

“Love, Peace, and Gratitude”
Colossians 3:14-15
(Preached at Trinity, September 9, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verses 5-9** Paul's focus was upon the characteristics of the “old man.” He describes man in his fallen condition. His life is characterized by sin resulting in God's condemnation.
In **Verse 5** the word for “consider” in the NASB is νεκρώω.
It literally means “Put to death” which is the way most translations render it.
The KJV translates it “mortify.”
2. After describing the characteristics of our old self, beginning in **Verse 10** Paul contrasts the life of the believer, describing him as a “new man” or “the new self.” The Christian has "put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him"
3. Paul begins **Verse 12** with the familiar, “therefore,” from the conjunction, “οὖν” which introduces a result or consequence from the preceding. The NASB translates it here, “so.” It connects us back to **Verse 10**. Since you have put on the new man what is the result? Paul is telling us there is a behavior consistent with the “old man” and there is a behavior consistent with being a “new man.”
4. Paul is saying in **Verse 12** there is a holy character that adorns the life of the believer. Paul uses a word that literally means “to put on as a garment.” It is in the imperative. We are to wear the holy garments of the elect. We are to clothe ourselves with these graces of Christian character.
5. Now in **Verses 14-15** Paul describes the three inner qualities that make these other characteristics of the Christian life possible.
He says in **Verse 14**, “Over and above all of these other adornments, put on love, which binds together all of the Christian virtues and binds the brethren together in unity.”
Ephesians 4:1-3 NAU - "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
6. And then in **Verse 15** he adds, and let the peace of Christ rule your hearts, and be thankful.” – both in the imperative.
7. Love, Peace, and Thanksgiving are the crown jewels of the Christian adornment. They control everything in the Christian character.
This morning I want us to gaze one at a time at these Christian graces.

I. The Supremacy of Love – 215 times in the NT

A. Love is the chief of the Christian graces

1. Paul is saying in this verse that love unifies all of the Christian virtues. William Hendriksen: “Love is the lubricant that enables the other virtues to function smoothly.”¹
2. It is listed first among the fruits of the Holy Spirit
“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . .”
3. In **1 Corinthians 13** Paul tells us that without love every religious action is empty and worthless.
1 Corinthians 13:1-3 NAU - "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."
4. Paul also tells us that love is the fulfilling of the law.
Romans 13:8-10 NAS - "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the law*. ⁹ For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of *the law*."
 - a. If love is the fulfilling of the law, then without it obedience is impossible
 - b. If you lack love, you lack everything that is pleasing to God

B. Love is the foundation of Christian character. It marks us, defines us.

1. The word here is ἀγάπη. It is unique. While this word is not specific to the NT, the NT understanding is of a particular sort. Even the classical Greek lexicon, Liddell and Scott records in their definition: “especially the love of God for man and man for God.”
2. This love is made possible by our unique union with Christ and it makes possible the virtues that mark the Christian.
John 13:35 NAU - "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
1 John 4:7-8 NAU - "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."
3. Vertically, love lifts our hearts upward towards Christ
Colossians 3:2 NAU - "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."
 - a. It enables us to have Christ at the center of our lives. It keeps your focus upon eternity

¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 6:158.

- b. Love is kindled through our relationship with Christ. We love Him because He first loved us. To know Him is to know His love. And to know His love is to know Him.
John 14:21 NAU - "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."
- 4. Horizontally, love for Christ changes how we look upon our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - a. In Christ we've been joined to one another. We share a common experience of redemption. We share a common love. Love is what we are. It marks us, defines us. We love one another. We like being with one another. We enjoy the same things. We love the same Lord. We are adopted into the same family.
 - b. This love makes the other virtues possible.
Love will give us compassion towards others. It will make us kind.
Love will make us willing to humble ourselves towards others
Love will make us patient and forbearing
 - c. Love enables us to overlook the faults of others.
George Muller: "We ought to look lovingly on weak disciples, and you and I, instead of looking at their weakness and shortcomings, ought to seek to find out Christ in them. If we do so, we shall find how dear they will become to our hearts, and we shall love them."
- 5. Love enables us to take our eyes off ourselves. If you are selfish your world becomes confined to the narrow sphere of yourself. You are concerned only about those things which have a direct effect on your own life. Everything is considered in terms of "I, Me, Mine." Love enlarges our heart and causes it to extend to others.
- C. Paul is saying "Put on love, adorn yourself with love,

II. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts

- A. This peace has to begin with our peace with God.
 - 1. Paul calls it "the peace of Christ." Once again Paul draws attention to our union with Christ – "to which indeed you were called in one body."
 - 2. Christ, as our Redeemer, has made possible our reconciliation with God. He has brought us to peace with God.
John 14:27 NAU - "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."
 - 3. The peace of Christ has brought us restoration.
 - a. Human beings were created in harmony and fellowship with God
Adam had a true and proper reverence for God – he worshipped God in love and obedience. He enjoyed true peace.
 - b. Adam had an inner confidence that God was working for his good – he was in a true and proper communion with God
 - c. God was the source of all his comfort and confidence
Adam knew the ultimate peace – the peace that comes from knowing God is on your side; that He is working on your behalf.

- d. Sin obliterated this peace. The lost man is born into the worst of all conflicts – he is at war with God and man.
4. The redeemed man has found true peace
 - a. Peace brings contentment that Christ is on His throne, that He reigns. It enables us to seek those things above, to live above this world.
 - b. Peace brings life into harmony with God. It affects everything. One of the wonderful results is the effect it has upon our relationship with one another. Only the one who has found reconciliation with God can be at peace with his fellow man. He has the comfort found in loving his neighbor.
- B. This peace must govern our actions towards others
1. The word for “rule” means “to act as an umpire.”
In other words, an umpire makes determinations based upon correct judgment.
When you are tempted to anger – let the peace of Christ rule.
When you are tempted to criticize – let the peace of Christ rule
When your are tempted to hold a grudge – let the peace of Christ rule
 2. The peace we have is a grace in the process of sanctification. We are growing in peace
 3. The lost man is on a never-ending treadmill trying to get ahead of everyone else. It creates endless hostility.
 - a. He wants the place of preeminence recognition
 - b. He is always concerned about what others think of him. There is no peace when our greatest labor is seeking to maintain our image.
 - c. He doesn’t really care for others. He only uses them to satisfy his own pride.
 3. The believer has found true peace in love – he sees God as enthroned. His heart is governed by the peace of God.
 - a. He is content in God’s favor – if God honors Him it is enough
 - b. He has found the peace in putting others before himself
 - c. There is true liberty here – true peace
 4. Peace changes our way of thinking
Philippians 4:6-7 NAU - "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
 5. Do you see how this is essential to the other virtues?
Colossians 3:12-13 NAU - "put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."
 6. Do you see how this peace destroys our former way of living:
Colossians 3:8 NAU - "But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth."

III. Finally, “And be thankful”

- A. Fallen humanity is characterized by ingratitude
Romans 1:21 NAU - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."
1. God has created all things as an expression of His glory – it is a manifestation of His majesty—His infinite worth and value
 2. His wondrous works are worthy of praise
Psalm 139:14 – "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well." "Praise" - תָּרַחַת – can also be translated "to give thanks"
NASB – “I will give thanks to you”
 3. Worship is an expression of gratitude but since lost humanity sees no value in God and have no gratitude for God’s mercies they do will not worship Him.
 4. Ingratitude robs us of every spiritual blessing.
 John Davenant writes: “Without gratitude there can be no spiritual blessings within us. For since every spiritual blessing depends upon a certain perpetual influx of Divine grace, ingratitude is that infernal bar which interrupts the flow and course of the Divine goodness. Therefore we should be thankful, lest we should be deprived of all our gifts.”²
- B. As Christians our hearts should be continually lifted up in gratitude
1. We praise God for the excellence of His Divine essence. He is worthy of worship.
 We praise God for His wonderful works.
 2. Remember praise and worship are displays of gratitude
 3. The Christian is commanded to be thankful always and in everything
1 Thessalonians 5:18 NAU - "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
 4. The Christian learns to be thankful in God’s work in others. We are all a work in progress. It is prideful sin that causes us to elevate ourselves above others. Our complaint about our brother is ingratitude for one who is the Bride of Christ. If you are thankful for what God has done in your life can you not be thankful for His working in the life of your brother.
 5. And the greatest expression of gratitude towards God is our life of obedience. Christ commands us, “Let us love one another.”
 And again,
Romans 12:18 NAU - " If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

² Davenant, John, *Colossians, Geneva Series of Commentaries*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009) page 128.

Conclusion:

1. While the grace of love and peace and gratitude marks us and testifies to our new life it does not find its perfection in this life. It demands much grace. It is a work of His Spirit in us—"the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . ."
2. The Christian life is one of strivings and groanings. It demands continual mortification of the flesh.
Colossians 3:8-10 NAU - "But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, 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--"
3. It demands continually setting our minds upon Christ seated upon His throne
Colossians 3:2 NAU - "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."