

Colossians 3:15–17

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

The Peace of Christ — Two Kinds of Peace in John 14

Darby renders verse 15: *let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts*. The peace of Christ is not the same as the peace of redemption, though they are closely related. John 14:27 makes the distinction. *Peace I leave with you* — the peace that flows from redemption accomplished, the peace that He leaves as His legacy to His own when He departs. *My peace I give unto you* — this is different. My peace is the personal peace He had in His own pathway here: unclouded communion with the Father, unbroken obedience, the peace of one who walked in the conscious fulfilment of the Father's will through every trial. It was this peace He had when He could say in Matthew 11:25-26, after the rejection of Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum: *I thank thee, O Father... even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*.

Uncertainty about one's own salvation would destroy this peace from the start. The peace of Christ presupposed that communion with the Father which only a clear conscience and a known standing before God can maintain. And this peace is to preside in our hearts — to sit as umpire, governing the decisions and

attitudes of the inward life. All the gurus and personal trainers of the world cannot supply this. It is owed to the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and it comes with His obedience — the very obedience we are called to share.

Called in One Body — and Be Thankful

The peace of Christ is to preside in the hearts of those called in one body. It is not a private peace of individual isolation. It is exercised in the context of the body — in relationship with others, in the practical expression of the one body on earth. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3) and the peace of Christ presiding in the hearts of all the members are complementary truths. The peace that Christ had in His pathway is to characterise the whole body in its corporate pathway.

The short exhortation — *and be thankful* — is not a throwaway. Thanklessness is listed in 2 Timothy 3 among the marks of the last days. It is characteristic of the flesh and of the world. It cannot be manufactured — it is the real fruit of the Spirit's work. The soul that knows the peace of Christ, that is in the good of the seven graces, that is conscious of being elect, holy, and beloved — that soul will be thankful. The exhortation is there because we need it. How could one have the peace of Christ ruling in the heart and not be thankful?

The Word of Christ Dwelling Richly

Verse 16 calls for the word of Christ to dwell in us richly. Not visited, not consulted under pressure, but inhabiting the soul, at home there. Richly — in abundance. The word in Colossians 1:27 that met the specific need of the Colossians was the mystery, *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. The word of Christ is that communication of His mind — what He expressed when He was here, and what He has communicated through the apostles and prophets from the glory since. Most of the New Testament is a communication from Christ in the glory to

His people on earth.

Out of the richly dwelling word of Christ flows the teaching and admonishing of one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The word of Christ is the source; the mutual edification is the fruit. And this is to be done in all wisdom — wisdom is the application of knowledge, and without it the teaching and admonishing will not be what God intends. Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord: it is the melody in the heart that matters — not in the vocal cords or the music of the meeting, but in the heart. Ephesians 5:19 connects the same expression with being filled with the Spirit. The Spirit's fullness and the word's richness produce the same outflow.

Whatsoever Ye Do — In the Name of the Lord Jesus

Verse 17 is the capstone principle: *whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*. Everything — the entirety of the Christian's life — is to be conducted under the authority and character of that name. The name of the Lord Jesus here is particularly personal — not the formal Christological titles, but Lord Jesus: the Lord who was the man here in humiliation. It is His character that is to give character to all that we do. And it is worth noting that this principle immediately precedes the practical instructions about household relationships — as though verse 17 is the banner under which wives, husbands, children, fathers, and servants are all to live out their duties.

Thankfulness closes the verse and bookends the section. Verse 15 ended with *be thankful*; verse 17 ends with *giving thanks to God the Father by him*. Everything that the Christian does in word or deed — done in the name of the Lord Jesus — is to be wrapped in thanksgiving to God the Father through Him. The three together — the peace of Christ (verse 15), the word of Christ (verse 16), the name of the Lord Jesus (verse 17) — constitute the atmosphere in which the entire practical life of the believer is to be lived.

— *Study ends* —