

LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST RULE IN YOUR HEARTS

A JOYFUL JOURNEY

Colossians 3:1-17

Key Verse 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.”

Today I want to think about the peace of Christ and our Joyful Journey with Immanuel Jesus.

1. The peace Christ gives

Just before Jesus’ departure, he promised his disciples to send the Holy Spirit, the Counselor to be with them. He also gave them a wonderful promise: **“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.”** (Jn 14:27), In John 20, the Risen Jesus came through locked doors to visit his fearful disciples. He blessed them with his peace. **“Peace be with you.”** He showed them his nail pierced hands and side and said again, **“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me I am sending you.”** He breathed on them and said, **“Receive the Holy Spirit.”** The next week he again came through locked doors and greeted them. **“Peace be with you.”** His last words before sending them out into the world were: **“I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.”** He is Immanuel, **“God with us.”** He kept his promise by giving us his Holy Spirit.

Peace comes from a right relationship with God. When we live without God, we have no peace. Romans 5:1 says, **“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God.”** The peace that Jesus gives begins at the cross. By faith in Jesus’ blood, we have been reconciled to God. Then, by God’s grace, we can be reconciled to one another. Only Jesus gives us real peace.

Shalom is the Hebrew word for peace. Shalom is a greeting. It literally means, “Peace.” Shalom is a sense of well-being. It is a sense of contentment. Everything works together, makes sense and is good. This is peace that Jesus gives.

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2. Immanuel, God with us—a Joyful Journey

I read a short book by E. Wilder and Anna Kang called, Joyful Journey. They call the Christian life a Joyful Journey with Immanuel. Immanuel means, **“God with us.”** The Holy Spirit whom Jesus gives is God with us, Immanuel. It is Immanuel who gives us peace. Walking with Immanuel makes life’s journey a joyful journey. It is a walk of faith. Enoch and Noah walked with God. (Ge 5:22; 6:9) Walking with Immanuel gives us peace. Matthew, the lonely tax collector, is the only gospel writer who tells us that Jesus’ other name is Immanuel, which means, **“God with us.”** (Mt 1:23) Brother Lawrence [Nicholas Herman of Lorraine] lived in the 1600’s. After serving as a soldier, he became a lay brother among the “barefooted Carmelites” in Paris. (1666) After his conversion he grew in the knowledge of God, endeavoring constantly to walk as in his Presence. He spent his life doing menial work in the kitchen of a Catholic priory. He was not highly educated and he didn’t like working in the kitchen and he didn’t like shopping errands because he was crippled, but he did these things with a conscious awareness of God’s Presence. After his death, a book of his letters and sayings was compiled. The Practice of the Presence of God became a Christian classic. Brother Lawrence was known as a man of profound peace and joy.

3. The peace of Christ, Shalom, should rule in our hearts (15)

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.” Colossians 3:15 says that the peace of Christ should rule in our hearts. The peace of Christ is like a referee. When the referee sees a foul, he blows the whistle and stops the action. Whenever Shalom is missing, we need to stop the action and pray and listen to Immanuel.

Colossians 3:1-17 tells us how we can have Christ’s peace ruling in our hearts and in his body, the church. As members of one body we are called to peace. These verses also tell us some things that rob us of peace.

Verses 1-4 remind me that I died with Christ when he died for me on the cross. I have been raised with him to have new life through the power of his glorious resurrection. So I should set my heart on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Not only my heart but also my mind should be set on things above, not on earthly things. If our hearts and minds are set on Christ, he

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rules us and gives us peace. I died and my life is hidden with Christ in God. As members of his body, we are called to encourage each other and build up the body. Our true hope is in Jesus, who will come again in glory. (4)

Verses 5-11 tell us that anything or anyone other than Jesus that rules in my heart and mind is an idol. I must remember that by God's grace, I have taken off my old self with its practices and put on the new self which is being renewed in the image of its Creator. (Col 3:9-10) This is God's work through the blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The peace of Christ, not an idol, must rule in my heart.

Idolatry robs us of peace. Idolatry includes the things belonging to the old self, to the earthly nature. Colossians 3:5 points out sexual immorality, impurity (things like pornography), lust, evil desires, and greed. We should nail these things to the cross of Jesus. They should be put to death. These things are idolatry because they capture our minds and hearts and rule where Christ should rule. The people dancing around the golden calf thought they were having fun. But idolatry is not fun. It cuts us off from God and leads to death. We should not let our minds be captured by video games or Facebook. Because we have taken off the old self and its practices, we must rid ourselves of things which damage the peace of the body. Some of these things are lying to one another (this comes from a lack of trust), giving into anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language. Now we have taken off the old self to which these things belong and put on the new self. We must have the same mind-set as that of Christ Jesus. He is our Creator and we must grow in his image.

The body of Christ, his church, includes people of every tribe and tongue and race and nation. Paul talks about Gentile, Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free. Someday people of every tribe and language and people and nation will worship together and bow before God on his throne and the Lamb. (Rev 7:9) The body of Christ is composed of people with different human backgrounds. Our church is a multi-cultural church. It includes Korean, American, Canadian, European, Russian, Ukrainian, Mongolian, Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, African, Indian, Hispanic, Australian, and Mid-Eastern. We have men, women, children, and old people, single, and married people. Some people have an identity problem. The good news is that we are not bound together by human identity, nor are we separated by human identity. Christ is all and is in all. We are members of one body called to peace. We have the peace of Christ when we realize who we are. We are God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved. We must, by God's grace through the work of the Holy Spirit, clothe ourselves with

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compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. These belong to the character of Christ. We shouldn't blow up at one another but bear with each other. If we have a grievance against anyone, we should forgive as we have been forgiven. (12-13) Verse 14 tells us above all these virtues put on love. Love binds everything together. Without God's help, I can't do this. When for any reason I lose Shalom—God's peace, the whistle blows. It's time to stop and find out what happened to the rule of Christ's peace in my heart.

I grew up in Mississippi, in a society where segregation and racial discrimination were taken for granted. So I was a racist. I met Jesus, who died for my sins and for the sins of all people. Through Bible study, I realized that all people are the same human beings. The Bible teaches us that there is only one race, the human race. We are all of one blood. Only the gospel can pull out the root of pride and remove racism from my heart and mind. Only in Jesus can people from different races and cultures and different backgrounds become one. We can find love and respect for all kinds of people only in Jesus, the Prince of Peace. The Holy Spirit changes our hearts. I realized that only the gospel of Jesus can bring real peace to our world. Only the gospel can bring peace to my mind and heart and soul. Only the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts brings peace to the body, his church.

The peace of Christ rules in our hearts when the word of Christ dwells among us richly. There is Christ's peace in the body as we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in our hearts. (16) Music is an important part of our joyful journey. Making music together is one way we encourage each other. Our walk with Immanuel begins and ends with thankfulness. We acknowledge answered prayer and God's grace and his work in our lives when we give thanks. Our hope is in the glorious return of our Lord. (4) For this we pray and give thanks.

Sometimes I lose my peace because I disagree with other people. So Immanuel reminds me that I am a member of the body of Christ and we are called to peace. He reminds me to forgive as I was forgiven. (13-15) Sometimes, I lose peace because of a broken relationship. Sometimes I lose peace because I say something I wish I hadn't said. I can't always solve the problem, but I can bring it to Christ, wait for his answer, and repent.

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Sometimes living and working in the world challenges Christ's peace in us. I asked a friend what takes away peace from her working place. She surprised me by saying, "Hatred." Another friend said, "Anger." How can we overcome this worldly environment? As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, we must clothe ourselves with Christ. Then the peace of Christ will rule in our hearts.

Fear robs us of peace. The devil attacks us through large and small fears. In 1964, God was working greatly in the beginning period of UBF. I came home from Korea on a regular furlough. I went to Nashville to study for a Master's degree. I had only been in town 3 days when I was mugged. A man attacked me from behind. I resisted with all my strength and followed the instructions in Deuteronomy 22:24 to scream for help. He beat me in the face to make me shut up. Someone heard me and called the police and he ran away. I spent 2 weeks in the hospital because my face was messed up. After I recovered, fear came into my heart and the peace of Christ left. I was afraid to go out at night. I cancelled my night classes. Then I realized that I was being ruled by fear. Fear made me helpless. It was the devil's attack. I repented. God restored the rule of Christ's peace, and I could finish school and go back to Korea to help pioneer Seoul. Immanuel Jesus died on the cross to destroy the devil and set free those he holds as his prisoners through their fear of death. (Heb 2:14) We have many lesser fears that rob us of peace. Fears about the future, health, family, finances, etc. Immanuel promises to walk with us on a joyful journey as we live by faith from first to last. When Christ's peace rules in our hearts, we can overcome the world and be salt and light in a world ruled by fear and the things of the earthly nature.

4. Isaiah introduces us to Immanuel, Prince of Peace

Isaiah lived in troubled times. Powerful enemies planted fear in peoples' hearts. (Isa 7-9) Planting fear is one of the main tactics of the devil. He still works to plant fear. The ISIS Muslim fanatics murder innocent people by beheading them publicly, with the world looking on. The fear they plant has produced thousands of homeless refugees.

Isaiah prophesied about Immanuel's coming. (Isa 7:14b **"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."** – God with us.) Isaiah tells us that Immanuel is the Prince of Peace. He is the one who can restore peace. Isaiah wrote: **"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."** (Isa 9:6)

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. God promises: **"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusts in Thee."** (Isa 26:3,

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RSV) When I was in college, the Korean War was going on. America sent soldiers to fight for peace and freedom. War could not bring real peace. After I met Jesus, I found peace for the first time. The peace of Christ ruling in my heart gives me peace.

Let's look at Colossians 3:15 again. **“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”** My life and yours is a joyful journey when the peace of Christ, Shalom, is ruling in our hearts. When we love one another and build up his body, we have this peace. If I lose peace, I must pray and ask Immanuel to restore his peace and to let his peace rule in my heart.

Verse 15 says, **“...and be thankful.”** Be thankful. Gratitude to God and thankfulness are mentioned three times in these few verses. God wants us to be thankful. Immanuel helps us do everything in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. I thank Immanuel Jesus for making my life a joyful journey. My joyful journey started my 2nd year in college when I met Jesus. He forgave my sins and called me to be a part of his body. Things happen in every person's life (mine, too) that are not so joyful—broken bones, sickness, losing loved ones, and disappointments in people we trust. Walking is not so easy for me these days, but walking with Immanuel Jesus is still a joyful journey. If we walk through painful events with Immanuel, we discover that we know him better and he gives us joy and peace. My joyful journey to Korea started on a boat—a freighter named, “The Philippine Bear.” It took a month to sail from San Francisco to Incheon. What a privilege it was to walk with Immanuel 20 years in Korea. It was the worst of times and it was the best of times in Korea. God allowed me to see him work in the lives of struggling Korean students. He called me to be a member of his body in Korea and in Chicago. He gave me the privilege of knowing and working with Dr. Lee, a man in whom and through whom God worked greatly. God allowed me to see lives changed by Bible study, prayer and the Holy Spirit. I walked with Immanuel and visited the mission fields of the world. Immanuel even walked with me to visit his homeland Israel. In 1954, Immanuel walked with me for a year to study the Bible in the Biblical Seminary in New York. Inductive Bible study became a part of my joyful journey. I came to Korea with the conviction that everyone can and should study the Bible for himself and anyone can be a Bible teacher if he prays and observed carefully what the Bible says, seeking the help of the Holy Spirit.

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Look at verse 16-17. **“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”**

Lord, let your word dwell richly in my heart. Give me your peace and help me to grow in Jesus’ image. May the peace of Christ rule in our hearts since as one body we are called to peace. Let us be thankful as we walk with Immanuel on the Joyful Journey.