

“Bringing Virtue to Life”

Part 2

Colossians 3:12–17

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COLOSSIANS 3:12–17

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS 3:12–17

- I. The Christian's Practical Virtues (vv. 12–13)
- II. The Christian's Comprehensive Virtue (v. 14)
- III. The Christian's Internal Virtues (vv. 15–16)
- IV. The Christian's Vertical Virtue (v. 17)

BRINGING
VIRTUE
TO LIFE

II. The Christian's Comprehensive Virtue (3:14)

“Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

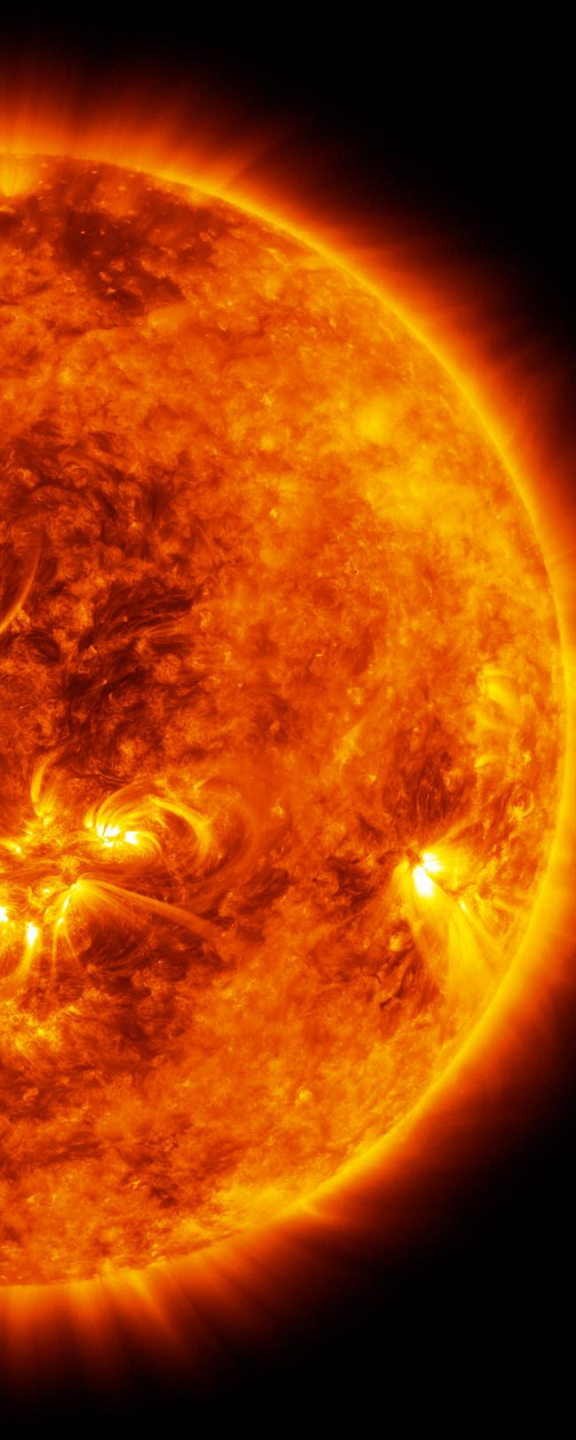
- “*Put on*” – is not stated in the original but assumed from v. 12.
- “Beyond all these” – or better: “upon all these”; Paul continues the metaphor of *getting dressed*, and he now refers to a *supreme virtue* that is like an *overcoat*.
- A distinctive garment of Paul's day was the *Roman toga*; semicircular in design and 12–20 ft in length, the toga was draped over the shoulders and around the body.



“Beyond all these things *put on* **love**, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

- “**Love**” – the chief Christian virtue that connects and holds every other virtue in place.
 - **1 Corinthians 13:13** – “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”
 - **Galatians 5:14 (citing Lev 19:18)** – “For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, ‘You SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’”



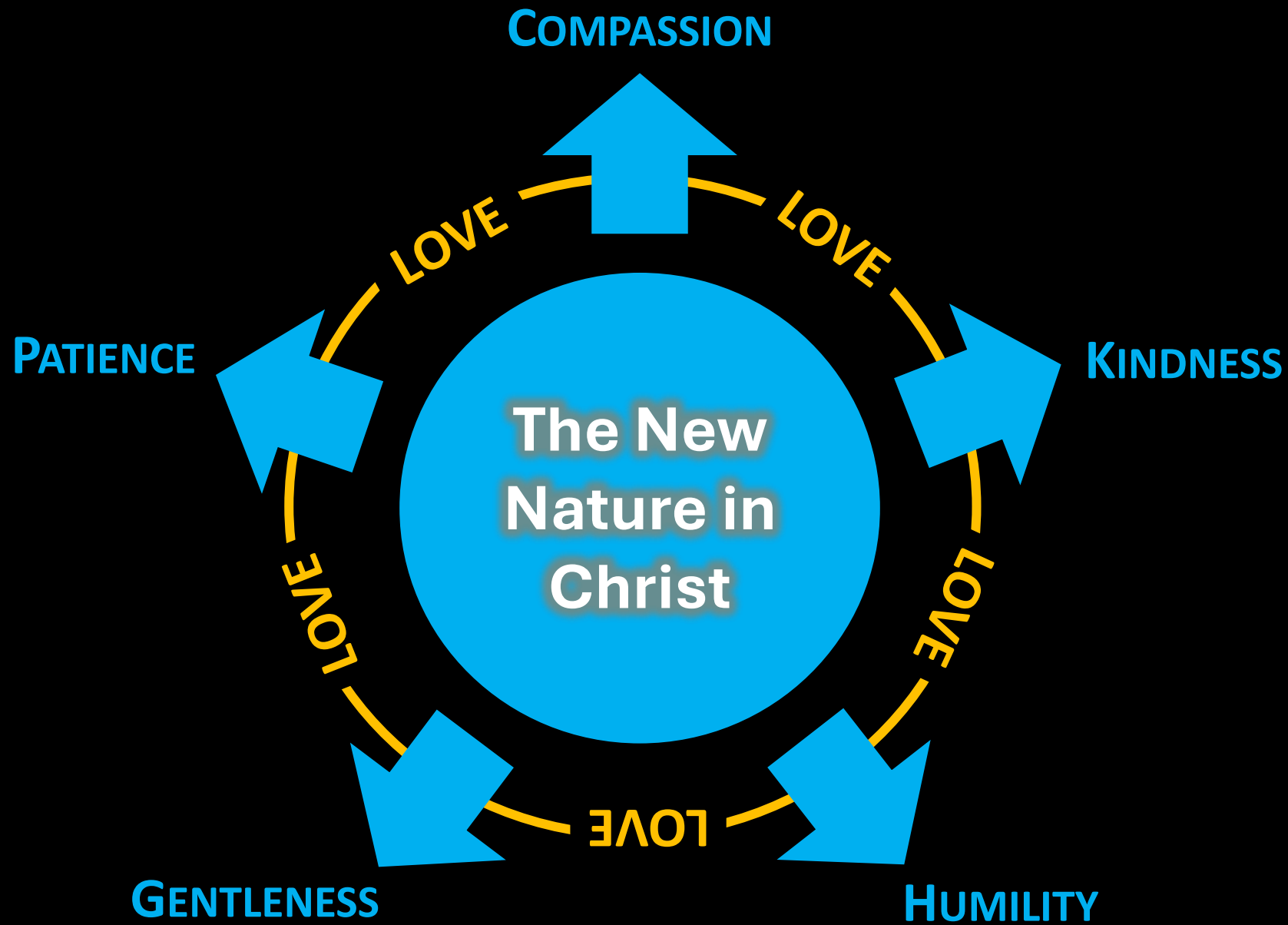


“Love is the queen of the graces;
it outshines all the others, as the
sun the lesser planets.”

—Thomas Watson

“Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

- **“Love”** – “Selfishness seeks its own private happiness at the expense of others. Love seeks its happiness in the happiness of the beloved. It will even suffer and die for the beloved in order that its joy might be full in the life and purity of the beloved” (John Piper, *Desiring God*, 176).
- **“The perfect bond of unity”** – *literally*, “the uniting bond of perfection.”
 - Paul describes love as something “which brings various entities into a unified relationship” (see 3:11); love is that which *binds*.
 - Paul describes this binding effect as that which “perfects” or “completes”; it is the crowning virtue that makes the members of the church *one*.



III. The Christian's Internal Virtues (3:15–16)

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

- In v. 15, Paul shifts from his active “put on” commands to his passive “let this take place” commands.
- Paul focuses on two primary *internal* virtues which have enormous social implications: (1) the peace of Christ ruling in the heart; and (2) the word of Christ dwelling richly within.

“Let **the peace of Christ** rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful” (3:15).

A. The Rule of Christ’s Peace

- “Peace” – Paul’s use of the term εἰρήνη (*eirēnē*) has a Hebrew influence (“Shalom”); it is more than the absence of conflict; it describes “prosperity of the soul”—a right relationship with God.
- “The peace of Christ” – the peace that comes specifically *from* Christ, which only He provides (see John 14:27; John 16:33; Rom 5:1, 10–11).
 - Like the love described in v. 14, it is Spirit-produced (Gal 5:22).

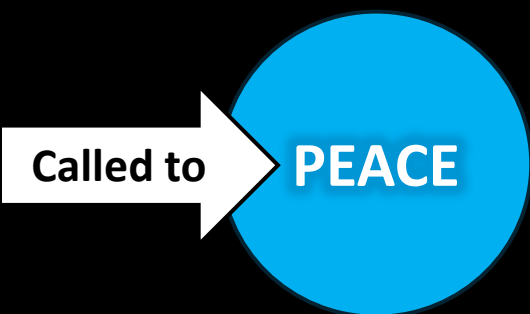
**“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful” (3:15).**

- **“Let . . . rule”** – “keep on letting it actively rule”—a continuous effort; found only here in the NT, the verb originally meant “to award prizes in contests,” and then “to be in control of someone’s activity.”
 - **“To serve as *umpire*, to *arbitrate*, to give the deciding argument.”**



“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful” (3:15).

- **“In your hearts”** – the *domain* of the ruling; the “mission control center” of our person; peace is to arbitrate our thoughts and decisions not superficially or legalistically, but *internally* and *authentically*.
- **“To which indeed you were called”** – refers to God’s effectual summons of the sinner to salvation (Rom 8:30); this summons was not to chaos or spiritual poverty, but to *peace*.
- **“In one body”** – the *mode* of the calling; we are called to peace along with other people, some very different from us, but together making up not *a* body but *one* body (see 3:11).



“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in one body; **and be thankful**” (3:15).

- “And be thankful” – *literally*, “keep becoming thankful.”
 - Gratitude is emphasized more than usual in Colossians (1:3; 2:7; 3:17; 4:2).
 - Ingratitude is a chief characteristic of the unregenerate (Rom 1:21).
 - There is an inseparable connection between *peace*, *thankfulness*, and *unity*; when one truly exists, the others are always present.

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (3:16).

B. The Indwelling of Christ’s Word

- **“The word of Christ”** – the teaching about Jesus Christ; Paul has focused dominantly on this topic—“Christology”—from 1:15.
- **“Let . . . dwell”** – a continuous dwelling—a permanent residency; the same verb is used to describe the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:11; 2 Tim 1:14), but here refers to the doctrine of Christ.
- **“Within you”** – emphasizes *corporate* rather than *personal indwelling*.
- **“Richly”** – “abundantly”; the degree to which this teaching must dwell.

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, **with all wisdom** **teaching** and **admonishing** **one another** with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (3:16).



- **“Teaching”** – “to provide instruction, formally or informally”; the *positive means* by which to achieve a *rich indwelling* of the teaching about Christ.



- **“Admonishing”** – “to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct”; the *negative means* by which to achieve a *rich indwelling* of the teaching about Christ.
- **“One another”** – to be implemented by every member of the church.
- **“With all wisdom”** – the necessity of tact; the ability to teach or admonish appropriate to the situation.

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another **with psalms** *and* **hymns** *and* **spiritual songs**, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (3:16).

- Paul lists three special *means* by which “teaching” and “correction” would be accomplished (see also Eph 5:19):

MEANS FOR
INSTRUCTING
AND
CORRECTING
ACCORDING TO
THE WORD OF
CHRIST

- 1) **“Psalms”** – “songs of praise”; used especially to refer to OT psalms.
- 2) **“Hymns”** – “songs with religious content”; perhaps Christian songs found in part in the NT (e.g. Col 1:15–20; Phil 2:6–11).
- 3) **“Spiritual songs”** – spontaneous songs voicing spiritual themes and aspiration.

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, **singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (3:16).**

- **“Singing”** – Paul lists a third activity that instills the word of Christ within the members of the church; in addition to “teaching” and “admonishing,” there must also be “singing.”
- **“With thankfulness”** – the response of a heart that recognizes God’s astounding generosity and one’s own unworthiness.
- **“In your hearts”** – from sincerity, not superficiality.
- **“To God”** – not to oneself, but to the One who alone is worthy to receive all the glory for His great and gracious acts.

IV. The Christian's Vertical Virtue (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.”