

## Colossians

### Priorities

Colossians 3:15-17

October 30, 2022

HDBC

**Spiritual truth** changes real living. It does not exist in a vacuum. It impacts how we think and act. That's what Paul is writing about in Colossians 3-4. These are practical instructions for how we are to live. This section follows the commands of Paul to put off the old (sinful attitudes, actions and words), and put on the new (Godly attitudes, actions and words). When we put off the old and put on the new we discover some **new priorities**. There are three that are mentioned in this text. All are tied directly to Jesus.

**Read the text.**

### 1. Peace of Christ (15)

Peace is defined as harmony, serenity, freedom from war or civil strife.

**Much is being** said about peace today. People are calling for and hoping for peace in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and around the world. What we really mean is an end to violence and killing. Certainly that would be a welcomed change. **But there is a peace that goes deeper** than the absence of war. There is a peace that involves the heart, not just actions. The peace that Paul is writing about is that kind of peace.

**What is the Peace of Christ?** The peace of Christ is unlike any other kind of peace that can be experienced. During those few hours preceding his death Jesus told his disciples . . .

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. John 14:27.*

**This is not just the absence of conflict.** Swindoll says it is . . .

- 1) An inner quietness in the midst of swirling chaos
- 2) A calm sense of tranquility in the center of tribulation
- 3) A feeling of harmony amid the world's blaring discord
- 4) An experience of ease and rest in our hearts and minds.

Notice that Paul indicates we have it. Past tense. All believers have the peace of Christ. We have been made right with God. So, every believer has the peace of Christ. But **how does this peace impact our lives?**

**We are** to let this peace **rule in our hearts**. The word **rule** carries with it the idea of **arbitration**. In the Greek world of that day the word was used to describe one who would oversee a contest and decide that everything was done properly and fairly, an umpire or referee. He is the final authority on all matters. One American league umpire made that abundantly clear when he commented on whether or not a pitch might be a ball or a strike, or whether a runner is out or safe. ***It ain't nothing 'till I call it.***

The peace of Christ is to be the umpire of our heart, sorting things out for us, especially when we experience conflicts.

**There** is an old story that comes out of the Salvation Army from generations ago. There was a strong-willed woman who had been nicknamed **Warrior Brown** because of her fiery temper. Often belligerent and enraged especially when she got drunk.

**Then** one day she was saved and radically changed. At an open-air meeting she told everyone what Jesus had done for her. A scoffer from the back of the room threw a potato at her, causing a stinging bruise. By God's grace, she quietly picked up the potato and put it in her pocket.

**Several months** later during the time of the Harvest this dear lady who used to be known as "Warrior Brown" brought an offering of a little sack of potatoes. She explained that had taken that potato that was thrown at her, cut it up and planted the pieces. The "insulting" potato had produced that which she was now presenting to the Lord. Warrior Brown had allowed the peace of Christ to be the umpire of her life.

**Allowing** the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts is our calling. Paul then adds that we need **to have a thankful heart**. Amazing how much Paul endured in his lifetime, yet he never lost the focus on thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is mentioned in all three of these verses. If there is one thing we can be thankful for, it is the peace of Christ that comes when we have peace with Christ. But notice the **second priority**.

## 2. Word of Christ

The peace of Christ is to **rule** in our hearts. The word of Christ is to **richly dwell** in us. The peace of Christ is a priority, but so is the word of Christ. How do we let the Word of Christ richly dwell in our hearts?

### 1) Read it

Begin by reading it. The Bible is not all that hard to understand.

Mark Twain put it well when he honestly shared, *Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I have always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me the most are those which I do understand.*

### 2) Meditate on it

Muse on it. Think on it. Roll it over in our minds. Let it grip us.

**Meditation** is taking time to let it takes to soak in and saturate our lives. Sometimes it comes in the form of serious, deliberate meditation. At other times, it is just allowing a passage or verse to be on a back burner while we do other things. But not letting it slip too far from our consciousness.

Henry Ford once hired an efficiency expert to evaluate his company. After a few weeks, the expert made his report, which was highly favorable except for one thing.

"It's that man down the hall," he said. "Every time I go by his office he's just sitting there with his feet on his deck. He's wasting your money."

"That man," replied Mr. Ford, "once had an idea that saved us millions of dollars. At the time, I believe his feet were planted right where they are now."

**It takes time** for the word of Christ to truly **dwell** within us. Sometimes that means just letting it percolate. But it can only percolate when we've read it and know it. Too many believers know only high points of Scripture. They only know what they see on the surface. **Like most of us in relation to the ocean. What we know of it is only the surface because that is all we have experienced.** Very few of us are willing to take the time and expense to go deeper. Those who do enjoy the beauty below.

### 3) Obey it

Only when you make a determination that you will live the word, no matter what the circumstance, will you be letting the word dwell in you. This may sound easy, but it is seldom followed. Sometimes it requires doing the hard thing in the face of incredible pressure.

John Galbraith, in his autobiography, illustrates this kind of hard obedience by telling a story about his housekeeper, Emily.

It had been a tiring day, and I asked Emily to hold all telephone calls while I had a nap. Shortly after the phone rang. Lyndon Johnson was calling from the White House.

"Get me Ken Galbraith. This is Lyndon Johnson."

"He is sleeping, Mr. President. He said not to disturb him."

"Well, wake him up. I want to talk to him."

"No, Mr. President. I work for him, not you."

When he called the President back, the president tried to hire her to work in the White House.

**What happens** when you let the word of Christ richly dwell within you? You are prepared to lead others toward maturity in Christ. You are then able to teach and admonish others. In other words, you are able to influence others toward Christ.

Interestingly Paul says we do that through psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. In other words, one important place this happens is in the context of worship gatherings, worship services. **Watch this!** The teaching of the word does not only happen through the sermon but through singing songs of worship together. Admonition does not only happen when the preacher makes an important point from a text of Scripture. It happens as we sing songs of worship and praise together. By the way, teaching and admonishing are two sides of the same coin. One is instructive and the other corrective. Both happen through music.

**When you fail** to participate in the singing part of our worship services you are not only failing to express your personal worship to God, but you are failing to participate in an important process of discipleship for others.

One of the by-products of allowing the Word of God to dwell in your heart is praise & worship that helps those around you grow in Christ. **Fascinating!**

### 3. Name of Christ

Finally, Paul mentions the name of the Lord as a priority in our lives. In every part of our lives we are to remember His name and His glory. This is what he means with the phrase in word or deed. Most everything in life can be included in those two things.

**In our culture** names mean different things to different people. To some it is very important to use a family name. Others just pick out a nice sounding name. Still others try to be creative and different.

The 1960s produced a lot of things. Among them some interesting names for children. When the hippies of the 60s began having children many rejected names like Bill and Sue. Time Warp, Spring Fever, Moonbeam, Earth, Love and Precious Promise all ended up in public schools.

**That's when the kindergarten teachers first met Fruit Stand.** Every fall, according to tradition, parents bravely apply name tags to their children, kiss them good-bye and send them off to school on the bus. So it was for Fruit Stand. The teachers thought the boy's name was odd, but they tried to make the best of it.

"Would you like to play with the blocks, Fruit Stand?" they offered. And later, "Fruit Stand, how about a snack?" He accepted hesitantly. By the end of the day, his name didn't seem much stranger than most others.

At dismissal time, the teachers led the children out to the buses. "Fruit Stand, do you know which one is your bus?"

He didn't answer. That wasn't strange. He hadn't answered them all day. Lots of children are shy on the first day of school. It didn't matter. The

teachers had instructed the parents to write the names of their children's bus stops on the reverse side of their name tags. The teacher simply turned over the tag. There, neatly printed, was the word *Anthony*. So, apparently there was not a little boy born to a hippie couple who named him *Fruit Stand*.

**There was** however a very important person, born of a virgin who named him Jesus. It is in the name of Jesus that we are to live and breathe, act and speak. It is His name that is to guide the very course of our lives. Why? Because at salvation we took on His name, His cause, his identity. We are called **Christians**, because we follow Jesus **Christ**.

**Everything** we say and do reflects upon that great name. It's not like a jacket that we can slip on and off as we desire. We are permanently marked with that name, and our actions reflect upon him. To do everything in His name is to act **consistently with his character**.

We often use a brief but insightful expression that characterizes a person's priorities, likes, values and passions. If a person loves training and motivating athletes we might say **coaching is her life**. If a person dearly loves music we might say, **music is his life**. If a person finds great pleasure in his career we might say **work is his life**. This is an idiom that is filled with exaggeration, but it makes the point.

**If the apostle Paul** was asked to fill in the blank, \_\_\_\_\_ is my life. He would not hesitate. The blank would quickly and boldly be filled in with one word, Jesus. What was true of Paul, is to be true of all believers. That's the point He is making in these verses. So, **how do we do it?** I'll suggest a few things.

1. Begin each day with a determination to honor Jesus in all your life. Tell Him!
2. Spend time each day reading and meditating on His word.
3. In prayer, surrender your will and life to the Holy Spirit. He knows best.
4. join with other believers in worship . . . including the worship of music.

**You will not** do it perfectly. You will at times, come short of His name. But in the effort to do everything for His glory, God will be honored and pleased. And in the effort you will experience a deeper sense of His peace and His presence. And when you fail, confess it, rest in His forgiveness and start again. One failure does not define who you are. He is a God of fresh starts and new beginnings.