

# The Lord Reigns – Let His Peace Rule

Col 3:15

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC: January 24, 2020

Please take the Word of Christ and turn to the book of Colossians. Last year we started a study through this book and I'm eager to jump back in. There's been a lot of changes in our world and nation but PTL for unchanging truth of an unchanging God. We'll be in Col ch. 3 but let's start in ch 1, key verse is 1:18: *He[Jesus] is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, **that in everything he might be preeminent.***

That's **the theme** of Colossians, the preeminence of Christ or the supremacy of Christ. He's supreme over all. Christ is to have first place in everything. That includes first place in our heart, our affections, what we think and seek.

Now go to ch 3 and let's review how it starts, ch 3 v.1 *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God [that's His rule]...<sup>15</sup>And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*

We'll focus on v. 15 today. Title: The Lord Reigns – Let His Peace Rule

**Let's pray.** Father we're thankful for this church body you've called us to. We thank you for your Son, the head of the body, who is seated at your right hand in that place of power and preeminence over everything. We ask your Spirit's help so we'll seek and think the things that are above, not the things of this world. Apart from you I can do nothing. I beg you: meet us and make us make much of You. And may Christ rule in our hearts in His name, amen

Well a lot of people couldn't wait to be done with 2020 but 2021 isn't off to a great start! Maybe you're not so sure things will be better for our nation? This hasn't been a very peaceful start to the new year. Pandemonium ruled in Washington D.C. earlier this month, as our capitol building was attacked by a mob. For many, *politics* rule, Col 3:15 says *let the peace of Christ rule.*

In God's timing the next verse is very timely: we need peace in these times. As we teach verse-by-verse, we don't make the Bible relevant, it *is* relevant!

There isn't peace in our nation or in the news but there can be in Jesus name

What is the *peace of Christ* and how do we *let it rule*? If you're taking notes

## **1. The Peace of Christ in history** (start with the context historically)

In biblical history, Israel's capitol city of Jerusalem often had turmoil with transfers of power to a new administration, Saul->David->Absalom-divided.

Centuries later, Ezra 4:19 (NLT) "... *Jerusalem has indeed been a hotbed of insurrection ... rebellion and revolt...!*" (-salem is related to *shalom* / peace)

Apostle Paul who wrote Colossians saw political turmoil there, insurrection, riots, revolutionaries, zealots. Romans brought about peace by suppression.

Paul was a Pharisee. He was likely in the mob when Pontius Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified because he saw a riot was forming if he didn't (27:24). Barabbas the insurrectionist was supposed to be crucified for his attempt to overthrow the government (gospel saved his fellow insurrectionist in Lk 23)

In Acts 21 he was falsely accused of being a man who led an insurrection. The book of Acts tells us in Paul's journeys before he wrote Colossians, he spoke before Claudius and Agrippa. Josephus writes of the time where there was violent chaos in the Roman senate over who would be their next leader: 'Agrippa exhorted [Claudius] not to let such a dominion slip out of his hands ... when he found that he was in disorder, and ready to resign up the government to the senate... the affairs of the senate were much worse than before; because they had not only failed in the recovery of their liberty, which they boasted themselves of, but were in dread... [Josephus talks of soldiers in streets] though this was to the great vexation of the multitude...'¹

Paul wrote Col 3 around 61-62 AD. A couple years after he wrote this letter in Rome there was a real turning point where government persecution of Christians grew. The capitol city burned. In the aftermath it was blamed on Christians. A fellow pastor writes of the new leader who came into power:

'fires of persecution were still some distance away, but ... Nero was already known to be a tyrant. He had made life...miserable... During his reign he outlawed "the sale of any kind of cooked foods in the taverns" (so there was no "indoor dining"). He also set limits on "public banquets" (... "outdoor dining"...)... Finally, Nero declared Christianity to be illegal throughout the Roman empire. The Christian historian... Severus wrote in chapter 19 of his Chronicle [church worship / practice of] their religion was prohibited by laws which were enacted; and by edicts openly set forth it was proclaimed unlawful to be a Christian [some not only 'cancelled' but killed] ... the great fire that consumed Rome represented an emergency ... for the government to exercise unprecedented power and authority over its people [sound familiar?]. ... it was Christians the government was able to blame for societies woes, so too it seems that religious conservatives are increasingly being targeted and blamed for everything that is wrong in [today's] world.'²

Things changed much for Christianity the 2-4 years after Colossians was written (and will for us) but God inspired these words for His peace to rule.

A Bible dictionary says this Greek word for *peace* 'refers mainly to being in political peace... But the political meanings of peace are associated with emotional and physical meanings [and spiritual] ... it "rules" ... hearts...'³

The hymn “May the mind of Christ” says may His ‘peace...rule my life in everything, That I may be calm to comfort sick and sorrowing.’<sup>4</sup> The word *Christ* in v. 15 is the word *Messiah*. Paul grew up hearing about the peace of Christ/Messiah that would rule. He knew Jewish prophets like Isaiah wrote:

- There’s no peace for the wicked, way of peace they have not known<sup>5</sup>
- Isa 9: *Prince of peace...no end to increase of peace in His kingdom*
- Isa 2, 32, etc. said His peace would rule (prophecy of His kingdom)
- Isa 26:3 perfect peace for mind stayed on Lord (cf. heart in Col 3:15)  
Stayed on Him, the hymn says ‘hearts are fully blessed  
Finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest’<sup>6</sup>
- Isa 48:18 if you heed His commands you can have peace like a river  
Like a river glorious is Christ’s perfect peace ...  
Peace like a river...[even] when sorrows like sea billows roll<sup>7</sup>
- Isa 57 promised the peace of Christ for believers mourning the loss of loved ones: *‘creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near,’ says the LORD. ‘And I will heal them.’...The righteous perish...the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.* (v. 19, 1-2 NIV, Eph 2 applies to Jesus)

We’ve had 3 senior saints die this month in their old age, righteous ones taken away to be spared from sin and its effects on the mind and body (Bob and Marion and Marge). The Bible promises they enter into peace and rest. The same chapter promises peace for those who mourn as they also praise:

Lonely or sad [when] friends apart, God will take care of you;  
He’ll give **peace** to your aching **heart**, God will take care of you.  
...ev’ry day, O’er all the way; He will take care of you<sup>8</sup>

Let that peace of Christ rule in your heart, even if it’s aching or breaking.

Best definition of the peace of Christ is Christ’s own words in upper room: *‘Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid...*

*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.’<sup>9</sup>*

That takes us from Christ’s peace in history to

## **#2. peace in sovereignty**

Col 3:15 *And let the peace of Christ rule ...* [others translate it ‘control’]

Who’s in charge? Comstock phone call – told you have months to live,,,

Talking with Pastor Dale – who’s in charge? It’s not me, Lord’s in charge.

In v. 1 Christ is sitting at the right hand, that’s place of rule (Ps 110:1 & 2).

We sang earlier<sup>10</sup> ‘let your will be done...till your sovereign work on earth is done...’

and ‘You’re seated now in heaven enthroned at God’s right hand,

You shattered death and freed us from our fears.’ You’re the glorious Christ!

Col 3:16 says we're to speak to one another in psalms and hymns, so I do.

Ps 103: *The LORD has established his throne...his kingdom **rules** over all.*<sup>11</sup>

Ps 29: *The LORD sat enthroned...[He] sits as King forever. The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with **peace**.*<sup>12</sup>

Paul says teach each other in hymns: Perfect peace? Our future all unknown?

Jesus we know, and He is on His throne.<sup>13</sup>

Another hymn says: You Are Sovereign In all affairs of man;  
No powers of death or darkness Can thwart Your perfect plan.  
All chance and change transcending, Supreme in time and space,  
You hold your trusting children Secure in Your embrace<sup>14</sup>

Commentators define *peace* in v. 15 as 'rest and contentment, knowing... our lives are in [His] hands, that nothing can separate us from Christ... the calmness of the soul...undisturbed by adversity or...fear'<sup>15</sup> (cf. Lk 2:11, 14)

Ps 89: '*you rule over the...waves...you calm them*'<sup>16</sup> (and He can our hearts)

*let it rule/control* - present tense active verb=continual action, habit, pattern.

Some translate Col 3:15 'let the peace of Christ *reign*' (NAB, NJB). It can also be translated 'govern, hold sway, preside, regulate, arbitrate, determine, decide as an umpire, be the ruling principle, have undisputed supremacy.'<sup>17</sup>

In Isaiah the one '*Who proclaims peace ... says ... "Your God reigns!"*'<sup>18</sup>

Peace isn't reigning in Washington D.C. but the Lord's peace is to rule us.

My friend and fellow Pastor Drew Buell wrote:<sup>19</sup> In light of the anxiety that so many of us are feeling about the days to come, I want to remind all of us that no that matter who sits in the White House, no matter who holds the gavel in the house of representatives... or who is serving as the President of the Senate...no matter who [is] in the Governor's mansion in Sacramento ... Our lives are not ultimately governed by the men and women who sit in the seats of authority in the world...[Col 3:1 is the seat of authority over all]

Republicans weren't in charge before and Democrats aren't in charge now.

Isa 9: '*to us a Son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders.*'

King Jesus is unelected, it's undisputable He wins, and He's unimpeachable

His Law can't be vetoed. The liberals can't cancel Him. The media can't censor or silence or stop His word. He can't be banned by any company.

We should be concerned about government overreach but we also need to remember Christ overrules governments and His Word overrides theirs.

He's preeminent over presidents. He's Commander in Chief of the universe.

He's never wringing His hands, He's always ruling all things by His hands.

He's never reacting to what's happening on the news, He's always reigning.

Daniel 2 and 4 says *'He controls the course of world events; he removes kings and sets up other kings...For this has been decreed...so that everyone may know that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world. He gives them to anyone he chooses...His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal. All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He does as he pleases among...the people of the earth. No one can stop him...'*<sup>20</sup>

Even in pagan Rome, Paul wrote government authorities that are in power or come to power are established by the Lord who works all things together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.<sup>21</sup>

Emperors are impotent before the Lord God the Omnipotent who reigns. If you want the peace of Christ to rule your heart, turn off CNN and turn your heart to the Sovereign. Col 3:1, set your heart on where He is on His throne. Many things are not right in America, but Jesus is King at God's right hand.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts because He rules in sovereignty!

That takes us to last 2 applications: Christ's peace internally and relationally  
Col 3:15 starts in the heart then it moves out to the church body (relational).  
Look at end of v. 15 *'And be thankful.'* Peacefulness goes with thankfulness

Listen for those words as I read 1 Tim 2, how we're to pray for Pres. Biden:  
*'prayers, intercessions, and **thanksgivings** be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a **peaceful** and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ...'*

APPLY TO GOVT.

APPLY TO GOSPEL TO UNSAVED

BE THANKFUL - v 14-15 covers love, joy, peace - we need Spirit for this

Thankfulness applied to gathering with believers who differ on Covid  
Don't judge those wearing masks (or not), be thankful they're there  
Again note the link of thankfulness and peacefulness. Peace vs. fear in 2020

TURN BACK JUST A FEW PAGES TO PHILIPPIANS 4 FOR MORE

in your hearts" - Bible says *'as a man thinks in his heart, so is he ...'*  
The heart in the Bible includes the mind, will, thoughts, desires, affections.

One paraphrase of Col 3:15 says *'the peace that Christ provides should show you what you should think'* (LN).

The combination of thankfulness and peace is a logical one. Generally a lack of peace results from self-seeking or dissatisfaction with things as they are.

Thankfulness points one to the realization that all things are provided in Christ. There is no room for ill will or bitterness if thankfulness prevails. The epistle provides ample reasons for thankfulness (NAC, 32:30)

Below from sermon on Philippians 4:6-8

<https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=31918223505>

There's a powerful image in Phil 4:7. The peace of God, this shalom for the whole body and soul includes wholeness, wellness, and healthiness instead of anxiousness that's so unhealthy in every way. As we give thanks to God, He gives us His peace that surpasses all comprehension and that guards our hearts and minds. The powerful image is guarding, like guards protecting what's valuable, that's what this God-given peace is doing to protect our hearts and minds in Christ. That Greek word guard was used of stationed troops that might form a garrison around a city, a battalion of Roman soldiers, military sentinels, security forces to keep intruders out. That's what God's peace does for our minds, keeping out intruding anxious thoughts. It's as if God dispatched us heavenly peacekeeping special forces.

ILLUSTRATION: SECURITY FORCES AT PHILIPPINES BANKS

Hendriksen wrote: 'God's peace will mount guard at the door of the heart... that impregnable fortress from which no one can dislodge...Peace is the smile of God reflected in the soul...the heart's calm after Calvary's storm'

The same Lord who said to a storm on the Sea of Galilee, 'Peace, be still,' the One who ruled the wind and seas below, can also say be still to my soul.

That peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ, like a security guard, or like secret service protection detail. It's been pointed out as Paul wrote v. 7 he 'was in a Roman prison and could look right at the soldier charged to keep him safely in protective custody. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote...this peace of God will walk around the ramparts and towers of our life. We are inside, and the activities of the heart and mind are producing those stresses and anxieties and strains from the outside. But the peace of God will keep them all out and we ourselves inside will be at perfect peace...in Christ...'

And then we can lie down in peace, resting our head like a pillow on God's providence. Ps 4:8 says from a grateful and glad heart: In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

This command to give thanks in everything presupposes God is sovereignly in charge of everything and is good and wise and loving in everything that comes our way, including what tempts us to anxiety or takes away peace.

## PEACE OF CHRIST INTERNALLY AND ALSO RELATIONALLY

BACK TO COL 3, READ V. 12-15

Thankfulness applied to gathering with believers who differ on COVID19.  
Don't judge those wearing masks (or not), be thankful they're there  
Again note the link of thankfulness and peacefulness. Peace vs. fear in 2020

ROM 12:19 'If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men', Rom 14 goes on: 'pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God [he talks there about even in what we or drink we're not to] ...do anything by which your brother stumbles' (v. 19-21). Rom 15 ends in same words as Phil 4:9 'the God of peace be with you...'

the subject is "the peace of Christ," not "you"; this is something the Colossians have not to accomplish but to let happen—to let go any attempt to control and manipulate and to let the peace of Christ be the determiner<sup>22</sup>

O'Brien: it is not a question of Christ's peace 'acting as an umpire'. Rather the verb means to rule; Christ himself, who is the Lord of peace (cf. Eph. 2:14; 2 Thes. 3:16), is to be present and ruling in their midst. He is to control every area of their lives as they relate to one another.

This exhortation is sometimes misunderstood as a subjective guide to decision-making. Paul is not speaking here of an inner sense of peace as God's gift to those who are in his will: this would make little sense of the second half of the sentence which must control the interpretation, especially if this interpretation is to be kept in line with the context. The Christians, so varied in origins and diverse in character, have been called into 'a single body' (NEB). Probably it is this unique bringing together for which they are to be thankful. Now the rule of Christ is the rule of peace. It is inconceivable that those who share with one another the benefits of that great peace-making work of the cross (1:20) should live with any hatred or contempt... The Christian congregation should be a realm of peace just because every Christian is totally committed to the rule of peace. When Christ rules in the heart, his peace will rule in the fellowship.<sup>23</sup>

2 Cor 13:11: *rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, **live in peace**; and the God of love and **peace will be with you.***

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NAS) Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. <sup>12</sup> But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, <sup>13</sup> and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. **Live in peace with one another.**

## References:

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- <sup>1</sup> R. C. Lucas, *Fullness & Freedom: The Message of Colossians & Philemon*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 153–154.
- <sup>1</sup> Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 516–518.
- <sup>2</sup> <http://coolchurch.org/blog/2021/01/18/not-home-yet>
- <sup>3</sup> Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 632–633.
- <sup>4</sup> Kate B. Wilson, “May the Mind of Christ My Savior.”
- <sup>5</sup> Isaiah 48:22, 57:21, 59:8.
- <sup>6</sup> Frances Havergal, “Like a River Glorious.”
- <sup>7</sup> Horatio Spafford, “It is Well with My Soul.”
- <sup>8</sup> Civilia D. Martin, “God Will Take Care of You.”
- <sup>9</sup> John 14:27, 16:33.
- <sup>10</sup> Sovereign Grace Music, “Let Your Kingdom Come,” and “Glorious Christ.”
- <sup>11</sup> v. 19.
- <sup>12</sup> v. 10-11 NKJV.
- <sup>13</sup> Edward Bickersteth, “Peace, Perfect Peace.”
- <sup>14</sup> Margaret Clarkson, “O Father, You Are Sovereign.”
- <sup>15</sup> Martha King, *An Exegetical Summary of Colossians*, 270.
- <sup>16</sup> Psalm 89:9 NET.
- <sup>17</sup> King, 270-71.
- <sup>18</sup> Isaiah 52:7 NKJV.
- <sup>19</sup> <http://coolchurch.org/blog/2021/01/14/how-should-we-think-about-the-events-of-last-week-01-09-20>
- <sup>20</sup> Daniel 2:21, 4:17, 34-35 NLT.
- <sup>21</sup> Romans 13:1-4, 8:28.
- <sup>22</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 234.
- <sup>23</sup> R. C. Lucas, *Fullness & Freedom: The Message of Colossians & Philemon*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 153–154.