

House Rules for the House of God

Series: Seeing the Invisible

Colossians 3:15-17

Introduction: One of the most powerful governmental bodies in the world is the United States House of Representatives. We are a republic governed by the Rule of Law. All laws and legislation are to be initiated by the House of Representatives. What you may not know is one of the most powerful committees in the House of Representatives is called the Rules Committee.

It is the committee that holds the reins on all legislation. It is called 'the traffic cop of Congress.' In other words, you must go through this committee to even propose a law to be considered and even then, they will tell you if, when, and how it will be.

Furthermore, there are rules of decorum. There are certain things you can and cannot do on the floor of the House of Representatives. There are certain rules they have on how you are to act and conduct yourself if you are going to be a member of the United States Congress.

There is another house that has house rules. It is what we would call the 'House of God.' It is made up of a corporate body called 'the church', but that corporate body is made up of individual members called 'Christians.' There are house rules on how the church is to conduct its business and there are rules of decorum of how the individual members are to live their lives and treat each other. It is only when those rules are followed that the mission can be accomplished, the impact can be maximized, and the most good can be done.

As we get near the end of the third chapter of Colossians, the Apostle Paul lays out the house rules for churches as we come together for corporate worship, and for each of us individually as members of that body.

Just so you know, Paul wrote Colossians: 1). To combat the false teaching that was undermining Christ's centrality and supremacy in things like creation, revelation, redemption, and the church. 2). To express the true nature of new life in Christ and its requirements on believers.

Paul focuses on two key issues:

1). Correct doctrine, especially as it relates to the supremacy of Christ.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God (1:15)

The fullness of deity in bodily form (2:9)

The Creator of all things (1:16-17)

The head of the church (1:18)

The all-sufficient source of our salvation (1:14, 20-22)

2). Complete sufficiency of Christ as the only way to progress as a believer.

More than any other NT book, Colossians focuses on the twofold truth of Christ's preeminence and the believer's completeness in him.

Turn with me to Colossians 3:15-17 *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."* [NIV]

Let's PRAY

When we were growing up, I'm sure we all had certain rules for how we were to conduct ourselves in our home, but some of those same rules applied when we left home, right. The way we lived our lives away from home reflected the kind of 'rules' that we were taught. On one level we were taught to say please and thank you and have good manners and eat everything on our plate.

STORY: I heard the story of a little boy who went to a birthday party and when he got home his mother asked how everything went. He said it was a great party, and as we left Billy's mother gave us all these goody bags. She asked, "did you say thank you?" He said, 'well, the girl in front of me said 'thank you,' but Billy's mom said, 'don't mention it;' so I didn't.

We have been in a series in this book of Colossians called '**Seeing the Invisible,**'

because Paul says in Chapter 1 that he is revealing **The Mystery Hidden for Generations.**

TODAY'S sermon is called, **'House Rules for the House of God'**.

As we begin, consider this statement. **The best argument for Christianity and the best argument against Christianity is the life of a Christian.**

In these three verses, we have three rules or better yet, three commands to follow as followers of Jesus Christ.

I. Let the Peace of Christ Rule Your Heart

Rule number one: ***"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."* (vs.15)**

Now, I don't know about you, but that should be a welcomed scripture in a day and time where it is hard to find peace anywhere. And if you do, it's not a lasting peace. Paul is not even referring to the kind of peace that we long for between each other, and between nations. The peace that he is talking about is unlike any other peace you will find anywhere other than in Jesus.

The last gift that Jesus gave to his disciples before he went to the cross was peace. Specifically, ***HIS* peace.** He said, ***'Peace I leave with you; MY PEACE I GIVE YOU. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.'* (John 14:27, NIV)**

The peace Jesus gives, is a peace that passes understanding. Any peace you find that comes from this world will not last. Some people might find peace for a while in a pill, or in a bottle, or when the kids finally go to bed, but it won't last. The peace that Jesus gives is an eternal peace.

Jesus said, 'Don't LET your heart be troubled. Don't LET your heart be afraid.'

That sounds like you have a choice in the matter. You can trust what you see, OR you can trust the One who is control over everything you see and everything you can't see. It's your choice.

There is a peace that passes understanding that bypasses your mind, goes straight to your heart and rules it. You have a choice over what rules.

There are three kinds of peace:

Vertical peace is peace with God. The only person on this planet that has peace with God is a Christian. Before you come to Jesus Christ, you were not at peace with God; you were at war with God. Sin separates you from God. The moment you receive Jesus Christ, who died for your sins and came back from the grave to break the barrier between you and God, is when you received peace with God. Romans 5:1 says, **'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'** (NIV)

Once you have this vertical peace with God, then you have the **internal peace of God.** The peace of knowing that your sins have been forgiven, that you have unbroken fellowship with God, that He is in complete control of your life, that He will work everything for your good and you can trust Him in everything.

If I am at peace with God and you are at peace with God and we have the peace of God, then that vertical peace and internal peace should lead to **horizontal peace** where you have peace with others.

The word **'rule'** is interesting. It is an athletic term that means to 'umpire' or 'referee'. Literally it says, "Let the peace of Christ UMPIRE your hearts." In a game where teams are battling, and lots of things are going on, the umpire or referee calls the shots. They dictate how it goes. When any conflict or trouble arises in a game, they make the final decision of how it's going to be settled.

If I'm truly in Christ and He's in me, then His peace umpires my life and calls the shots. That means whenever conflict creeps up and whatever problems press in, I can respond by choosing to listen to the One who is the ultimate umpire over my heart and life.

I'm going to choose to trust, not in what I can see, but in the power, presence, and promises of Jesus who loves me, came for me, gave His life for me, and now walks through every part of life with me. **When I cling to the peace that is in the person of Christ, it calms my heart and focuses my mind.**

You know another amazing miracle this peace will do for you? It won't just provide harmony for your heart; it will provide harmony in the church. "Let the peace of

God rule in your hearts, to which you were called into one body..."

Paul is speaking to the whole church. Many members, but one church. They are all connected, so when one part is troubled, it affects the rest. When one part is fearful, it shakes the rest. **The peace of Christ isn't just to rule in the Christian, it's to rule in the church.**

Here is what Paul meant by this. In any situation that we face, before we act or react ask two questions:

1) Is this how a person who is at peace with Christ would act?

2) If I do this, will I still have the peace of Christ in my heart?

You cannot have the peace of Christ in your heart and be bitter, be unforgiving, be unkind, be un-Christ like toward anyone. Let the peace of Christ rule your heart.

II. Let the Message of Christ Saturate Your Community

Paul turns his attention to the church as it meets for corporate worship. ***'Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.'*** (vs.16, NIV)

I like how The Message paraphrases verse 16: ***'Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God!'***

We gather regularly with other members of the body to preach, pray, and sing the Word of God. The church gives the world a front row seat to the matchless power and enduring grace of our awesome God. And it ENCOURAGES Christians to live lives full of thanksgiving and gratitude.

Paul describes what it looks like when the Word of Christ is dwelling among God's people in His church. There is 'teaching...admonishing...singing'.

This is one of the very few verses that gives us a snapshot of how the early church

worshipped, and it all centered around the message of Christ. Some interpreters take this to mean the words that were spoken by Jesus. Others believe that it refers to the words spoken about Jesus. The answer to me is it is referring to both. Everything we know about what Jesus said is found in the word that God gave.

House rule #2 for the **'House of God'** is that the **'Word of God'** be our guide for what we believe, what we teach, how we worship, and how we live.

To **'dwell'** means to be **'at home.'** If there is any place where the Word of God ought to be at home and welcomed, it is in a New Testament church. What is true of the church is true of the Christian. You ought to make the Word of God feel at home in your heart every day.

The Word of God cannot dwell in you unless it gets to you. Nobody will ever feel at home in your house until they are first allowed into your house. That is why every Christian should read God's word every day. I am going to say this as strongly as I can. There is something wrong with someone who claims to be a follower of Jesus but never takes the time to read the words of Jesus, never takes the time to hear the voice of Jesus, never takes the time to learn the teachings of Jesus.

Then Paul says something I never really thought much about. He says that we are to teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. Two responsibilities that is not just the pastor's responsibility, but everybody's responsibility. We are to be teaching and admonishing each other.

Teaching refers to the positive presentation of the truth of God's word. We need to know the truth about how to live the truth.

Admonishing is when we warn each other when we stray from the truth. In other words, we are to communicate with each other what this book teaches and how to live by it, AND we are to confront each other when we don't.

We should all be able to bring biblical truth to anyone who needs to hear it and understand it. Amazingly, he says something else. We are to do this through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. This tells us that songs should communicate sound theology, biblical truth, and should be centered on the message of Jesus.

Let me remind you of something. The early church didn't have drums, guitars, keyboards or sound systems. There is nothing wrong with any of those things and I am glad we have them and that we do use them.

Illustration: The Swiss Scholar Ulrich Zwingli said this about church music, "No teaching, no injunctions sink so deeply into the heart of man as does music." The power to emphasize the Word is almost unlimited through the means of music. Martin Luther said, 'Music is a divine revelation.' Music is the universal language of our emotions because it moves and stirs us to joy or sorrow.

Illustration: Tim Hughes, the Dove Award winning songwriter who wrote the song, 'Here I Am to Worship,' talked about a time when he was in South Africa. He was working with kids and leading worship. He didn't have all the modern aids to worship. He thought to himself, 'How are we going to worship?' He said, 'A moment later the place was filled with some of the most beautiful singing he has ever heard as those kids began to sing out of the overflow of their hearts.' At that moment, he said, 'I learned something.' **Worship isn't about music; it is about Jesus.'**

Here is the point. We are collectively the bride of Christ. We are accountable to each other and the proclamation of Christ should saturate our community.

III. Let the Praise of Christ Govern Your Conduct

Then Paul wraps it up with this simple statement. **"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."** (vs.17, NIV)

What does it mean to do everything and say everything in the name of Jesus? It means that whatever you say and whatever you do should always line up with the character of Jesus. A person's name and a person's character are always linked together.

One of the ways that corporations and businesses advertise their products is they get a well-known personality to endorse it. They want them to lend their name and reputation to whatever they are trying to sell. Businesses know that when you

can find someone the public admires, and they endorse your product, they are more likely to buy it.

As an Illustration: The top five athletes by endorsement earnings in 2026 are:

Baseball player	Shohei Ohtani	\$125 million	New Balance
Basketball player	LeBron James	\$85 million	Various global brands
Soccer player	Lionel Messi	\$70 million	Adidas and Pepsi
Soccer player	Cristiano Ronaldo	\$65 million	Nike
Basketball player	Stephen Curry	\$65 million	Under Armour

As a point of reference, Tiger Woods became the first professional athlete to earn over one billion dollars in his career. He passed that mark in early 2014 and it was estimated that eighty-eight percent of what Tiger Woods made as a pro-golfer didn't come from playing golf; it came from endorsements. In one of his highest years, he made sixty-two million dollars, but ninety-six percent of that came from his name.

Here is exactly what Paul is saying, and it is a radical thought. **'Whatever you say or do, whether it is the word that comes out of your mouth or a work that comes out of your hand, you should do it in a way that endorses Jesus and has His approval.'**

Illustration: Brother Lawrence was a cook in a monastery in the 1600's. In his book, The Practice of the Presence of God, he gave practical ways to "offer God in your heart from time to time in the day," even during chores such as cooking or repairing shoes. One's depth of spirituality he said does not depend on changing things you do, but rather changing your motive – doing for God what you ordinarily do for yourself.

Here is the question we should all ask before we do anything or say anything, Can Jesus sign his name to what I am about to do, or I am about to say?'

So, you might be asking, 'pastor, how do I really know if the peace of Christ rules my heart? Or, if the message of Christ is saturating my community? And, if the praise of Christ is governing my conduct?

Let me show you what I believe is the tell-tale sign that you are following God's house rules. Paul repeats something three times in these three verses?

1. **In verse 15 he said, 'And be thankful.'**

The Bible is full of commands to be thankful, but the word Paul uses in verse 15 is the only time it's used in the entire NT. It's a combination of thankfulness and peace rolled into one word. Which makes sense because **a heart full of the peace of Christ will produce a mouth full of gratitude to Christ.**

A heart that lacks peace will belong to a mouth that lacks praise.

Jesus healed ten lepers, but only one returned to say two precious words, 'thank you'. And Jesus seemed stunned. 'Where are the other nine?' He hadn't just given them their health back, but their families, their friends, their dignity, their future. In a sense, He raised them from the dead. He gave them their lives back. But only one returned to express his appreciation.

No one in the Bible was ever medically cured of leprosy; they were always miraculously cleansed of it. You and I cannot be cured of sin; we must be cleansed of it. What can wash away our sin...nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again...nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Do you think the other nine lepers who didn't come back to Jesus FELT thankful? Absolutely. No doubt about it. They felt thankful, but they didn't give thanks. Feeling thankful isn't the same as giving thanks. Jesus expected more from them than just feeling grateful for having their lives given back to them. He expected them to express it. Say it. Show it. Sing it. Demonstrate it. Why?

Because gratitude isn't just a FEELING you feel...it's a RESPONSE you give to communicate how you feel.

Hebrews 12:28: ***"Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe."***

Here's a thought: If God used the same measure of blessing on you that you used in blessing Him this morning, what would that look like?

In verse 16 he said, ‘...singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.’

In verse 17 he said whatever you do in Jesus’ name,’ ...giving thanks to God the Father through him.’

Illustration: The Puritan Bible commentator Matthew Henry was robbed while walking down the street. The thieves took everything of value. Later that night, Henry made the following entry in his diary: 'Let me be thankful: First, because I was not robbed before. Second, because although they took my wallet, they did not take my life. Third, because although they took my all, it was not much. Fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.' Even during a horrifying experience, he showed thankfulness.

God's Word makes it abundantly clear that thanksgiving for Jesus followers isn't a day we celebrate; it's a life we live.

When you are at peace with God and at peace with others, when you are into the Word of God and the Word of God is in you, and you are determined to bring glory to the name of Jesus, you will be thankful IN everything.

Illustration: Corrie Ten Boom was a beautiful, Christian lady who survived the Holocaust. She and her family were credited in hiding over 700 Jews in the Netherlands during WWII before they were captured. She and her sister, Betsie, were moved to Ravensbrück, the most horrible of all the Nazis death camps. When they were moved to their barracks, they found that not only was it overcrowded, but it was saturated with fleas.

Earlier one morning, the two sisters had been reading I Thessalonians 5:18, ‘In everything give thanks for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus...’ Betsie suggested that she and Corrie should thank God for everything including fleas. Corrie thought that was ridiculous, but her sister wouldn’t give up and so finally they did thank God...FOR FLEAS.

As the months went by, they were surprised how easily they were able to conduct Bible studies and prayer meetings without any interference from the prison guards. Then one day they learned the reason. The guards would not come into the barracks, because of the fleas.

CONCLUSION: Joy and Gratitude aren't options God gives us based on our circumstances. They are to be the priorities we live by despite our circumstances. That's only possible when joy and gratitude aren't based on what's going on around us but built upon Who is living in us.

A person truly thankful to be rescued and redeemed by God will gladly live all of life IN the name, FOR the name, and BECAUSE of the name of Jesus.

Because with Jesus' name comes my *identity*.

With Jesus' name comes my *security*.

With Jesus' name comes my *authority*.

With Jesus' name comes my *responsibility*.

With Jesus' name comes my *eternity*.

Jesus willingly surrendered all His life to save mine. Now I thankfully live all my life for Him. Nothing is off limits. There is no event, activity, endeavor, or goal that is exempt from the Lordship of Jesus. God wants those who have tasted His grace and experienced His goodness to radiate with joyful gratitude because of His eternal promises.

A church house or a Christian home full of thankful people is not just a happy house, but it is a holy house.

So, let me ask you, is every part of your life in word and deed dedicated and committed to glorifying the name of Jesus Christ? Is there anything in your life, that you've been holding back from complete surrender to the Lord? Won't you lay it down before Him this morning.