

THE HEART OF THE NEW LIFE

COLOSSIANS 03:15–17

Introduction

When a new life enters the world, a new heart enters the world. There is no life apart from a heart. A new life necessitates a new heart. So it is with the believer: the believer receives a new heart when he receives a new life. *The heart of the new life* is the great subject of this passage.

- I. A heart ruled by Christ's peace (v. 15).
- II. A heart rich with the Word of Christ (v. 16).
- III. A heart that does all in the name of Christ (v. 17).

I. *Colossians 03:15 Peace of Christ*

First, the believer is to have a heart ruled by Christ's peace. He is to let the peace of Christ rule in all things and differences. The best Greek texts read the "peace of Christ" instead of the "peace of God." The word *peace* (eirene) means to be bound, joined, and weaved together. It means to be assured, confident and secure in the love and care of God. It means to know that God will take care of us no matter the problem or circumstance. It means to be absolutely assured that God will allow nothing to swamp or defeat us. God will...

- strengthen
- provide
- encourage
- deliver
- guide
- save
- sustain
- give real life both now and forever

But note the critical point: this peace is the peace of Christ, and He alone possesses it. Therefore, a person can experience true peace only as he comes to know Christ. Only Christ can bring real peace to the human heart, the kind of peace that brings deliverance and the assurance of deliverance to the human soul. Three significant things are pointed out about the peace of Christ.

1. The choice is up the believer: the believer does not automatically experience the peace of Christ. He is supposed to, but he may not. This is a command, which means it demands obedience. The word *rule* (brabeueto) means to be or to act as an umpire. Peace is to be the umpire, the deciding factor in all circumstances and situations of life.
=> Mathew Henry words it well: "Let this peace rule in your heart — prevail and govern there...as an umpire [let it] decide all matters of difference among you" (*Mathew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 764).
=> William Barclay pointedly says: "Let the peace of God...be the decider [umpire] of all things within your heart" (*The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*, p. 190).

The point is this: the believer must make a choice — the decision is his whether he lets the peace of Christ rule or not. Scripture commands it, but the believer has to

be willing to let the umpire of peace rule. He has to be willing to lay aside all the differences and circumstances — to be willing to give up differences and let Christ handle them through the rule of His peace.

John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Rom 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

Psa 119:165 Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.

Isa 26:3 You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.

Isa 48:18 If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

2. The reason why believers are to let the peace of Christ rule is clearly stated: we are members of *one body*. We are not called to be *in two bodies*, but in one. Any believer who stands *out there* in another body is not a genuine believer. There is only one body of Christ, only one body of believers, only one church. This means something significant: believers are to act as one. They are to live and behave as one body, as a body of people in union with each other. How? By letting the peace of Christ rule in their hearts. Peace is to be the deciding factor, the umpire in all relationships between believers. (See Col. 1:18.)

Thought 1. Why is this exhortation given? Because too often some person arises within the church who is...

- cantankerous and divisive
- critical and judgemental
- murmuring and grumbling
- gossiping and spreading rumours

Too often some person becomes a troublemaker, a person who stirs up trouble within the body of Christ, the church. The person accepts the umpire of difference instead of the umpire of peace. He lets differences rule within his heart instead of Christ and His peace.

This is the reason for the exhortation. The exhortation is needed. Some persons desperately need to hear the challenge and demand of God: *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.*

Job 22:21 “Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you.”

Psa 34:14 *Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.*

Eph 2:14 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*

Col 3:15 *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

1 Pet 3:11 *He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.*

Rom 8:6 *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

Rom 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

3. Believers are to respond to the demand for peace with thankfulness. Believers should always thank Christ for His peace...
- the peace He has brought to their own hearts personally
 - the peace He has brought to all men who trust Him
 - the peace He has brought within His body, the church
 - the glorious privilege which all men have to know His peace

Eph 5:20-21 *Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Phil 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Col 1:20 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

II. **Colossians 03:16** *The Word of Christ*

Second, the believer is to have a heart rich with the Word of Christ. He is to let the Word of Christ dwell in his heart. Throughout Scripture this is the only time “the Word of God” is referred to as “the Word of Christ.” The emphasis of Colossians is Christ; therefore, the Word of God becomes the *Word of Christ* in this great book. (See 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; 1 Th. 1:8; 2:13; 4:15; 2 Th. 3:1.)

Three significant points are made about the Word of Christ.

1. The choice is up to the believer: the Word of Christ does not naturally dwell within the believer’s heart. The word *dwell* (enoikeito) means to be at home or to make a home; to abide or dwell within. The believer must make room within his heart for the Word of Christ. He must let the Word of Christ enter his heart and make a home within his heart. He must let the Word of Christ dwell and abide in his heart. The

believer must clean out all the old furnishings of his heart and let the Word of Christ settle down as the permanent resident within his heart.

Note the word *richly*. It is important, for the Word of Christ must be allowed to dwell *richly* within our hearts. The believer is not to be satisfied with just a meagre visit by the Word of Christ. He is to let the Word of Christ *dwell richly* within Him. The Word of Christ must be allowed to furnish the believer's heart with all the wealth of its commandments and promises, instructions and warnings.

Deu 6:6 *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.*

Deu 11:18 *Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.*

Psa 119:11 *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

John 15:7 *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

2 Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

1 Pet 2:2-3 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

2. The reason why believers are to let the Word of Christ dwell within them is clearly stated: believers are to teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. This is the believer's task, the very reason God has not yet taken us home to heaven: to teach and admonish one another. By teaching is meant the instruction of the Word and by admonition is meant the warning of Scripture. But how can we teach and admonish others if we do not...

- know the Word of Christ?
- let the Word of Christ dwell in us?

The answer is obvious: we can't. And note another fact: it is not enough to know the Word of Christ. We must be living the Word of Christ. Knowing the Word and not living it is hypocrisy. Our very lives must be the home, the dwelling place for the Word of Christ. When people look at us, they must immediately see that our lives are indwelt by the Word of Christ.

Something else should be pointed out as well. We can teach and admonish others in forbearance and not *in wisdom*. Worldly philosophy and teachings about reality and

truth, God and the universe are only the crude notions of men. The truth and wisdom of life are found in the *Word of Christ and in the Word of Christ alone*. (See Col. 2:8-10.)

1 Tim 4:11 *Command and teach these things.*

2 Tim 2:24 *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

Deu 6:6-7 *These commandments that I give you today are to lie upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Ezek 44:23 *They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.*

3. There is a way to tell whether or not the Word of Christ dwells in us: Are we teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratitude in our hearts to the Lord? As we walk throughout the day are we...
- talking about Christ?
 - sharing the Word of Christ with each other?
 - teaching each other?
 - admonishing and encouraging and warning each other?
 - singing to ourselves and with others?

Thought 1. What a contrasting picture of how so many of us live! The believer is to live and move and have his being in Christ, and he is to let Christ live and move and have His being in him. For the believer, to live is Christ. We are to walk all day long talking about and sharing Christ, teaching and admonishing others in the Word of Christ, singing the psalms of Scripture, the hymns of the church, and the spiritual songs that arise out of a heart filled with the joy of the Lord and His Word.

Deu 6:6-7 *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Deu 11:19-20 *Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.*

1 Cor 14:15 *So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.*

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

Psa 95:1 *Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.*

III. *Colossians 03:17 Believer's Duty*

Third, the believer is to have a heart that does all in the name of Christ. Whatever he does in word or deed, he does all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

1. The believer has a choice. He is the one who speaks and acts; no one speaks and acts for him. Whether or not he speaks and acts for Christ is his choice. The command is there: "do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus," but the choice as to what he talks about and does is his. He and he alone is responsible for his words and deeds.
2. The believer is to do all *in the name of the Lord Jesus*. What does this mean? It means that the believer knows something: the name of Christ is the only name that God accepts in His presence. Therefore, the only persons He accepts are those persons who come to Him in the name of Christ. There is no other name given among men whereby men may be saved. Therefore, the believer approaches God "in the name of Jesus Christ," that is, by surrendering his life to Christ and by living for Christ. This is the reason the believer does not dare speak or act outside the name of Christ. To do so would be evidence that he had not really approached God in Christ, that his profession was a false profession.

Again, what does it mean to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus? It means...

- to live, move and have our being in the name of Christ
- to *trust and depend* upon the name of Christ in all that we do
- to *claim* the name of Christ in all that we say and do
- to *represent* Christ in all that we say and do

Simply stated, we must do nothing that dishonours Christ. Whenever we speak, Christ peppers and fills our conversation; and whenever we act, Christ is honoured by our behaviour.

We must always remember something: Christ hears every word and sees every deed. We love Him with all our hearts; therefore, we seek never to hurt or cause pain for Him by what we say or do. We diligently seek to bring only honour to His name.

Luke 24:47 "And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

John 14:13 "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father."

John 20:31 "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Eph 5:20 Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The believer's response is that of thanksgiving. God *the Father* has become the believer's Father by Christ and only by Christ. Therefore, the believer is constantly thanking God the Father. But note: even in thanksgiving, the believer still approaches God only by Christ. As important as thanking and praising God is, a person still has to approach God by Christ. God will accept no person apart from Christ, not even to offer thanksgiving and praise.

1 Cor 10:31-32 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.

Col 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. ■