

*Colossians 3:15-17***PREFACE**

A change takes place in v15 of our text. Since the beginning of Chapter Three Paul has been telling the Colossians—and each of us in the body of Christ—to *remove* certain things from our lives and to *apply* certain things to our lives—the classic “put off/put on” passages.

v1: keep seeking

v8: But now you also, put them all aside: anger, etc.

v9: Do not lie to one another

v12: put on a heart of compassion, etc.

v13: bear with one another

v14: put on love

Up till now the emphasis has been on *doing*—put these things off, put these things on. But now, in vv15-17, the emphasis changes to *let it happen*.

Read Colossians 3:15-17. [not KJVs]

Sidebar: I could find no explanation for the “let.” It is not a discreet word in the Greek text, but drawn from the verbs “rule” (v15) and “dwell” (v16). The tenses of the two verbs seem to indicate more of a command (“do this”), but all the translators have gone with “let.” So, considering their agreement, all I can do is bow to their superior understanding of the text.

Perhaps more important than the difference between “put off/put on” and “let” is that vv15-17 represent an eloquent *how* to the earlier commands. As has come up in our recent sessions, these imperatives cut against our fleshly nature, and there may be times when we despair of our ability to live in such a righteous way.

But the commands of vv12-14 are book-ended by clues to how these are possible—even this side of glory. We find the first clue at the end of v11:

Christ is all, and in all.

Every believer has Christ Jesus inside. And just who is He?

Read Colossians 1:15-20.

I challenge you to find any better description of “Christ is all” in Scripture (or anywhere else, for that matter). That is the first “how” bookend; the second we find in vv15-17, and that bookend consists of three elements that give us the ability to carry out the “put off/put on” imperatives Paul has just listed: the *peace* of Christ, the *word* of Christ, and the *name* of Christ.

The setting for these three verses is the body of Christ—the community of believers, and we could summarize this passage with,

We are to let Christ have His way with us.

Then—and only then—will our lives reflect the righteousness of His example.

V15: PEACE

Read John 14:26-27.

After I go, the Holy Spirit will be your Teacher, but I give you right now, before I leave, My peace—My special, otherworldly peace.

So right now, because He personally gave it to us, every believer has inside him or her Christ's peace.

Read v15.

Sidebar: Most of the oldest, most authoritative manuscripts have *Christos*, while the KJVs, from a later manuscript, have *theos* (God).

peace = *eirene* (ay-ray'-nay) = probably **from a primary verb eiro (to join)**; peace (literal or figurative); by implication prosperity :- **one**, peace, **quietness**, rest, + set at one again.

This is the peace of *shalom*, [in the Septuagint, the Greek *eirene* translates the Hebrew *shalom* (completeness, soundness, well-being)] "the eschatological state of cosmic restoration that the Old Testament prophets anticipated" (Moo). We saw this in Chapter One:

Read Colossians 1:19-20.

We are to let this unifying peace "rule in [our] hearts."

rule = *brabeuo* (brab-yoo'-oh) = from the same as <G1017> (brabeion); **to arbitrate**, i.e. (genitive) to govern (figurative prevail) :- rule; **empire**.

Whenever competing concerns arise within the family, the church, the controlling factor should be the peace that comes from Christ Jesus. Not selfish wants, not the powerful over the weak, but the corporate wellness, the unifying joy of Christ's peace. It is to be sincere and heartfelt.

Read Romans 14:16-19.

What is the starting point for this? What changes in us first as we fulfill our "calling," as Paul puts it, and let the peace of Christ control us? His peace changes the way we see ourselves and each other—a change so eloquently described in Philippians 2.

Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:1-4)

And although it seems to break the rhythm of this injunction regarding peace among believers, the call to "be thankful" is fitting, as Douglas Moo points out.

Believers who are full of gratitude to God for His gracious calling will find it easier to extend to fellow believers the grace of love and forgiveness and to put aside petty issues that might inhibit the expression of peace in the community.

v16: WORD

This verse is one of those that no one agrees on—that is, the punctuation and which words go together.

- Is the “word of Christ” words *He* spoke, or the word *about* Him?
- Is that word to dwell within the individual, or among believers?
- Do “teaching” and “admonishing” go with the “word,” or with the singing?

First, what goes with what. The NASB associates “teaching and admonishing one another” with “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”

NASB: 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.

The NIV, on the other hand, separates those from the singing of psalms, etc.

NIV: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

I favor the ESV, which is a pretty good compromise, keeping “wisdom” with the teaching, and the singing with those things we tend to sing:

ESV: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

As to the *scope* of the indwelling (individual or corporate), F. F. Bruce writes, Perhaps it would be unwise to rule either alternative out completely. Let there be ample scope for the proclamation of the Christian message and the impartation of Christian teaching in their meetings.

As to the scope of “the word of Christ” (*His* words only, or the word *about* Him), a logical starting point would be the Greek word translated “word,” which is little help in settling the dispute. It is the popular *logos* [used 330 times in the NT], which is variously translated speech, account, matter, report, saying, word (of course), and, as we all know from John 1, even Word, for Christ Himself.

Out of all the possible interpretations, I favor “the message that proclaims Christ” (from Moo, source unknown). This does not limit it to the very teaching of Christ, but it includes it (for Jesus certainly proclaimed Himself). More important, if that which resides in us—both personally and corporately—does *not* proclaim Christ, it is to be rejected and silenced. Because, again as Paul writes in v11, “Christ is all and in all.”

So with this “word” which dwells in us

- we teach it
- we admonish with it
- we sing about it

and, just as with the peace of Christ (v15), we are to do all this with thanksgiving in our hearts.

v15 = thankful = *eucharistos* = from a derivative of *charizomai*

v16 = thankfulness, gratitude = *charis* = grace, graciousness

In fact, note the rhythm of thanksgiving in this passage; all of this—the peace of Christ, the word of Christ, everything in our lives done in the name of Jesus—all is to take place within an atmosphere of gratitude to God:

v15: and be thankful;

v16: singing with thankfulness/grace in your hearts;

v17: giving thanks through Jesus to God the Father.

v17

Question: Considering the context, which do you see as the most important word in v17? For me, it is the word “all.”

The peace of Christ and the word of Christ are to be the dominating forces as we move and participate within the body of believers, as we teach and admonish each other, as we come together to worship and sing to our Lord. And then Paul closes this injunction with, *Oh, by the way, everything in your life is to be permeated with Christ.*

Paul opened this section of the letter in Chapter Two.

Read Colossians 2:6-7.

And now he summarizes and wraps up this section in v17.

Read v17.

We are in the habit of closing our prayers with some variation of “in the name of Jesus.” We get this, principally, from the words of Jesus in John 14:

“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” (John 14:13-14)

Unfortunately, ritually tagging our prayers with “in the name of Jesus” can become nothing more than a linguistic habit, nothing more than good form—that is, meaningless. As we have been stressing throughout this study of Colossians, as believers we abide *in* Jesus the Christ—*inside the realm* of Christ: He in us, we in Him. And this is succinctly expressed at the end of v11: “Christ is all, and in all.”

Douglas J. Moo: To do all things “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” then, does not mean simply to utter Jesus’ name but to act always in concert with the nature and character of our Lord.

F. F. Bruce expands on this with a series of clarifying questions:

What is the Christian thing to do here? Can I do this without compromising my Christian confession? Can I do it (that is to say) “in the name of the Lord Jesus”—whose reputation is at stake in the conduct of His known followers? And can I thank God the Father through Him for the opportunity of doing this thing?

In everything we say, everything we do, we are to represent Christ to a fallen world, and we are to do it with thanksgiving and joy in our hearts.