sup>39</sup>, you want love as there is nothing that can dispel discord and unify people better than love.

### **The command to let “the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”**

Even though verse 15 begins a new sentence in the Greek, it is still closely tied to the previous sentence (v12-14) by an untranslated “and.” Yet it begins a series of commands that are within our grasp once we put on these 6 virtues. “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”

BDAG<sup>40</sup> list peace (εἰρήνη) as “a state of concord, peace, harmony” under definition #1. Harmony seems to fit the context of unity with believers. However, listed under definition #2, “a state of well-being” is where it indicates the correct definition of its use here. It is referring to the peace, a feeling of general wellbeing, found through Christ and the unity we should have with our fellow Christians. It looks forward to the messianic kingdom where this peace of Christ rules and everyone has a good relationship with one another, even the animals will all get along. (Isaiah 11:6-9) We are to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts today. Rule (βραβεύω) is a word Paul borrowed from the games. He spent considerable time in Corinth which is near a place they held the Olympics. The word describes the work of the umpire. It has been translated as “rule”, umpire (verb), and arbitrate<sup>41</sup>.

This “peace of Christ” is to “rule” in our hearts as a guiding or “decisive factor”<sup>42</sup> in our lives. It makes the call as to what is the right thing for us to do and we are to heed this decision of the umpire.

### **Our calling to be one body**

Paul then indicates by a brief explanation this is our calling, “which indeed you were called in one body.” The Greek called (καλέω) carries the same range of meaning as the English “called” and here means we are chosen, and by chosen by God to receive a “special benefit or experience.” Whether it is counted as benefit or experience depends a lot on us, but the calling is to be “one body.”

### **“and be thankful”**

After his brief explanation above, Paul says, “and be thankful.” How should we understand “and be thankful?” I first must note that I may differ<sup>43</sup> in opinion with NASB on the punctuation. I

---

<sup>39</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature (3rd ed., p. 966). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* p. 287.

<sup>41</sup> Moule, H. C. G. (n.d.). Colossian and Philemon Studies: Lessons in Faith and Holiness (p. 222). Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell.

<sup>42</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature (3rd ed., p. 183). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>43</sup> Be (γίνομαι) is in the imperative like a command and is the reason for the strange sentence construction used in the NASB but for understanding how the “and be thankful” applies, it is useful to separate the explanation.

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

would replace the semicolon with a comma. So that verse 15 reads, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.” The punctuation is not in the Greek, so it is our best guess anyway. Looking at it without the explanation gives us, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ... and be thankful.” “And be thankful” relates to the “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.”

As the peace of Christ make a ruling in our lives and keeps us on the straight and narrow, we are to be thankful for the Lord’s direction. It is a command to be thankful in this. This command to be thankful keeps us in the frame of mind that avoids resisting the Lord’s direction away from sin, away from destroying the unity of believers, away becoming one who “destroys the temple of God.” (1 Corinthians 3:17)

Love is a noun so we cannot read, “Beyond all these things love” because that makes love a verb. Love is the 6<sup>th</sup> virtue in Paul’s list. When the virtue of love is put on top of the first 5 virtues, we have “the perfect bond of unity” and “the peace of Christ rule.”

Paul command us to “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.” “The word of Christ,” the message He has brought to us, is more than the gospel message. It is everything He taught us in how to live our earthly live, loving God and getting along with each other. Paul desires for us to have a heavy dose of the word of Christ dwelling within us. Still, this is something that becomes part of us and affects how we live our lives.

Paul elaborates that “the word of Christ richly dwell(s) within you” is accomplished through teaching and admonishing “with all wisdom” just as he and Timothy did with them, the church of church of the Colossians. We too teach and admonish one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Psalms are “Christian songs of praise”<sup>44</sup> and a hymns (ὕμνος) indicates “a song with religious content”<sup>45</sup> and “spiritual songs” (ὠδαὶς πνευματικαῖς, [songs spiritual]) are “sacred songs.” These can all be considered synonyms used to repeat the thought and emphasize our flowing over with the fullness of Christ’s word. We sing about the things that consume us. When we are so fully engaged with God and the word of Christ, we sing His praises and we find ourselves unable to do so without “thankfulness in your hearts to God”.

### **The climax of the passage**

If you want an action verse, here it is. Paul continues with “and whatever.” Again, “and” is untranslated but still links this verse with the previous one. He also covers everything by including what we say as well as what we do and then he emphasis it again with “all.” This one must be important.

---

<sup>44</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature (3rd ed., p. 1096). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 1027.

## Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-17

©2020 By Daniel Gray

The second word “do” in this verse is not in the Greek text, but it is implied. By not actually saying “do,” Paul makes it more intense. It is an imperative, a command, “DO.” That is the action of this verse. DO all, the “all” repeats the “whatever” and “in word or in deed.”

Paul’s command in this verse carries great emphasis. Everything we do should all be done “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” By doing something “in the name of the Lord Jesus” you are representing Him on His behalf and must do so as to protect and increase His honor. The second part of the command is to give thanks to God through Jesus as we do whatever we do. “In everything give thanks.” (see 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

All quoted scripture is NASB95<sup>46</sup> unless otherwise specified.

---

<sup>46</sup> New American Standard Bible: 1995 update. (1995). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.