

# Let The Peace Of Christ Rule In You

## *Letter to the Colossians*

Here are some statistics I picked up a few years ago about stress. I don't know where they get these figures or who calculates them, but they do illustrate a point. The statistics come out of the United States, but they probably relate to most Western cultures. 30,000,000 men in the United States describe themselves as stressed out. The average desk worker has 36 hours of work on their desk. They spend three hours a week just sorting out the piles. The average middle manager is interrupted 73 times a day. On average we spend eight months of our lives opening junk mail. We spend two years of our lives trying to ring people whose lines are busy or who are not in. We spend one year searching for misplaced objects. Some of you probably feel you spend more time than that! The average misplaced object has been moved only 10 inches from its original place. 18 million Americans are on Prozac. Some of them have misplaced their Prozac so they are even more anxious.

In 1850 the average person slept an average of nine and a half hours per night. Now the figure is 7 hours a night and declining. There are 70 million people in the United States with sleep disorders. Exhaustion is one of the common disorders of our society. When interviewed, one mother of four children said "I am so tired; my idea of a holiday is a trip to the dentist. I just can't wait to sit in that chair and relax." Often life is not much different for Christians. One survey revealed that 85 percent of Christians only prayed when they were on the run.

Now, how do we balance that with [this scripture](#)?

***"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 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. 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". (Colossians 3:15 - 17)***

### **Let The Peace Of Christ Rule**

Paul tells us to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. The word that Paul used was used in athletic events in those days. It's the word that we would use in a game of tennis for the umpire. He is saying that the peace of Christ is like the umpire or the referee of a game. In tennis the line umpire makes the call regarding whether a ball was in or out. The chair umpire is the final authority on all questions relating to the match. Now the player can dispute the umpires decision. They can throw their racket on the ground in disgust. They can even become a John McInroe and abuse the umpire and shout and throw a tantrum, but it doesn't make any difference. The decision of the umpire is final. In football, when the referee holds up a red card, it doesn't matter if the player thinks he right or wrong, fair or unfair, when that red card is held up, if you are the player, you are going to take a walk.

The peace of Christ is like the umpire or the referee in our hearts. When a decision is right, the peace referee gives the right signals and tells us in our hearts that it's OK. When we are going against what God wants us to do, the peace umpire says "Sorry - no peace. It's wrong. It's not what God wants for you". It doesn't matter if we rationalise it, or deny it, or tell ourselves we are not hearing the voice of the referee, the peace referee still says - "Sorry - no peace". So Paul is saying to these Colossian Christians, don't ignore the referee. Let the peace of Christ rule. Don't pretend you have peace when you don't have it. Listen to the referee.

### **1. What Is The Peace Of Christ?**

The peace of Christ is the settled assurance that because of God's care and Gods competence, this universe is a perfectly safe place for me to be. Even though this universe doesn't look like a safe place for me to be, I can trust God and live at peace in that. The writers of the New Testament were convinced of this truth. Paul said ***"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord". (Romans 8:38 & 39)*** Despite all things that were out there that could shatter his peace, Paul was convinced

that this universe was a safe place to be. When you live in that sort of settled assurance, it changes your life.

Picture a mother who is asleep in bed at night during a terrible storm. The thunder is crashing and the lightning flashing. There is a tremendous flash of lightning so she gets out of bed to check on her small son only to find him coming up the hall with a big smile on his face. "Guess what Mum" he says. "I was looking out the window and God took my picture!" That's someone who is convinced that God is at work and that the universe is a perfectly safe place to be.

In Matthew 8 we read about Jesus and his disciples on the lake in a big storm. While the disciples are in the boat all frantic, what is Jesus doing? He's asleep. Why did Matthew find this important enough to recall that Jesus was asleep during a storm? Matthew wants us to understand that Jesus was convinced that this universe was in the hands of his Father and was a perfectly safe place to be. The disciples went to Jesus because they believed he could do something to help them. They had faith **in** Jesus, but they didn't have the faith **of** Jesus. They didn't believe, as Jesus did, that they were safe in the hands of God. They had faith **in** him, but they didn't have **his** faith yet.

## **2. What Would It Look Like For Me To Have The Peace Of Christ Reigning In Me?**

My anxiety level would go way down. I wouldn't be tormented by my inadequacy. I would be an unhurried person. I might have a lot of things to do, but I would have the inner calm and poise that comes from living in the presence of God. I wouldn't say so many of the foolish things that I say, because I wouldn't speak without thinking. I wouldn't be defeated by guilt because I would be living in the calm confidence that God's love is with me forever. I would trust God enough to give. I wouldn't have to hoard.

Worry makes me focus on myself. Worry makes me selfish and small. It robs me of joy, energy and compassion. There is a very strong relational component to peace. Paul's says if all possible live at peace with all people. When the peace of Christ is reigning in our hearts we become an oasis of sanity in a world of pandemonium. A community where the peace of Christ is reigning would change the world.

## **3. How Can I Increase The Peace Of Christ Of Christ In My Life?**

One way that is not an option for Christ followers is to make my primary goal in life living in peaceful comfortable circumstances. That's not what letting the peace of Christ reign is about. It is not an individualistic search for easy living conditions. One of the trends of our society is to move to gated communities with high levels of security and away from anything that might disturb our peace. The peace of Christ reigning within us is not about a search for comfortable circumstances.

Recently someone sent me the notes of an interview with Rick Warren. Rick Warren is Pastor of Saddleback Church in California, and author of the book "The Purpose Driven Life". Recently his world was turned upside down when his wife discovered she had cancer. This is what he said.

*"In a nutshell, life is preparation for eternity. We were not made to last forever, and God wants us to be with Him in Heaven. One day my heart is going to stop, and that will be the end of my body-- but not the end of me. I may live 60 to 100 years on earth, but I am going to spend trillions of years in eternity. This is the warm-up act - the dress rehearsal. God wants us to practice on earth what we will do forever in eternity. We were made by God and for God, and until you figure that out, life isn't going to make sense. Life is a series of problems: Either you are in one now, you're just coming out of one, or you're getting ready to go into another one. The reason for this is that God is more interested in your character than your comfort; God is more interested in making your life holy than He is in making your life happy. We can be reasonably happy here on earth, but that's not the goal of life. The goal is to grow in character, in Christ likeness. This past year has been the greatest year of my life but also the toughest, with my wife, Kay, getting cancer. I used to think that life was hills and valleys - you go through a dark time, then you go to the mountaintop, back and forth. I don't believe that anymore. Rather than life being hills and valleys, I believe that it's kind of like two rails on a railroad track, and at all times you have something good and something bad in your life. No matter how good things are in your life, there is always something bad that needs to be worked on. And no matter how bad things are in your life, there is always something good you can thank God for. You can focus on your purposes, or you can focus on your problems: If you*

*focus on your problems, you're going into self-centeredness, which is my problem, my issues, my pain.' But one of the easiest ways to get rid of pain is to get your focus off yourself and onto God and others."*

Here are a couple of ways Paul mentions that can allow the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts.

- **Let The Word Of Christ Dwell In You Richly.**

We are to let all the teachings of Christ make their home in our hearts. Welcome them through the front door of our hearts. Invite them in to a place where they can get comfortable. Welcome the teachings of Christ so much that they take their shoes off, and settle down to stay. Make all the teachings of Jesus feel at home and let them live there permanently. As they settle down in our hearts, we find ourselves thinking the way Jesus would think, and acting the way Jesus would act. When the Word of Christ dwells in us richly, it begins to overflow out of our lives. For example, take the words of Jesus when he said "Don't let your hearts be troubled, don't let them be afraid" and letting those words dwell in us. Choose a thought from scripture each day that leads you to peace, and walk it around all day. Think about it. Dwell on it. Live with it all day.

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

- **Sing Psalms, Hymns And Spiritual Songs With Gratitude In Your Hearts To God.**

Sometimes a song can bring peace in a way that nothing else can. All through the New Testament we find singing. When Mary finds she is pregnant she sings. When Zachariah sees the birth of the baby Jesus he sings. Jesus sang a hymn with his disciples. After Paul and Silas had been stripped of their clothes and beaten with rods then thrown into jail with their feet in the stocks, they sang praise to God.

Singing carries the truth of God in a way nothing else can. The Christian faith has always been a singing faith. We have this amazing ability to learn the truth about Jesus and retain it by remembering the words of songs. During the Billy Graham crusades of the 1960's many of us learned an old hymn written in 1871 by Horatio Spafford. This man was a very successful lawyer in Chicago when his only son died. Then soon after, his business was wiped out in the Chicago fire. Two years later, he sent his wife and four daughters to Europe. The ship they were on sank, and only his wife survived. Here is the song that he wrote after all that tragedy;

***When peace like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.***

***It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.***

Songs take us back to those times when we knew the closeness of the presence of God. Songs remind us of funerals, weddings, the celebration of the birth of a child, and times when the Spirit of God was moving powerfully in our lives. When we sing those songs again we are taken back in our memories and reminded of the peace of Christ which rules in our hearts. Sing songs that lift your spirits and reinforce the truths of what you believe. Sing in the shower. Sing on the way to work. Sing when your job is boring and dull. It doesn't have to be in tune. It's between you and God. It's a way of expressing gratitude. And from your singing will come peace.

Try it this week. Let the word of Christ dwell in you, and sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. See what happens. I think you will find the peace of Christ will rule in you. Have a wonderful week.

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