

The Peace of Christ, Part Two (Colossians 3:15)

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Introduction

1. In part one we saw that Paul wrote his exhortations to the Colossian believers against the background of God's reconciliation motif begun in Genesis 3. Support for this observation is his use of several terms: "glory" (v. 4), "knowledge" and "image" (v. 10), "put on" (v. 11), "blame" (v. 13), "love" and "harmony" (v. 14), and "peace" (v. 15).
2. Paul's understanding of *peace* (Gk, *eirene*) echoes its Hebrew connotation rather than its Greek etymology.
 - a. The Hebrew, *shalōm*, describes a state of harmony and communion between covenant partners (Num. 6:26; Isa. 54:10). The presence of *shalom* signifies that God's blessing rests on the relationship (Mal. 2:5; Num. 25:12; Psa. 85:9–11; Isa. 32:17). Conversely, its absence reflects a breakdown of the relationship due to disobedience and unrighteousness (Jer. 16:5, 10–13).
 - b. The Greek (*eirene*) expands the Hebrew *shalom* to include the concept of *rest* (Gk, *anapauo*, "to cause to cease"), seen in the Hebrew *shabbat* or *sabbath*.
 - 1) The concept of *rest* speaks to *peace* as inner tranquility and or quietness of soul resulting from the absence of stress and hostility.
 - 2) Jesus invites us to that rest (Matt. 11: 28, 29). The two statements seem to be a contradictory. Rest is offered to the laboring in v. 28, but a yoke (to labor in) is required to find rest in v. 29. The inconsistency is reconciled by observing that *sin* is the burden of v. 28. Rest, however, requires the trading of sin's yoke for that of Christ's; His yoke is easy (v. 30). We are to learn from Him; in so doing, we *experience* the rest (or peace) that He gives us in salvation (John 14:27).

What is it that Jesus wants us to learn from Him?

I. The Divine Purpose

1. In His high-priestly prayer of John 17: 22, 23, Jesus gives us what we are to learn from Him – the divine purpose: "The glory [the result of His cross work] that you have given me I have given to them." Three purposes that come from the previous:
 - a. "That [*hina*, a purpose clause] they may be one [union and unity] even as we are one [a unity in diversity], [how?] I in them and you [the Father] in me –
 - b. "That [*hina*, a purpose clause] they may become perfectly one [Gk, *teleioo*, "complete" or "harmonious whole" – same word in Col. 3:14] –
 - c. "So that [*hina*, a purpose clause] the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." How will the world see this glorious new creation? How will the world see Christ's kingdom?

2. How is this union and unity manifested? Paul uses analogies in his letters to teach this.

a. Is this union and unity individual or corporate?

1) He reminds the church at Colossae that “you [plural] were called in one [corporate] body” (3:15).

2) When the Corinthian believers asked about spiritual gifts, Paul answered them by first addressing their use in the church (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:3, 4). Individual believers were coveting certain gifts for themselves personally, but Paul reminds them that the Lord’s focus was *corporate* (vv. 20, 25, 27).

The real question was how their gifts benefited the body in its establishment and growth.

b. This union is likened to a body of which Christ is head (Col. 1:18).

1) Paul saw his ministry as directed to the body of Christ (Col. 1:24). His aim in “proclaiming” Christ was to “present everyone mature [*teleioo*, perfect or complete] in Christ” (remember John 1:23). True unity in diversity is possible only as we are in Christ – in His divine union. Our responsibility is to demonstrate our union through our unity.

2) Epaphras (4:12) was “always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that [*hina*, a purpose clause] you may stand mature [*teleioo*, perfect or complete] and [or even] fully assured in all the will of God.” What is the will of God? It is “that they may become *perfectly one* [*teleioo*]” (John 17:23).

c. This union is likened to a kingdom (Col. 1:13).

d. This union is likened to a new race (Col. 3:10).

3. How do we come to understand and experience this divine purpose in our redemption?

a. We need to be “filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” and every “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:9, 10).

b. We need to “seek the things that are above,” setting our “minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col.3:1, 2).

II. What Paul Exhorted

1. You are in Christ – in His kingdom. Behave like kingdom saints: put on love, which binds everything in the harmonious (*shalomic*) whole, and “let the *shalom* of Christ rule in your hearts.”

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