

Sunday, June 20, 2021—Colossians 3:14 Charity: The Bond of Perfectness

Colossians 3:14

- **And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.**
- **And above all these things *put on* charity**—above all what things? All the other things that believers are instructed to “put on” in the context.
 - Bowels of Mercies (v. 12)
 - Kindness (v. 12)
 - Humbleness of Mind (v. 12)
 - Meekness (v. 12)
 - Longsuffering (v. 12)
 - Forbearing one another (v. 13)
 - Forgiving one another (v. 13)
- Charity is the principle that encompasses, encapsulates, and motivates all the other imperatives mentioned in the context. They all steam from and flow from love.
- The phrase “put on” in verse 14 is in italics indicating that it was supplied by the translators to complete the thought in English. That said, there are no corresponding words in Greek. However, given the strong language I think that Paul’s statement to “put on charity” needs to be added to our list of imperative commands here in Colossians 3.
 - Col. 3:1—“seek”
 - Col. 3:2—“set”
 - Col. 3:5—“mortify”
 - Col. 3:8—“put off”
 - Col. 3:9—“lie not”
 - Col. 3:12—“put on”
 - Bowels of Mercies (v. 12)

- Kindness (v. 12)
 - Humbleness of Mind (v. 12)
 - Meekness (v. 12)
 - Longsuffering (v. 12)
 - Forbearing one another (v. 13)
 - Forgiving one another (v. 13)
 - Charity (v. 14)
- The Greek word translated “charity” in Colossians 3:14 is the word *agapē*. This word occurs 116 times in 106 verses in the New Testament. It is translated as follows by the King James translators:
 - Love—86x
 - Charity—28x
 - Dear—1x
 - Charitably—1x
 - Feast of charity—1x
- Modern versions such as the NIV and ESV read “love” and not “charity” in this verse which has prompted King James Bible Believers to insist that “charity” is the only correct rendering in this verse and that modern versions err with their choice of “love” over “charity.”
 - NIV—And over all these virtues put on **love**, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
 - ESV—And above all these put on **love**, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
- Defenders of the King James have said the following:
 - Charity means “love in action.”
 - There is a discriminated shade of meaning difference between “love” and “charity.” Charity is only used when dealing with relationships between believers.

- The debate about these words is nothing new. When William Tyndale printed his New Testament in 1526, he was heavily criticized by his Roman Catholic opponents for his nearly exclusive use of the word “love” over and against “charity” which he perceived to be a Catholic word. All of the pre-1611 Protestant English Bible followed Tyndale in using “love” instead of charity. It was not until the second edition of the Bishops Bible in 1572 that the word “charity” was used 28 times to replace “love” in the text. The same 28 times that “charity” appears in the King James text.
 - My mid-week video this week is going to delve more deeply into this history.
- A study of the relevant cross references reveals that the King James translators used both words interchangeably. What is said, about “charity” is said about “love” and vice versa.

| Charity | Love |
|---|---|
| 1Pe 4:8 KJV - And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. | Pro 10:12 KJV - Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins. |
| 1Co 13:13 KJV - And now abideth faith, hope, charity , these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity. | 1Th 1:3 KJV - Remembering without ceasing your work of faith , and labour of love , and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; |
| Tit 2:2 KJV - That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. 2Ti 3:10 KJV - But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, | 1Ti 6:11 KJV - But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. |
| 2Ti 2:22 KJV - Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. | 1Ti 6:11 KJV - But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. |
| 2Th 1:3 KJV - We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; | 1Th 3:12 KJV - And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all [men], even as we [do] toward you: |
| 1Ti 1:5 KJV - Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and [of] a good conscience, and [of] faith unfeigned: | 1Pe 1:22 KJV - Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, [see that ye] love one another with a pure heart fervently: |

- Colossians 3:13-14—instructs us to be “forbearing one another” and putting on “charity” as the primary thing.
 - Ephesians 4:2—instructs us to be “forbearing one another in love.”

- When comparing scripture with scripture there does not seem to be a discriminated difference between “charity” and “love.” Rather they appear to be words of synonymous meaning that are used interchangeably.
- **which is the bond of perfectness**—the word rendered “bond” is the same word translated “bands” in Col. 2:19 i.e., that which bands, binds, or bonds together. Charity/love is described as the “bond of perfectness.”
- The word rendered “perfectness” occurs one other time in the Greek text supporting the King James Bible.
 - Hebrews 6:1
- E.W. Bullinger defines the Greek word occurring in both verses as follows:
 - “Completeness, spoken of that which has reached its full and intended end.”
- Noah Webster offers the following definition of the English word “[perfectness](#)” in his American Dictionary of the English Language.
 - Completeness; consummate excellence; perfection.
 1. The highest degree of goodness or holiness of which man is capable in this life.
- Present the OED definitions.
- Colossians 3:14—putting on and functioning out of love/maturity is bond of perfectness and the hallmark of a mature saint who endeavoring live out of their new identity in Jesus Christ.
 - Galatians 5:22—“love” is the first fruit of the Spirit identified.