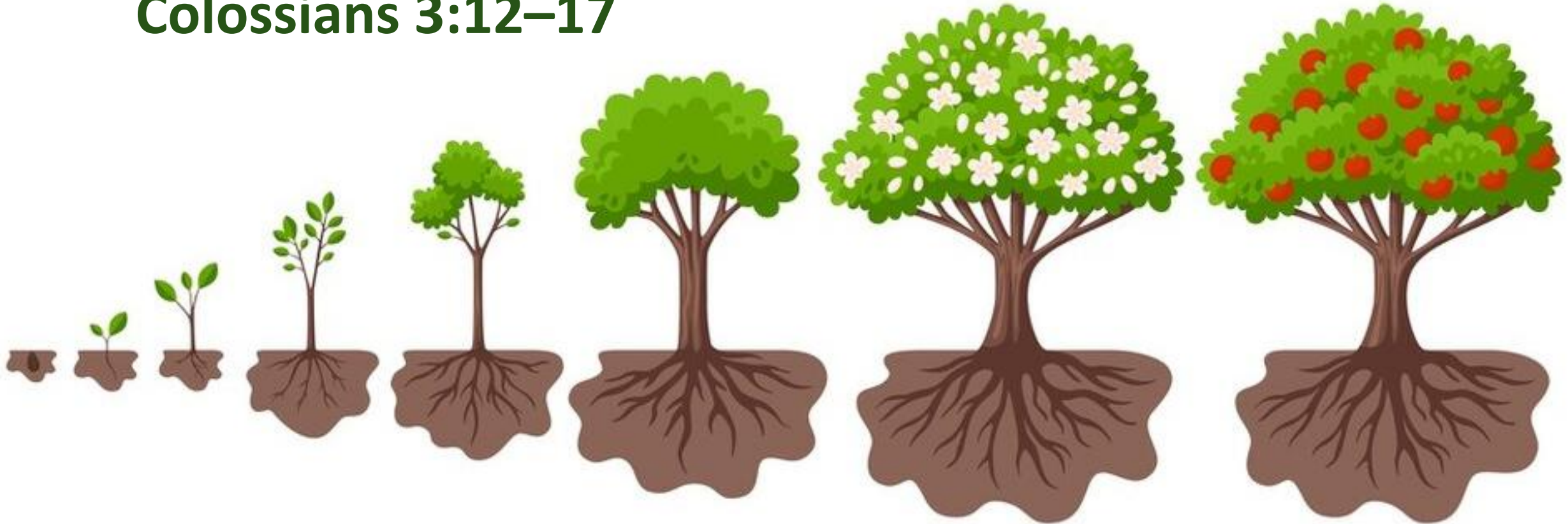


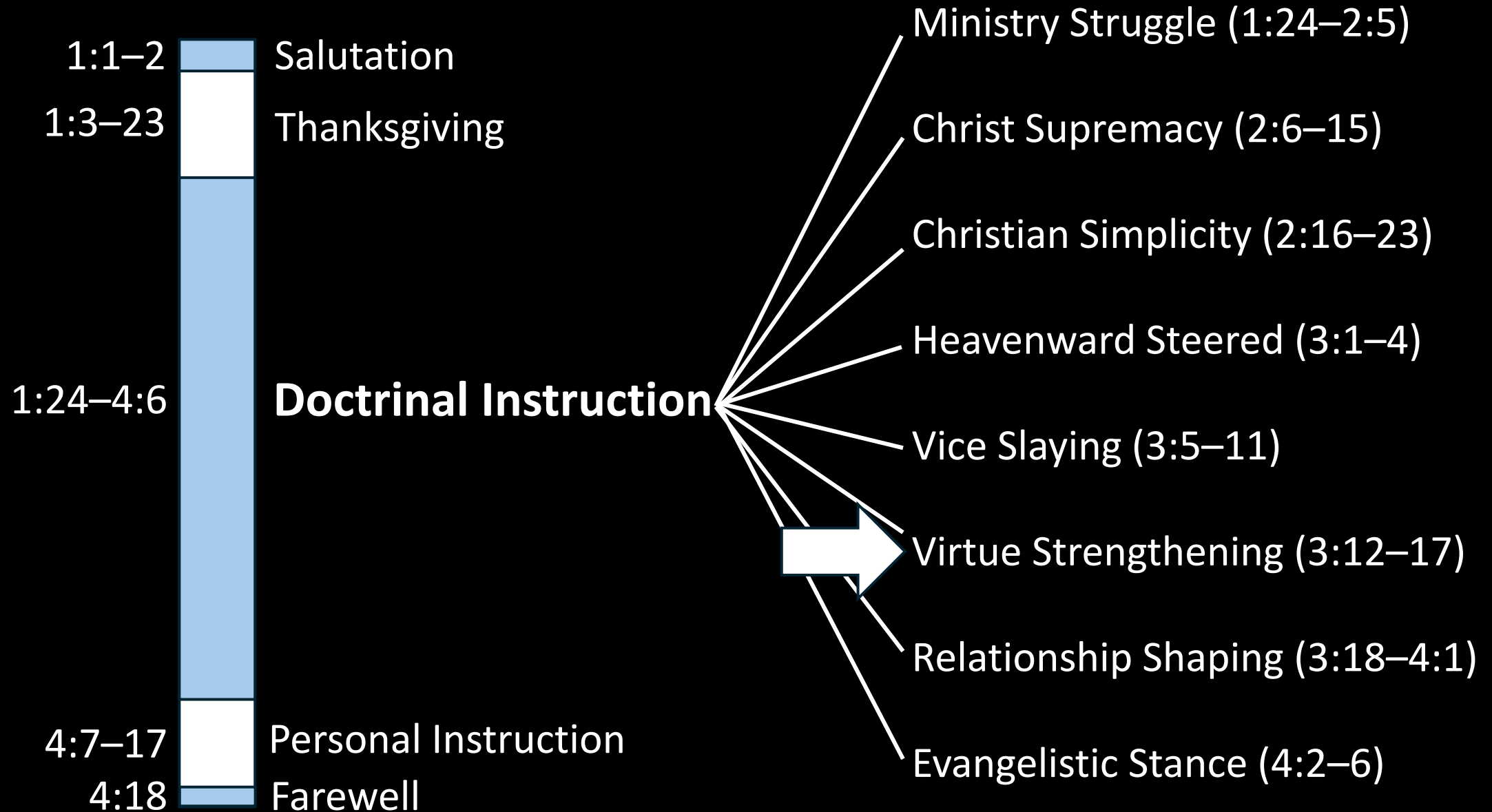
“Bringing Virtue to Life,” Part 1

Colossians 3:12–17

*Christ over All:
Paul's Letter
to the Colossians*



THE OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS



COLOSSIANS 3:12–17

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

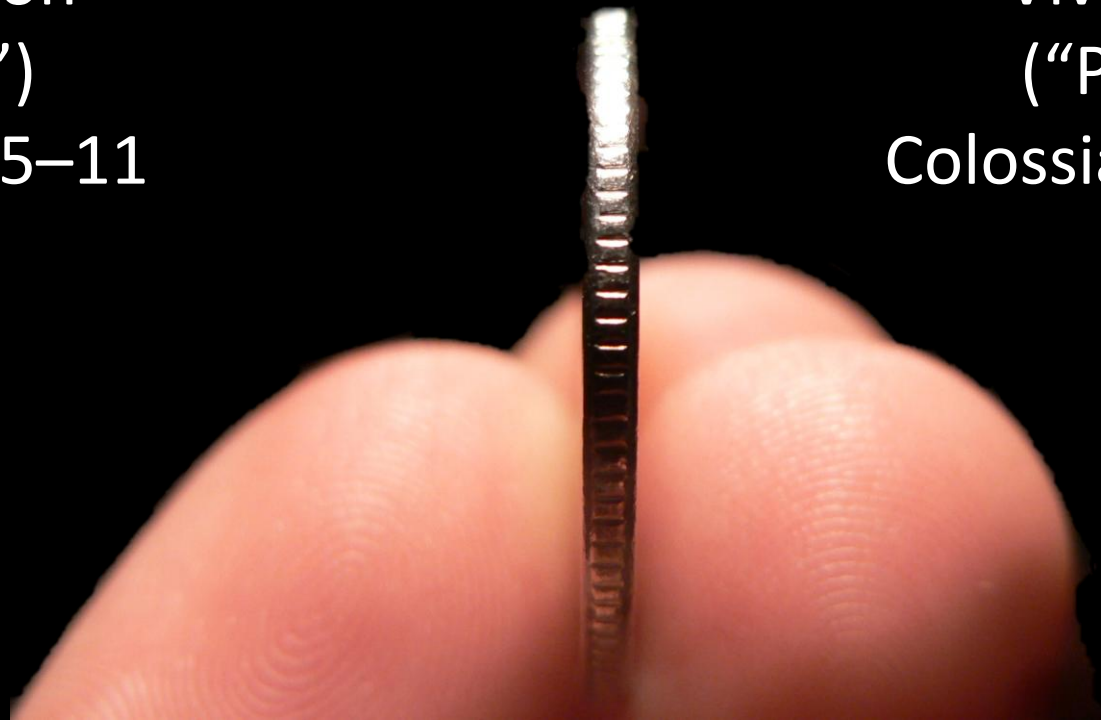
THE NATURE OF PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION

Separation from sin

Mortification
("Put off")
Colossians 3:5–11

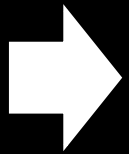
Consecration to God

Vivification
("Put on")
Colossians 3:12–17



OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS 3:12–17

- Having commanded us to mortify sin (3:5–11) in response to our union with Christ (3:1–4), Paul then describes the virtues that we must nurture in their place (3:12–17).



I. The Christian's Practical Virtues (vv. 12–13)

II. The Christian's Comprehensive Virtue (v. 14)

III. The Christian's Internal Virtues (vv. 15–16)

IV. The Christian's Vertical Virtue (v. 17)

**BRINGING
VIRTUE
TO LIFE**

I. The Christian's Practical Virtues (3:12–13)

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

A. The Basis of the Command (v. 12a)

- **“As those who have been chosen of God”** – “as elect of God” – the phrase emphasizes two things: (1) the unique status of believers (they have been chosen *from* mankind); (2) the sovereign initiative of God (God—not believers—is responsible for this status).
- The instructions are only doable by those saved by sovereign grace.

“My Lord, I Did Not Choose You”

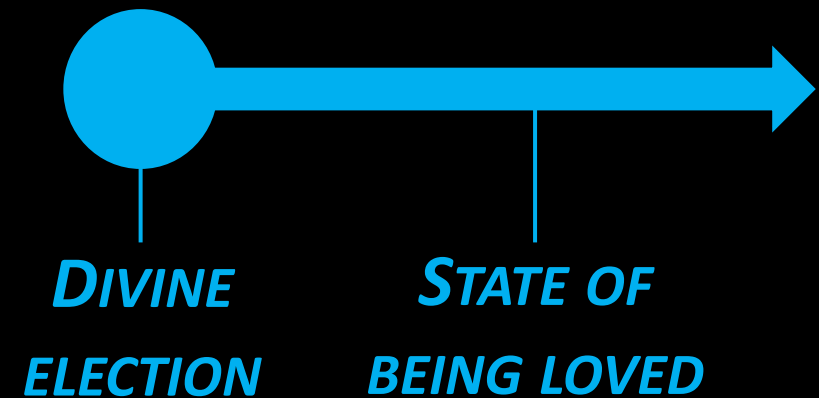
Josiah Conder, *Hymns of Grace* #54

My Lord, I did not choose You,
For that could never be;
My heart would still refuse You,
Had You not chosen me.
You took the sin that stained me,
You cleansed me, made me new;
Of old You have ordained me,
That I should live in You.

Unless Your grace had called
And taught my opening mind,
The world would have enthralled me,
To heavenly glories blind.
My heart knows none above You;
For Your rich grace I thirst.
I know that if I love You,
You must have loved me first.

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, **holy** and **beloved**, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

- “**Holy**” – “Holy ones,” “saints” (see 1:2, 4, 12, 26); refers to those whom God has consecrated to Himself (*positional sanctification*); this status is the *result* of being “chosen of God” (see Ephesians 1:4).
- “**Beloved**” – the term describes an ongoing state *of being loved* that resulted from a definitive act; God is the assumed subject; this act is His act of *choosing* (see 2 Thessalonians 2:13).



“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on** a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

B. The Substance of the Command (v. 12b)

- “Put on” – literally, “clothe yourselves!”—here used figuratively.
- Paul already used the verb in v. 10 to refer to the “putting on” of “the new man” (new nature) that *happened decisively* at regeneration.
- Now he uses the same verb to describe the behaviors that *still need* to be put on that are consistent with that new nature.



“We are to become in experience what we have been declared to be in fact.”

—John Kitchen, *Colossians & Philemon*, 258

We are to become in practice what we are already in nature.

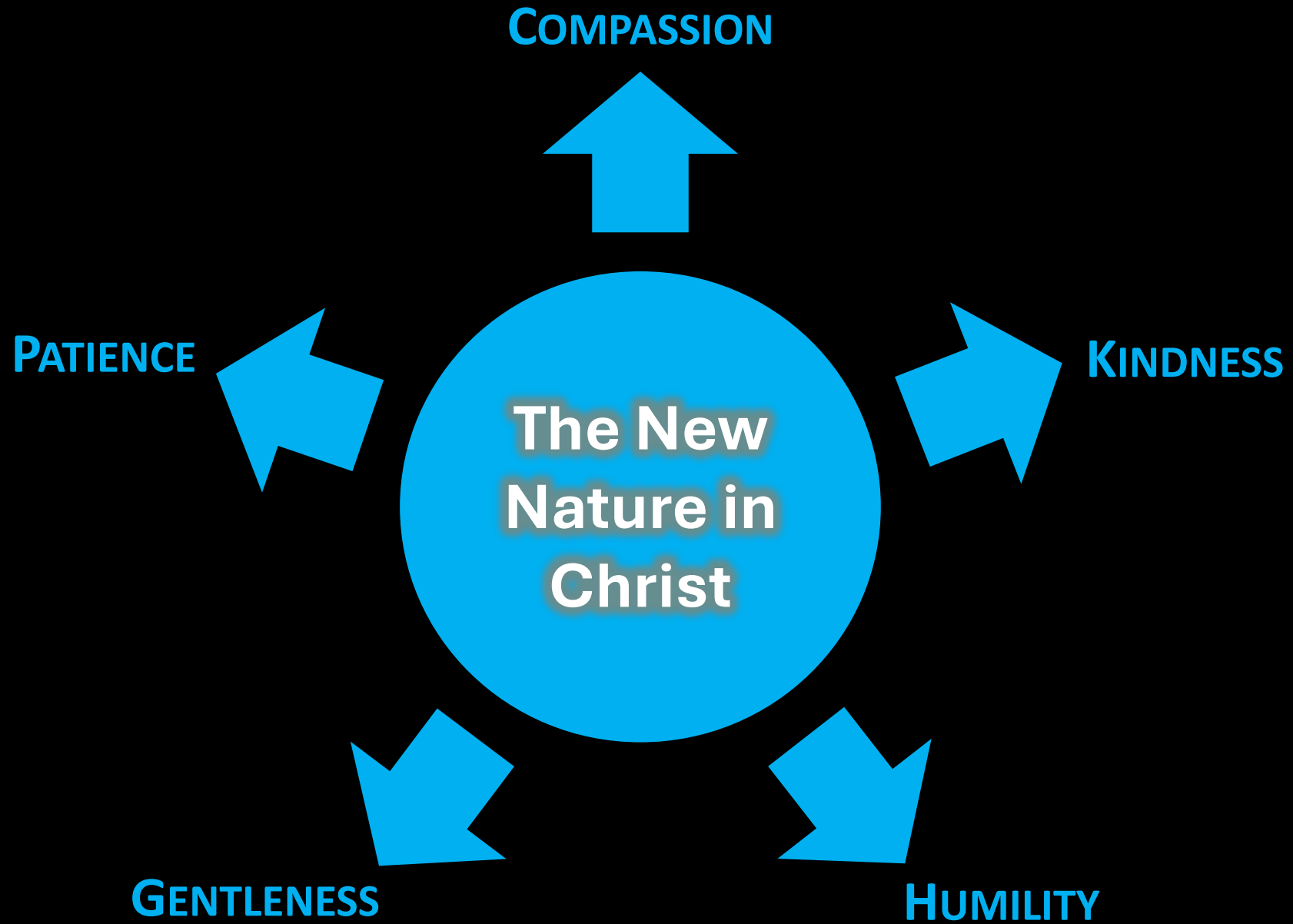


“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

C. The Focus of the Command (v. 12b)

- Paul lists five *Christian virtues* that must be “put on”; these contrast the sets of five *fleshly vices* listed in verses 5 and 8.
- These virtues are “the garments of the renewed soul” (Alexander McLaren), particularly with respect to our relationships with others.





“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

1) “A heart of compassion” – literally, “bowels of compassion.”

For the Greeks, the innermost body parts (“bowels”) were considered the seat of emotions, especially love; we render this as **“heart.”**

“Compassion” – “a display of concern over another’s misfortune”; the disposition of showing mercy to those who suffer, and bringing relief.

God is a God of *mercy/compassion* (e.g., 2 Cor 1:3); Jesus epitomized *compassion* (e.g., Matt 9:36; Mark 6:34; Luke 7:13).



“It is not an uncommon thing to observe in us a sternness in our dealings with others that is certainly not Christ-like, rather than sympathetic interest. If you want to show forth the Lord Jesus to other men and women, it will not be done by a harsh and critical behavior, by austerity and a lack of sympathy, but by a demonstration of the compassion of the most compassionate One who ever lived on this earth, our Lord Jesus Christ.”

—E. Schuyler English, *Studies in Colossians*, 103

“Biblical orthodoxy without compassion is surely the ugliest thing in the world.”

—Francis Schaeffer

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

2) “Kindness” – “the quality of being helpful or beneficial.”

“It is the proper Christian temper in our relation to others, that goodness of heart that makes us act rightly in dealings with each other” (A. T. Robertson, *Paul and the Intellectuals*, 107).

God is a God of *kindness* (e.g., Luke 6:35; Rom 2:4; Eph 2:7); Jesus epitomized *kindness* (e.g., Titus 3:4); and the Holy Spirit produces *kindness* (Gal 5:22).

“Kindness is a sincere desire for the happiness of others; goodness is the activity calculated to advance that happiness. Kindness is the inner disposition, created by the Holy Spirit, that causes us to be sensitive to the needs of others, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. Goodness is kindness in action—words and deeds. Because of this close relationship, we often use the two words interchangeably.”

—Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, 189

“Kindness is a readiness to do good, to help, to relieve burdens, to be useful, to serve, to be tender, and to be sympathetic to others. It has been said, ‘Kindness is love in work clothes.’”

—Alexander Strauch, *Leading with Love*, 44



“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

3) “Humility” – “one’s low estimate of oneself”; the practice of regarding another as more important than yourself (Phil 2:3); the art of self-forgetfulness.

The same word is used to describe “self-abasement” in Colossians 2:18, 23—a *fake* humility that does things *to self for show* (the humble-brag).

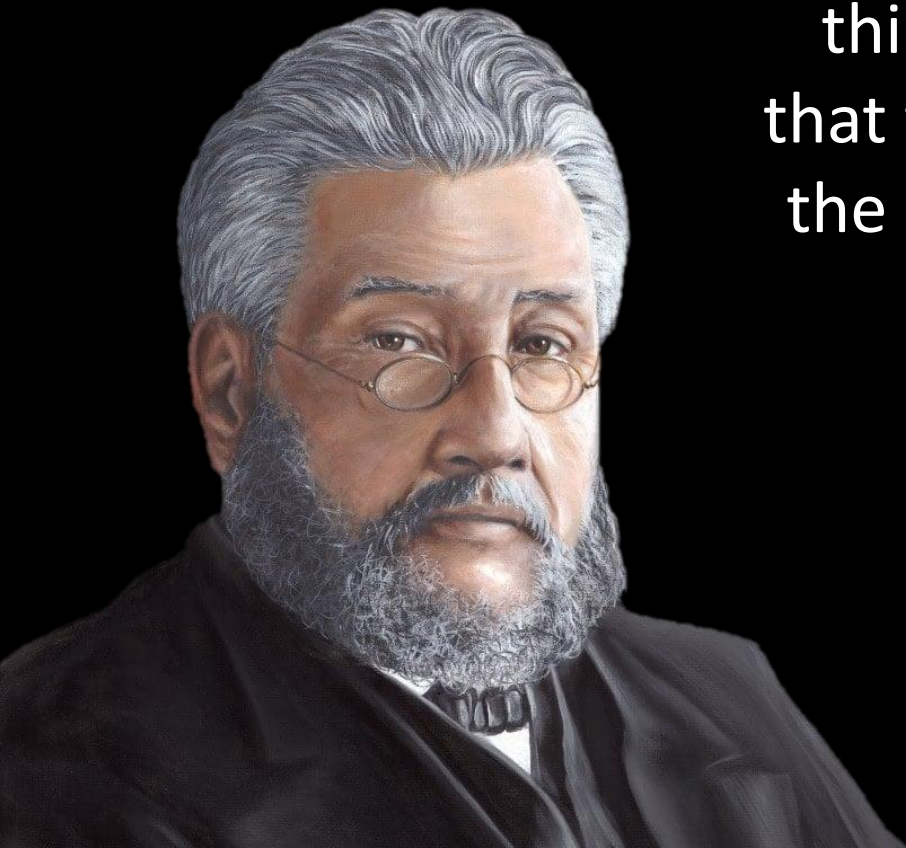
Jesus epitomized *humility* (e.g., Matt 11:29; Phil 2:8).



“When the corn is nearly ripe it bows the head and stoops lower than when it was green. When the people of God are near ripe for heaven, they grow more humble and self-denying.” —John Flavel

“Should you ask me what is the first thing in religion; I should reply that the first, second, and third thing therein is humility.” —Augustine

“Nothing sets a Christian so much out of the devil’s reach than humility.” —Jonathan Edwards



“You are not mature if you have a high esteem of yourself. He who boasts in himself is but a babe in Christ, if indeed he be in Christ at all. Young Christians may think much of themselves. Growing Christians think themselves nothing. Mature Christians know that they are less than nothing. The more holy we are, the more we mourn our infirmities, and the humbler is our estimate of ourselves.”

—Charles Spurgeon