

COLOSSIANS 3:11-17 | LIVE LIKE THIS

verses 11-14 - see chapter 11

VERSE 15 - BLUE

Paul instructs believers to "let the peace of God rule in your hearts." Though it does not yet rule in the halls of government or of justice, nor often on our street or even in our home, it can rule in our heart. The command is interesting in that it is an imperative to do that which is passive. We are to step back and allow God's peace to rule our hearts.

The Greek word for "rule" (βραβευέτω, brabeuetō) in Colossians 3:15 carries the idea of acting as an umpire or arbitrator. We need to be good "umpires," determining what gets in and what gets called "OUT!" in our hearts.

Paul describes this peace as one which "passeth all understanding," (Phil. 4:7), therefore, to seek to describe and define it would be a fool's errand.

It is interesting to note that the critical texts have "peace of Christ" rather than "peace of God." Some may count this as a difference without a distinction. However, we should note that the peace of Christ is that which will be on earth in the millennial reign. The peace of God is something that can be "in our hearts" rather than in the halls of government, justice, etc.

Though the instruction is that individually the believer is to let the peace of God rule (thus "hearts" is plural), the calling in this passage is to the body (corporate). That is, "in one body," each of us should individually live with the peace of God ruling our hearts. Each member is to let God's peace rule their hearts, contributing to the overall peace within the body of Christ.

Further, we are to be thankful, both for the fact that we are called in peace as a body, and for so much more.

VERSE 16 - BLUE

The body of Christ is to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Given the grammatical structure and the nature of the words, we should view this command and each instruction in the verse as directed toward each individual within the body of Christ. While we could interpret it as "let the word of Christ dwell in you, the corporate body," the rest of the verse wouldn't make sense. The corporate body does not teach, admonish, and sing. Additionally, the singing is "with grace in your hearts," and since "hearts" is plural, it must refer to each individual in the group.

Concerning this "word of Christ," the phrase "of Christ" is in the Greek genitive case. The genitive case can express various relationships, including possession, origin, and association. Here are some potential meanings:

- **Possessive Genitive:** "The word belonging to Christ" (indicating possession or belonging)
- **Descriptive Genitive:** "The word about Christ" (indicating the subject matter or content)
- **Source Genitive:** "The word from Christ" (indicating the origin or source)

I think the source genitive is the least likely, as it would limit this to the "red letters" only. The possessive genitive would be hard to define beyond the entire Bible itself and thus also seems less likely. It seems to me that Paul is referring to "the word about Christ," and thus the focus is on the person and work of Jesus Christ. This "word" is foundational to Pauline doctrine and a Biblical worldview.

Paul further explains that the body is to spend time "teaching and admonishing" concerning the word of Christ. Both words relate to changing the way one thinks.

Many interpret Paul's words to mean that this teaching and admonishing should be done "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." However, I think this is a misreading of the text. Teaching and admonishing are never shown to be done through singing. Furthermore, there are three participles in the verse, and I believe these should structure our interpretation: teaching, admonishing, and singing.

In Greek, word order is relatively flexible compared to English due to the inflectional nature of the language. The meaning of a sentence is largely determined by the case endings rather than the position of the words. We have several ways to understand the text:

- That there is one activity: teaching and admonishing, and it should be done with singing. This is the common view.
- That there are three activities:
  - teaching in wisdom
  - admonishing in psalms
  - singing in hymns and spiritual songs
- That there are two activities: teaching and admonishing is one set of activities, and in addition, singing should be done with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

I personally think that the third option (two activities) makes the most sense in Pauline theology.

Our singing should be "with grace" and should consist of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." The word "Psalm" likely has its root in musical instruments. Strong's Enhanced Lexicon says that the Greek word means "of a striking the chords of a musical instrument." The word "hymn" speaks more to the content, namely praise to God. The word "song" is a general word. One "spiritual song" could be all three: a spiritual song of praise to God with instruments.

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#### VERSE 17 - BLUE

The word "word" can be understood as "speech." Thus, whatever a believer does, both verbally and physically, should be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus" while "giving thanks to God and the Father" by the Lord.

To do something in the Lord's name is to do it on His behalf, as His representative.

The phrase "to God and the Father" may be confusing, since God is the Father. The King James Version (KJV) has retained the Greek style, whereas modern English would say "God, the Father" or "God, even the Father." Some might argue that a newer translation is needed since we do not speak this way in English. However, this position implies that the original style of speech is not relevant and shouldn't be translated. I believe that a translation philosophy that simplifies the language by removing the original style will inevitably oversimplify other areas where the style is important.