

Sunday January 22, 2023  
Lesson 8: Controlled By Peace  
Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17

**Context:**

We continue our unit “Power and Belonging” today. The lesson today comes from the book of Colossians in the New Testament. This letter functions to give purpose and counsel to the church in Colossae. The purpose of today’s lesson is to focus on how the peace of Christ is to control and guide us.

In the preceding verses of our main passage today, the writer Paul gives several ways for the people of Colossae to live. In a set of ethical principles, with the contrast “put off...put on,” there is both abstraction and idealism.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the writer gives a more practical appeal for the people of Colossae to cultivate in the next set of lines. With a list of virtues to be cultivated, the Colossian Christians are given the tools they need for certain human situations. As the people have been chosen by God, they are to strive for virtues such as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Yet the virtues are to be paired with specific acts. Peacemaking attitudes are a natural accompaniment of this life-style as “forbearing” and “forgiving” go hand in hand.<sup>2</sup> As the people forgive and forbear with one another, they are bound together by love which is meant to provide unity. Love and unity cannot be separated from one another.

These virtues and actions have a root to drive them. It is because the “peace of Christ” is in the Colossian Christians’ hearts they can move forward. To give a social expression of their identity Christians are called first into “peace with God” through Christ and then into a peace-creating society as they display Christ’s lordship and judgeship.<sup>3</sup> As one has the peace of Christ, they are able to live with others and demonstrate to the world what it means with love for God and love for one another.

This peace should lead them to be a thankful people who see their many blessings in front of them. Yet this peace should also convict them. If they have the peace of Christ in their hearts and study God’s word, they will be moved to true wisdom and seeing the worth of those around them in the body of Christ.

As this letter would have been read publicly in the Colossian church and then spread to other churches, the people would have seen the importance of worship. They are to sing psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and find gratitude in their hearts for all God has done for them. As believers worship, they are transformed.

Finally, the church is reminded of how their entire life should be bound up in being servants of God. All speech and all actions are to be rooted in the peace of Christ and lived in thanksgiving. The people of God are called to be transformed, a different example in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin, Ralph P. “Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.” *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2012), 124.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Application**

This is one of my favorite passages, especially to pull out for presiding over a wedding. There is both abstract and practical counsel given to govern how individuals are to cultivate life together. When in doubt, one can turn to this passage and find something to apply to one's life whether it is a personal relationship or a group process. Love is to be the bonding force, and the peace of Christ is to be the rooting agent. If the peace of Christ is not in one's heart, then all the other virtues fade away.

A heart with the peace of Christ can be one of the greatest gifts to possess, especially today. Having a heart of peace, much as the letter suggests, takes cultivating those virtues and then applying them to one's life. And the peace of Christ also means acknowledging how much one needs God and not just one's own passion, wisdom, or intentions. Only God is the one who can grant a heart of peace, and even then, it takes a lifetime to understand how to be one with God and one in relationship with others.

Today's world often doesn't have much time for the peace of Christ. Everything is a rush and there are always power politics going about as people seek to get their way. People turn into objects or pawns, only to be pushed away and dismissed, forbearance and forgiveness shoved to the side. And love becomes an afterthought, something which is nice if one likes the person or it gives something in return.

Having the peace of Christ in our hearts means we are searching to find and think on how God dwells and convicts us. I have discovered the peace of Christ comes in various ways where God sends me nudges to think and discern more clearly about living out the Christian faith. As always, God finds different ways to speak to us and remember how we are to clothe ourselves as the beloved children of God.

Sometimes it comes from sitting with the Word and something stirs within us. Just the other day, I read a passage and it spoke into something I had been chewing on for a while in how to see a situation. God was giving me the peace of Christ, to remind God's story comes alive in my life.

Or just yesterday in corporate worship, our pianist found a beautiful new hymn to try. We had made a goal to try at least five new hymns this year, and thus we have started implementing them over January. As I sang the hymn, I also paid attention to the words and something moved within me about looking hopefully to the future.

And then of course, every now and then, you have a conversation with a holy friend about a wrestling or dilemma. You want the peace of Christ in a situation, and they do not exactly give it to you, as they help you to have grace with yourself and trust God will work in the chaos and in the mess. One is reminded of the power of love and how our journeys can never be solo as the writer of Colossians reminds us.

One thing Colossians makes clear is nothing good comes when the peace of Christ does not dwell in one's heart. We begin to lose our way and we struggle not just in our relationship with God as we begin to struggle in our relationship with others. The counsel is for us to pray, to dwell in the Word, and to worship. As we engage in those acts and we do so not just looking for easy answers or clichés, God comes to us and we are met with the peace of Christ.

Yet with all things in the Christian faith, we are given the choice. Having a heart of the peace of Christ often means we might have to give of ourselves. We will not always have control and we may even have to love people we do not like. We might be challenged to dig deeper about what we truly believe about God and community. We might even have to be convicted of the harm, both intentional and unintentional we engage in.

The Lord calls us to a different way of being. We are called to full of the peace of Christ, seeking God and harmony in our relationships with others. God wants us to see a different way than the world offers and to be who God has called us to be.

Why is having the peace of Christ so important to the Christian faith? What are the ways God speaks to us so we might have a peace of Christ? Who are people who you see possessing the peace of Christ in their hearts? How can you clothe yourself with the virtues listed in Colossians? Why do you think love and the peace of Christ go together?

Rev. Dr. E. Hunter Pugh  
Pastor of Brantley – Brunson Chapel Charge  
PO Box 71  
Brantley, AL 36009