**The Referee of Your Heart**

Colossians 3:15

**Introduction**

The closer we are to Christ, the closer we will be to each other. The closer we are to each other, the closer we need to be to Christ. One writer said, “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 should live with any hatred or contempt for each other in their hearts. The Christian congregation should be a realm of peace just because every Christian is totally committed to the rule of peace.” What is ruling in your relationship with others? If you are having a problem with someone, God has the solution to your problem. The people of Colossae needed to experience unity, and we will consider Paul’s words to them as we consider the referee of our own hearts.

1. **Unity was God’s goal for the church in Colossae.** 
   1. They were saved by one Savior. He called them into one body.
   2. Division threatened the well-being of the body.
      1. False teachers jeopardized the unity of the church.
      2. Cultural differences could have divided the church.
      3. Arguments could have divided the church.
   3. They needed spiritual guidance.
      1. Paul helped them to understand Christ more clearly.
      2. He helped them to understand who they are in Christ more clearly.
      3. He identified ways of treating others that had to stop. (v. 8-9)
      4. He identified ways of treating others that needed to start. (v. 12-14)
   4. In verse 15, he explains how to have harmonious relationships with others in the church.
2. **Paul instructed the members of the church in Colossae to let the peace of God rule in their hearts as they interacted with each other. (v. 15a)**

Note: This verse has been misinterpreted to mean that the believer is to make decisions based on having peace (God’s leadership). The context is relationships within the church.

* 1. Something or someone is ruling your heart.

1. To “rule” means to be the judge or umpire; hence to preside, direct, or control. It is “one who renders verdicts in contested situations.”
2. A referee (one referred to) is the person of authority, in a variety of sports, who is responsible for presiding over the game from a neutral point of view and making on-the-fly decisions that enforce the rules of the sport. The official tasked with this job may be known, in addition to referee, by other titles as well, including umpire, judge, official, arbiter, arbitrator, linesman, etc.
   1. When there is strife between believers, there is something other than God ruling the heart. (James 4:2)
3. In contested situations, to whom are you referring? There can be a difference between your professed God and who is actually ruling your heart.
4. Self-centered desires are poor referees for your relationships. Your heart will throw a flag every time you don’t get your way. “Personal foul!”
5. Obviously, you need someone other than yourself ruling your heart.
6. Paul instructs the believers of Colossae to let the peace of God rule their hearts.
   1. The peace that Paul describes is the peace that God produces in a relationship.
7. Peace implies a state of peace, the opposite of an armed conflict; exemption from the rage and havoc of war. It means an agreement between persons, in contrast to division or dissension; a state of tranquility, harmony, and concord.
8. The peace of God in verse 15 has a specific meaning.
9. It is not the peace of God that is the result of justification. (Romans 5:1)
10. It is not the peace of mind available to believers who are under duress. (Philippians 4:7)
11. It is the peace between believers. (Ephesians 4:3)
    1. Paul says that this God-produced peace is to rule the hearts of the believers as they interacted with each other.
12. Instead of allowing fleshly desires to rule the heart, the believers in Colossae are called by God to allow the peace God provides to rule their heart.
13. It is not just for a special group within the church who seem to have the “gift of peace.” It is an imperative.
14. It is not to be short-lived. It is a continued state (present active). “Without sacrificing principle, believers should relate to one another in a way that facilitates and demonstrates the peace that Christ has secured for them.” (Moo)
15. Questions to guide us in “split-second calls”:
16. “Does what I am about to say or do make for peace?”
17. “Will these words or actions produce or enhance peace?”
18. “Would I have the peace of God in my heart if I said or did what I am thinking to say or do?”
19. “Would God be able to reward what I am about to say or do?”
    1. Let the peace of God judge your words and actions! Let it be the referee that throws a flag or blows a whistle in every situation of our lives where we respond in a way that would cause a relationship to go backward, not forward.
20. The peace of God would “throw a flag” in the following examples: “That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard.” (flag) “You always do this to me.” (flag) “I don’t really care what you think.” (flag) “You are just like your mom.” (flag) “You should have known I was just kidding around.” (flag) “What were you thinking?!” (flag)
21. What does it look like to let the peace of God rule in your heart?
22. You will be compassionate, kind, humble, meek, and longsuffering. (v. 12)
23. You will put up with others. (v. 13a)
24. You will forgive wrongs. (v. 13b)
25. **Central Idea: The reason they should allow the peace of God to decide their interaction within the church is that they were called to be at peace with one another since they are in the same church. (v. 15b)** 
    1. You were called to live as members of Christ’s body, His church.
    2. God’s call summons you away from something to something different.
    3. In this case, God has called you away from self-centered ways of life to live as Christians in His church (called out assembly).
26. This means the answer is not avoiding contact with other members of the body.
27. It means that you are to apply God’s peace to the situations that arise with other members of the body.
    1. “God has chosen His people not simply to be His people, but to live a certain kind of life. That life is bound up with the calling and cannot be separated from it.” (Moo)
28. **Thankfulness is a God-given antidote to strife. (v. 15c)** 
    1. Thankful means to be mindful of favors; to be grateful.
    2. This exhortation is unexpected on one hand because it seems to break up the flow of thought. It is expected on the other hand given the full context of the letter.
29. There are many reasons a believer should give thanks.
30. Most of the references by Paul exhorting us to thanksgiving are in the context of salvation.
31. “Believers who are full of gratitude to God for His gracious calling will find it easier to extend to fellow believers the grace of love and forgiveness and to put aside petty issues that might inhibit the expression of peace in the community.” (Moo)

**Conclusion**

What is ruling your heart in the relationships of your life…with your fellow church members, with your spouse, with your parents, with your friends, with your co-workers? Let the peace of God rule in order to go forward together.