

We've come to three of the most helpful instructions in Scripture. Before we delve into them, I want to explain the Jewish concept of the boundaries of the Law. Our culture see rules and commands as confining, but the attitude of the Jews toward the Law of God is more like a path to blessing. They felt that they were very special people because, of all the people on earth, God had chosen to give His Law to them. The Law and its commands were seen as a revelation for a life of peace and goodness. (Psalm 119:1) To study the Scriptures and apply them to life was to put on "the yoke of the Kingdom of heaven".¹

This should certainly be the attitude of the born again believer in Jesus. (John 15:7) These instructions within the New Covenant are a blessing. They keep us from the destructive effects of sin. They guide us to a life of peace and joy. (Psalm 119:165) They open our eyes to discern what is truly good and what is deceptively evil. We should treasure these lists of instructions Paul gave as a blessing to the churches and to us.

Last week we looked at the importance of taking off the old clothes of our sinful nature and dressing in Christ. We saw the importance of continuing to kill that zombie (the old nature) so that we can be the person we truly are now. The final instruction was to put on love over all the other godly virtues, because love is what keeps all the other virtues in their place.

Without skipping a beat Paul continues with the word "and". We should not forget that these instructions flow together. Put on love over all *¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.* Like many of the previous commands, these are expressed in an imperative present active tense. We must now and always allow the peace of Christ to govern our heart.

What is the peace of Christ? It is the third fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22) It is the peace that the Son has of knowing that the Father is good and sovereign over all things. It is the peace that knows that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purposes. (Romans 8:28) It is the peace that can say when faced with unspeakable torment, "Not my will but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) We can sense it deep within. We know when it is not present and when it is. And though we do not rely on feelings within our soul, this peace is a sense that goes deeper, to the very condition of our spirit.

We first experience the peace of Christ when we ask Him to be our Savior and forgive us of our sin. (Psalm 20:5) Surely you have heard of people expressing it as a load

Commented [Paul1]: Psalm 119:1 (ESV)
¹ Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!

Commented [Paul2]: Avot R. Nat. verse B ch. 26

Commented [Paul3]: John 15:7 (ESV)
⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Commented [Paul4]: Psalm 119:165 (ESV)
¹⁶⁵ Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.

Commented [Paul5]: Galatians 5:22 (ESV)
²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Commented [Paul6]: Romans 8:28 (ESV)
²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Commented [Paul7]: Luke 22:42 (ESV)
⁴² saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

Commented [Paul8]: Psalm 20:5 (ESV)
⁵ May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions!

being lifted. Then, when we compromise in our walk with the Lord, there is the sense that it is not present or is disturbed. It is uncomfortable for the believer who has become used to having the peace of Christ. (Psalm 51:12) The mature believer becomes very sensitive to when this peace is present and when it is disturbed. When it is disturbed, they immediately go to prayer to find out why. I realize I haven't given you a very specific definition, but the believer will know exactly what I am talking about.

The command is to let the peace of Christ rule our heart. The word "rule" can also be translated "govern" or "arbitrate". It is the word that is also used for an umpire of a sport. The peace of Christ is to be the umpire in your heart. He says what is fair or what is against the rules. That peace arbitrates between two opposing desires. Which one is of that old nature and which is of the new? The peace of Christ can make that call for you. The peace of Christ can govern your heart.

That peace will not allow unforgiveness. He'll call it, "Out!" every time. It will not allow lust to comfortably occupy your thoughts. He'll call it out of bounds. I appreciate most of all that even when there is no clear instruction from the Word, the peace of Christ will arbitrate what is right. You aren't left to guess which path is the will of God and which is a road that is not His will. The peace of Christ will call it for you. Our part is to allow or let it govern our heart. It's our choice. We can ignore it to our peril, or heed it for our good. (Isaiah 30:21) Like all the commands from the Lord, we can partake of the blessing or not. Have you learned to let the peace of Christ rule your heart for your good?

to which indeed you were called in one body. When we became a child of God we were called to peace. We all have a unique calling and we all have a corporate calling. The body of the local church was called to walk in the peace of Christ. Every dispute, every conflict, every bitter experience is because we do not walk in the peace of Christ as one body of believers. (Galatians 5:20) When the peace of Christ rules in our hearts individually, then we have that peace corporately.

And be thankful. I believe this is the third reminder in this letter that the believer is to be thankful. (2:7; 1:12) We have so much! We have fullness in Christ. We have the peace of Christ within our spirit. When the Spirit says, "Out of bounds!", we should be thankful that we can walk away from that desire and thank God we did not go down a path of destruction. If we could see the destruction from which the peace of Christ has spared us, we would be so very thankful! If you want to get a glimpse of it, just look at what it cost you when you went against the peace of Christ in your past. I could tell you story after story of heartache and loss in my own life because I ignored the peace of

Commented [Paul9]: Psalm 51:12 (ESV)

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Commented [Paul10]: Isaiah 30:21 (NIV)

²¹ Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Commented [Paul11]: Galatians 5:20 (NIV)

²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

Commented [Paul12]: Colossians 2:7 (ESV)

⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Commented [Paul13]: Colossians 1:12 (ESV)

¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Christ. I think I'm finally getting it. By the grace of God may we all understand that the peace of Christ is a good arbitrator and be thankful for it. Amen?

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. We come to the next instruction, allowing the Word of Christ to be dwelling in us richly. The Jews understood this concept. The children of Galilee all made an attempt to memorize the entire Torah. The people sang the Psalms. They talked about the prophecies. The words of Scripture were their life.² The highest calling a Jew could have was to be a student and teacher of the Scriptures.

The Apostle is using the imagery of the Temple. As He has said in other passages, we are to be the dwelling of the living God, the Temple. (Ephesians 2:22) The Spirit of God is to reside in us. Here he expresses it as the Word of Christ. The words of Jesus are the very heart of God. He said nothing but what He had heard from the Father. (John 12:49) The *logos* of Messiah is to make His home in us – richly! It is not only the words of Jesus, but any portion of Scripture, for He is the word (*logos*) of God made flesh. (John 1:14)

That means not only to memorize the Scriptures, but to meditate on them. (Joshua 1:8) They are to be our companions, our instructors. This is one area where we have really failed. It's no wonder the church is so anemic! The average Christian might be able to quote four or five verses. They rarely if ever meditate on them, and would never consider bringing them up in a conversation. But that is exactly what we are commanded to do. Paul probably drew this instruction from the Shema, Israel's daily prayer. *⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.* Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (ESV)

The Gentiles of the Colossian church needed to develop a passion for the word like their Jewish brothers. By calling it the Word of Christ, Paul was emphasizing that the words of Jesus should obviously be a part of our treasure that we commit to memory and talk about. (John 15:7) This is a privilege and a blessing. The old nature abhors it because this is one way to make sure the zombie (old nature) stays in his grave! (Psalm 119:11) Satan is so cunning and subtle. He wants us to believe that memorizing the word is tedious and useless. I don't know anyone that hasn't heard the lie, "memorizing is not your gift." Or how about this one, "You don't need the letter, just the Spirit." If that is

Commented [Paul14]: "...two students who walk together without discussing the Torah deserve to be burned." Sotah 49a

Commented [Paul15]: Ephesians 2:22 (NIV)
²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Commented [Paul16]: John 12:49 (ESV)
⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.

Commented [Paul17]: John 1:14 (ESV)
¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Commented [Paul18]: Joshua 1:8 (ESV)
⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Commented [Paul19]: John 15:7 (ESV)
⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Commented [Paul20]: Psalm 119:11 (ESV)
¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

so, why was Jesus always talking about Scripture? Most of His messages were exegetical sermons explaining a Scripture passage. Of course you can misuse Scripture, but that is not an excuse to neglect the living powerful word of God! (Hebrews 4:12)

I could harp on this for the rest of the year, and some will see the blessing in taking the time and effort to memorize the Scriptures and some of will never do it. That is their loss.

I know a drug user that came to Christ and had a great desire to memorize but was just unable. He would work all week on one simple verse. Finally he got desperate in prayer and asked God to heal his mind so he could store up the word of Christ. God healed his drug fried brain, and that day he memorized almost entire chapter. If you want it bad enough, God will help you. It's His will, and where He guides, He provides. (Philippians 4:19)

When the Word is in you, **when the Scriptures fill your mind and heart, then you can teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.** Paul was reminding the Colossians that the false teacher's wisdom was not based on the eternal Word of God. True wisdom is found in the Word. (Psalm 19:7) A preacher once said that you can tell a person has carried a full bucket by their wet feet. Get full of the word and it overflows in wise counsel. It spills over from a full heart and mind to bless the lives of others. The author of Hebrews shamed his readers by telling them that by this time they should have been teachers. (Hebrews 5:12) They should have had a full bucket by now. Most believers today stay in the spiritual child stage all their physical life. They don't become the teachers they could have been because they don't let the Word dwell in them richly.

And when your mind is full of the Word, when you are meditating on it, you find yourself *singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* That's the bucket overflowing. Our cup runs over when walk with Jesus in the Word. (Psalm 23:5)

Music is like the peace of Christ. It can reside in a place that is deeper than the soul. I've led worship at care homes where many of the residents have lost touch with the world around them. They'll hold the hymnal upsidedown, but they know every word of every verse of a hymn. They can't tell you their own child's name. How is that possible? Music goes deeper than the mind and those words of praise are captured deep in the spirit. I'd like to hear some humanist's explanation for that! **We are spiritual beings with a human body, not human beings with a spirit.** (2Peter 1:13-14) We are going to praise God for all eternity, as that is what we are designed to do. You don't have to, but praise is that expression of a spirit overflowing with God.

Commented [Paul21]: Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Commented [Paul22]: Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Commented [Paul23]: Psalm 19:7 (ESV)

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

Commented [Paul24]: Hebrews 5:12 (ESV)

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,

Commented [Paul25]: Psalm 23:5 (ESV)

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Commented [Paul26]: 2 Peter 1:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body,
¹⁴ because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

I see in this verse instruction for blended worship. Now, I know I'm on controversial ground, but consider this, by the time Paul wrote this letter, most of the psalms they sang were 400 to 1000 years old! The spiritual songs that erupted from the spirit of the worshiper were brand new. They sang both! I wonder if they had the same conflict over music then? But if either or both are sung with thankfulness in the heart, and sung to God, I think we won't be so concerned about the style. Songs are meant to be an expression of thankfulness of the heart. This is the fourth command to be thankful!

17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Our final gracious imperative in this passage today is speaking and acting in the name of the Lord Jesus. Police are to act in the name of the law. In other words, their words and actions are to represent the authority under which they serve. We are to speak and act under the authority of our Lord, Jesus. Our words should be what He would say. (1Peter 4:11) Our actions should be how He would act. (1John 2:6) We don't have the same calling so we won't die for sins or establish a new covenant or save people, but we are to represent our heavenly Father in the earth. The Scriptures tell us that if we speak, we should speak as the oracles of God. They tell us that if we claim to be in Jesus, we should walk as He walked.

And now for the fifth time in this letter, and the third time in as many verses, Paul reminds us that if believers are to be anything, they are to be thankful. We give thanks to God through glorifying the name of Jesus. When we act in the fruits of the Spirit, when we put on the attributes of Christ, then God is glorified. (2Corinthians 4:11)

Are you a thankful believer? **An unthankful believer is an oxymoron.** Are you thankful for the gracious imperative to let the peace of Christ rule in your heart? Then it will be your guide each day. And what about the command to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly? If you see it as a gift from God, it won't be a mere duty, but a joyful privilege. Will you speak and act under the authority of Jesus with a thankful heart? As believers, we certainly should.

These verses point us back to the beginning of the chapter. Is your heart and mind set on things above or on earthly things? (3:1-2) These instructions are the gift of God for you today. Will you receive them?

Questions

- 1 How did Jews feel about the commands of God?
- 2 Summarize the commands that preceded our passage.
- 3 What is the first imperative in our text?

Commented [Paul27]: 1 Peter 4:11 (ESV)

¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Commented [Paul28]: 1 John 2:6 (ESV)

⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Commented [Paul29]: 2 Corinthians 4:11 (ESV)

¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Commented [Paul30]: Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)

¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.
² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

- 4 How do you experience it?
- 5 What is the second?
- 6 What are the results?
- 7 What is the third?
- 8 What does "in the name" mean?
- 9 What do they all have in common?
- 10 In what way do you see these as a path to blessing?