

## **RULED BY PEACE, FILLED WITH GOD'S WORD, AND DOING ALL IN THE NAME OF JESUS (COLOSSIANS 3:15-17)**

I'm going to start out this morning with a question: "What is **a church** supposed to **look like**?" And the answer is... "What do you **mean** by a church," right? **Why** does that question need to be asked? Because **most of the time** when people use the word "church," they are referring to a **building**. **Does** God tell us—in His Word—what our **building** should look like? **No**; He doesn't—at least not directly!

But...He does tell us what a **body of believers**—what a **church family**—is supposed to have for a "dress code," right? And the "dress code" that we've been looking at in Colossians 3 is not about our **outward clothing**—it is about **attitudes and virtues** that we are to have toward fellow believers in the family of God—especially those you regularly **gather and worship** with!

Please take your Bibles and turn once again to Colossians 3; follow along as I read verses 12-17. Three weeks ago, we focused on the command to "put on" the virtues listed in verse 12.

What **will it look like** if we are wearing those things? Verse 13 gives us **two** ways.

--**First**, we will be "forbearing one another." That means we will **bear long with...we will put up with...we will tolerate** one another—regardless of the differences that make us unique.

--**The second way** we will demonstrate these characteristics is by "forgiving one another."

--**Why** are we to do that? Because **we sin** against others—and **others sin** against us!

--**How** are we to forgive one another? "...even as Christ forgave us."

--We also noted—in verse 14—that **love** is to be the priority. If we stick with the **clothing** metaphor, it would be the **outside garment** that covers all the rest. If we go with **a list**, it would be at **the top!**

What does **Biblical love** look like? In **some** ways, it has similarities to **how the world** demonstrates love. For example, it helps with **physical needs**...and **does things** for others...and **bears the burdens** of others.

On the flip side, though, **Biblical love** is also **very different** from the world's concept of love.

--Biblical love means we will **warn one another** about sin—and **restore those** who are overtaken by sin.

--Biblical love also means that we will **not set stumbling** blocks in front of fellow believers. In other words, **don't you be the one** that puts temptation in front of a fellow believer in an area they are vulnerable in!

--And Biblical love also requires that we **pray for** our brothers and sisters in Christ!

And that brings us to verses 15-17 where we have **three more** commandments that God's children are to carry out within the context of the church family. I've summarized them in the title of the message: "Ruled by Peace, Filled with God's Word, and Doing All in the Name of Jesus."

Before we look at "ruled by peace" in verse 15, I want to point out why I believe these commands are directed to the **church** as a group of believers. **First**, verse 11 is an obvious reference to the diversity of members within the body of Christ. **Second**, we have the phrase "called in one body" towards the end of verse 15. And **third**, "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" as well as "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" point to a setting of **public worship!**

### **1. Be ruled by peace in yourselves—and in the church (vs 15)**

Notice again vs 15 "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts..."

#### A. Be ruled by peace as an individual (15a)

Pretty easy to see that, isn't it? The peace of God is to rule in the heart of **each of** the Colossian believers Paul was writing to—and by extension—the peace of God is to rule in **each of our hearts** as well. The word "rule" is kind of interesting. The Greek word that it comes from is **only used here**. It literally means to "act as an umpire" and "make the call in a conflict between two contending forces" (Biblehub.com; Strong's 1018).

What does Paul mean by the **peace of God**?

Turn back a page or two to Colossians 1:20; notice what it says in vs 20 and 21.

Here we see that **peace** refers to the **reconciling**—the restoring of a relationship—between parties.

**What** are the **two** parties? On **one** side **is God**; on the **other** side **is us**—the enemies of God—because of our wicked works. **How** are we reconciled? Verse 20 says by the **blood of His cross**—an obvious reference to Jesus! And verse 22 also refers to the cross where it says, “In the body of His flesh through death...”

So the **peace of God** has to do with our **relationship with God** that comes about when we **repent** of our sins and **receive Jesus** as the payment for the penalty of our sins.

But what does it mean to be **ruled by**—to be “umpired by”—the peace of God? **Steven Cole** put it like this: “When you’re faced with a potential or real conflict, decide **how you act** or **what you say** based on the **peace Christ secured on the cross between you and the other person**, no matter how different the two of you may be. You are **now one body in Christ**. Let **preserving that unity** be the deciding factor in how you act.” (Bible.org; Lesson 22: The Priority of Love (Colossians 3:14-15); emphasis mine).

**Romans 14:19** conveys a similar thought: “Let us therefore follow after the things which **make for peace**, and things wherewith one may edify another.”

#### B. Be reminded of your call to peace in one body (15b)

We see that in the middle of Colossians 3:15; please turn back there. Notice what it says: “to the which also ye are called in one body...” “...to the which” refers back to what Paul was just talking about—**peace!** So it could be translated “to peace ye are called in one body.”

**Ephesians 2:14** captures the thought well: “For He is our peace, **who hath made both one**, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;” Paul is saying that that which **used to divide** Jews and Gentiles has been torn down by Christ’s death **for both the Jew and Gentile**—and they now belong to the same family! Colossian 3:11 states the same concept.

And let’s not forget: If you are a child of God, it is because God adopted **you** into His family—just like He did all His **other** children! **I Corinthians 12:18** “But now hath **God set the members** every one of them in the body, as it hath **pleased Him**.”

So if **God is the One** who put the members in the family, He obviously expects us to **get along** as members of the same family, right?

Don’t be the “eye” who says to the hand “I have no need of thee”—and don’t be “the head” that says to the feet, “I have no need of you!” (I Corinthians 12:21). “**Father knows best**”—and put us in the family!

#### C. Be resolved to be thankful (15c)

We see that at the end of verse 15: “...and be ye thankful.” At first glance, it seems almost random and disconnected from the rest of the verse. But when we compare it with a similar passage in Ephesians 4, we see there some things that we certainly should be **thankful for**. Rather than have a long passage printed out on your outline, though, I want us to turn there.

--Eph 4:1. “Your vocation is a child of God—so live like a child of God!

--Eph 4:2. Sounds a lot like Colossians 3:12 and 13.

--Eph 4:3. That sounds a lot like “...let the peace of God rule in your hearts...” in Colossians 3:15.

--Eph 4:4. “One body” is also mentioned in Colossians 3:15.

What is “one hope of your calling”? “Hope” is the **expectation**—the blessed future with God—that we have to look forward to.

--Eph 4:5-6. One Father **of all**... who is **above all**...and **in you** all.

To recap, there is one future...one family...one faith...and one Father—that **all of God’s** children share! That should lead us to be at **peace with one another**—but also to be thankful for **what we share** as members of the same family!

Back to Colossians 3, verse 16, where we see the command to ... **2. Be filled with the word of Christ**

Notice what it says: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...”

#### A. The meaning of the word of Christ dwelling in us (16a)

“Let the **word of Christ**...” What is the word of Christ? Is it **just** the words that Jesus spoke, written in **red letters** in some of our Bibles? **No!** The “word of Christ” certainly **includes** what Jesus said, but it encompasses **the entire Bible** because Jesus Himself said the entire Bible points to Him!

**Luke 24:44** “And He [Jesus] said unto them [the eleven disciples], These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, **concerning Me.**”

--“Let the word of Christ  **dwell...**” The verb “let dwell” is in the **imperative**—meaning it is a **command**. It is in the **present** tense—meaning it is something we are to be **continually** doing. And it is in the **active** voice—meaning it is something we **actively participate** in.

--“Dwell” means **dwell**—not just visit! It means to “inhabit; to live in” like you do your home! **Twice** it is used of the Holy Spirit **dwelling in—residing in**—believers.

--**Who** is God’s word to dwell **in**? Notice again what the verse says: “Let the word of Christ dwell in **you pastors...**” Is that what it says? **No!** It is to dwell in **all** the Colossian believers—not just a **select few!** And—by extension—that means God’s Word is to dwell in **all believers of all ages**—including **YOU!**

That means “Loddy, Doddy, and Every Boddy” as the drill sergeants were so fond of saying!

Next, notice... **B. The manner in which Christ’s word is to dwell in us (16a)**

--**How** is God’s Word supposed to dwell in us? “Let the word of Christ dwell in you”—what’s the **next** word? **Richly**—not poorly! **Abundantly**—not barely there! **A large quantity**—not scarcely present!

**To recap**, God **commands us** to **actively and continually** be making His Word **dwell abundantly in** our hearts!

--**How** do we make God’s Word **dwell** inside of us?

**Jeremiah 15:16** “Thy words were found, and **I did eat them**; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.”

--So are we to **tear out** the pages of our Bible...and cut them up into **bite-sized** chunks...and literally **chew them** and **swallow** them? Obviously not!

--What it means is this: If God’s Word is going to **abundantly dwell** in our hearts—if it is going to **take up residence** in our lives, we can’t just **take it in**—it needs to **become part of us!**

And for it to become part of us, we need to **take it** in often enough to **remember it!**

--**Psalm 119:11**, right? “**Thy word** have I **hid in mine heart**, that I might not sin against thee.”

--**Deuteronomy 6:6-7** “And **these words**, which I command thee this day, shall be **in thine heart**: And thou shalt **teach them diligently** unto thy children, and shalt **talk of them when thou sittest** in thine house, and **when thou walkest** by the way, and when thou **liest down**, and when thou **risest up.**”

--**Joshua 1:8** “**This book of the law** shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt **meditate** therein day and night...” Psalm 1:2 makes a similar statement.

Simply put, **you cannot obey this command** by just coming to church and having a “Sunday Morning Sermon Sprinkling” from God’s Word! You need to be **taking in** God’s Word yourself—daily—and **chewing on** it for yourself—daily. And let’s not forget that the reason we are **to know** what God says is so we **can do** what God says!

**So are you?** Are you taking in God’s Word so it can dwell in you richly?

--“But Pastor, I’m too busy!” To which I respond, “You’re not too busy—you are being disobedient!”

--Am I being mean by saying that? **No**; I’m being Biblical!

**C. The manifestation of Christ’s word dwelling richly in us (16b-c)**

So if we are obeying this command to have God’s word dwell in us richly, what will it **look like?** Paul gives us two ways here in vs 16. Before we look at them, though, I want to point out the phrase “in all wisdom.” Keep in mind that the original texts had no punctuation and there is some debate as to where the “;” should go.

It makes more sense—in my mind, anyway—that “in all wisdom” fits better with **how** we teach and admonish one another than with how God’s Word dwells in us. At any rate, here is what it will look like:

**1) We will teach and admonish one another** in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs. “Teach” means **instruct**; “admonish” means **to warn**. In fact, the Greek word it comes from is translated “warn” in Col 1:28.

--**Who** is to do the teaching & admonishing? **One another**—not just the pastors...or deacons...or SS teachers!

--**How** are we to do that? **Through** psalms and hymns and spiritual songs!

Does that mean we “sing” to one another like people do in a musical like “The Sound of Music”?

Imagine **a visitor** coming into the building for the first time and we **introduce** ourselves to them by **singing** to them! That would certainly get people in town **talking about** our church, but it would also lead to people **leaving the church**—including me!

So what **does it** mean? To understand what Paul is saying, we need to keep in mind what things were like when Paul wrote this. The early church had no Bibles. The NT wasn't written yet and the OT was written on scrolls that were expensive and not very accessible. So the teaching of God's Word often involved putting psalms—and Bible truths—to music to aid learning. That is what I believe is being referred to here.

What's the application for us? We already sing **hymns**; should we start singing **psalms**? The application is this: Our music should be **Biblically** based! The songs we sing should **teach Biblical truth**—to include **warning us** about the **dangers** of not living for Christ!

**A second way** that shows Christ's word is dwelling abundantly in us is... **2) We will sing joyfully to the Lord!** We see that in the last part of vs 16: "...singing with **grace** in your hearts to the Lord." The Greek word that "grace" comes from carries several meanings. The meaning that best fits here is "joy, pleasure, and thankfulness." So our singing should reflect **the joy and thanksgiving** that is in our hearts because we **love God** and are **thankful** for Who He is and what He has done!

Most denominational churches are **lifeless** in their singing. **Why?** Because a life-less **pastor**—or **priest**—is not sharing the message **that brings life!** So the **dead lead the dead**—and the dead don't sing **like they have life** because they don't!

Do you **enjoy** singing? If not, **one reason** might be because you don't have the **joy of salvation**—that joy that comes from **knowing you have been forgiven by God!** If you are a child of God—but don't enjoy singing—it's probably because the Word of Christ isn't dwelling richly in you!

Lastly...**3. Do all in the name of Jesus (vs 17)**

We see that in vs 17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..."

What does **it mean** to do something "in the name of the Lord Jesus?" **Dr. S. Lewis Johnson** put it like this: "The expression, 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' means under the **authority and approval** of Him." (Precept Austin; emphasis mine). For the sake of time, let's focus on the **approval** aspect.

#### A. Actions (17a)

--Do our words—what **we say**—meet the **approval** of Jesus? **Which** words? **All of them**, right? "**Whatsoever** ye do in **word...**, **do all** in the name of the Lord Jesus." That means **every word** of **every day** is to meet the approval of Jesus **every time**—without exception! **Do they?** What if **everything** you said—or **talked about**—this week was **put up on a big screen** here at church? Would any of you be nervous? We're obviously not going to do that, but Jesus heard **every word** you spoke this week, didn't He?

--What about your **deeds?** Do **all** your **actions**—the **activities** you do—what you **look at** and **participate in**—meet the approval of Jesus? Would you **invite Him** to join you—or would you **be embarrassed** if He showed up? The truth, of course, is that He is **already there!** You can't have Jesus' promise "Lo, I am with you always" and "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" **to comfort** you on the one hand, then think He isn't around when you are sinning!

--Pretty safe to say that in order for our "whatsoever's" to meet the approval of Jesus, we need to develop the habit of asking ourselves, "Will these words—and will these actions—please or displease—Jesus"?

But it's not just our **words and deeds** that are supposed to meet the approval of Jesus—our **attitudes** are, too!

#### B. Attitudes (17b)

Where does Paul mention attitudes? Towards the end of the verse where it says, "...giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." **Giving thanks** is **an attitude**, isn't it? It often comes out as **an activity**—like **singing** or **telling others** what God has done for you—but it is also a mindset, a way of thinking.

And Paul mentions thanksgiving in all three of these verses!

--In vs 15, he says we are to be thankful for one another in the body—the family of God!

--In vs 16, he says we are to sing with grace—meaning thanksgiving.

--And here in vs 17, everything **we say and do** is to be done for the approval of Jesus—and with a spirit of thankfulness.

--Do your **words express thankfulness** if you are murmuring and complaining? Obviously not! There's no such thing as being a **thankful complainer!** You are doing one or the other—not both!

--What about your **attitude** when going through a trial? Does God expect you to be **thankful then?** He certainly does—and we looked at that back in Colossians 1:11. Let's look **at it again**; Colossians 1:11.

--"Strengthened with all might"—according to God's power, not ours—to have "patience"—meaning endurance and faithfulness—to go through whatever God calls us to go through—"with joyfulness!"

--**Does God the Holy Spirit**—who dwells in the heart of all true believers—have the ability to **make us joyful** in trials? Yes; He does! But our mindset needs to be that God **is good...and does good...and has reasons** for allowing things into our lives!

--Is that your mindset? God wants it to be—and it can be—according to His glorious power!

So what would God have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First, are you in the **body of Christ?** Because of our sin—and the sin nature we are born with—we are by nature the enemies of God. And the only way we can cease to be God's enemy is to come to Him in humility and repentance, recognizing our need for mercy.

--And when we do that, He holds out to us the gift of His Son—the Lamb of God who paid our penalty.

--Is the Lamb of God yours? Do you have the Son?

--Don't just know about Jesus—receive Him as your sin-bearer; your Substitute!

2. Second, is God's Word dwelling richly in you? People all over the world would love to have the treasure that we have: God's Word written in a language that they can read and understand!

--Do you believe God's Word is the declaration of His heart and thoughts?

--Do you believe it is His love letter to you?

Don't just believe it in your head—read it and study it and treasure it so it can become a part of you!

3. Third, do your words and deeds meet the approval of Jesus? They are supposed to, aren't they? Get in the habit of asking yourself, "Will this thing I'm thinking about doing please Jesus?" If not, don't do it!