

Clothed in Compassion

The Peace of Christ

“Let the Peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.” – Colossians 3:15

The context for Colossians 3:15 is instructions for living together in harmony in the Body of Christ. One of the fruits of the Spirit is peace (Galatians 5:22).

We are to let His peace rule in our hearts. Not that we are never immersed in anxious thoughts, not that we are never startled or discomfited. But these are not the rulers of our hearts; they are temporary. In the spiritual battle we may retreat to the hospital tents, but we don't dwell there.

Does this sound super-human? It is. That's why He helps us. He is sufficient, not us. He is our peace. His Gospel brings peace.

We lived in a country under communism for over a decade. One government official in the Gideo region of southern Ethiopia sent soldiers to bring me to his office. I dreaded what he might demand of me, but God was at work.

He said, “I grew up in this country; now I'm the communist cadre in charge here. We have 4 clans—that used to always fight. Now when I return from my education, I find 3 of these clans live at peace while the 4th is still always fighting. The people explained that the Gospel of Peace has come to the 3 clans, but not yet to the 4th. Do not tell anyone I said this—but I need you to take the Gospel to this 4th clan. I'm tired of constantly dealing with all their unrest.”

Down where we lived in southwestern Ethiopia, a man from the Bunna tribe got drunk at market and killed a man from the Mali tribe. This would normally lead to vengeance killing back and forth; but a government official asked me to go with him—so they wouldn't shoot him in the presence of a foreigner.

They met at a creek, the border between the Mali and Bunna lands. They took a goat, stepped into the stream, and killed it. Then they cut open the stomach, and elders from each side took out some of the contents and washed it away in the creek, declaring that they were washing away the offense of the other tribe.

Each side took turns shouting deprecations upon whoever should dare to break this treaty—“let such a fool become like this goat!”

The government official muttered, “What a backward business.” But I thought it was a fantastic analogy for how Jesus became peace for us—He took the guilt to make peace between God and man!

Look at Ephesians 2:14-18. *“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with*

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its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

You know what they did next? They cooked the goat, and we all sat down together under the acacia trees and ate together as new friends. Is this not a bit like sharing the Lord's Supper together, in remembrance of how Jesus brought us peace?!

Years later, when communism fell, the country was without governance for a season. Each people group did whatever they wanted to do. The Bunna people we lived among met together for a whole week to decide whether to kill us or not! You'd think we'd be anxious?

But the peace of Christ ruled in our hearts. We can't explain it; we should have been freaking out. We should have laid awake all-night listening for someone coming to kill us.

But instead, we never missed a night of sleep. The Lord gave His inexplicable peace, as He promised in Philippians 4:7. *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

By ourselves, we could never have let His peace rule in our hearts. But He did it. He also gave us Psalm 4:8 during that time: *"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for You alone O LORD, make me dwell in safety."*

- 1) How are you sleeping? What are you anxious about today?**
- 2) What do we know about God that helps us surrender our anxiety to trust Him in peace?**
- 3) Can you look at the character and work of Jesus, and let His peace rule in your heart?**



One month after vet school graduation (WSU, 1983), Fred Van Gorkom went to Ethiopia with Christian Veterinary Mission. While working in veterinary projects, famine relief, refugee, and discipleship ministries he met Vicki, also a veterinarian (OSU, 1982). They married in 1986, returning immediately to remote southwestern Ethiopia where they raised their four children while doing community development and church planting. In 2008, they moved to CVM Seattle where they serve to help mobilize others for the privilege of international missions.

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