

Doctrinal Summary of Love: The Bond of Completion

In Colossians 3:14 the apostle Paul identifies unconditional love as the perfect bond of unity.

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

The word “beyond” is translated from the Koine Greek word ἐπὶ (“eh-pi”) which more literally means, “upon.” It identifies that something is in a state of rest upon something else. Whatever it is resting upon is supporting it much in the same way a foundation supports a house. Paul’s statement comes at the end of a list of attributes which the believer is to clothe himself with (cf. Col. 3:12-14). Those attributes become the foundation upon which Paul instructs the Colossian believers to clothe themselves with love. The position of unconditional love upon the other attributes that the believer is to put on places a focus on its importance and significance. When all the attributes are gathered together love is to be placed upon them as the pre-eminent attribute that believers are to be clothed with. This is because love is the perfect bond of unity in the body of Christ.

The words “*put on*” are implied in verse 14 due to Paul’s command in verse 12 to “put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” Since verse 14 is a continuation of his statement “put on” is properly supplied into English where Paul had left it implied in his original statement. In verse 12 the words “put on” are translated from the word ἐνδύσασθε (“en-du-sas-the”) which more literally means, “you all are commanded to participate in the action and be affected by the action in a point in time to be clothed.” It identifies the believer’s responsibility to participate with the Holy Spirit’s use of the God’s Word to equip the believer with the spiritual maturity he needs so that he can act properly towards those believers with whom he interacts. It is a command which requires that the believer must decide to obey what has been commanded of him through his God-given free will. The action of putting on each of the expressed attributes in verse 12 is to occur in a point in time. The believer is to participate in putting things attributes on so that they clothe him wherever he goes and whatever he does. As the believer puts on love he puts on that which is the perfect bond of unity.

The word “perfect” is translated from the Koine Greek words τῆς τελειότητος (“taes tel-ei-o-tae-tos”) which more literally mean, “of the completeness of something which has all the components or parts that it needs to meet a standard, goal, or construction. It refers to something as being in a state of completion, with no missing parts or pieces. It is used to describe the bond that love is as the cap upon all the other attributes Paul instructed the Colossian believers to clothe themselves with.

The phrase “bond of unity” is translated from the Koine Greek word “σύνδεσμος” (“sun-des-mos”) which more literally means, “connecting agent which joins two people or things together.” It identifies the coupler that connects two things so that they are linked together as a part of one larger component. It is used to identify that love is the connecting agent which joins multiple things to one another. In this sense love unites things together as one, though it is the role of connector that is in view by Paul and not any sense of unity. In fact, unity is completely missing from the original text, being derived only from the idea of a bond that links things together.

Unconditional love is the joining agent which connects all the other attributes Paul commands believers to participate in putting on together as one. Consequently, unconditional love exists as the bond of completion which completes all the other virtues the believer is to live and walk in.