
Colossians 3:15-17, The Peace of Christ!

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.or

General Idea: The peace of Christ that passes all understanding and our gratitude produce the peace that supports our spiritual growth along with the church's health, hope, and connectedness. We must allow the Word of God to impact us, live in us, and referee us so we can live joyfully, worship God, and love others more effectively. Paul's mission was to rightly instruct the Colossians, warn them about the false teachers and their distortions, as well as woo them back to the Lord—the Real Lord—not the half-baked Greek philosophical hybrid they had. Christ is the One who has to empower us—not only to save us but also so that we can trust in Him for holy living. With the understanding of what Christ did for us, we can have the hope and confidence to trust and obey Him. These are the attributes that produce character and spiritual maturity that in turn show that we are representatives of Christ. This total life transformation will not only change us from the inside out, but also allow us to have an impact on others for the Kingdom!

Contexts and Background:

Paul continues the theme of putting off those sins and desires that are contrary to God's call and principles and putting on proper understanding of God's Word to produce His Fruit. In so doing, we put on our good character because He is good and desires to work in and through us. Our ethics come from our relationship with Christ and in understanding His Lordship and the application of His Word, not just from obligation or ritual or law. In the first two chapters, Paul focuses on essential doctrine, such as who God is and His attributes. Now, Paul transitions to applications for putting His precepts into our practice. Chapter three could be called "practical theology for personal application" explaining what God needs to be doing in us and asking if we are allowing Him to do so. It comes down to our having died with Christ, as now we live with Him. God does not force Himself. He encourages us to obey and when we do He gives us success. But, the secret key is not surreptitious at all; we just need to allow Him to lead us by placing our minds, our will, and our desires in Him and His direction for us (Eph. 4:25-32).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Peace of God/Christ/bond of perfectness.* This means God calls us to salvation and then binds us to Him and to one another. This refers to salvation as well as the practice of unity "among one another" as in the practice of God's love, reconciliation, grace, and forgiveness that give us eternal rest as well as peace and security for today. This is what He did for us; as Christians, we are to show who we are in Christ—the example being how we are to others. When we practice His precepts, we are modeling Christian community and unity that shows a broken world our Lord and what He can do for them (Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:6-7; Heb. 6:1)!
- *Dwell in you richly/rule.* This means to have Christ as our "supreme umpire" to live in us. This is the picture of our abundance and unity in Christ and His promise to reside in us. The Colossians had a skewed understanding of the goodness and sufficiency of Christ. Both they and we need to know that it is Christ Himself living in us; we are motivated by Him to bear and bring Christ wherever we go. This is a powerful conviction and motivation and blessing. We are to live out our Christian walk with the responsibly of His power, conviction, clarity, and truth, because He is not in heaven, aloof, or just watching. He is residing in us now (Psalm 119:11; Matt. 13:9; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; 5:18-19; Phil. 2:16; Col. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:15)!
- *Hearts.* Means the inner will where one's desires and conflicts reside. Peace in our hearts makes peace with others and peace in the church that influences the world. Gratitude promotes peace

and secures a content heart whereas sin and turmoil become cancerous and adversely affect others around us (Psalm 32; 51).

- *Members of one body.* A colloquialism for the Church, a “corporate” union in Christ. It is not a building; rather, it is a “spiritual house of people” in relationship of unity, deriving life in and from Him. Being of His membership means our identity is in Him, thus we are affected personally and publicly, synergizing as a community that is formed, indwelt, and empowered by the Spirit. We are all precious, important, and have a job to do as a moving, living temple, reflecting His love and holiness. The Church is God’s dwelling place and legacy, His training and worship center where people are empowered by Him to worship Him (Ex. 19:6; 2 Sam. 7:5-7, 12-16; Matt. 16:18; Mark 12:10-11; John 2:19; Acts 2:33; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 3:16; 15:45; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22; Heb. 3:6; 7:26; 10:10; 1 Pet. 2: 4-10).
- *Peace.* This means God-given tranquility, which comes from the surrendering and yielding of ourselves to our Lord. When Christ is in control, we have peace because He is the source of ultimate peace! This is achieved when we allow tranquility from our harmonious relationship with Christ be our attitude, control, and composure. The closer we are to Christ, the closer we are to contentment and what is really important in life. Because peace allows for wisdom and peace, it promotes virtue and love and forgiveness. Peace is a Fruit of the Spirit that comes from the tree of love that is fruited with wisdom, pruned with virtue, watered with forgiveness, and produces the sweet fruits of “*compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience*” (Isa. 26:3; Matt. 5:9; Luke 19:42; John 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1; 12:18; Gal. 5:19-23; Col. 3:15; Phil. 4:7).
- *Thankful.* This comes from our enjoyment in Christ. When we realize who and what He is, we respond. The opposite is being a complainer, grumbling as the Israelites did in the desert, which only leads to bitterness and anxiety both personally and collectively and no change in one’s situation (Phil. 4:6; Col. 1:12; 3)
- *Word of Christ/Word of God.* Meaning Christ's teachings, the clarified and uncompromised true Truth of His Word now found in Scripture (At this time, it was oral and in letterform; now we have it in the Old and New Testaments.) as well as the words, character, and precepts of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. How He lived and what He taught must also infuse and affect us—what He taught and modeled and how we are learning and responding to Him. We are to learn and employ what He has for us. It is not just enough to know; we must also be. Learn it, know it, be it, and do it. This is study, internalization, transformation, and application (John 14:16; 16:13; 20:31; Col.1:15-20; Eph. 5:14; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16).
- *Dwell.* Meaning what controls and rules you. Here, it means to be directed by God’s principles and Christ’s character and the Holy Spirit’s leading. Being led by the Word of God will enable us to be more filled with the Spirit of God; they go together. One cannot be effective without the other. You cannot say the Spirit fills you by being emotionally ecstatic while you ignore God’s Word. What gives you hope, reason, purpose, meaning, and motivation will be what is planted, cultivated, and growing in your mindset that influences your attitude, outlook, and actions. This will either fill your life with hope or despair, joy or discontent, gratitude or ingratitude, contentment or dissatisfaction, all dependent upon being truly “Spirit Filled.” This is not a “charismatic” thing; rather, it is a real Christian thing, being controlled and filled by Christ and not by apprehension, selfishness, turmoil, damaged past, or uncertainty (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 6:3; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:8-6:9, Col. 3:19-4:1).
- *Teaching/admonish.* This means to allow the Word to touch our thinking, our conduct, and us so we can touch others by our word and example. This is an imperative! We are called not to just sit in a church, but to learn all we can, to keep learning, and make sure we are teaching. We may not

have to be actively teaching a class, but teaching by our lifestyle and counsel, which is more powerful than we can do with a good PowerPoint presentation. Also, the Church is called to teach and guide its flock. We are never to be rude or tactless or lazy or forsake this great, needed, and important ministry (Gal. 6:1; Col. 1:9, 28; 2:3; 4:5)!

- *Psalms*. Possibly referring to the “Psalter.” The reciting of the Psalms, blessings and worshipful knowledge of our Lord, were also sung with or without music in the local churches and homes. When we are filled with God’s Word, we will have gratitude that will be manifested in our nature, temperament, and attitude. We will want to sing the song that He has planted in our hearts—the songs from His Word the Bible (Luke 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33; 1 Cor. 14:26).
- *Hymns/songs*. This means the praise and celebration of our Lord in unity with willing, loving hearts. In context, this also means that significant doctrines and truths are articulated in hymns written by authentic Christians from the beliefs in Scripture. Real worship and music are never a show; rather, they are responses of our love giving praise. We as a congregation are the performers, and Christ is the audience. Real, authentic worship is to be inspired by who Christ is and what He is doing in us. It is not about form or function or type; it is about our hearts showing our love to Him (Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Heb. 2:12).
- *Spiritual songs...giving thanks*. Means being inspired by the Spirit for worship, thanking God and recounting the deeds of God in Scripture and in one’s life that inspires holy living. In contrast are secular, worldly songs, like bar songs and sports chants (1 Chron. 16:29; 25:1-6; 1 Cor. 14:15; Rev. 5:9; 14:3; 15:3).
- *Gratitude*. Here, this means graciousness and tact as in acting with and in grace that brings glory to our Lord and a positive prime testimony to our community (Eph. 5:18-19).
- *Whatever you do... name of the Lord*. Means actions reflect faith. With our lips and lives, all we do must have as a focus the glorifying of Christ and the furthering of His Kingdom. This is also a reminder that God is Sovereign; He is our hope and reason, so we must line up our lives to Him. This is an attack on the pagan religious services that were influencing them; they emphasized ritual observances and negated personal holiness. Paul turns this phrase around to admonish the Colossians to “shape up.” All aspects of our lives must reflect His Lordship over us! (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Thess. 5:8)!

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

If you want to be a person of good character, this passage, in context, makes the designation clear: “*compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience*.” Then, we put them together with forgiveness and love, and they operate in the parameters of peace and wisdom—all from our Lord’s love and work and our gratitude toward Him for that love. Be thankful you are able to work; do it with gratitude and for the Lord. Do your job as if Christ is beside you, because He is.

When we are focusing on the heavenly things, the earthly things seem small, insignificant, and worthless. His precepts are much more needed, precious, and positively impacting. What is often missed in this passage is the call to *admonish*. This means we are to take to task with gentleness and love but still do it earnestly, counseling others when they stray from God’s path. We are to sharpen one another, help one another avoid sin so we can help one another put off what holds us back. If by not admonishing one another we think we are being kind, we are, in fact, being mean, negating our responsibilities, allowing a brother or sister in the Lord slip into the ways of the world so they lose out on opportunities and rewards, and gaining meaninglessness and bitterness. We are indeed to remind each other His tender mercies by our own behaviors and spur on The Kingdom.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What does it usually mean when someone says they have a “spiritual life?” What does this passage say it means?
2. How do unity and gratitude set the tone for your life and spiritual growth? How does this help you with your tranquility and your relationship with God and others?
3. What are the attributes that produce character and spiritual maturity? How do these help demonstrate that you and your church are representatives of Christ?
4. How does being a complainer or a grumbler help one’s situation? How does this lead to bitterness and anxiety? Why do we do it?
5. How does the proper understanding of God’s Word produce Fruit? How has this been so in your life and church? What can be done better?
6. If you know for certain that Christ is good, how should it affect your desires and relationships? How do one’s ethics come from their relationship with Christ?
7. Is there a secret key to the Christian life? How can an attitude of gratitude be that key? How does being thankful allow you to place your mind, will, and desire in Christ and His direction for you?
8. Have you experienced the peace of Christ? How does this support your spiritual growth, church health, hope, and connectedness? How does it help that He is in control?
9. How can the understanding of what Christ did for you give you the hope and confidence to trust and obey Him in whatever situation you are in or could face?
10. How does being closer to Christ help you be closer to one another and to what Christ has called you to do and be?
11. What blocks you from your growth in Him and your character towards others? How do your desires easily distract you from holy living and your call? How can your living in response to what Christ has done for you be of help?
12. What do you need to do to allow more of the Word of God to impact you, live in you, and umpire you? How can this help make you more joyful and content? How can this help you worship God and love others more effectively?