

Power is Good; Christ is Better

¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body: and be thankful. (Col. 3:12-15)

In verses 8 & 9 Paul has told these believers in the Colossae church some things they should “put off” ...

... anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, lying to one another

... and NOW here, he is telling them what to “put on”

Basically, Paul is describing the essence of what it looks like to be a follower of Christ.

As we read the instructions Paul is giving to the Colossian Christian, we also realize that these instructions are for us ...

Paul wants us to renounce sin in all of its forms ...

... he wants us to turn away from the broken ways we have been living ...

... Paul wants us to PUT ON ... to “**clothe ourselves**” with those attributes that characterize Jesus Christ.

... and as we look at these attributes, we are supposed to PUT ON we are going **to find out that they don’t fit very well** at first ...

... In the same way that it is uncomfortable to take off pride, anger, wrath, malice, slander, and lying to one another – those things that marked our old life...

... It is uncomfortable to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience

... It is uncomfortable bearing with one another, and forgiving each other

AND LET’S BE HONEST ... sometimes we try to put on the good without ever taking off the bad!

... but that never works because these things are adversarial to each other

... you can't be filled with anger and malice while being kind, compassionate and gentle.

In order for these Christian virtues to live in us and fit us well, we must actively work to discard those vices.

... and I'll make a promise to you today ...

... if you will commit to do these things you will discover four things:

- A healthier relationship with Jesus Christ
- Better relationships with others
- A more loving, vibrant spirit in corporate worship within the body of Christ
- ... lowered inward angst, jealousy, anger, and anxiety

... and these things are so intertwined with each other they are inseparable

... they are inseparable because this is the "basic stuff" of our social lives.

Yes, we are headed to heaven ...

... but God intends for our lives here (our relationships) to be filled with grace, joy, hope, and satisfaction.

Today we are going to learn three very important truths. ...

... first I want to begin at the end of the passage.

1. The Characteristic of Christ's PEACE

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body: and be thankful. (Col. 3:15)

Notice the word "peace" it is what is called a *genitive of possession*

... it literally means "the peace belonging to Christ."

Also, notice the verse says 'let this peace' '*rule in your hearts*' ...

The word **rule** is '**bra-beo**' ... Paul's use of this word comes from its one use in the Old Testament where Jacob wrestles with the angel

... it is the picture of an umpire deciding the outcome (winner) of a contest

... Paul is saying that “the peace of Christ” within us become our internal arbitrator ...

... the peace of Christ determines the arguments

... it restrains our passions

... it subdues our jealousies

... it holds our tongues

... literally translated Paul is saying

... ***“Let this peace that belongs to Christ be the ruling principle in your heart and life.”***

AND NOTICE: PAUL SAYS WE ARE “CALLED TO” THIS!

Listen to me:

Think of the anxiety and misery we would avoid if we allowed the “peace of Christ” to umpire our hearts ...

What if the “peace of Christ” was allowed to become the dominant influence in our relationships?

Are you tired of obsessing about some ‘relational tension’ that you are struggling with, with this person and that person ...?

... well then—THE PEACE OF CHRIST!

NOW, I know this seems a bit abstract but let me try to be more specific and explain what the “peace of Christ” does.

It gives assurance of God’s acceptance and protection ...

It affirms our eternal value as well as our emotional and spiritual worth ...

Now think for a moment:

- What does it matter what that person thinks?
- Really, how important is this or that denied opportunity?
- How tragic really was the earthly injustice, marginalization, or offense ...

If the God of heaven and earth has declared you to His, under his protection, adopted into His family and called his child.

The characteristic of “Christ’s Peace” is that it rules over and over rules everything else!

I wrote this:

“The word "rule" tells us that this “peace” settles differences, especially where there is any conflict of thoughts or feelings. When there is disagreement, when there is offense, if jealousy causes one to view another with suspicion ... our union with Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit settles every difficulty and resolves ever conflict among believers. This peace is essential for unity in the body of Christ.” -NTM

When you truly believe that you are HIS then **Christ’s Peace** can become the ruling principle in your life.

2. The Ruling Power of the NEW SELF

And have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him (Col. 3:10)

In verses 12-13 Paul is describing what it looks like to put on this “new self” that is constantly being renewed.

There are 5 things we are to be “putting on.”

- **Heart of compassion**—to pity, feel sorrow, or sympathy for those suffering and struggling.

This is exactly what we see when Jesus cries from the cross “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

- **Kindness**—this is a friendly helpful spirit.

When the great theologian Augustine was young, he moved into the city, fell in with the wrong crowd, and became very wicked.

... as is usually the case with wickedness it nearly destroyed him.

One day he heard a preacher preaching and hated what the preacher said ... but afterward the preacher (Ambrose) showed Augustine kindness.

This is what Augustine wrote of Ambrose, the great pastor of the cathedral in Milan: "**I began to love him, not at first as a teacher of the truth, but as a fellow creature who was kind to me—What an open-door kindness can be!**"

- **Humility**—the absence of arrogance, the presence of lowliness.

It is never wrong to believe your brother and sister as better and more worthy than yourself.

The truest test of love and friendship is the willingness to let yourself to be thought less of so that another might be more esteemed.

- **Gentleness**— in the Greek this word was used to describe a soothing wind, a healing medicine, or a horse that had been broken.

Gentleness speaks of the power ... of power under control.

People love to hear sermons about to get and have spiritual power ... stories of Christians exerting spiritual power.

When God stretches forth his arm and parts the red sea, holds back the sun, tears down the walls of Jericho, and raises the dead...

... BUT the greatest example of God’s power is God’s gentleness ...

... When God could have destroyed everyone but spared Noah and his family

... When God could have destroyed Israel because of their idolatry but instead allowed them to go into Canaan.

... When Jesus could have come down from the cross, but instead stayed there until the price for the sin of humanity was fully paid.

... IT'S LIKE THE TITLE OF THE SERMON SAYS: POWER IS GREAT, BUT JESUS IS BETTER!

- **Patience**—not being angry when it is justifiable.

It is when one has the power and the justification to retaliate ... but chooses not to.

It is ability to choose to not be frustrated when frustration is a reasonable response.

Then Paul says this in verse 13:

bearing with one another, and forgiving each other

These two things are participles that express the means by which the believer is able to cloth themselves.

... in other words, the way we have a heart of compassion, be kind humble, gentle and patient is by “bearing one another” and “forgiving each other.”

And to be clear “**bearing with**” means controlling your emotions and not “giving in” to what you feel like **doing/**thinking/saying to spare feelings, to encourage acceptance, and to express love.

... and forgiving each other ...

I recently heard a preacher say that the greatest problem we have in the church is that we can't forgive ourselves for what we have done ...

... I wish that was true

... I truly wish people really were that magnanimous

The real problem is that there are people in the church who still haven't forgiven people for what they did 4, 5, 10, and 15 years ago.

This is one of (certainly not the only) but one of the primary reasons there is competition, hurt feelings, and division in the body of Christ.

This is exactly what Paul writes

¹⁴ Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity

Paul wrote something almost identical to the church in Ephesus.

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3)

- When you truly believe that you are HIS then **Christ's Peace** can become the ruling principle in your life.
- When the **New Self** has ruling power, it fuels and increases love and unity in the church

3. The Glory of HOLY and BELOVED

No two words better describe Jesus Christ than these two ... and yet that is also how Paul (here in verse 12) describes the believer.

- We are to have these two attributes of Christ
- We are to forgive one another like Christ forgave
- We are to let the peace of Christ rule us
- In verse 15 we are told to let the "Word of Christ" dwell in us
- In verse 17 everything we do we are to do in the name of Christ
- And in verse 24 we are reminded that it is Christ we serve

In every way and manner Christ is our guide, our example ... our pattern to follow.

That means that we are to **love** the way He loved

... **forgive** the way He forgave

... be **true to the Word** as He was true to the Word

... love the **good and hate the evil** as He loved the good and hated the evil.

And to follow the same path to victory that He followed.

Here is what I mean:

Jesus didn't come to the earth on a **white horse, welding a great sword, cutting down his enemies and vanquishing His foes** with miraculous power.

... that was not Jesus' path to victory over His ultimate enemy.

What could be weaker than being tied to a stake and whipped like an animal?

What could be more helpless than a man stripped and beaten crowned with thorns draggin his own cross to his execution

What could be more powerless than being nailed to a cross, hoisted into the air, and mocked by the cursing mob?

AND YET, when we think of spiritual victory all we focus on is the **rushing wind and tongues of fire** in the upper room in Acts 2 ...

... **Peter preaching to thousands** from the southern steps of the temple mount

... **3000 added** to the church in one day

... **Peter and John at the gate beautiful** saying, “silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee in the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk” ... and that man being healed and walking away.

AND YET, those things were possible because of the weakest lowest point in the history of the earth ...

... the God-Man nailed to a cross and dying ...

Everybody wants Jesus’ power to heal the sick ... but **who wants His surrender?**

Everybody wants Jesus’ ability to **calm the seas** ... but who wants **His humility**, ability to **forgive, meekness** ... His **shame**.

What we fail to realize is that the **greatest strength in time and eternity was veiled in the greatest weakness** ever known.

Compassion ... Kindness ... Humility ... Gentleness ... Patience

... to the world these look like weak things

... and so does the church

... what we want is size, popularity, and power

We’ve got it backwards the path to victory is not power, but surrender and submission first to Christ and then to each other.

Alexander the Great conquered almost all of the known world.

One day Alexander and a small company of soldiers approached a strongly fortified walled city and Alexander raised his voice and demanded to see the king.

When the king arrived, Alexander ordered him to surrender the city and everyone inside.

The king laughed, “Why should I surrender to you? You can’t do us any harm!”

In response Alexander offered to give the king a demonstration.

He ordered his men to line up single file and start marching. He marched them straight toward a cliff.

The townspeople gathered on the wall and watched in shocked silence as, one by one, Alexander's soldiers marched without hesitation right off the cliff to their deaths!

After 10 soldiers had died, Alexander ordered the rest of the men to return to his side.

The townspeople and the king immediately surrendered to Alexander the Great.

They realized that if his men were actually willing to die at the command of Alexander the Great, then nothing could stop his eventual victory over that city.

The Lord is not calling us to personal power and physical success, but to surrender....

As **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** wrote in his book "The Cost of Discipleship"

"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

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