

Colossians 3:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Analysis

And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Paul climaxes the virtue list with agapēn (ἀγάπην, "charity/love"), the supreme Christian virtue. "Above all these things" (epi pasin de toutois, ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις) means either "in addition to" or "over" these virtues—love crowns them all, the outer garment completing the outfit. "Put on" continues clothing metaphor.

Love is "the bond of perfectness" (syndesmos tēs teleiotētos, σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος), literally "the binding element of maturity/completeness." Love unifies all virtues, holding them together and bringing believers to maturity. Without love, other virtues become distorted: compassion without love is condescension; humility without love is false modesty; patience without love is passive aggression. Love perfects and integrates all Christian character.

Historical Context

Greek distinguished multiple love words: eros (romantic/sexual), philia (friendship), storge (familial), agape (self-giving commitment). Christianity elevated agape—the love God shows in Christ, choosing others' good despite cost. This love type was relatively rare in pagan literature but became Christianity's defining characteristic (John 13:35). Early Christians were noted for caring for sick, poor, and marginalized—practical agape that testified to gospel truth.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does love function as 'bond of perfectness' in your spiritual life—integrating and perfecting other virtues?
2. What's the difference between agape love and natural affection or emotional feeling?
3. Where do you practice other Christian virtues without love, making them empty or distorted?

Interlinear Text

ἐπὶ	πάνσιν	δὲ	τούτοις	τὴν	ἀγάπην	ἥτις	ἐστίν
above	all	And	these things	G3588	put on charity	which	is
G1909	G3956	G1161	G5125		G26	G3748	G2076
σύνδεσμος	τῆς	τελειότητος					
the bond	G3588	of perfectness					
G4886		G5047					

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 4:8 (Love): And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Ephesians 5:2 (Love): And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Colossians 2:2 (Love): That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

John 13:34 (Love): A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

Romans 13:8 (Love): Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

Ephesians 4:3 (Parallel theme): Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

2 Peter 1:7 (Love): And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

1 John 4:21 (Love): And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

1 Timothy 1:5 (Love): Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

1 Thessalonians 4:9 (Love): But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.