

Sunday, September 4, 2022

Colossians 3:15-17 (People of Christ)

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Intro

This morning we're continuing a theme of harmony in the local church community.

In the world, different ideologies and agendas create division, accusations, caricatures, insults, hatred. We as a nation are not one. News headlines are slanted to fit a narrative. Social media posts are inflammatory. We provoke one another instead of bearing with each other.

Paul says not so in the church. And it's interesting how peace happens.

Through an outside force changing our hearts.

Through gratitude.

Through the words of a book.

Through remembering a person.

READ PASSAGE (3:12-17)

Body

Recap

- 1) The Christian life is all about continuing in Christ.
- 2) The Christian life is all about moving towards maturity, completeness...no area of life untouched by God's word.
- 3) We build on the foundation...we don't stop at the foundation.
- 4) We live consistent with who we are...we've risen with Christ.
- 5) So we can kill sin and put on righteousness.

Passage Focus

How we live in community with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Point 1: Be ruled by the peace of Christ (3:15)

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

peace of Christ

peace = a state of peace meaning the absence of conflict.

“peace of Christ” = peace created by Jesus and consistent with who he is.

rule = have control over someone's actions by making a decision or a judgment. Used of a judge or umpire in athletic contests. A sport officials' rulings directs the practice of athletes. If the basketball referee is calling fouls really tight, players will stop making contact. If the baseball umpire has a wide strike zone, batters will start swinging at more pitches.

Let the peace of Christ umpire your hearts. Let Jesus' peace (the peace he produces) be the deciding factor in how we interact with each other as a local church.

in your hearts

Jesus' rule takes place in our hearts. The battle takes place at the heart level. In our thoughts, emotions, desires, loves. Paul is saying submit to the peace Jesus has already established in the body (the local church). Don't fight against it by bringing in division.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. – Ephesians 4:1-3

“maintain” speaks of retaining, preserving a state or condition that already exists. To cause an existing state to continue on. It's our job to preserve not create peace in the body. It's our responsibility to kill sin and put on righteousness so that we don't disrupt the peace Jesus created.

Like maintaining a car. We don't create the car. We take care of it so we don't bring any unnecessary harm upon it.

It's submitting to the work of Christ in our hearts. Jesus is working God's character in us. Let the Spirit kill sin. Let the Spirit work compassion, kindness, humility, meekness (gentleness) in us. Don't fight it. Submit to the Spirit of Christ that indwells us and so live out the newness of life Jesus has wrought in our hearts.

Submit to the Spirit and live out the effects of the new birth.

to which indeed you were called in one body

We were called to live in peace with one another in one body = the local church.

Called speaks of God summoning us for a certain purpose. The purpose is salvation. In Paul's writings, the called are the saved (1 Cor 1:24). When someone is called they come to faith (Rom 8:30). Almost synonymous with salvation here. You were saved to live in peaceful community in the local church.

Application

God saves sinners to bring them into fellowship with one another in the local church. God changes the hearts of sinners so we'll live in peace with one another.

Why part of a local church?

- 1) Hebrews 10:25.
- 2) Going against our design if we're not.
- 3) Rejecting the local church is resisting the Spirit.

Point 2: Be thankful in Christ (3:15-17)

Explanation

Thankfulness is a recurring theme in Colossians.

- 1) Paul thanks God that the Colossians have faith, love for one another, and hope of a heavenly dwelling (1:3-5).
- 2) Paul prays that the Colossians growth in spiritual depth (completeness) would include thanksgiving.

Thankful for an eternal inheritance, rescue from the domain of darkness, and forgiveness of sins (1:12-14). Thankfulness is a sign of spiritual growth.

- 3) As we walk in Christ, as we build on the foundation, we abound in thanksgiving (2:6-7).
- 4) Singing characterized by thankful hearts (3:16).
- 5) Whatever we do, we should give thanks to the Father through Jesus Christ (3:17).

We thank the Father as those in Christ.

How should we respond to God? One of the numerous ways we respond to God is thanksgiving. Recognizing what God has done for us in Christ. Appreciating the goodness and mercy of God in Christ.

Application

1 Corinthians 10:6-12 comments on grumbling. A lack of thankfulness.

Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." ⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. – 1 Corinthians 10:6-12

- 1) Grumbling is lumped in with idolatry, sexual immorality, and putting Christ to the test = thankfulness is a big deal!
- 2) Israel is an example for us in that their response to God was evil.

We shouldn't imitate evil examples.

- 3) Israel is an example to us in that they were judged for their evil responses to God.
- 4) Israel's failure should cause us to do a little self-examination.

I can grumble against God. I can lack thanksgiving.

Numbers 13-14

- 1) The grumbling incident is recorded in Numbers 13-14.
- 2) 12 Israelite spies were sent out to investigate the promised land (13:1-16).
- 3) Ten of the spies gave a bad report. The people there are too powerful to defeat. We shouldn't go (13:28-29, 31-33).
- 4) Two spies, Caleb and Joshua, said they should go. Because God would ensure victory (13:30; 14:6-9).
- 5) The people grumbled against Moses and Aaron, insinuating that God had rescued them from Egypt only to kill them by the sword in the promised land. They wanted to go back to Egypt (14:1-4).
- 6) The congregation wanted to stone Caleb and Joshua (14:10).

- 7) God sent a plague taking the lives of the ten with the bad report (14:36-38).
- 8) The rest of the Israelites 20 years and older, minus Joshua and Caleb, would never be allowed into the promised land (14:28-35).

Grumbling was an act of unbelief (Num 14:11). They grumbled because they didn't trust that God would do what he promised. Didn't trust God cared for them. Didn't trust God would help them. Didn't trust God was good. Failure to trust leads to grumbling.

Do I trust God? Or do I grumble against God? Two ways to live. How do I see God? Do I see his goodness in Christ? Do I see reasons for thankfulness?

The fight for thankfulness is a fight for faith in God's goodness!

Thankfulness maintains peace.

Point 3: Speak and sing Christ to one another (3:16)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly

"*the word of Christ*" = the word about Jesus. Specifically the **gospel message**. Forgiveness of sins, Jesus' death on the cross, faith and repentance. More generally **the whole Bible**. Because the whole Bible is about Jesus (Luke 24:27).

The term for dwelling is normally used for the Spirit indwelling believers. The gospel must be inside us. And it must be inside us richly. Richly could be translated abundantly. Meaning a large amount. The gospel must be large in our hearts.

The rest of the verse spells out how we let the gospel be large inside us.

teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom

teaching = positive instruction. Sharing the content of the gospel.

admonishing = negative instruction. Warning or correcting one another because of improper thinking or conduct.

"*in all wisdom*" = using the truth well. As fits the occasion (Eph 4:29). Knowing when to comfort. Knowing when to correct.

Note who's doing the teaching and admonishing. All Christians ("one another"). Teaching that all Christians do. Not public teaching when the church is gathered that's restricted to a limited group.

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. – James 3:1

Few should be public teachers. But all Christians should be speaking truth to one another.

Admonishing is preemptive discipline we could say. We warn one another before the need for church discipline arises. When Christians are regularly giving correction and heeding correction, there's no need for church discipline. Harmony is kept. Division is averted. We should have the courage to warn and correct. We should have the humility to receive warning and correction. How wonderful the depth of relationship when we can speak freely to one another without offense.

Marriage illustration – myself and Kaitlin are free to correct each other.

So we let the gospel indwell us when we teach and admonish one another.

singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

We also let the gospel indwell us through singing.

psalms = songs of praise, possibly or likely OT Psalms. Sometimes used of OT Psalms.

hymns = songs with religious content.

spiritual songs = songs that are spiritual in nature. Inspired by the Spirit?

Gratitude should accompany our singing. We're not going through the motions. We're not taking part in a performance. We're expressing our joy in God together.

Song selection

Like teaching and admonishing, singing is a means by which the gospel grows in our hearts. Meaning the Bible must be in our song lyrics.

What are my favorite hymns or worship songs? The ones with the best biblical content.

Christian books differ in degree of biblical accuracy and richness of content. Television preachers differ in degree of biblical accuracy and richness of content. Likewise, hymns and spiritual songs differ in degree of biblical accuracy and richness of content.

It's good to evaluate the songs we sing. The degree to which singing fills us with gospel is proportional to the degree of gospel content in our song lyrics.

How the gospel indwells

The Colossians were people without a printing press. They didn't have personal Bibles. The Bible they got was through hearing Paul's letters, hearing other Scriptures read, and the public teaching/preaching they received.

In other words, they needed to memorize Scripture and meditate on Scripture if they were going to teach and admonish one another. They had to have the word readily available in their mind.

This commends memorization and meditation on us. We need to have the word on the spur of the moment (knowing what it says). We need to have wisdom to skillfully use what we've memorized (how to use it).

We should be a people who have the word with us at all times.

The word maintains peace.

Point 4: Do everything with Christ in mind (3:17)

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Everything we do must be done in Jesus' name and with thanksgiving. Word (speaking) and deed (actions) = the full range of human activity.

What does it mean to do everything in Jesus' name? To say Jesus every time we talk and do something?

I don't think Paul's after a ritual. It means living consistent with Jesus' character. Living consistent with Jesus' lordship. Doing everything with Jesus in mind.

Ps 119:55 is helpful:

I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law. – Psalm 119:55

Remembers God's name leads to obeying God's law (55). Remembering God's name brings God to mind. The name draws attention to the person. We shouldn't think of the Psalmist thinking of God's name without respect for God's character and works. When we think of the name Jesus, more than the word Jesus comes to mind.

When I say the name Bernie, more than six letters come to mind. I think about Bernie the person. Bernie isn't a faceless, without content string of letters. Bernie is a person with qualities his name brings to mind.

So it is with Jesus. Jesus' name brings to mind his teachings, his promises, his death, his return, his lordship, his care. Jesus' name makes us a thankful people.

Walking in Jesus' name is walking in accord with Jesus' character.

For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever. – Micah 4:5

Walking in light of who our God is.

Who Jesus is governs how we do the dishes, how we talk to the pharmacist, how we use our time.

Remembering Jesus maintains peace.

Non-Christian

Christianity is a word-centered religion. God has spoken in the Bible. In the gospel. We can have certainty.

Christians are a thankful people. Thankful for Jesus.

Christianity is communal. We're saved for community in the local church.

Turn from rebellion to trust. Then live from gratitude in the strength God supplies. That's Christianity.

Conclusion

Be ruled by the peace of Christ. Submit to the Spirit's work.

Be thankful in Christ. Meditate on who God is for you in Christ.

Speak and sing Christ to one another. Be saturated with gospel and Bible.

Do everything with Christ in mind. Let Jesus' person govern your conduct.