

## **Love: the Bond of Perfection (Colossians 3:12-14)**

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### **Introduction**

1. Life expresses its true nature (Matt. 7:16, 17).
2. Paul presses this argument upon the Colossian church: if they have been raised with Christ, if they have Christ's life, then they must reflect Christ.
3. Becoming like Christ requires knowledge of Christ and the power of transformation (v. 10).
4. Responsibility and obedience are necessary. Believers are to put off the deeds of flesh while they put on the virtues of the Christ-life (vv. 8, 12).
5. However, a very important issue surfaces at this point:
  - a. What will guide and shape the practice of these virtues (compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering)?
  - b. What is to keep these virtues from becoming self-serving and pride-elevating?
  - c. How can sinners, albeit saved sinners, forbear and forgive as Jesus did? That is an impossibly high standard.
  - d. Paul addresses that problem in the verse before us: "Put on love" (v. 14).

### **I. What Is Love?**

1. Love is a communicable attribute of God (1 John 4:7).
  - a. It is God's ultimate attribute—prominent and superior (1 Cor. 13:13).
  - b. It is the attribute that complements all other attributes: God is holy, but He is also love.

One cannot fully understand God's attributes unless he sees them through love.
2. Love defined: love is giving (John 3:16; 1 John 4: 8, 9). God gives Himself fully and eternally.
  - a. For believers, love is a choice to act for the benefit of another in spite of feelings.
  - b. Love is counting someone else's needs and interests more important than one's own.
3. Beware of two errors.
  - a. Love is not emotion, but emotion is often associated with love.
  - b. Love is not tolerance. When one stands for truth or right, he is often criticized as unloving.

4. It is in loving that believers best reflect the person of Christ in their new life (John 13:33, 34).
  - a. No one can claim to be a Christian who does not love (1 John 4:20, 21).
  - b. Jesus commanded His own to demonstrate their relationship to God by loving each other (John 13:34).
  - c. Jesus referred to this as a new commandment. What makes it a new commandment if it's already in the OT? Jesus raised the standard—"as I have loved you."

## **II. Why Is Love Essential?**

1. The whole of God's law is summed up in the two commandments (Matt. 22:36-40; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18).
  - a. Love is essential because it fulfills the law of God (Rom 13:8-10).
  - b. It is necessary for regenerate believers to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (Rom. 8:4).
2. While forbearance and forgiveness are important in the relationship of believers to one another in the body of Christ, love motivates and guides forbearance and forgiveness in their use and outcome (1 Pet. 4:8).
  - a. Love makes the difference between mere religious practice and spiritual obedience.
  - b. Love is a work of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26).

## **III. What Does Love Do?**

1. Love is preeminent in the outworking of relationships within the body.
  - a. Paul exhorts, "Above all these things, put on love."
  - b. However, it is an acquired characteristic. Thus, we are to "put on."
2. Love binds everything in perfection (completion or maturity). What is the perfection referred to? Two possibilities:
  - a. In reference to the other *virtues*, love binds them together and brings them closer to perfection.
  - b. In reference to the *church*, love binds believers together and brings them closer to perfection.