



CAPITOL COMMISSION

In the Courtroom of Motivation

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For the past few weeks we have been looking at verses that teach us to “put off” certain undesirable qualities, as we would a dirty set of clothes and to “put on” other qualities that please the Lord. These are positive qualities that do not come naturally to us, but are possible to display to others when we are being changed by the gospel of Christ.

In our text for this week, the list of “what to wear” continues and concludes with three huge expressions of Jesus’ work in our minds, hearts and actions. When we consider each of these three, I’d like us to think about their opposites as well. Almost like three separate court cases, they argue against one another for a judgment from us. We choose which to follow based on the “merits” they present. But Scripture has much to say about these courtroom battles and speaks directly to the most important motivations we should possess.

Colossians 3:14-15 ¹⁴ *Beyond all these things, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.* ¹⁵ *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body; and be thankful.*

I. LOVE v. SELFISHNESS (3:14)

The first court case of motivation is the most foundational. Most decisions we make are based on whether we are thinking more of ourselves or more of others. The Bible teaches we naturally love ourselves and innately care for our needs, which isn’t necessarily bad. In teaching about marriage, for example, we read “So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; **for no one ever hated his own flesh**, but nourishes it and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church.” (Ephesians 5:28, 29)

The opposite of love, and the opponent in our first “courtroom” is not hatred, but selfishness. Love is actively seeking the best for another person and a willingness to sacrifice in that effort. It’s the kind of love that Christ demonstrated when He offered His life on Calvary for the sins of the entire human race. In our text, it is called the “belt” to our new spiritual wardrobe – it wraps everything together. It is the “perfect bond”.

The “love chapter” is 1 Corinthians 13. Here’s the definition of love we find there:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 ⁴ *Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, ⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Do you see these qualities in the political arena? Are you manifesting this desire to do what is best for others as you interact? How does this impact your home, business, campaign, constituents and colleagues?

II. PEACE v. CONFLICT (3:15a)

The Greek word used here for peace (*eirene*) carries both ideas of agreement and security.

Romans 5:1 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The word for “rule” is the same concept as an umpire making a call on the field. Think of it – when peace with Christ rules our decisions, it guides our decisions, showing we are on Christ’s side, consistent with our peaceful relationship. Just as our status of peace guides our foreign policy decisions with other nations, our peace with Christ rules in our decision-making to please Him.

Peace with Christ, then, is the ground for our peace with others, ensuring that the opposing counsel of conflict does not win the argument.

James 3:18 *And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

Matthew 5:9 *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.*

Romans 12:18 *If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*

BIBLE STUDY

LEGISLATORS: FRIDAYS @ 12:00PM, HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING (ROOM 153)

Maryland

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III. GRATITUDE v. COMPLAINING (3:15b)

Giving thanks is a common thread through the short book of Colossians (1:3; 1:12; 2:7; 3:15, 16, 17; 4:2). Paul knew that a loving heart that is at peace with God will be a thankful heart. And just as love and peace find outward expressions of their inward reality, thanksgiving must be expressed as well. Gratitude to God should be verbalized and expressed consistently as well as thanks to people around us. Unexpressed gratitude does no good and we should look for many creative ways to show how thankful we are.

Complaining sits at the opposite desk in our courtroom. Peace and complaining cannot coexist. In fact the Bible makes clear that it is the byproduct of an unbelieving heart.

Romans 1:21 *For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

We should cultivate hearts of gratitude. People in your life need to hear they are appreciated. God, who knows your heart anyway, must be thanked. Ingratitude grows in the same dry, unproductive soil as selfishness and conflict.

WHEN THERE IS PEACE IN THE HEART, THERE WILL BE PRAISE ON THE LIPS. THE CHRISTIAN OUT OF GOD'S WILL IS NEVER FOUND GIVING SINCERE PRAISE TO GOD.¹

CONCLUSION: THE EXAMPLE OF BARNABAS

As I thought about a Bible character that embodied these three qualities, a man by the name of Barnabas came to mind. Paul knew Barnabas well and was the recipient of his love, peace and gratitude.

We are first introduced to Barnabas in Acts 4. The thankfulness and generosity of the first-century church was exemplified by this man.

Acts 4:34, 36, 37 ³⁴ *For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales . . .* ³⁶ *Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called **Barnabas** by the apostles (which translated means **Son of Encouragement**), ³⁷ and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

So "Barnabas" was just his nickname, but what a name! How many people around us are characterized by encouragement. His thankful, loving heart overflowed in a giving spirit we rarely see today.

Barnabas also displayed peace. When Paul was converted he was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians. He had a well-earned reputation as a ruthless leader who would imprison Jesus' followers (Acts 8:3) and occasionally oversee their executions, such as Stephen (Acts 7:54-60).

Paul began to share the amazing story of his new-found faith with the Christian community, which understandably met with much hesitancy. Barnabas peaceably accepted him, though.

Acts 9:26, 27 ²⁶ *When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing he was a disciple.* ²⁷ *But **Barnabas** took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.*

We all need a Barnabas in our corner. We all need to follow the godly example of Barnabas and his loving acceptance, peace-making and thankful generosity.

¹Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Col 3:15). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.