

A Life in Harmony with Heaven

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[0 : 00] what songs God will have for us, and what instruments.

You know, we know some. Singing is a marvelous gift, and singing to God is a beautiful thing. We're going to be in Colossians this morning as we make a transition. I had shared with Greg the next book of the Bible that I hope to be in, and I've been preparing even over the time we were away.

Still have some preparatory work to do before I can bring you the first message. So you'll have to, God willing, pray for me this week. God willing, that first message in this new book that we'll be going through together will be next Sunday.

That's what my plans are right now. So as I battle the allergies and sickness, whatever it is, and study, you'll pray for me. I would appreciate that so much. I'm not going to tell you what it is.

[1 : 08] You have to show up and see. Show up and see what it's going to be. Colossians 3 is where we'll be today. Before we get to our text, though, I want to share a little bit of an introduction with you regarding a prominent, now deceased, theologian and author that most of us have probably heard of.

And I want to share some things that he said in answer to a particular question he was once asked. Here's the question that he was asked. The prominent theologian is J.I. Packer.

The question was, what does Christianity, which exalts God and diminishes individual rights, offer a culture like ours that aims to exalt the self?

I think we can read that question and all understand the reality and truthfulness of the question itself. That is our culture. And Christianity does seek to exalt God and diminish individual so-called rights.

Here's how J.I. Packer answered the question. Religion in many circles has become the business, business, notice that, of trying to make people happy.

[2 : 21] Anything that enlarges my comfort zone is regarded as good, godly, proper, and to be integrated into my religion. North American culture, both secular and churchly, zeroes in on the right, quote, to happiness, end quote.

But a true study of God challenges that notion. For it calls on us to deny claims of self and to exalt God instead.

God promises that if we pursue holiness, happiness will come. And it does come. In the form of a joy that the world knows nothing about.

Christian self-denial produces more joy and happiness than secular self-indulgence ever does. People who don't know God don't believe that.

But it's true. And it's not true because J.I. Packer said it. It's true because that's what the Bible teaches. People who know God and exalt God are confronted every moment of their lives with denying self so that Jesus might increase and I might decrease as a Christian.

[3 : 43] And the world doesn't understand the reality of that as being the secret, as it were, to happiness. The same goes for thanksgiving.

Thankfulness in our hearts comes as we know God, as we serve God, as we deny self, as we say no to sin and yes to righteousness.

These are the kinds of truth, realities that the world doesn't understand. The world will never pursue. In fact, the world is anti-toward.

It's not just that they don't get it. Unbelievers, and I was an unbeliever and lived the same thing I'm about to tell you, unbelievers are anti-God. The scripture teaches us that.

So the world is never in its system going to reward us for the gratitude that we show to Jesus by living humble lives. Our humility is an excuse for them to put their boot on our neck.

[4 : 47] The humility of Jesus was a good reason for the religious leaders of his time to nail him to a cross and murder him. So we'll see today that following in his footsteps means that they will hate us like they hated him.

The title of my message this morning is A Life in Harmony with Heaven from Colossians 3. A Life in Harmony with Heaven. We're going to read the passage beginning from verse 12 of chapter 3, but I'm going to zero in on verses 15 through 17 for this morning.

Just a little more of the context. So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Bearing with one another and forgiving each other. Whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Beyond all these things, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And then our text for today. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.

[6 : 12] Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another, with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

What I'd like to do is take each one of these three verses, each one of these will be a point in my message for this morning, and talk to you about the reasons that we have in these verses to be thankful to God.

Reasons that we have to be thankful to God. These are just a few that Scripture bears out among the 10,000 that we sang about earlier in our service.

The first that I'd like to share with you then from verse 15, Christ's peace in our purpose. Here's the first reason. Because of Christ's peace and the purpose that He gives us in that peace.

[7 : 26] Verse 15 again, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body and be thankful.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. That's a very interesting clause for me. That we're supposed to allow this to be the reality in our hearts.

And rule is a strong, strong word. Now in the context of Colossians, what exactly is this peace which Jesus gives to govern or rule over or rule in our hearts?

If you look at Colossians chapter 1, I'm doing this just for the reason that we haven't worked verse by verse through this. So, let's just be reminded in chapter 1 verses 13 and 14, we're answering the question, what is this peace which Jesus gives to govern our hearts?

For he rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

[8 : 49] And then in chapter 2, if you'll look at verse 6, therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.

That is, lead your life in him. Verse 7, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in him and established in your faith just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude.

These two passages alone are enough to show us that Jesus Christ is our peace. So, we could modify this statement and say, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts or let Jesus Christ rule in your heart.

He's your peace. And we're going to make a big deal out of that as we go along. So, those verses help us see that the peace of Jesus can be understood as the reconciling, the bringing together favor of God on your life.

So, it's God bringing you near to himself. Another way that we talk about this, it's the salvation and grace of God.

[10 : 18] It is the undeserved favor of God on your life by giving you Jesus. He's the peace. He's the treasure.

I'm going to say it over and over again throughout this sermon. And I'm going to help distinguish some things for you so that we all understand and take away today that the peace that we're talking about this morning that breaks out in thanksgiving to God has nothing to do with your circumstances.

Regardless of where you are in your life, what season you're in in your life, how old you are, how young you are, how rich, how poor, what kind of job you have, it doesn't matter. Or where you live in the world.

This is a wonderful peace. I'd like for you to just turn, if you would, to John chapter 14. Hold your finger there in Colossians. John 14 and verse 27.

Here is a promise that we need to hold on to. It's so precious. Peace, Jesus says, I leave with you. [11:27] My peace I give to you. That is my shalom in Hebrew. My shalom I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.

Do not let your heart be troubled nor let it be fearful. Isn't that wonderful? I don't give you what the world falsely calls peace.

I give you something much richer and much deeper. I give you something permanent. I give you my peace. It passes understanding, doesn't it?

God's peace with us and in us is very precious. It steadies and readies our hearts in a society torn apart by division and hatred and fear.

You see this every day of your life and I do too. Friends, the systems of our world offer no true peace.

[12:35] You cannot find this peace in the systems of this world. The answers of this world. The mechanisms of this world cannot bring this kind of peace to your life.

No matter how much money you make, how much you make an effort to insulate yourself from the issues of life, this kind of peace will always elude you because it's a peace that's given as a gift by God.

We live in a world at war with God and with itself. People, I think, sense this reality. It makes them all very fearful.

It makes them anxious and continually uneasy about life. They always feel a little out of kilter, a little off balance, like they can never really get their footing.

And you see these insecurities in people. They come out in a number of different ways. We understand this. As we approach the seasons of both thankfulness and peace, Thanksgiving and Christmas, millions and millions of people are going to hear these words in some form or another.

[13:54] They'll hear these words I'm about to put up on the screen in songs. They'll be in the department store and they'll hear it come on. They'll see it in Charlie Brown.

They'll see it all over the place as the Christmas specials come on. Millions of people around the world even in their own languages and here it is. Look at this. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased.

Now you and I understand the context that was said in. It was said about a person. It was an announcement being made about a person. Who was that person? Jesus.

Jesus being born brought into the world as a human being. But true thankfulness and peace will evade people. Even the people who hear this who do not look to God for this kind of peace.

Now why? Why will it evade them? Why will they not be able to own this? Because it is not a true inner spiritual thankfulness and peace wrought by the Lord in the heart.

[15:05] And where there is no peace with God there cannot be true peace among men. Now folks you see examples of this every day of your lives whether we immediately recognize it and identify it with biblical truth or not.

Let me give you just one example. There will never ever ever be peace in the Middle East. Ever. Now biblically do you know why that's true?

Because for there to be lasting true peace in the Middle East we've got to have the people who live there turn their hearts to Christ. That's why. So anything that's brokered in the way of a peace and I'm not saying we shouldn't try I'm just saying don't be naive.

we will never see that happen and last and be meaningful until people come to turn their hearts to Jesus Christ and receive the peace of God within and then from within it will work out toward your brother and your sister and your quote unquote enemy.

Only Jesus can teach us how to live in peace with each other. because until we're at peace with God we cannot be at peace among men.

[16:28] It won't happen. Such is the nature of our sinful hearts. Any sense of worldly peace is false, fickle, and fleeting. Now that doesn't have to be bad news in the sense of oh my goodness we're always going to live in a war torn tumultuous world.

Yes, yes until heaven comes we will not know peace on this earth in the manner that I'm talking about as far as the whole earth being converted. This is the spiritual emphasis.

The reason I'm doing all of this with you now this is the spiritual emphasis Paul is making when he says to which indeed you were called in one body.

Let's look at it again. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which this peace to which indeed you were all called in one body and be thankful.

There is a tremendous spiritual emphasis being driven right in to this understanding of peace. In other words as Christians you are now one spiritual family and that has brought peace.

[17 : 55] You've all been blood bought and put at peace with each other. You can't take any credit for this. I can't take any credit for this.

God gets all the glory for this. That's what the psalmist said. We exalt you to you, O Lord. That's what we want. Peace is a gift of God.

Do you remember in Galatians 5 22? It reads this way. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace.

Number three in the list. The fruit of the Holy Spirit. This is a gift of the spirit of God in your life. And the gift is spelled J-E-S-U-S.

He is your peace. Somebody can keep count. That's probably number 15 by now. He is your peace.

[19 : 02] Now God did this by calling and putting you into the body of Christ. That's what he means. You were called to this in one body. You were saved to this. You were put into this.

This is a spiritual reality about you, Christian. God did this by calling and putting you into the body of Christ with Jesus as your authority, your head.

Jesus is the head of our church. He is the head of the church. So we share the same reconciliation. Which put each of us at peace with God.

I share in the reconciling favor of God the same as you do. And that same reconciling favor with God puts us in favor with each other. That's the plan.

That's why I say until mankind reconciles with God, there will be no reconciliation across the aisles. It can't happen. Anything that less than that is superficial and bound to fail.

[20 : 09] Why? Because it's man-made. It's man-made. So what do the people who are killing each other around the world need most?

They need Christ. They need Christ. If you'll look with me at Colossians 3, 11. As Paul is moving down through chapter 3 talking about how we put to death the sin that wants to kill us and how we put on the righteousness of God, he comes to verse 11 and says this is a renewal.

This is a new self spiritual renewal which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew. Now notice these groups of people Greek and Jew circumcised and uncircumcised that is believing and unbelieving barbarian Scythian slave and free man but Christ is all and in all.

Folks these are very divergent groups of people who disliked each other and in some cases hated each other. So these classes heritage race religious distinctions which serve to separate us because of sin in our hearts toward each other these are the very things that have been nullified by God's grace.

They were barriers to our love and peace and service to each other and Paul is saying God took them away and brought peace between these groups of people who hated each other, disliked each other, who had nothing at all in common and now they have one thing that has brought them together in love and it is this Christ is all and in all.

[22 : 02] So as those who have been chosen of God, all of you, holy, beloved, put on now a heart, there's your peace, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing, where does all that come from?

Where does your ability bear with someone who is so unlike you, so different from you, maybe culturally, maybe whatever. You know, it's been our prayer, Greg and I, it's been our prayer along with our wives for many years now that God would make us a multicultural church family.

You know, we're actually praying that God will bring people in here that look a lot different than we do, sound different than we do, come from different backgrounds than we do, eat different food than we do.

I'm great with that. So what would happen if 25 Hispanics walked in the door for Sunday service because they heard about us and they wanted to come worship and they just showed up late.

Some of you will understand that. And they walk in and they sat down and we got chairs from them and everything and we found out that 90% of them don't even speak English and they showed up.

What would we do?

[23 : 22] What would we do? You want me to tell you what we do? What we do every single Sunday without a hitch. Do the same thing.

Sing, preach, pray, hug necks, shake hands, get to know, ask questions, and trust that if God brought them here, he'll help us know what to do.

So we do what we know. We preach the word and teach the word and we trust that God will help us work it out. See, I'm not scared of that. I am not scared of the language barrier, the cultural barrier, whatever.

Because we want the world to see that there is one reason why people that are so divergent, so different, so distinct from one another are being brought into this family and it's Christ.

We want to be able to tell them, you know what makes this work? You know what greases this whole thing? Jesus makes this work and it's the love of Jesus that greases this whole thing. It's the love of Jesus.

[24 : 35] That's why we can do this. That's why we can come in here every Sunday and get over ourselves and reach out to one another and love one another as different as we are from one another.

Christ is our all and he lives in each of us. God the Father sent Christ the Son to put each of us in a right spiritual relationship with himself and then with each other.

He reconciled us to himself that he might reconcile us to each other. Look at what Romans 5.1 says. Let's see if that's what's next.

Romans 5.1 Look at this. Therefore, having been justified by faith, that is to be made right, to be declared righteous in right standing with God, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. There's no other way. We have been brought together by the blood of Christ. That's exactly what Ephesians 2, 13, and 14 tells us.

[25 : 40] But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were formerly far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, for he himself is our peace.

See? I didn't have to say it. The Bible said it. He is your peace. So we're talking about a supernatural gift of God's own peace, work in our hearts, to bring an unnatural, that is an unworldly, holy, calm to our lives.

And I want to explain that. Because I don't want you to get trapped in this idea that the peace of God means calm in your life.

Or you'll miss it. Because I don't know about you, but I don't have many moments like that.

Circumstances just won't allow for the water to be just glassy.

You know, you just, there's always some kind of movement on top of it. And if I see a glassy water in my life, I'm going, uh-huh, it's underneath. I just can't see it.

[26 : 54] But there's something swirling around underneath there. Because that's the world I live in. Calm, a holy calm. Look, this godly calm is in major contrast to the turbulent and vitriolic nature of our society, our country, and our world.

And I want to help you some more with that distinction. Please, please, please don't hear me saying that the calm is the peace. No, the calm is the result of the peace.

Who is the peace? Not what. Who is the peace? Jesus. He's my peace. What happens as a result of Jesus, my peace, being in my heart and me allowing that peace, who is Jesus, to rule my heart? I'll tell you what happens. Calm. Now, the circumstances won't look calm. The water's choppy. The sea's broiling and rolling in my life. But there's this, hey, I'm not freaked out.

You know, I don't know what's going to happen. I can't predict the future. I don't know how this is going to all work out. I don't know what's going to happen to me. But here's what I know.

[28 : 15] He is my peace. And he has told me in scripture, let the peace of Christ rule your heart. Jeff, not the circumstances, not what you see.

Don't do that. Now, you're going to ask me, how are we going to do that? I'm going to get to that in just a minute. This is a major contrast, as I've said. I want you to consider the spiritually radical nature of Philippians 4, 4 through 7.

Philippians is right here by Colossians. You have to turn a page or two back. Look at Philippians 4, if you would, please, 4 through 7. This is an example of the radical nature of what we're talking about.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Now, notice there's no caveat about circumstances there. He said always. So in any circumstance, at all times, rejoice in the Lord. All right, keep going. Verse 5. Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. That's beautiful. So this rejoicing, this focus on Christ, helps you remain gentle in times of turmoil in your life.

[29 : 29] Let it be known to all men. And then this wonderful encouragement. The Lord is near. He's not far away. He may feel far away, but he's not. And then verse 6.

Be anxious then for nothing, but in everything, in everything you face by prayer and supplication. Notice, with thanksgiving.

You see, we just can't get away from that, can we? Let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Now, folks, I can just say to you that that is real. That is livable. That's not pie-in-the-sky Christianity or for the super-spiritual.

That's for you, friends. To live that out, that can be the reality in your life. So what we're talking about here is a genuine inner man peace.

[30 : 33] This is a spiritual reality. Notice up here on the screen real quick. Christ's peace has made us heavenly distinct from the world and our purpose is to live that distinction in the world.

You with me? Now, how do we do this? This is the how. How do we do this? How do we show Jesus' peace in our daily lives?

Especially given that, boy, we can go through some seasons where some things are really turned upside down in terms of our daily life. Well, a good start. Here's a good start. It's for you to see what Jesus means by saying that we are not of this world.

Jesus has saved us, forgiven us, and delivered us from this world so that he can send us back into it. So what we don't want to do is think, all right, I'm saved, I'm in the Lord, I'm walking with Jesus, and it's some abnormal, unnatural thing for me to get hit with circumstances that threaten that peace, that threaten that calm, that threaten that focus on Jesus.

That's normal. Can we just all accept that? That's the normal Christian life. If you're there, you're not abnormal, you're normal. This is perfectly natural to you living for Christ.

[32 : 00] Remember, you're living in a world that has a system that is anti-Christ, anti-God. So please stop thinking that it's supposed to feel right or feel anything when you come up against the reality of an anti-God world as you live the peace of Jesus.

They won't mix. You cannot get them to mix. So what does it come down to? Focus. Focus. It's where you focus your heart so that what you're allowing to rule your heart will make the difference. What does Paul say? Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. This is what we're talking about. This is the start that I want to encourage you with.

So we are no longer products of this world because we are now God's blood-bought children. But because we are his children, we are commissioned to live in this world by his power and his grace. Not in our own strength. This whole thing, this whole paradigm has been turned around for us. It hasn't been put upside down. We were living upside down.

[33 : 19] It's been turned by God right side up. We're living right side up. The world is living upside down. We're actually swimming with the current of heaven.

The world is swimming against the current of heaven. Do you see that? So if the world is swimming against the current of heaven, that means that when we get into the current, we look like we're the one swimming upstream.

Do you see what the Bible does with your heart? The Bible teaches you how to think like God. Not like you. not like men.

And so it looks radically different. You've been invaded. You've been brought from death to life.

You've been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of light.

Don't you think that dark light radical difference is going to look and feel radical? Absolutely. See? You're normal. It's okay. You're normal.

[34 : 30] If you'd look with me at John 17, I just want you to have Jesus encourage you for a second here. John chapter 17.

This is Jesus' prayer basically for us. He prayed for his disciples that were with him and then he began to pray for all those who would come after his disciples.

All those like us who would come to know Christ. So beginning in John 17:13. Jesus prays for you, friend, and here's his prayer. But now I come to you, that is to God, and these things I speak in the world so that they may have my joy made full in themselves.

I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.

[35:42] As you sent me into the world, I have also sent them into the world for their sakes. I sanctify myself that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, even as you, father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me the glory which you have given me.

I have given to them, that they may be one just as we are one. This is Jesus prayer for us, friends. I in them and you in me, that they may be perfected in unity so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you have loved me.

Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am so that they may see my glory which you have given me for you love me before the foundation of the world.

Oh, righteous father, although the world has not known you, yet I have known you and these have known that you sent me and I have made your name known to them and will make it known so that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.

[37:11] Jesus is your treasure. He is your peace. Saved and sent back into the lostness. So the world needs to see this peace difference that Jesus makes in our lives.

And you and I live this difference of heavenly peace by allowing it to rule our hearts as we face situations where strife and conflict are swirling around us and seeking to define the moment.

See, people see you in those contexts and they expect you pretty much to respond to those contexts the same way they do as unbelievers. And when you don't, that distinction stands out.

And that becomes opportunity for you to witness and to share and to testify to the difference Jesus makes in you. Jesus is the difference. It's not just my attitude or my perspective.

I'm not just a positive thinker. This has nothing to do with Scientology or any other ology. This has everything to do with Christ in me.

[38:20] The hope of glory. My hope. It's very personal. Now again, the text says, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Folks, you give way to, you submit to the peace of Jesus acting as, catch this, the umpire of your inner man.

That is your heart as you relate to God and man. The peace of Jesus becomes the umpire. Safe. Out. Don't argue with the umpire.

Whatever he says goes. So that peace of Jesus umpires your inner man, your inner heart as you relate to God and to man.

This is one of the gifts that God's given you in the treasure of Jesus. And it goes two ways. I want to help you see this now. I'm just trying to put a finer point on this distinction of what peace is and isn't.

[39:24] As it lives in you. As Jesus lives in you. Here's one aspect. One aspect of this peace that we're talking about concerns you seeking the high road of remaining at peace with the Lord.

That's one aspect. Remaining at peace with the Lord. And you say now, okay Jeff, what are we talking about? Because if we're talking about peace with the Lord and you talked about reconciliation and salvation and grace earlier, you're not talking about that I can undo my salvation.

I can lose my peace. No, no, no, no. We're not touching that. You can't lose your salvation. So I want to explain what I mean. How, how do I take the high road of remaining at peace with the Lord day to day as I face the circumstances of my life?

Because I am tempted to be fearful, Jeff. I am tempted to be anxious. I am tempted to be angry. I am tempted to take matters into my own hands.

I am tempted to not even think about the Lord and just kind of do my own thing. And I know those things are not healthy for me in my walk with Christ. And I know that when I do those kinds of things, they turn out in my relationships in bad ways.

[40 : 39] My sin comes out. I'm irritable. I'm impatient. I fuss. I blame shift. You see what I mean? So how do I do this?

How do I cultivate this peace? How do I allow the peace of Jesus to rule in my heart? All right here. Look how by choosing. Now, look, folks, by choosing to think and behave in ways which keep your conscience clear with God.

And you can do this in the power of the Holy Spirit. You've been given the resources that you need to fulfill this in the Lord Jesus. So what does this mean?

Another way to say this, let me backdoor it for you. You are not hiding sin. You're not ignoring sin. You're not harboring sin. You're not dishonoring the Lord through willful disobedience and neglect. You say, well, I knew it was wrong. I did it anyway. I know that it's not right for me to be like this, but it's a habit in my life. And I just, you know, it's just you're just going to have to.

[41 : 44] That's just me. You hear people say that. No, it's just me. I know that's the problem. That me thing. That's the issue. We got to deal with that. The word of the Lord calls us to countercultural me.

It's not OK for me to just say, well, that's me and pass it off. So here's what I want to help you do in these moments of your life, in these circumstances of your life, is you're trying to understand how do I apply this?

Let let the peace of Christ rule. Let it umpire my heart as I relate to God and man. Right now we're with the God thing. All right. Ask this. This is the question I want you to ask.

Will this whatever you're you're doing, choosing to do, thinking about doing in terms of that walk with God, that relationship, whatever. Will this help me protect and promote peace in my walk with God?

Is it going to help me safeguard that peace? With God, we're zeroing in on that conscience thing, because you know this.

[42 : 48] When you sin high handed sins and you don't deal with it, don't you feel distant from God? You do, don't you? You can even get to the point where you doubt your salvation.

You ever had somebody come to you wrestling with that? Man, sometimes I sin in ways I don't even know if I'm saved. You look at the Psalms and read the Psalms, you'll see some of the Psalmist crying out to God and saying things like that.

And pleading for forgiveness. Help me. What did the man say? Help me with my unbelief. As you nurture peace with God, allow that peace to umpire your choices.

Our purpose. Our purpose. Our purpose. Hear me now. Our purpose concerns holiness. Holiness. And holiness always takes the high road, which is very often the harder road.

This is normal Christian life 101 stuff. All right. That's number one. The second aspect of this peace working as the umpire of your heart is it helps you choose the high road of being at peace with others.

[44 : 06] With others. With the Lord. You're guarding your conscience. You're guarding your heart. You're cultivating that sense of nearness to God.

That peace with God. That wonderful privilege of knowing the Lord and being close to him. And this isn't about warm feelings and warm spiritual fuzzies.

This is about truth. This is about you operating in obedience to the truth. And perhaps the warm fuzzy will come and the nearness will be sweet to you. There's those times.

But what happens if you don't feel that does that mean it's gone. So you you camp out on the truth. Look at if you would Romans 12 with me. I'm just giving you a few passages here and there to bolster this concept in your mind.

And give you some practical ways of thinking about it. Romans 12 17 and 18 as we promote the idea of the high road of peace with others taking the high road of peace with others.

[45 : 12] In verse 17 of chapter 12 in Romans never pay back evil for evil to anyone. So you know right there you're not going to go there. You're not going to take the attitude. You do it to me.

I'm going to do it back to you. But 10 times worse. Whatever you give out you better be willing to get it back and worse. No. You need to get that out of your life.

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible so far as it depends on you be at peace with all men.

Now can you can you be at peace with all men. Well you can be at peace from your end. But you can't make them be at peace with you can you. So you're going to have relationships in your life

where people are not going to like you.

They might even hate you. They may walk out of your life. They may cut you off. This could be friends. It could be family. But as far as it concerns you.

[46 : 13] You make every effort to let the peace of Christ umpire your heart toward them. So don't be bitter. Don't be resentful. Now let me ask you somebody's going to know the answer to this.

What is perhaps the highest and best way on a spiritual level for you to safeguard your heart towards another person against bitterness resentment revenge.

What can you do for them every day that will help guard your heart from those kinds of things. Pray who said it pray pray pray for them.

Now I'll tell you right now you won't feel like it. But start praying for them. Pray like this Lord. God. If they keep up what they're doing. The Bible says that you will not receive them to yourself.

And when they die. They will hear you cast them into a devil's hell. Where there will be burning and weeping and gnashing of teeth. And they will never ever have another opportunity to know you.

[47 : 19] God I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy. I think maybe your heart's starting to change now. Lord please save them.

Whatever they've done to me. It's not worth hell. Please. You see. Start there. Start there and see if God doesn't begin to mold your heart.

And then you can pray other things for them. God help them to see. Help. Help them come to you. They might be people who profess Jesus but they're not living like they know Jesus.

They're living with bitterness. Well. That's what we want to see done. You ask yourself will this decision will this choice will this direction or action help me protect and promote peace with others because the scripture tells me that as far as it concerns me I need to be at peace with all men.

So I might not be at peace with them in my relationship. Our relationship is strained. It's cut off. But as far as my heart goes I'm going to be at peace with them in my heart.

[48 : 33] All right. Now one quick caution. One quick caution. This is not peace at any price. You hear people in churches. You hear people in families that talk about don't rock the boat.

We don't talk about those kind of things. We don't bring up that kind of stuff. We don't go here. Churches say we don't teach doctrine like that. We don't talk about sin.

We don't. Because all that does is divide people. That just puts people in an uproar that gives people ulcers and all this kind of nonsense. Listen. Listen. This is not peace at any price.

This is not peace at the expense of truth. Why? Because that's not love. It isn't loving to lie to people.

It isn't loving to control and manipulate people. And the only way we can keep from doing that is to minister the truth in love. Speak and live the truth in love.

[49 : 31] In love. Now friends. Please look at me and listen to me when I tell you this as your pastor and your friend. That is going to cost you.

Okay. Are you ready to pay the price? To speak the truth and to live the truth in love? It's going to cost you. Some of you it's going to cost real real dearly.

But it's going to cost. Compromising truth doesn't bring peace. Hear this.

There was no compromise in the cross. God took the highest road. And he won peace for us at the highest and greatest price possible.

The cross was the highest display of compassion at the greatest cost to God. Now we walk that path. As we follow Jesus that's the path we walk.

[50 : 45] That's the way of true peace. Let me hasten to give you the next one. Christ's world in our worship. This is another reason for our thanksgiving. Because of Christ's word in our worship.

Verse 16. I spent most of the time in Colossians 3 on that verse. Now we'll move quicker. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom.

Teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing with thankfulness. I am so, so glad this verse is in the Bible. Here is where Paul tells you how to grow in. How to safeguard and progress in your life of love and peace with God and others. So let me ask you the question then as we think about that. What is this word of Christ?

Let the word of Christ. What is this word of Christ? Well back in chapter 1 verse 5 we see this.

Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven of which you previously heard in the word of truth the gospel.

[51 : 53] That's what we're talking about. The word of Christ is the truth. It is the gospel of God. It is the teaching of scripture. The whole of scripture is the word of Christ.

It is the product of his wisdom. The Bible is the product of Christ's wisdom. Jesus taught the truth of God and the entire Bible is God's truth. So let Christ's wise word richly dwell within you.

See that in the text? Richly dwell within you. This isn't just knowing a few verses. Let it be abundantly at home in your heart. Is it? God's home for the word of Christ is your spiritually renewed heart, friends.

Is God's word at home in your heart? And when I say that I'm asking you is God's word at home in every room of your heart?

The janitor closet. The bathroom. Whatever. The garage where everything's everywhere. Do any of you have a room that just catches all the stuff?

[53 : 04] That room too. Where all the stuff is. The stuff of your heart. Let the truth of Jesus have an abundant influence on the designs of your heart.

God's word should adorn the home of your heart with the beautiful riches of Christ's character, wisdom, and ways.

And that's where he goes. Look, let the word of Christ richly dwell within you. Look, with all wisdom. With all wisdom. Teaching and admonishing one another.

So as you share with one another from these beautiful, beautiful treasures of the truth in the person of Jesus, what you do is you speak and act in accord with his wisdom and warnings about godly living.

That's how we talk to each other. Oh yeah, we talk about sports and the weather and hobbies and stuff. We catch up on life. But we're constantly seeking out, looking for, and in a very natural way, we're speaking the wisdom and ways of God to each other.

[54 : 08] Constantly. We're doing that out of an attitude of love because this is just the way that peace comes out. Peace gets out of you through thanksgiving and truth speaking.

It's wonderful. Yeah, you may be thinking, man, this is, this is, this is, I don't, this is pie in the sky. Come on. No, no. This is the reason you show up here every Sunday so I can look at you and say, no, no, no, this is normal.

I know what you're going to get for six days out there. That's not normal. This is normal. This is just a little bit of what heaven's going to look like when we're all gathered around the throne.

So just keep that in mind. That's abnormal. This is normal. This is who we are. This is what we're called to be and do.

It's just that when we go out there and do it, people look at you like you have three heads. All right.

[55 : 16] I understand. So because of his words of life are at home in your heart, your words in your very life teach the way of Christ's love and peace in truthful living.

It's dynamic. It's a powerful, powerful force at work inside of you and it needs to get out. So it's powerful truth of Christ at work in your heart.

It's what makes your life a dynamic testimony of Jesus. It's the same truth which works within our shared life as a church family as well.

I've been talking about that. The word of Christ works in and defines you individually even as it also works in and defines us congregationally. We practice the centrality and supremacy and sufficiency of the word of Christ preached, taught, read, prayed, sung in our times of worship.

Why do we put so much emphasis on God's word when we gather? Because scripture itself tells us to do that. That's why the fact that we're to do this in conjunction with singing is remarkable to me.

[56 : 38] That's what the text says. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom. That's God's wisdom. The truth of the wisdom of God. And we're using that truth of the wisdom of God to teach each other and warn.

That's what admonish. Warn each other and look and you do this and this is so interesting. You do it with singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

So when we gather together we're expected by the Lord to sing to each other. Do you realize that? When you stand to sing this is why you being here is so critical.

It's so important. Don't ever, ever, ever think that you not being here isn't a big deal. It's a big deal to God. It is. Because when you stand to sing like that it doesn't matter.

You say, I can't sing. Oh, you don't want me to sing? Yes, we do. We want you to sing so sing. Right? If it sounds a little bit like I don't want to sing that's okay because I guarantee you that's not what it sounds like to Jesus.

[57 : 42] It's not. So I'm going to get over that because I know it doesn't sound like that to Jesus, friends. So you sing. You sing. Sing to your Jesus.

To your horse. When you stand up to sing to Jesus you're singing to each other. Did you think about that?

You're instructing your neighbor in worship, in truthfulness, in peace, in kindness. You're speaking and singing sound theology across the way and across the aisle and the person around you. Isn't that what this text just said? Didn't it just tell us to take the wisdom of God in the truth of Christ and sing it? And in that way we admonish each other.

We teach each other. This is such a big win. This is such a big win. Now this is why we keep saying this is one of the reasons Greg and I say we're essential.

[58 : 48] Oh, those doors, it's going to take a lot to shut those bad boys. And if they shut those bad boys and put something over the top of it we'll call you and tell you where to secretly meet. We'll find someplace else to go.

We're essential. The world needs to hear us singing to Jesus. And you do too. You need to hear your neighbors singing to Jesus. We don't take that cue from the world.

We take it from God's word. Here's a way that I can say that. We sing the truth of God back to him. And here's what we're saying with this.

Here's what we're saying. Look, God's word, God's word tunes our hearts to heaven. So God's truth in scripture is like a tuning fork putting our hearts in perfect pitch with heaven.

That's why I say that's not what Jesus hears. You may not can carry a tune in a bucket but what Jesus hears is that heart tuned to his word. You're singing that truth back to Jesus from a joyful heart, from a thankful heart, that's what he hears.

[59 : 53] I know that because that's what the scripture tells us. So as God's word tunes our hearts to heaven, it puts us in perfect pitch with heaven. All of us.

Song comes from the overflow of your heart. So what song is your life singing? Your life always sings the song of your heart.

Whatever you are putting into your heart and nurturing there is making its way out in song. And so here's what we can ask.

We can ask, is my heart here at the bottom, is my heart tuned by the word of Christ so that my worship is in harmony with heaven? That's the title of my message, Harmony with Heaven.

All right, and then finally, the last one, Christ's glory and our good from verse 17. Whatever you do then in word or deed, see, comes this wonderful summation, whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

[61 : 05] with Christ's peace umpiring your heart's choices, with Christ's word of truth tuning your heart to be in harmony with heaven.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Live your life for the sake of Jesus. I know that's not necessarily profound, but it's true.

You'll notice that in the span of these three verses, did you notice? Paul attaches three injunctions. He attaches three commands for you to be thankful.

Do you see that? Look in verse 15. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body and be thankful. Be thankful. So he's saying let God's peace umpire the desire and devotion of your heart and be thankful.

Be thankful for that. Show yourselves thankful for this gift of God's peace by how you live. Live thankfully. The idea is become increasingly thankful, expressive of that.

[62 : 14] It's not just an inner warm feeling in your heart of gratitude. It's an expression of thankfulness that you live out. Your life shows gratitude.

And you can think of ways that it doesn't. Be thankful. It won't surprise you as to how that increase in gratitude happens in your life.

Here's how it happens. It happens as you become more scripture saturated. As you let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Remember that was before. As you let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, it helps express.

It helps get out. It helps that thankfulness to be made known. To be lived. Then in verse 16, look. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts.

To whom? To God. To God. Let God's word tune your heart to sing in harmony with heaven. And then in verse 17, whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Jesus to God the Father.

[63 : 28] Wow. Well, here's the point. What's the point of all this? Here it is. It's very difficult, if not impossible, for us to be at odds with God or others when our hearts are filled to overflowing with thankfulness to God.

It's not a secret. I could say, there's the secret. Well, it's not a secret. God's been saying this forever. You have every reason to be thankful.

You have 10,000 or more reasons to be thankful, to bless the Lord. And you have one lifetime to do it. So we better get at it, huh?

Here's another way of saying this. This might resonate. Gratitude promotes godliness. We value what we are thankful for. Vice versa. We value what we're thankful for.

Conflict, strife, a critical spirit, an unforgiving heart, a complaining spirit, a grumpy spirit, a spirit that's always looking for the negative, always looking for the wrong, always looking for the lack or the failure or the falling short.

[64 : 41] Mm-mm. Rehearsing other people's wrong. These are manifestations of pride stemming from a greedy, ungrateful heart. So Paul warned the Galatians in 5:15.

Here's what he said. If you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. See, that captures that spirit of complaining and always rehearsing the wrongs and looking for the fault and just being grumpy.

Just being grumpy about life. But then he said this to follow up. But I say, walk by the spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

There it is. To walk by the spirit is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It's to let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. Let it richly dwell within you.

So let being at peace with God umpire your heart towards yourself, toward God, your church family. Allow Christ's word to tune your heart to be in harmony with heaven as you worship God with your entire life.

[65 : 52] And look, folks, increasingly become a thankful person, living out an abundance of gratitude to God for his goodness to you. That's the godly good we enjoy and have the privilege of offering to each other.

Now, friends, just to close, we need heaven's peace. we need heaven's truth and we need God-grateful hearts.

And we get all that and more in Jesus. So the heart of any family, the heart of any country, the heart of any people, the heart of any local church or society is the heart that people have for God.

They either have it for God or they don't. The heart of our church ought to be the heart of our Lord and Savior. And that's just, I know that's basic.

But until the heart of any group of people is redeemed by Jesus, there's going to be enmity, strife, hatred, fear, biting and devouring one another. Jesus Christ crucified and raised again for the forgiveness of our sins is our only hope for true healing and lasting peace.

[67 : 07] Jesus is the only reason that we have to truly be thankful. But he's every reason and he's the fullest reason.

Amen. So that's what we cultivate. And as you go into Thanksgiving season, it's just a reminder from scripture why we're to be thankful, the most thankful people on the planet.

And we can be that here in Williamsburg together. So let's do that. All right. Let's pray together.

Dear Lord, thank you for your forgiveness.

and bless you though you've got here about this.

Yes. Thank you. When you're going to love you. It's okay. Thank you.