

Preeminent. Christ's Place in The World

WEEK 12

The Love and Peace of Christ



“Above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body” (Col. 3:14-15).

Continuing his discussion of what the new humanity in Christ is supposed to look like, Paul in today’s passage gives the chief virtue that we are to display. In keeping with Scripture’s emphasis, this virtue is love (Col. 3:14). How could it be anything else? God is love (1 John 4:8). The world will know we belong to Jesus because of our love for others (John 13:35). Therefore, the chief virtue of the Christian must be love.

Love is primary because it is the impetus for the kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and forgiveness to which we are called (Col. 3:12–13). Authentic pardon of another’s sin — the refusal to feel ill will toward an offender and the determination never to hold the offender’s sin over his head — is possible only through love. It was love that moved the triune God to provide a way for human beings to be forgiven and reconciled to Him (Deut. 7:6–8; John 3:16; Rom. 5:6–8), and if love drove Him to absolve us, nothing less can make us extend true forgiveness to others.

**COLOSSIANS 3:12-17
CORAM DEO**

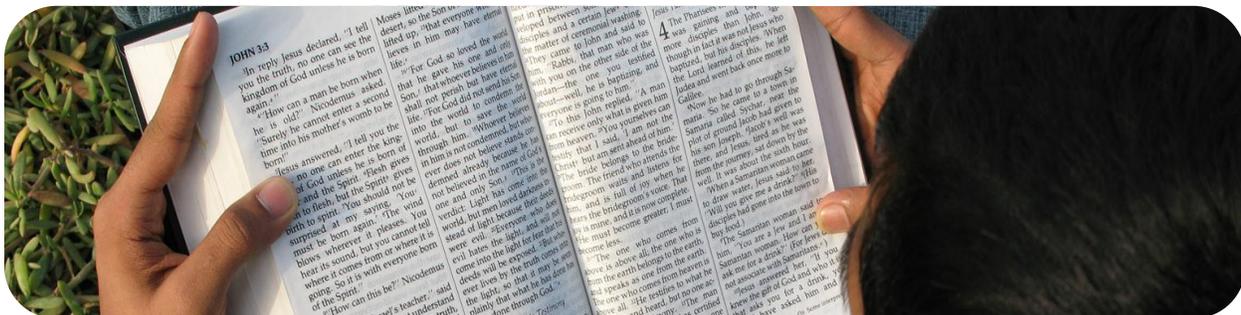
When church elders, committees, and other bodies need to make a decision, their choice should in large measure be based upon what will bring peace to the church in the matter without compromising the gospel of Jesus Christ. Similarly, as individuals in the body, we are to make choices about what we do and say based on whether or not these actions will bring peace or create unnecessary conflict.

Kindness, meekness, patience, and so forth are praiseworthy only if they are not merely outward qualities but are the very disposition of the heart. Anyone can show kindness or patience externally while inwardly hating the object of one’s good will, but it takes love to ensure that the virtues we display outwardly match the thoughts and desires that no one but God can see. John Chrysostom writes, “Whatever good thing it is that you mention, if love be absent, it is nothing, it melts away... . Whatever good our deeds possess will vanish completely if they lack love” (ACCNT 9, p. 49).

In Colossians 3:15, the apostle follows up on his assertion of the primacy of love with a call for us to “let the peace of Christ rule” in our hearts. This is an oft-cited passage when we are considering the topic of personal decision-making, and it is common to hear believers say that they chose to do something because “God gave me a peace about it.” Of course, the Lord does sometimes settle our hearts in one direction and not another when we must choose between two or more godly options. Yet the apostle is not speaking about personal decision-making in verse 15 but about life in the church. Note that the verse describes the “peace of Christ” as that to which we are called in one body. Paul is exalting peace as the goal of all the church’s deliberations insofar as it does not require the compromise of the gospel.¹

OPEN IT

1. Choose two of the positive character qualities from Paul’s list in Colossians 3:12-14. What public figure (or someone you know) best demonstrates each quality?



READ IT | Colossians 3:12-17

¹ <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/love-and-peace-christ/>

EXPLORE IT



2. How does Paul describe God's feelings about us?

3. What attribute allows us to live in perfect harmony?

4. What attribute should Christians have because of their part in the body of Christ?

5. What are we to do "in the name of the Lord Jesus"?

GET IT

This passage is paralleled in Ephesians as Paul was sending out similar instructions to other churches too. He sends a call for us to let Christ rule our hearts and actions, our motives and behaviors, and to put our new lives into effectual action. In this way, we will not waste what God has done in/for us or how He wants us to be toward others. These include the obligations and opportunities of living out our ethics and responsibilities that we have regarding God and one another. The image is the taking off of "grave clothes" as Lazarus did, shedding whatever holds us from growing in Him, and whatever prevents maturity and increasing spirituality that is sincere, real, and vibrant. Our vitality and good character should be the influencers in our spheres of impact, infusing those within our reach for Christ as His ambassadors. We are to be wearing His "grace clothes" as a

showcase, not the "grave clothes" of sin, apathy, personal agendas, stifle, gossip, anger, or bitterness. Rather, we are to focus on Christ, so He is clear in our hearts and minds, directing our will and our behaviors.²

6. Looking back to verses 8-9, what are some differences between the two?

What causes us to gravitate to verses 8-9 instead of 12-14?

Beloved is a verb which means to love unconditionally and sacrificially as God Himself loves sinful men the way He loves the Son. Note that beloved is a verb and by its verbal nature calls for action. This quality of love is not an emotion, but is an action initiated by a volitional choice, and so for example God's love will sometimes be manifest to us in discipline when we wander from His path of righteous living. . . .

The glorious epithet "**beloved**" signifies that believers are objects of God's special love, dear to His heart. Notice that "**beloved**" (gk. agapao) is in the **perfect tense** which signifies past completed action with present ongoing result or effect. It speaks of the permanence and enduring quality of God's love for you, dear believer. His love is not like a geometric sine wave curve, up and down, but is steady and stable for we are in Christ Jesus, His beloved Son! And nothing can remove us from our position. This should be the Christian's "shouting ground!"³

7. What does it mean to you that God loves you and chose you to be His? How can this help motivate you to live out these biblical qualities?
8. Do you think or feel that you are holy? Why or why not?

How can Colossians 3:1-4 help to reinforce our confidence when it comes to our standing with God?

² <http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=53451&columnid=3803>© 1987, 2004, 2008, R. J. Krejcir Ph.D. Into Thy Word Ministries

³ http://preceptaustin.org/colossians_312-25.htm#3:12

Each one of the qualities mentioned in this passage expresses themselves in relationships. A significant measure of our Christian life is found simply in how we treat people and the quality of our relationships with them.

“It is most significant to note that every one of the graces listed has to do with personal relationships between man and man. There is no mention of virtues like efficiency or cleverness, not even of diligence or industry – not that these things are unimportant. But the great basic Christian virtues are those which govern human relationships” (Barclay).⁴

9. The five qualities listed result in our ability as believers to “bear with one another” and “forgive each other.” What are the things that cause you to struggle with others?

When do you find it hard to forgive?

How does Christ’s example of forgiveness shape the way we forgive others?

10. How can love truly bind together all the virtues listed in 3:12 into “perfect harmony”?

11. What would happen in your church if most people were sincerely exhibiting love as exemplified in the qualities that Paul has spoken of?

What happens when we are stingy with these fruits or prevent them from functioning properly?

⁴http://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/guz/view.cgi?book=col&chapter=3&verse=1#Col3_1

What can be done to make them work better?

To illustrate the idea of letting the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, picture a baseball umpire. Baseball fans know that the man in the black suit who stands behind the catcher rules on the plays and makes the calls. He remains absolutely unruffled no matter what happens. Managers curse him and kick dirt at him, fans throw pop bottles at him, yet he remains unperturbed. That is the idea. Let the calmness of Christ rule among you. Consider Jesus in the gospels. He moves into every situation with total poise. He is not upset by others but remains calm and collected when other people are panicking around him. He is in control. That [peace] is to characterize the church in its functioning as a body.⁵

12. What does it mean to "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts"?

How does the world tend to define peace? How is this different from the peace of God?

How does knowing we are chosen, holy and beloved by God bring about peace?

13. What is one way you can intentionally impact someone else's life this week with the peace you have in God?

⁵ http://preceptaustin.org/colossians_315-16.htm

Grant Richison writes that. . .

The word “dwell” means to keep house. We should live in the Word of God like we live in our homes. We are familiar with our home — where all the closets are, where we have items stored. We must thoroughly acquaint ourselves with the Word. The Word should become so familiar to us that we know it like the back of our hand. The idea is to let the Word of God dwell inside and live at home in our lives. The Word of God needs to inhabit us. This is more than just reading the Bible. God wants us to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts (v. 15) and the Word of Christ dwell in our hearts.

Some treat the Word of God like a rabbit’s foot or charm. We use it like a fetish. We cannot use the Bible that way. We cannot rub the Bible on warts and they disappear. We cannot flip the pages of the Bible and blindly put our finger on a verse and claim it. The Bible is no prayer wheel or magic book. We must systematically study the Bible and memorize pertinent verses to deal with weak areas of our Christian life.⁶

14. This passage challenges us to let the Word of God become so deeply implanted within us that it takes control of all our thinking. How do we foster this indwelling of the “Word of Christ” in our lives?

15. The theme of thanksgiving is used twice in this section, and both uses remind us that those who have received grace should extend grace out to others. Why is grace needed when we are “teaching and admonishing one another”?

As Christians, we are living in a world that is hostile to our spiritual survival. Every day we go up against forces that could destroy us. Some are internal — our pride and selfish desires. Some are external forces — ungodly media influences, acquaintances who don’t support our faith, the stresses of life. Wrong decisions as we face these “blizzards” can lead to destruction. Every move we make — each word and action — must be done in Jesus’ name (Col. 3:17). We must live according to God’s principles and act as we think Jesus would. That will make every move count.⁷

16. What areas of your life need to change so that all things might be done in the name of Jesus and in a spirit of gratitude?

⁶ http://preceptaustin.org/colossians_315-16.htm

⁷ http://preceptaustin.org/colossians_317-25.htm