The Gracious Governance of Christ's Peace

Colossians 3:15

August 16, 2026

Well, we are returning to the study of Paul's letter to the Colossians, so you can turn to Colossians chapter 3, as today we consider a single verse, Colossians 3:15, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful."

Consideration of that single verse is going to occupy us for the next hour, and it's also going to take us into our time of communion around the Lord's table in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper.

But the contextual setting of that verse, as you know, as we've been studying together, the contextual setting of that verse is sanctification. Sanctification, the doctrine that explains the progressive growth in practical holiness that is the lifetime occupation of every Christian believer and is also a distinguishing sign of every true Christian.

After Paul has given a positive presentation of true justification and a negative polemical critique of a false gospel that's troubling the Colossians, Paul has started this chapter, chapter 3, by orienting the hearts and the minds of the believers in Colossae toward Heaven, toward heavenly things, toward Christ himself, who is everything to us.

So in order to keep seeking the things that are above, in order to set our minds on the things above, we have to go to war against anything that drags us back to our former sins. We have to mortify every single impulse of the old self.

We have to choke off its power and its influence, and that's what we saw in Colossians 3:5-7. We have to put off all the associated bad behaviors of the old self as well. That's Colossians 3:8-9. We have to shed all of that like dead skin.

And now that the old man is truly dead and gone because of Christ, we're no longer identified with that old man. So we are aggressively stamping out every remaining vestige of the image of the old man in us. We're erasing every trace of his sinful character. The way of the old man is the way, as we all know, the way of futility and frustration and conflict and darkness and death.

But praise be to God, right, verse 10 of chapter 3, that we have put on the new man. We've put on the new man, who is being renewed to a full knowledge according to the image of the one who created him.

Now, what used to define us, like verse 11 says, that which had cut deep grooves into our personality and what shaped our character culturally, ethnically, socially, politically, economically, whatever it is, those old categories of verse 11, they all fade to black as we all learn together as one body of Christ.

We learn a new culture. We learn a culture that is revealed to us from Heaven, that settles on us, that changes us, that shapes us, that develops us, that matures us. We are, as Colossians 3:12 says, the elect of God. We're holy, we're beloved.

And we find out, here, that when God chose to bring us near to himself, when he reconciled us to himself in Christ, he brought us all in. He withheld no right, no privilege. He pulled out all the stops, having given us his beloved Son, as Romans 8:32 says, "God was pleased also to freely give us all things as well."

God made us citizens of his kingdom, with Christ as our King. God adopted us into his own family, making us younger siblings of Christ, our brother. God made us living stones in his temple with Christ himself as our great high priest.

And God brought us into the very depths of his mind, revealing his will to us. And he's given to us all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ. And he's given us Christ, the Word of God incarnate. He's given us Christ as God's living Word, as the great prophet that Moses promised, who is God's final word, as Hebrews 1:2 says.

So as citizens of his kingdom, as children of the father, as living stones in God's temple, as students, true disciples, privileged to sit in his classroom, sit at the feet of God's Christ, soak up the knowledge of the truth, learn the wisdom of the eternal God, God wants us to dress the part.

Look at verse 12. "So as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and graciously forgiving each other. Whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord graciously forgave you, so also should you above all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

One new people dressed like that are of all people most favored, most privileged, most blessed of all people. What they wear, how they behave, the excellence of their bearing, the dignity of their comportment and their demeanor, all of this truly befits their new station: to adorn the beauty of their God.

So as kingdom citizens, how are they to be governed? As sons and daughters, what family identity marks them, keeps them close? As stones in God's temple, what is the mortar that binds them together? What knowledge compels their hearts, mind, will and emotion, what knowledge compels their hearts in unity? It's this, verse 15, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful."

The unity comes through the ministry of our head, Christ, whose peace is to rule each individual heart for the unity of the whole body and for the sharing of the harmony of gratitude. I'll say that again. The unity spoken of, here, comes to the ministry of our head, the Lord Jesus Christ. His peace is to rule in each individual heart for the unity of the whole body and for sharing in the harmony of gratitude.

That has been my prayer, our prayer, for Grace Church I'd say for many, many years. It's been our prayer, and it's what I hope the Lord will, he is producing, and I want to see him continue to produce this in our church.

So several things to understand, here. First, the expression, "the peace of Christ." This is the only time it's used like this in Scripture, "the peace of Christ." So what does that mean? And then the ministry of Christ's peace, how does that work? And then what is the resulting mentality? What is the resulting mentality?

So the first point, number one, the meaning of Christ's peace, the meaning of Christ's peace. In the original, Paul puts that expression, "the peace of Christ," he puts that up at the front of the sentence, which gives it emphasis in the text. So "the peace of Christ," let it rule your hearts, "let it rule in your hearts." That's how it's expressed in the original.

"The peace of Christ," then, is the chief and the critical component, the chief element, here, for understanding verse 15. And there are several important questions that come immediately to mind when you examine this. We understand peace, the word *eirene*, opposite of *polemos*, where you get the word polemics, from that word *polemos*. It's the word for armed conflict or war.

So peace in its most objective sense is a state of civility instead of hostility. It's stability instead of agitation and strife and discord. And when there is a cessation of hostility, when there is an end to armed conflict in warfare, that objective peace creates conditions in which subjective peace abounds, where there are feelings of peace.

So peace is tranquility instead of turmoil in this subjective sense. It's serenity, not tumult. It's calm instead of agitation.

And so, as I said, several questions come to mind, here. Does Paul, then, here in this expression, "the peace of Christ," does he refer to objective peace, which is a state of peace instead of war? Or is he talking about a subjective peace, like a peaceful feeling?

And if it is a subjective sense, is it the sense of peace that Christ himself has? Or is it a sense of peace that he gives? And by the way, why not simply say, "Let peace rule in your hearts?" Why does Paul add the genitive "of Christ" to this word peace?

Okay, and speaking of that genitive, what kind of a genitive is this? I know you're all thinking it; I'm just giving

an expression to your questions. What kind of a genitive is this, anyway? Is it a descriptive genitive, that is, Christ-like peace? Is it a possessive genitive, which, the peace that Christ has, possesses?

Some commentators identify this as a genitive of source: peace that is sourced in Christ or comes from Christ. Or maybe it's none of the above and something else entirely.

Let's answer that last question, first, because I know it's the burning question on your heart right now. Since of Christ modifies what is called a verbal noun, remember that from your Greek study, right, modifies a verbal noun, it's a noun related to a verb, it can't have any of the senses that I just mentioned to you.

So if you had those in your mind and you're thinking, Oh, it could be A, B, C, and that's, none of those. It's not a descriptive genitive. It's not a possessive genitive. It's not a genitive of source.

Those elements may be in the concept, here, but they are not in the grammar since the genitive of Christ modifies what's called a verbal noun, a noun that has a verb related to it. So

peace, *eirene*, that's related to the verb *eireneuo*, *eireneuo*, to be at peace, to live in peace, to keep the peace.

Well, since it's, this genitive of Christ is related to this verbal noun, there are two options, here. It could be an objective genitive, or it could be a subjective genitive. We're making decision trees, here, right?

If the peace of Christ is an objective genitive, then Christ would be the direct object of the verbal idea and the noun peace. So make peace with Christ would be what it's saying here.

And when we try to run that, then, back through the sentence in verse 15, it would be, Let making peace with Christ rule in your hearts, which not only is confusing, but it sounds like an unbearable, intolerable form of legalism. Making peace with Christ? Try to, you try to make peace with Christ and let that rule your hearts. Man, we could never do that, right? Huh.

So we hope this other option is going to make a bit more sense and actually lighten our load. And it does. But let's find out. If the peace of Christ is, instead, a subjective genitive, Christ then becomes the subject of the verbal idea, so Christ

makes peace, or perhaps the peace that Christ gives, the peace that Christ, Christ brings.

So does that work? Let's run it through the sentence. "Let the peace that Christ gives, the peace that Christ brings, rule in your hearts." That's more like it. Not only makes sense, but it actually comports very well with the theology of the Bible, the entire Bible, particularly what we see in the New Testament.

So having clarified the kind of genitive this is, we now have an objective starting point grounded in the grammar, which is a solid foundation to work from. We try to practice the historical-grammatical approach to biblical interpretation. I wanted to take you through that little exercise to show you a little bit how this works and something that really matters for your soul right here.

What kind of peace does Christ bring? It's an objective peace, right? Peace instead of war. If we ask what kind of peace has Christ won for us, well, that's clearly the answer. It's an objective peace, a cessation of hostilities. No more are we at war with God. More importantly, no more is God at war with us. He's given peace. The conflict is over. We're reconciled, right?

What about a subjective peace, though, a mental serenity, a tranquil heart, a conscience at rest, emotions in complete control and in service to the cause of God? Does Christ bring that, too? Well, he sure does. The primacy of place has to belong to the objective peace that Christ has won for us when he died on the cross.

Paul is referring, at least initially, here, to what he taught back in Colossians 1:20, that "through Christ God made peace through the blood of his cross," objectively. "Though you were alienated, enemies in mind and in evil deeds, he has now reconciled you in the body of his flesh through death, to present you before him holy and blameless and beyond reproach." Objective.

And Paul tells how the subjective peace was accomplished in Colossians 2:14. He says that "God has cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us. He's taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

So those who were once alienated, God brought near. Those who were once enemies, God now calls friends. Those who were once guilty of cosmic rebellion and, get this, siding with the devil, God conquered their sin and he conquered their hearts. He

forgave them. He went further than that. He adopted them into his own family, and he did so all in the ministry of Christ.

"Therefore," Romans 5:1, "having been justified by faith, we have peace with God," objectively, "through our Lord Jesus Christ." We who were once helpless and ungodly, Romans 5:6; we were once vile sinners, verse 8 says; once God's enemies, verse 10, by grace God saved us, changed our status.

He brought about a cessation of hostility. God, God is no longer at war with us. Our Creator is no longer bent on our annihilation, on our un-creation, to disintegrate us, cast us into Hell.

Now, by justification, he's declared us righteous. He's turned us into citizens in his kingdom, friends through Christ, members of his own family. That, beloved, is an objective peace.

You know who's always had that peace as an abiding, unbroken, everlasting possession? Unbroken, objective peace is the sole possession of the triune God himself, right? It's more properly understood as the blessedness of God, shared perfectly among the members of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit.

Setting the Trinity aside to talk about humanity, now, among humanity, one man has possessed unbroken, objective peace

with God. There was one man who was created with it, but broke it. Adam, right? He lost that peace in unbelief and transgression.

But Christ, the new and better Adam, he never departed from that peace. He always possessed it, always abided in it. There was never any conflict, not one bit of conflict between him and the father.

So Paul draws our attention to this. He uses the expression the peace of Christ. Having peace with God through the redemptive work of Christ, we can consider peace now in its subjective sense, which he also possessed. Christ also possessed that, always.

That is a consistent picture in the Gospels and one that as we together traversed the Gospel of Luke, it's just amazing to see him with such peace, such a subjective sense of ease, even in those difficult of circumstances.

He always walked with the perfect composure, tranquility of mind, serenity of heart. He was always in perfect contentment, always at ease, at rest, stable, steadfast, even under extreme pressure, duress, under scrutiny. When he faced adversity, he

was so calm, wasn't he, and poised. He was always collected and composed, dignified. Kind of like he's in charge of everything.

Christ has, in his disposition or personality, if we could say it that way, he's got an evenness of emotion, doesn't he? Perfect expressions in him of joy and laughter, but without frivolity or banality or triviality. He wasn't a goof-off, but did he enjoy? Absolutely.

Perfect expressions of the darker emotions, too: anger without any sin; sadness and sorrow without any despair, but always in a perfect, unbroken hope in God. He had longing for things, but no covetousness. He had desire, but no anxiety about outcomes. He was always at perfect peace and rest in the Father's providence and timing and circumstances.

So an objective sense and a subjective sense, but the objective is primary. The subjective flows out from it. Understand the meaning of Christ's peace, more we could say about that, but we need to move on to a second point, so we can see what Paul intends for us to do with this doctrine.

Number two, the ministry of Christ's peace, the ministry of Christ's peace. When Paul says, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts," what he's calling us to do, what he's

bidding us to do, is to come and partake of Christ's ministry to us.

That is to say, we are all to come under the governance of the peace of Christ, which is Christ's ministry to us, and yet we have a crucial role to play, here, to partake of it. That's why that's put into a command. Paul does put this command in the third person, kind of like a, let it be or let this happen.

That doesn't turn you into a passive recipient. You are a recipient. There is a peace that Christ ministers to you, but there's an active part that you play.

When translated into English, let it happen, this third-person imperative makes it sound kind of like a permissive idea. We permit it to happen. Allow it. Seems kind of weak to our ears and a little bit odd when we think about the powerful Lord Jesus, letting him do stuff.

That's not really the sense in the Greek at all. The force is more; it's stronger. It's more like, You must do this. So instead of the third-person imperative, Let this happen, instead of it being weak, it's actually quite strong because Paul is, here, addressing the will.

He's not speaking just to your mind though it's got to come through the mind so you understand the peace of Christ and objective, subjective, the things we just talked about. But he actually wants to address the will.

He speaks directly to individual volition, and he's putting us in this verse under obligation. He's calling us to a habitual duty here, a continual practice that we should practice every single day. And you think, Oh boy, another command to obey.

Let me just express this to you this way. If I take any kid, let's say under the age of 10, and I command that kid, I want you to partake of chocolate and candy and milkshakes, you're like, Man, dude, you're overstepping the bounds of your authority. Don't bind my conscience to enjoying chocolate and good things and things I really like.

This is kind of like that, only what I just said was trivial and stupid. This is not that. The more you understand, the better you understand what Paul is saying here, the happier you will be in pursuing obedience to this.

It'll be like if I just say, if you're tired and I say, Hey, go have yourself a nap. You don't look at me and say, Legalist! You say, Thank you. I think I will.

If I say to some, some men, hey, let's, let's go grill some steaks, put it on the grill, have some potatoes and some, nothing green, just red meat," they'd get that. I don't mean to insult women, but I don't know what you do. It's, it's like saying, let's all go shopping, you know, and go get us some nice handbag or shoes, or whatever you guys do.

It's not a burden. It's not a burden. And anybody commanding you to do such a thing, he's not considered a legalist, but a great friend. That's what Paul is here to us. That's what the word of God is to us, is a good friend commanding us what we really want anyway, what we deeply, deeply need.

Remember the clarification we just learned about the kind of genitive this is, that, of Christ is a, is a subjective genitive. Okay, so we render the command, Let the peace that Christ gives, or maybe Let the peace that Christ brings, let that peace rule in your hearts. That's the idea, here.

So what does he mean, then, by rule? The original sense of this verb, the verb is *brabeuo, brabeuo* is to be a judge or an umpire in the public games. So think about the Olympic games or the Ithsmian games or different contests and things they had

back in Paul's day. To *brabeuo* is to be a judge, to be an umpire in those public games.

So it's referring to the referee in the game, or the one who blows the whistle, gives the penalties or awards the points. It's the umpire who calls balls and strikes, who shouts Safe! or he shouts, You're out! It's that guy.

Ancient times, the *brabeutes*, this would be the judge of some Olympic events. He qualifies athletes, scores the performances, awards, prizes, bronze, silver, gold medals as we practice today. But the broader sense of the verb then, as it meant that originally, it meant really, then, to broaden out, to preside over, to rule, to direct, or even control.

So let the peace that Christ gives, let the peace that he brings preside over your hearts, rule in your hearts, direct your hearts, control your hearts. And it’s, just think about the original context as judge in the games who wants to award prizes, that’s the idea here. It's positively directed.

Any judgment over our sin, that's been done, right, at the cross? It's not talking about that kind of judgment. It's talking about a judgment and a control and a direction that’s for your good. So let's consider this in the two senses of peace

that we spoke about earlier, an objective sense of peace and a subjective sense of peace.

First, the objective peace of Christ. Let the objective peace that Christ won for you, let the peace with God that Christ secured for you, let that peace rule over your hearts. Your objective standing before God, your position as a saint bought and paid for by Christ, let that peace act as your umpire, your judge, the referee in your hearts.

So this has to do with your justification, the declaration of God that you are indeed righteous, not because you are personally righteous, but because you are counted righteous in Christ by faith alone in Christ, not according to any of your works.

This is Romans 5:1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Have peace, that's a present-tense indicative mood. It refers to an abiding, ongoing reality. Peace with God equals fact for you who are in Christ.

In the doctrine of justification by faith, it's entirely the work of God from start to finish. In the perfect work of Christ, who acted as your substitutionary atonement, who is your

propitiatory sacrifice, he's the one who reconciled you to God, made peace. God gives us a new nature in regeneration by his grace; we turn from unbelief to belief.

So this is a repentant faith. It is a faith that is repenting. It is a repentant faith. We believe the gospel, we trust Christ, and then God imputes our sin to Christ, and he imputes his righteousness to us and it's on that basis he declares us righteous by faith in Jesus Christ. It's the doctrine of justification.

So how does this work, to let the objective peace of Christ rule in your hearts. How does this work? Let me give you a little list, not exhaustive at all, but just a few examples of how this works.

We can start right with the Colossian context, what we've been studying, the vulnerability. We'll start with the vulnerability that the false teachers took advantage of that that these Colossian believers, like all believers, these believers still struggle with sins. So the false teachers took advantage of their sensitive consciences and the fact that they felt guilty over sinning.

They took advantage of this saying something like this to them, See? This whole Christ thing? Not helpful. Your rituals aren't good enough. You've given up on the rituals and the connection to the divine that you used to have to turn to this. Simple bread and wine. Are you kidding me?

You left the rituals that connect you with the elemental spirits of the world, and you no longer attend their feasts. You no longer honor their days by fasting and preparing yourself. Maybe that's why you're struggling with the sins of the flesh. Just look at you. Poor excuse you are as a representative of your religion.

So to combat their insinuations, resist those pressures to fight against those kinds of slanders and that kind of intimidation, let the objective peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Let him act as the true arbiter and the judge of the comments and the accusations. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" even if, even when, we struggle with sin, even if we fall, even when we fall.

For what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did. God did. He sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, he condemns sin in the flesh. He knows where the problem is.

He did that "in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, those of us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." He's taking care of that in your justification. He's working it out in your sanctification. It's a progress, it's a growth process. It takes time, but the real work's been done.

So we battle any condemning accusations, any of these slanderous insinuations, any intimidations from other people, letting the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.

But what if those condemning thoughts come from within? That's really troubling, isn't it? When the accusations come from our own consciences, well, what then? Same thing. Let the objective peace of Christ rule in your hearts then, too.

Let his peace and him act as the just judge to look upon the finished work of Christ, and then declare no condemnation over you. The Apostle John put it this way, "We shall know by this that we are of the truth and shall assure our heart before him in whatever our heart condemns us." Whatever our heart condemns us? Yeah, anything. It's a big bucket. "For God is greater than our heart. He knows all things."

You know what else he knows? He knows the justification he declared over you. He hasn't forgotten that. "By this," John says, "we have confidence before God." Isn't that good news?

So any assault from worldly accusers or intimidators, any assault from, let's call this fleshly thinking, a conscience that is weak or poorly informed, all of it is combated swiftly and effectively by the rule of the objective peace of Christ.

Let's add one more. What if the devil himself comes to attack you, insinuating against you, charging you, making a slanderous accusation against you? What if he comes, not, you know, with a, pointy horns and sharp tail and a pitchfork and dressed in his little devil suit?

But he comes in the form of pastors, comes in the form of bad religion, comes in the form of weak doctrine, comes in the form of false teachers, foolish pastors, hypocrites who are confused, who then, maybe unwittingly, but maybe intentionally, lay heavy burdens on people and load consciences with guilt.

What happens then? This very thing happened to Joshua, the great high priest who served a returning Israel under Zerubbabel. You don't need to turn there, but jot it down and look at it later, Zechariah 3:1-5. "And then he showed me Joshua

the high priest, standing before the angel of Yahweh, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And Yahweh said to Satan, 'Yahweh rebuke you, Satan. Indeed, Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you. Is this not a brand delivered from the fire?' Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.

"And he answered and spoke to those who were standing before him, saying, 'Remove the filthy garments from him.' And again he said to him, 'See, I've made your iniquity pass away from you, and will clothe you festal robes.' And then I said, 'Let them put a clean turban on his head.' And so they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments while the angel of Yahweh was standing by."

What a picture! What a picture of the kindness of God himself to forgive us, take away the filthy garments and put festival robes upon us, in this case, a priestly robe and a turban on his head.

Whether the attacks and charges come from the world, the flesh, or the devil himself, and beloved, note this: Even when there are sins, legitimate causes for accusation, like we just heard earlier from Psalm 38, from David, the objective peace of Christ, the peace that he won for us, reconciling us to God by

his grace, by faith in the finished work of Christ, we're to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, in our minds, in our emotions, in our will.

Let his peace preside over your minds, your thoughts. Let it control your emotions. Keep your feelings in line with the truth of what really is and not what other people say it to be, even your own condemning conscience says it to be, or the devil himself.

Let his peace direct your will so that you think and speak and act in faith in any charge that comes against us whatsoever. When the peace of Christ rules, our umpire, the peace of Christ, it cries out Safe! Safe! Justified! Forgiven! Reconciled!"

In theological terms, we might put it this way, you must learn to let your justification rule in your sanctification or some might say it this way, the indicatives of salvation must have the presiding influence over the imperatives as you work out your salvation. That's the objective peace of Christ.

There's a subjective element or aspect of Christ's ruling peace as well. Because from the objective reality of our peace with God, which Christ won for us, there is obviously going to

be an increase in the experience of a subjective peace from God, which again, Christ himself ministers to us.

In all things related to God, that is to say, in all things, period, right? All things are all related to God. He's the sovereign over all things, and he's meticulously sovereign over all things.

So in all things related to God, Christ mediates. Christ communicates, ministers the peace and goodness of God to us. He ministers to us as prophet, priest, and king. Jesus told his disciples in John 14:27, he's thinking about his forthcoming ministry as prophet, priest, and king to them, in an improved condition, looking past the cross to death, burial, resurrection, ascension, glory.

He's thinking about that ministry. "'Peace I leave with you,'" he says. "'My peace I give you,'" he says. "'Therefore let your heart not be troubled, nor let it be fearful.'" My peace is what Jesus called it. Paul, here, calls it the peace of Christ, an objective peace with God that Jesus accomplished on the cross, and a subjective peace that Christ has ministered to his people before, during, and after, and ever since.

That ministry began in earnest on Resurrection evening, and as he told his disciples who were hiding behind a locked door, their hearts were troubled, they were fearful. And so they've locked the door, they're hiding in the upper room. And he comes in, stands among them, poof, he's there, and he says, "'Peace to you.'" He reminds them, "'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you,'" says to them again, "'Peace be to you."'

Jesus had ministered to them as the perfect mediator before the crucifixion, after being crucified, buried, raised from the dead. And now that he's ascended into heaven, he ministers no longer in a state of humiliation, but in glorification.

He now has a ministry, an improved ministry in an improved state. He is the perfect prophet, telling us the truth. He teaches us the meaning. He trains us to walk in that truth and disciples us by the Word and by the Spirit to grow in wisdom.

He said, "'These things I've spoken to you, that in me you may have peace,'" John 16:33. "'In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I've overcome the world,'" just proved it on the cross, resurrection from the dead.

In his prophetic ministry, Jesus speaks truth to bolster our faith, teaches truth to give us courage to face every trial,

to endure all kinds of trouble, to withstand adversity and to win. That's a subjective sense of peace that comes through the ministry of Christ, who's the perfect prophet.

Christ is also the perfect priest, flawless in his righteousness, offering himself first as a substitution for us, the sacrifice of atonement that we needed to propitiate the wrath of God to reconcile us to the father. And after that he administers all the benefits of that reconciliation.

In fact, right after what he said in John 16:33, Jesus entered into his high-priestly prayer. He says in John 16:33, "'These things I've spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I've overcome the world.'"

And then he enters into his high-priestly prayer. Lovingly, gently, tenderly, he assures us of God's favor. He hears our prayers as our priest, calms our fears, assures us of God's love for us, ministers to our needs. He relieves us of our anxieties, rests us in our worries, walks with us through every trial.

As Hebrews 4:15 says, "We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses. We've got one who's been tempted in all things, just as we are, yet without sin." That's

the priest we need. Sinless one. Yeah, he experienced everything but never sinned. He can lift us up.

In his high-priestly ministry, Christ prays for us during our temptations. He praises God for our successes, and he pleads the merits of his blood when we fall. He prays that we'll grow mature, more mature, strengthened and believing through everything.

Hebrews 2:17-18, "He was made like his brethren in all things, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since he himself was tempted in that which he has suffered, he's able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." Beloved, he's with you.

Christ is the perfect king. He's the one who leads his troops from the front, not from the rear. He's not in the rear with the gear. He's in the front, actually fighting the battle for you. He vanquishes every enemy. He vanquished the greatest enemy, sin, death, Satan, single-handedly, really leaving us very little to do but to divide the spoils of war.

He gives us a role, clean up operations, mop-up operations. He has us stand up for him, fight battles of our own, and he

equips us for that, fully dresses us in his armor, as Ephesians 6 says, full-armor-of-God passage, "Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with the truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation," here it is, "of the gospel of peace."

Steady, firm footing, because the objective peace of Christ, which gives you an agility and an alacrity and a strength on a firm foundation as you fight battles. That's what he gives. "In addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith with which you'll be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, also receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." And on and on it goes.

Stability in battle comes from standing strong, standing on a firm foundation, which is the objective peace that Christ won. But we move, we're able to spring forward with alacrity, power because of that subjective sense of peace, the same piece that Christ himself lived in, walked in, operated in.

Although we're in a war, enlisted in the king's army, we fear no evil. We're "anxious for nothing," Philippians 4:6-7, because "in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, we send our requests up to God." We send them up

in prayer. "The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Probably no stress more intense than warfare, and yet through it all we could be free from all fear. We're to let the peace of Christ rule, preside over us, control us, direct us in a subjective sense, too, because Christ, in his kingly ministry, he rules us, his people, not by the rod. He rules us by strong assurances of his peace, his love, his affection.

So we let this subjective peace of Christ rule in our hearts, too, assuring the mind, soothing and settling in the emotions, steadying the will, so we can make good decisions serving our king.

We're to let the ministry of our great mediator, the one who communicates his peace to us in various ways, to meet every moment. Peace comes from his prophetic truth and rules our minds. Peace comes through his priestly ministrations, caring for us in our weaknesses and attending to our needs.

Peace comes to us by his kingly power, providing security, safety, infinite supply. He dresses us in his own armor, robes us in the shining, resplendent garments of his own righteous

beauty, his royal magnificence. We move through life that way, with the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts.

As much as I'd love to camp here a bit longer, Paul has a further design to show us in this verse. So thirdly, the mentality of Christ's peace. The meaning of Christ's peace, the ministry of Christ's peace, and now the mentality of Christ's peace.

If I just give you the bottom line, here, this section of verse 15 is about unity and harmony, unity and harmony. Each of us, individually governed as we are by Christ's peace, each of us receiving the ministry of Christ's peace though we are many members, we share a corporate unity and we celebrate a true and beautiful Christian diversity. We share a corporate harmony because of a common and heartfelt gratitude.

Look at the verse again. "And the peace of Christ, let that rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body," that part speaks to our unity, "and be thankful," that part speaks to harmony.

The mentality of those under the governance of the peace of Christ comes from Christ himself. His life, his work, his ministry are what produce in us both unity; keeping us together

as one, and also a harmony as we all share profound gratitude with each other and bolster each other in harmony.

His redeeming reconciliation work leads to our eternal gratitude. So it's his mentality first, and then that spreads from the head through the body to us all. Let's start with the mentality of unity, a mentality of unity.

The implied subject, there, of the passive verb, you were called, who is that who called us? It's God, right? He is the hidden, the invisible agent there in that verb. When he called us, when God called us, he called us as members of one body, with one Lord Jesus Christ as the head of the church, Colossians 1:18 says.

We understand that this happened before the foundation of the world. It happened as a part of God's eternal decree, that God decreed not only Christ, but decreed a people for Christ, a whole people, unified people, one people.

All of us, being born as sons of Adam, are born in sin. We're born under the condemnation of God's law. We therefore have to be called by God in the same exact way. All of us are alike equidistant, far from the cross, and we needed God's grace to reach out and get us and bring us near. We need his call.

Our confession summarizes this, the *London Baptist Confession*. God calls each of us, causing us to be born again. It says in chapter 10, section one, that "God enlightens our minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away our heart of stone, giving us a heart of flesh, renewing our wills, and by his almighty power determining us to that which is good, and effectively drawing us to Jesus Christ, yet so as we come most freely, being made willing by His grace."

In the next chapter we see that unity and justification, that all whom God effectually calls, he also freely justifies. The next chapter says, "not by infusing righteousness into us, but by pardoning our sins, by accounting and accepting our persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in us or done by us, but for Christ's sake alone.

"Not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to us as our righteousness, but by imputing Christ's act of obedience under the whole law and His passive obedience in His death for our whole and sole righteousness by faith, which faith we have, not of ourselves. It's the gift of God."

We all come the same way. We're all in the same predicament because of our sin, under depravity, under God's condemnation, a

condemnation of his law. That means we all needed his grace in the same way. His call works on each of us effectively in the same way. He does the same things to us, justifies us by the same means, the same way, through the same Christ.

We are all alike called, justified by God, the exact same way, by the grace of God, by the works and the merit of Christ, by the power of the Spirit. We share the unity of our origin. We exist because one God called and justified us. We exist because one Spirit worked to apply the redemption of one Christ, the one Christ who reconciles us all to God.

And so we need to understand, by virtue of our origin, by virtue of what we are, our nature, everything that is us and explains us. God didn't save us to be islands unto ourselves. He didn't intend us to be isolated, wandering stars, each on our own individual journeys and taking our individual pathways heading to our own destinations.

From eternity, he chose us to belong together, to be together, to know one another. Better get used to one another, folks, because we're going to be with each other for eternity. That's a long time.

So while there is diversity in the body, there's not to be any division in our body, but only unity, an intentional, thoughtful, informed unity. Unity in a moral sense, since we're all partakers of Christ's prophetic office that we know and do his will.

Unity in a political sense, not since we're all Republicans, but since we're all citizens of a united, heavenly kingdom. The politics of our situation, of who we are, transcends all political structures and institutions here on this earth. We're citizens of a heavenly kingdom. We're subjects of Christ's kingly office.

Unity in a social sense, since we're all members of one family. God is our Father; Christ is our brother. And unity in an ethical sense, too, because we're all partakers of Christ's priestly office, his priestly perfection and instruction. His moral dealing with our sin, his teaching us in righteousness, sets a moral and ethical standard for us, that we're all unified, all the same moral, all the same ethic for us.

So we must be intentional in pursuing unity with each other because it is the will of him who called us in one body. It is our justification that presides over our sanctification, our

calling and justification that causes us to share in the same spirit of gratitude, which is what ends verse 15.

So the mentality of unity leads us to the mentality of harmony. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body," and then this, "be thankful." Be thankful.

Nearly forty uses of the verb for giving thanks, which is *eucharisteo*, fifteen uses of the noun gratitude or thanksgiving, *eucharistia*. This is the only use of that root, *eucharist*, to produce an adjective, which is, here, *eucharistos*. It's plural, here, so it's *eucharistoi*.

But Paul is describing, here, and that's why he uses the adjective, he's describing a mentality. It's a mindset. We have a mentality and a mindset of grateful people, thankful people.

In fact, every time we come into church on Sunday, we need to be looking around and pinching ourselves and saying, I can't even believe I'm, I'm here. I can't believe I get to do this, and I get to worship this God because of that Christ. I can't believe I have a copy of God's Word, and in fact this church is handing them out if I don't have one. So cool! I get to sing these songs, pray these prayers, be with these people! What

privilege is mine! This grateful, thankful mentality is to pervade the entire church. It's to set the tone for all of our interaction with each other.

In fact, all of our disagreements and debates, even our conflicts as well as they arise occasionally, according to verse 13, they're to be governed by the objective peace of Christ as well, a deep gratitude about our shared calling and justification, profound thankfulness of what that peace produces in a subjective peace that is aided and strengthened by the virtues of verse 12.

We're a grateful people to be members of one body together, sharing in, growing in compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. Man, to be joined together to this forbearing and forgiving group!

You think I'm going to get this kind of forbearance and forgiveness out there? You can forget it. We all feel that, chewed up, spit out, rejected, walked on. That's why we all feel like we've got to stand up, posture, put our shoulders back, chin out, take our blows.

It's not this body. It's not this body. We're all citizens of the same excellent kingdom, members of the same loving

family, worshippers being built into the same holy temple, members of the same student body in the same classroom. We are the most privileged people on the planet. As I said at the beginning, it's been my prayer for you, Grace Church, for many years, and shared among the elders, that we pray that God will mature us all more and more in this way.

For any of you who may be strangers to Christ's kingdom, family, temple, classroom, please stop and consider. Think about what's on offer here. This Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, the one who created and sustains all things, who in Jesus took on flesh and then died for the sins of all those whom God is calling, who now lives to intercede for them, that Christ even now extends to you this offer.

He says in Matthew 11, "'Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I'll give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I'm gentle and humble in heart, and you'll find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, my burden is light.'"

To be ruled by the peace of Christ is the secret of the easy yoke and the light burden. That's what's on offer to you. If you don't know him, take it from us. We can testify to you it is so worth it, because that eternal Christ who created the

heavens and the earth and who sustains all things by the word of his power, he's watching over my life every single moment of every single day. I want that for all of you, any of you who do not yet know Christ. Bow with me.

Our Father, we are so grateful for this great gospel, that you are a great Savior and a mighty God, and you sent to us the perfect Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for forgiving us of our sins, for looking upon Christ and his perfect atonement and covering us with his righteousness so that we stand before you not, not by anything that we've done. We couldn't stand. We would cower were not for your grace, were not for the covering of your perfect righteousness.

We thank you for that, and we ask that you would introduce any here who don't yet know you, don't yet know this peace of Christ objectively or subjectively or in any way, and pray that you would introduce him to Christ even today. In Jesus' name, amen.