

October 8, 2006 by Steve Brandon



# Put on Christian Virtue

## Colossians 3:12-14

1. A Reason to Put on Christian Virtue (verse 12a)
2. Eight Christian Virtues to Put On (verses 12b-14)

The Bible is full of instructions for us in how we ought to live. It instructs us in how we ought to relate to God. It instructs us in how we ought to relate to each other. It instructs us in how we ought to relate to ourselves. The Bible addresses many areas of our conduct. It tells us what to do. It tells us how to think. It tells us what sorts of attitudes we ought to have. The range of applications are broad. It addresses the use of our mouths. It addresses the use of our checkbooks. It addresses the use of our time. It addresses how we should choose our friends. It addresses how we should behave on the job.

And yet, in all of this instruction, the Bible isn't simply a book of do's and don'ts. Throughout the entire Bible, there is always some sort of theological truth behind such admonitions. In other words, the Bible never tells us to do something without telling us why we ought to do these things.

For instance, the Ten Commandments were given to the people of Israel because of the redeeming work of God. "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ... You shall have no other gods before Me. ... You shall not make for yourself an idol. ... You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain." Why do all of these things? Because God has redeemed you from slavery in Egypt! This is the way that is appropriate for you to live. God told Joshua, "Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed" (in Joshua 1:9). Why? The very next portion of the verse continues, "Because the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." The LORD is telling

Time and time again, the prophets came to the people of Israel and told them to repent of their sin. Why? Because judgment was coming if they didn't repent. Jeremiah's words summarize the situation over all these years. "The LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets again and again, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear saying, 'Turn now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds, and dwell on the land which the LORD has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever; and do not go after other gods to serve them and to worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands, and I will do you no harm.' Yet you have not listened to Me, declares the LORD." (Jer. 25:4-6).

Throughout our exposition of Colossians 3, we have seen similar reasoning. Paul instructs us in how we ought to live, giving a reason every time. For instance, look at chapter 3, verse 1, "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." In this verse, Paul tells us to set our minds upon heaven, because, in fact, that is where we, as believers in Christ, reside. We "have been raised up with Christ." Since you are up there already, see the heavenly things.

The same thing takes place in verses 2-4, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." Again, there is an admonition to think about the heavenly things. Again, there is a reason given. As a believer in Christ, you have died to sin and now you are safe with Christ in God. There is nothing that can come and harm you or hurt you or take away your heavenly inheritance, which soon will be evident when Christ returns. Because of these realities, you should "set your minds on the things above."

Paul continues in verses 5-8, where Paul wrote, "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them." In this case, Paul puts forth four sins in the sexual realm, and one sin in the material realm. We should stay away from these things. Why? Because God's wrath will come upon you if you continue in these things (verse 6), and, you used to live that way, but no longer (verse 7).

In verses 9-11, the pattern continues, "But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 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—a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all." In verses 8 and 9, Paul lists six sins of the heart that often expresses itself in the way you speak with others. We are to remove them from our lives. Why? Because we have laid those things aside. Because we have put on new clothes. Such things are no longer proper for us. Christ has changed us. We are different than we used to be. We no longer have need to behave in those ways.

As we come to our text this morning (verses 12-14), we have a similar pattern. We are told how to live based upon a theological reason. In this case, the reason comes first, and our actions follow. Consider the text:

Colossians 3:12-14

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.

My outline is simple: (1) A Reason to Put on Christian Virtue (verse 12a); and (2) Eight Christian Virtues to Put On (verses 12b-14). Let's look first at ...

## **1. A Reason to Put on Christian Virtue (verse 12a)**

It all has to do with God and His character and His actions toward you. Paul writes, "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on [these things]." Paul gave the Colossians three identifying marks of those who believe in Christ. They are (1) Chosen, (2) Holy, and (3) Beloved. And when you come to embrace these things and internalize them into your life, they will make a radical difference in the way that you live. These Christian virtues will be manifested in your life. Let's look at each of these identifying marks of those who believe in Christ. First of all, they are ...

### **1. Chosen**

By this term, Paul is simply saying that God had chosen them to be Christians. Yes, when they heard the gospel that Epaphras brought to them, they opened their arms and whole-heartedly embraced it. Yes, they chose to follow Christ and placed their faith and trust in Him. This is true. But, fundamentally, something else was going on. A sovereign God was working behind the scenes, working His plans to bring His chosen ones in Colossae to faith.

When you do a bit of tracing through the Bible, you see that before the foundation of the world, God chose a people for Himself out of all humanity. Ephesians 1:4 says that "God chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world." We were "predestined" to be adopted by God into His family (Eph. 1:5, 11).

There were those in Colossae during the first century whom God had chosen to be in Christ before the world was ever created. As these people came into the world, God determined that they would live in Colossae. In God's own time and in God's own unique way, God has acted in their life, by bringing Epaphras to them. As Epaphras brought the message of the gospel to them, God opened their eyes to understand it. Some may have embraced it the very first time that Epaphras spoke to them. Others may have taken some years to finally come to saving faith. But, the point is clear. They came to believe because God had chosen them. God granted them faith. God granted them repentance. And as they believed and trusted in this saving message of a crucified savior, they were "rescued from the domain of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of [Christ]" (Col. 1:13). They were redeemed and granted the forgiveness of all their transgressions (Col. 1:14; 2:13).

They also became ...

### **2. Holy**

This is a reference to the work that God does in the soul of everyone who believes. He purifies those who believe in Christ. By faith in Christ, your sins can be wiped away. Every sinful act that you have ever done has been recorded in heaven upon a list. This list is essentially a debt that you owe to God. It's like a credit card bill that you must pay someday. Each of these sins put a blot upon your soul. They make you dirty in God's sight and unacceptable to stand before Him. They have to be dealt with.

And at the cross of Christ, they are dealt with. In Colossians 2:14, we read of how God "canceled out [our] certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." That list of decrees and rules that you never kept and that list of sins that you committed, it was all nailed to the cross. What was formerly against you and called for your execution, has now been transformed into your ticket to heaven. When you present this certificate of debt to God, He will look at all of the decrees and commands that you have broken, but will see this giant blood-red stamp on the certificate that reads, "paid in full." And God knows well enough that the stamp was dipped in the blood of Jesus. Rather than being expelled from heaven to spend an eternity in hell, you have been forgiven of all your transgressions (Col. 2:13).

The way it works is simple. Jesus paid the price for your sins upon the cross. Jesus gave to you the righteousness of His life. I know that the transaction seems incredibly unfair, because you are getting into the kingdom based upon the merits of another. It seems so un-American (as is His electing grace, for we think that we are in control). We think that we can earn it! It may appear to be unfair. In some sense, it is. But, at the same time, it is real. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that "[God] made [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." This is talking about what happens in our salvation. When we trust in Christ, His righteousness becomes ours, because our sin became His. And thus, we are forgiven. We are made righteous. We are made holy.

The third term here is that we are ...

### **3. Beloved**

This simply means that we are loved by God. God loved us. Sinners though we be, God loves us. Now, His love for us is not in any way linked to some inherent goodness in us or to some talent that we have or to some ability that we can offer up to God in exchange for His love. None of this. We are loved by God, because God chose to love us. That's what it is. In Deuteronomy 7, God explained His love for Israel. He said, ...

Deuteronomy 7:7-8

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD love you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

In other words, God was saying to Israel, "I set my love upon you because I choose to set my love upon you. You weren't such a great people in my sight. In fact, you were a small, enslaved race of people. But, my love was upon you because I have committed myself to love you."

This is how God loves. He loves because He loves. He loves because He chooses to love. He loves because He has promised to love. And as it is not based upon anything in us, those who have trusted in Christ can be assured of His great love for us, for we will never turn more sour than we were when the Lord saved us. He saved us when we were sinners (Rom. 5:8). In this way, the death of Christ was the greatest display of love every known in this universe.

The most famous verse in the Bible connects the love of God with His saving work on the cross. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). And as we participate in receiving the benefits of the atonement, we can be assured that we rest secure in the love of Jesus Christ.

So, let's put all of these characteristics together. We are ... "(1) chosen of God, (2) holy, and (3) beloved." Every Christian can give this testimony. ...

"Apart from the working of God in my life, and apart from Him **choosing** me, I never would have chosen Him. What was once considered to be foolish to me, now makes sense. It's not because I had some great wisdom or insight to understand these things. It's not because I have riches or honor or wisdom to give to Him (1 Cor. 1:26-31). It's simply because God was gracious to give me spiritual eyes to understand what took place on the cross. I came to understand that God is a holy God, who must punish sin, that my righteousness will never measure up to the righteous requirements of God, that left to myself, I'm doomed. But, Jesus Christ, upon the cross, died, so that I might live. Through faith, His righteousness is imputed to my account. My sin is imputed to His account. Therefore, God can forgive me, because He punished my sin in Christ Jesus upon the cross, and I can be **holy** enough to enter God's presence because I have received the righteousness of Christ in my soul (2 Cor. 5:21). My life is a testimony to God's grace in saving me from my sin. God has opened my eyes to see the 'light of the gospel of the glory of the glory of Christ' (2 Cor. 4:4). I know that those who come to Him will never be cast out. Through the promises of God, I can rest assured in His great **love** for Me. My life is His, because His life was mine."

That's the motivation behind each of these eight virtues that Paul gives for us to live out. God's working in our life--to choose us, to make us holy, and to continue to love us--is great motivation for us to live out these Christian virtues. So, let's transition now to my second point. We have seen (1) A Reason to Put on Christian Virtue (verse 12a). Let's now look at ...

## 2. Eight Christian Virtues to Put On (verses 12b-14)

Like we have done in recent weeks, I want to zip through each of these virtues one by one and define them for you. Then, I'll attempt to unpack each one of them a bit. Let's start with ...

**1. Compassion.** This is the pity that comes at the sight of another's misfortune. The compassionate one feels in his own heart what others are feeling when difficulties come with them. If you lend someone your car and they get hit by a drunk driver, compassion will pity those who borrowed your car, knowing how bad they feel. The one with compassion, "Weeps with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15).

**2. Kindness.** At its root, this word is describing a genuine goodness toward another. The kind one wants only what is good for others. The one who is filled with kindness will give a cold glass of water on a hot day, will offer the best seat, and will make others comfortable in whatever way possible.

**3. Humility.** Literally, this word means "lowness of mind." The humble one doesn't bring attention to himself, his gifts or his achievements, considering himself to be a servant of others. The one who is humble will "regard one another as more important than himself" (Phil. 2:3).

**4. Gentleness.** This word describes a delicate consideration for the rights and feelings of others. The gentle one isn't concerned about himself, never pities himself, nor feels sorry for himself, as though he, himself, deserved anything. Rather, the one who is gentle is like the sacrificial "nursing mother who tenderly cares for her own children" (1 Thess. 2:7) by sacrificing sleep to nurse the child.

**5. Patience.** Literally, this word means, "long-suffering." It is the opposite of a quick temper. The patient one will wait and wait and wait and wait and continue "to do what is right" even when experiencing difficulty at the hands of others (1 Peter 2:20). The one who is patient will "not be quarrelsome, ... but with gentleness [will correct] those who are in opposition" (2 Tim. 2:24).

**6. Forbearance.** This is the word that I'm using to summarize the first half of verse 13, "bearing with one another." This word describes an endurance, with an element of leniency, toward another person whose actions tend to provoke you. The reality is that others provoke us by the annoying things that they do. Kids might choose only to speak in a robot voice, or might sing a constant song that gets on your nerves. Your friend might have an incessant cough or constant nasal snort. Your husband may prefer to drive without using his windshield wipers as much as you would like him to do. Your wife might enjoy whistling as she does the housework. The one who forbears will overlook all of these things. The one who forbears will wait with composure, even when provoked.

**7. Forgiveness.** This word describes the pardon that is granted to those who have wronged you. The forgiving one will not only be able to let go of the sinful action, but will freely extend goodwill toward those in the wrong. The one who forgives will never again bring the offense to light, because he has willingly forsaken the right for revenge in his heart. Paul helps to define this word for us by showing us the scope of our

forgiveness. He says, "Whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you." Our forgiveness of others is based upon the forgiveness that God has given to us.

As Paul has clarified this word for us, it would be well for us to expand upon it for a little bit. Perhaps you remember the parable that Jesus told about forgiveness. Peter had come up to Jesus and had asked him how many times it was necessary for him to forgive. Peter said, "Up to seven times?" By any Jewish standard of the day, this was very generous. Based upon a passage in Amos (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6), the Jewish teachers at the time only required you to forgive another person three times. Peter thought that he was getting the drift of the teaching of Jesus, in abundantly forgiving other people, offering more than double of what is usually offered.

Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22). Jesus proceeded to tell him a parable of a slave who owed an astronomical debt that could never be paid in several lifetimes. When his master found out the extent of the debt, he threatened to sell this slave along with his wife and children to help make repayment for the debt. This slave pleaded mercy from his master. With unbelievable grace and kindness, the master forgave him his debt completely!

You would think that such a realization would change the slave's character, especially as it related to others. But it didn't. When he went out, he found one of his own slaves who had owed him a very small debt. The slave pleaded mercy from his master with the exact same words. But, this man, who had been forgiven a great debt was unwilling to forgive a small debt. He threw him into prison until it would be paid. When news got back to the lord, he said, "You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?" (Matt. 18:32-33). He was thrown into prison and tortured until all the debt was repaid.

This is the heart of our text this morning. Each of us has been forgiven a great debt of sin before God. As our great sin has been forgiven freely through the blood of Christ, so also do we need to forgive others of their sins against us just as freely.

**8. Love.** This word describes an interest in the welfare of another. The loving one will place himself in the shoes of a neighbor and will do to him according to what he would like to be done unto himself. The one who loves will give of himself completely to see another prosper and benefit. We need to pay particular attention to this last virtue, because it is the greatest of all virtues. Look once again at verse 14, "Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

Expressing compassion toward others is great and we need to do it, but beyond compassion, we need to "put on love." Demonstrating kindness is good, but beyond kindness, we need to "put on love." Humility is essential, but beyond humility, we need to "put on love." Beyond gentleness, put on love. Beyond patience, put on love. Beyond forbearance and forgiveness, put on love! Why? Because love is that which will bind us together. When you love, you will be compassionate. When you love, you will be kind. When you love, you will be humble toward others. When you love, you will be gentle and patient. When you love, you will forbear and forgive. These things all flow from love. Consider the following text:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; [love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

There is not a single virtue listed here in Colossians 3 that isn't listed as a characteristic of love in 1 Corinthians 13! When these things take place, we will be unified together, as a united body. Does Rock Valley Bible Church need unity today? Yes, we do! How can we obtain this unity? By putting on love! I'm thrilled that the topic of the Ladies Bible Study this fall is on the topic of "love." Because, it will help to focus our attention upon the key issue for the unity of our body (which is love).

So, how do we love. Have a heart for the wellbeing of others. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment in the law, Jesus summed it up using the word, "Love." The greatest commandment is two-fold. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Second, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said, "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40). We are to love God and to seek His best at all times. We are to love others and to seek their best at all times.

What does this look like? When Jesus was pressed about the meaning of "loving your neighbor as yourself," He told the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). Jesus described the case in which a man was so interested in the wellbeing of another person, that he crossed all social, economic and cultural barriers in helping the despised Samaritan who had been robbed on the way. And when we love like that, there will be tremendous unity at Rock Valley Bible Church.

It's hard! In recent days, we have had some neighborhood boys coming over to our house to play on the skate ramp that we have in our back yard. We built it for the purpose of being a magnet for the neighborhood boys, because we want the neighborhood to come to our house, rather than having our children go to their houses. But, it's hard. These boys are loud. These boys are selfish. These boys are only interested in themselves. Almost every single one of them comes from a broken home. One of these boys had black fingernail polish on his hands. When I asked him about it, he said that his brother put the polish on his nails, because he was "Goth." I asked the boys what "Goth" is. They replied that they worship the devil. It was my opportunity to preach the gospel to them, telling them that there will be a day in which Christ will destroy the works of the devil. I also was able to tell them of the forgiveness of sins that comes through faith in Christ. It is difficult to love them. They aren't lovable. And yet, call of God to love extends to those who don't know Christ. We had the opportunity yesterday to love them, by letting them play and showing how it's done. We trust in future months (and years), we will continue to help them by giving them the words of life.

But, beyond our love for the unsaved is our love for those in the body of Christ. Our love for one another needs to abound. This must take

place beyond Sunday morning. It must be throughout the week. Sunday morning is simply a catalyst to put us all together on a regular basis, that friendships might form around the truth, so that genuine Christian love might take place. And when genuine Christian love takes place, those who come into our midst will see it! They will see us and “know that [we] are [His] disciples” (John 13:34-35). That’s my prayer for Rock Valley Bible Church. I pray that love would bind us together in the “perfect bond of unity.”

Well, there are the eight virtues to which Paul calls us to. There is certainly much overlap in these terms. They are far from mutually exclusive. But, they paint well this picture of the one who is “walking in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (Eph. 4:1).

These eight terms are so rich and so important that we could spend a Sunday morning on each one of them. But, when this letter was read to those in Colossae, they simply zipped right through these things. And then, according to Col. 4:16, they sent this letter to Laodicea to be read there as well. So, it’s important to catch the context here, because the original hearers would have heard these eight virtues conveyed in the context of verse 12a.

Please remember, that it’s not simply that we should do these things because we should do these things. There is a foundational reason why it is that we should act with compassion and kindness and humility and gentleness and patience and forbearance and forgiveness and love toward one another. It comes down to who we are! We are the chosen of God! We are holy because of Him! We are loved of God! These virtues are visible reflections of our belief of these things.

Let me attempt to give you the Steve Brandon, living and amplified version of how you should read these virtues, ...

“As those who have been the object of God’s tremendous graciousness in His choosing of you, making you holy through faith in Christ, and setting His love upon you that you are secure in His love. So live in light of these things. As God has been compassionate toward you, being gracious toward you, sinner though you be, be compassionate to others, who are likewise sinners. As God has demonstrated His kindness to you, in returning your hatred with His love, so also be kind to others, even when they hate you. As Jesus put forth His humility in dying for a rebel worm like yourself, so be humble before others, and give them your service. As Jesus was “meek and gentle of heart” be gentle and caring with others. As God was patient with you during the days of your rebellion, be patient with others, who are rebelling as well. As God has endured your foibles and weaknesses and continued sin, endure the weaknesses of others, who may irritate you from time to time. As God has forgiven you abundantly through faith in Jesus and nothing more, so also should you forgive other people just as abundantly and just as freely. As God has loved you with an everlasting love that is renewed every morning, love others as well.”

This is what each and every one of us is called to in this Christian community. We are called to live out the electing grace of God upon our lives. We are called to live out the justification that we experience. We are called to live out the love of God upon our lives. The way that it looks will be a reflection of God, Himself. Every single one of these virtues are first and foremost true of God.

When Moses requested of God to see His glory, the LORD said to him, “I myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion” (Ex. 33:18). So, the LORD put Moses in the cleft of the rock and passed by him (Ex. 33:22). And when the LORD passed by Moses, the LORD declared, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished” (Ex. 34:6-7). These types of attributes are the types of attributes to which we are called.

The LORD has a heart of **compassion** toward His people. “Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust” (Psalm 103:13-14).

The LORD has extended His **kindness** toward His people. In Psalm 106:7, the Psalmist describes all that the LORD did in redeeming Israel from slavery as a demonstration of His “abundant kindnesses.” In fact, in the ages to come, God will show forth “the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7).

The LORD has demonstrated His **humility** in the incarnation. Jesus Christ “although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:6-8).

As Jesus walked on the earth, He demonstrated His **gentleness**. He, Himself said, “I am gentle and humble in heart” (Matt. 11:29). He had time for the children (Matt. 19:13-15). He had tenderly cared for the sick and the diseased and the demon possessed and the epileptics and the paralytics, in healing them one by one (Matt. 4:23-24).

Oh, does the LORD have **patience**. If you only knew His holiness and purity and righteous demands for those who walk upon the earth, you would be amazed that the earth continues in existence for a single micro-second longer than it does. He is patient, delaying His ultimate judgment upon the earth, waiting for people to come to repentance and faith in Him (2 Peter 3:9).

The LORD **bears** with us. When we don’t know how to pray, the Spirit “helps our weakness” (Rom. 8:26). When we are being tempted to sin, the Lord Jesus is praying for us as our great High priest (Heb. 10:21-22). When we are weak and heavy laden, Jesus takes the burden upon Himself and carries us along (Matt. 11:29).

The LORD **forgives** us. This is the great reality of our salvation! God is a forgiving God. “Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon

Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Is. 55:6-7). He forgives those who come to Him in faith, believing in His Son.

The LORD is the epitome of **love**. It was His great love for us that sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2). It wasn't simply a one-time act that the Lord did for us. "The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22-23). His love is continually directed toward us and there is nothing that can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:38-39).

Bottom line in all of these things is that we are called to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1). We are His beloved children. Our actions are to reflect it.

One thing that I have always appreciated about my father is that he has repeatedly told me that he has never told me to do anything that he isn't first willing to do himself. It's true. I know that if he ever told me to do something, he was quite willing to do it himself. I never felt as if he had me doing things that he simply didn't want to do. But, I was stuck with them. No, he was always willing to do them himself. This is true of these things in our text today. God hasn't called us to do anything that He, first, isn't willing to do Himself. For years, He has demonstrated Himself to be all of these things.

It's one thing to know these things. It's another to do them. This was perfectly illustrated for my wife and I last night as we watched the behavior of our children (who gave me permission to tell this story). We gathered the family for a time of worship and Bible reading. At one point, I spoke with them about this text, as I was going to preach it the next day. As I explained my message this morning to them, each of them (particularly the older ones) communicated that they understood what God calls us to be and to do. We had a time of prayer and then sent the kids off to brush their teeth and get ready for bed. Yvonne and I were still seated in our bedroom when we heard a commotion down the hall. The children were fighting over the water so that they could brush their teeth. Some of the girls were fighting over a brush with which they were seeking to brush their hair. Also, there was a bit of a struggle with a drawer in the bathroom.

What a great picture this is of our lives as well. How easy is it to know these things with our heads here in church. They sound so wonderful and so nice. And then, as we leave church, we might easily forget them and go home and have an argument with our family, violating many of these same virtues that none of us would deny here this morning. So, how will we ever be able to do these things? Only through trusting in Him to give us the strength to accomplish these tasks. May the Lord strengthen us for the days to come.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 8, 2006 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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