

"Living out the Virtues of the Christian Life"

Part 4

Colossians 3:12-17

Introduction: Three weeks ago, in our study of Colossians we were in the middle of looking at the Virtues of the Christian life and what it looks like to live them out. In verse 10 of chapter 3 Paul told us that we have put on the new man and that happened when we were saved. This "new man" then is a new way of living and this new way of living is empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is not you and me reforming our lives under our own power because that is something that we cannot do. But instead this new life is living under the power of the Holy Spirit and He lives the life of Jesus Christ in and through us.

Romans 6:3-6

³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

So far, we have looked at 7 virtues of the Christian life.

1. Bowels of mercies
2. Kindness
3. Humbleness of mind
4. Meekness
5. Longsuffering
6. Forbearing one another
7. Forgiving one another

➤ **The Virtues**

➤ **Part 4**

Notice Colossians 3:14

8. Love

In this verse we have the crown of all the virtues. It is LOVE. The verse reads "above all of these" but it could also read, "upon all of these." There are two thoughts in this statement that we need to consider.

1. Love is the crown of the Christian virtues.
2. Love is what ties all the virtues together.

We can exercise all of these Christian virtues without love but let us understand that when that is done it is nothing but the result of legalism. It is just going through the motions and the Holy Spirit has no part in it.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

² And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Paul gives three hypothetical situations here and he explains that IF he could do either of these or they were not done with love then they would have no eternal value at all. Paul goes on to tell us why love is so vital in the body of Jesus Christ and his teaching here in Corinthians ties in perfectly with our verses in Colossians.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

⁴ Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

⁵ Doth not behave itself unseemly (not rude), seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil (love keeps no records);

⁶ Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

⁷ Beareth all things, believeth all things (looks for the best in others), hopeth all things (stays steadfast), endureth all things (does not weaken).

⁸ *Charity never faileth (it continues regardless of the circumstances): but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

Love is the foundation for all spiritual fruit.

Galatians 5:22-23

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*

²³ *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Notice Colossians 3:14 again.

Let us notice that LOVE is the bonding agent that pulls and holds all of these virtues together.

Illustrations:

There are families that have certain people who are often referred to as the "glue" of the family. These are people who just hold the family together through whatever trial or tragedy they may face. These kind of people are vital to the family and they just know what it takes to keep it all together. Often times when this person dies the family will scatter all because the "glue/bonding agent" has been taken away.

When artificial stones are placed on a wall there is a bonding agent that gets mixed in with the mortar which causes the stone to adhere to the wall of the building. Without the bonding agent the stone will eventually come loose and fall away.

Application:

This is exactly the way that love works within the body of Jesus Christ. Love is like the person in the family who holds it all together. It is the bonding agent that holds everything together and brings each of these virtues to perfection. Notice the words of Vines on this verse,

*"The phrase **the bond of perfectness**" is best understood as meaning that love, in its binding power, gives perfectness, or completeness, to the other virtues in combination. For lacking love they certainly would not be perfect."*

Notice the words of the philosopher Plato.

"But two things cannot be held together without a third; they must have some bond of union. And the fairest bond is that which most completely fuses and is fused into the things which are bound."

Notice Colossians 3:15

9. Peace of God.

We as believers are here called to let the peace of God rule in our hearts. There are two applications with this thought.

1. God's peace is to have the place where it brings us inner calm.

This has the idea of allowing the peace of God to function as an umpire in our hearts. In other words, we are to be people who are walking by faith and trusting in the sovereign rule of God in our lives and in the church.

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

⁷ *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Notice the illustration.

To illustrate the idea of letting the peace of Christ rule in your hearts picture a baseball umpire. Baseball fans know that the man in the black suit who stands behind the catcher rules on the plays and makes the calls. He remains absolutely unruffled no matter what happens. Managers curse him and kick dirt at him, fans throw pop bottles at him, yet he remains unperturbed. That is the idea. Let the calmness of Christ rule among you. Consider Jesus in the gospels. He moves into every situation with total poise. He is not upset by others but remains calm and collected when other people are panicking around him. He is in control. That is to characterize the church in its functioning as a body. Though subjective in nature, yet very really indeed the peace of God produced by the Spirit of God "acts as umpire" in the heart to make definite the right decision in accord with the divine purpose. The means used by the Spirit in making each decision is the written Word. As noted above, it is the Scriptures which are used to prepare the heart and cause it to yield to the sovereign purpose of God. The Spirit of God through the Word of God also produces the peace of God in the heart.

Isaiah 26:3-4

³ *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

⁴ *Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:*

Notice the words of Hughes on this thought.

"How much misery we would avoid if we permitted "the peace of Christ" to umpire in our hearts. How many words we would hold back if he were the arbitrator in our lives? How many sleepless nights we would forego if we did that? How the Church needs this too, since as members of one body you were called to peace."

2. We are to live in peace with other believers.

Matthew 5:9

⁹ *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

There are those who give a false pretense of peace but it is completely different within their hearts.

Psalm 28:3

³ *Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.*

Psalm 55:21

²¹ *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.*

Notice Colossians 3:15 again.

We are called to a life of unity in the body of Jesus Christ. Notice the words of Matthew Henry.

"God's being at peace with you, and the comfortable sense of his acceptance and favour: or, a disposition to peace among yourselves, a peaceable spirit, that keeps the peace, and makes peace... We are called to this peace, to peace with God as our privilege and peace with our brethren as our duty. Being united in one body, we are called to be at peace one with another, as the members of the natural body."

Ephesians 4:1-3

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

² *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*

³ *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Conclusion:

As we live out all of these virtues it is all for the purpose of glorifying the Lord. That is the entire purpose of history and it is the purpose of the church, to glorify God. We do this as we allow the Holy Spirit to manifest the life of Jesus Christ through us. We show forth a lifestyle that is completely different than that of the fallen world around us. It enables people to see Jesus Christ in us and that is why we are here.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

⁸ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

¹⁰ Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

¹¹ For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.