

The Christian is without a rulebook by which to make his decisions. He has been delivered from the bondage of the law. Does this mean that he is without any aid when faced with decisions? Evidently not! The truth is that no one has ever been better equipped for making the right decisions than a genuine Christian. Already we have been reminded that the Christian is to walk in a pathway that is consistent with his new life in Christ. Instead of giving him a rule book by which he would seek to live a new life, the Lord has given him new life in Christ. This new life is so much better than a new set of rules.

Along with this new life, the Lord has given us principles by which we decide what is right and wrong for us. The Apostle sets forth three of those principles in this passage:

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And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:14-17 ESV).

The three are to be considered together. It is really impossible to follow one of the principles without the other. They will stand or fail in their effectiveness by being used together. If you have not considered them before, you will probably be surprised at their simplicity. **They involve the peace of Christ, the word of Christ, and the name of Christ.**

First, the Rule of the Peace of Christ Is a Principle for Christian Living (v. 15).

The Apostle Paul writes, *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body (v. 15)*. Though it has no affect as to the meaning of the admonition, most of the better manuscripts make the change from the "peace of God" to "the peace of Christ" as we see in the English Standard Version. **This peace of Christ is the inner spiritual tranquility which Jesus called "my peace."** One of the last gestures toward His disciples before His death was to bequest them "my peace." He gave this peace to each of them as a gracious gift. So he does to each Christian. It is a precious gift which God places in the heart of the Christian. Often it is the first benefit of salvation the new Christian is aware of. The primary difference he immediately recognizes is that now his heart has a strange peace within.

This peace of Christ is to "rule" in the heart of the Christian. This is the principle for Christian living. "Rule" is the translation of a word that means "to act as an umpire." The principle then is to allow the peace of Christ to be the umpire in your decision making process. The word is borrowed from the athletic encounter where the umpire controls the play of the game. He interprets and enforces the rules of the game. The peace which Christ has given is to so act in our lives. He is to enforce the rules of the game of life for us. Whenever he blows the whistle on any course of action, we are to stop immediately. A course of action can be continued if the umpire does not blow the whistle.

This is subjective in a real sense. This must be admitted. But this inner peace of Christ is not just your own moral awareness or conscience. This is a gift which Christ has placed in our hearts. This is more than just following your own intuition or heart.

The principle is that the Christian should never do anything that causes him to lose this inner peace which Christ has given. There is also a concern about the unity and peace within the body of Christ. We are called with other Christians to form one spiritual body in Christ. This body is to be characterized by oneness and unity. The false teachers in Colossae were dividing the body, as false teachings always will. This points us to this first principle for Christian conduct: *the rule of the peace of Christ*.

Second, the Rule of the Indwelling of the Word of Christ Is a Principle for Christian Living (v. 16).

Paul goes further and says, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God (v. 16)*. The “word of Christ” can be either the word about Christ or the word which Christ has given. It probably includes both. It is the objective word of revelation, the truth of Christ. Some have understood it to be more subjective, to be synonymous with the indwelling of Christ Himself. However it would seem to be more objective word, the word which is for us a written word.

The principle is that this word is to be continuously made to dwell, to be at home in you richly. The life of the Christian is to be the home of the word of Christ. This is to be done “richly.” The Christian should regularly cram his life full of the word of Christ to the point of overflow.

How is this principle carried out in the practical way? If the word of Christ is to be at home in the heart, it must naturally be received into the heart. This reception should be made daily through personal Bible study, through memorization of the word of Christ, and through meditation upon the word of Christ. This is the only way it can ever dwell in you richly. It must be removed from the written record to your heart. This will require time and spiritual discipline on our part.

When the word is so dwelling within, the Christian has all of its wisdom and counsel at his disposal when making decisions. He will be able to make them in the light of the word. While the peace of Christ is subjective in measure, this is an objective principle. Two other wonderful things will grow out of having the word in your heart.

- ✚ *First, you will be able to admonish and teach other Christians in all wisdom.* This is so important. Your knowledge of the Word is also for the benefit of others.
- ✚ *Second, there will be genuine worship to the Lord in your heart.* “In psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” is not a method of teaching and admonishing. It is a parallel idea. Singing to the Lord by the use of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs is a product of having the word of Christ in you richly. Many Christians fail to experience joyous worship in the house of the Lord because they come with an empty heart. You do not come to the house of the Lord to be filled, but to empty out a full heart of praise to the Lord. This will be true if you follow this second principle of Christian living.

To bring the principle into focus again, let me restate it. Christians follow the counsel of the indwelling word when making their decisions. **If the peace of Christ and the word of Christ seem to be together, there is just one more principle to consult.**

Third, the Rule of the Recognition of the Name of Christ Is a Principle in Christian Living (v. 17).

Finally the apostle says, *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (v. 17)*. This is the principle that is carried right out into the midst of life. It involves “whatever you do in word.” When you are trying to decide whether or not something is to be said, this principle is applicable. It also includes “whatever you do in deed”; this is any act or work you are contemplating. It should be evaluated in light of this principle.

Simply stated the principle is to do and say everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” The question is what does it mean to do something “in the name of the Lord Jesus”? Two primary things seem to be included.

- ✚ ***When something is done in the name of the Lord Jesus it must be in harmony with His revealed will and under His authority.*** Is the thing to be said or done consistent with the Lordship of Jesus Christ in your life? What is His will in the matter? The will and authority of Christ must be a primary principle in determining a course of action.
- ✚ ***The other thing included is dependence upon His power.*** When you do something in the name of Christ, you are looking for him to provide the strength for the doing of it. If you cannot look to Him for the power to say or do the thing being considered, then the whole course of action should be abandoned. Added insight is given to this principle by the closing part of the verse.

When something is done in the name of the Lord Jesus, it involves giving thanks to God and by Him. Doing things in the name of Christ is a way of expressing praise to God for the goodness and grace that has come to us through Christ Jesus. You could always ask yourself the question, will my saying or doing this thing express gratitude to the God of grace? If it will not bring praise to His name, it would be best left undone.

A Final Thought

Perhaps you are trying to make decisions in a number of areas of life. These principles can be applied to any area of life. They can be applied in those areas where clear cut lines between that which is right and that which is wrong cannot be found. But they should never be separated from one another. They belong together. The Lord put them together in scripture so we should not divide them. **To summarize them they are be sensitive to the peace of Christ. Allow the peace of Christ to be your inner spiritual umpire in making decisions. Be filled with the word of Christ. Your heart should be so richly filled with the word of Christ that it will permeate your thinking when facing any decisions. Be honoring and acknowledging the name of Christ. Everything should be done with reference to His position as lord of life. This will make every word and deed an occasion of thanksgiving to God. These are the principles on which happy, fruitful Christian lives are built. They are better than a dozen spiritual rule books.**