

Colossians 3:16

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[0 : 00] of thankfulness for what you have done for us in Jesus. All these things we ask now in his name. Amen. Now if you'll turn in the Scriptures back to Colossians 3, and John Gillis is going to come and read this to us. He'll read the same passage that we looked at this morning. Hopefully the continuity will, well there will be continuity because of this. Colossians 3 verses 1 to 17.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[2 : 40] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'm going to sing in the Scottish Psalter.

I gave the wrong information there. Sing in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 32. Psalm 32 in the Scottish Psalter, verses 1 to 5.

And verse 5 is a double stanza. We'll sing both of those. Verses 1 to 5. This is on page 243. O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned all the transgression he hath done, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile nor fraud is found therein. This is a song that we can all identify with as David wrestled with personal sin, yet was confronted and was forgiven.

[4 : 00] He confesses his struggle and yet God's grace. So please keep in mind your own struggles with sin, yet God's forgiveness and grace in Christ, as we sing verses 1 to 5 to God's praise.

God's grace. We're about to sing. God's grace. God's grace is unharsh, and if you're not familiar, he pretending to be physical. God's grace is good to her. Thank you. God's grace. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[6 : 33] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for the grace, the kindness that you lavish on us.

despite what we do. You have blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms in Christ.

[8 : 34] We bring to you a twisted and corrupt life, both personally and as a group of people.

We offer that to you, and you offer to us the magnificent, the pure righteousness of your Son, who took our filth on himself so that we could have his purity.

You have been so gracious in your mercy to us, and we cannot thank you enough and we think of all of the millions of people throughout time and around the world right now that you have done that same act of grace for.

We thank you for pouring out your Spirit, the Spirit of your resurrected Son, on to us to equip us. We thank you that your Spirit is at work in your people all over this globe.

We're amazed to see what you do in this world that belongs to you. All of those other Christians, our brothers and sisters in Christ, whom he has bought with his own precious blood, would you comfort them right now, especially those who are facing struggles and pain that we can't even imagine, but which your Son can imagine because he has experienced them as well.

[10 : 25] Would you please comfort them with their great High Priest, our Lord Jesus, who has experienced their temptations, their struggles, and he has come out victorious.

Would you also guide our hearts, our minds, tonight, this evening, with what we contemplate next.

It is your Word. You have breathed it out of your mouth. It is perfect. It is flawless. There is no error within it because there is no error within you.

Would you apply it to our hearts? Would you help us understand it correctly? Give us the wisdom and discernment that only comes by your Spirit, helping us understand what you know.

Please turn our eyes to your Son so that we may glorify Him as you intend Him to be glorified. All of this we ask with thanksgiving from the bottom of our hearts.

[11 : 42] In Jesus' name, Amen. Let me turn, if you're not already there, to Colossians 3. We focused on Colossians 3 this morning.

Colossians 3 as a whole, well, verses 1 to 17 anyway, and saw the focus on our Lord Jesus and all of the amazing things that He is and has done and how He's brought us into that and He's given us a share of who He is and what He's done and how that is our focus as we walk through the difficulties and the joys of life, the bores and the excitements.

We're going to focus this evening on a verse toward the end of this section that has to do with God's provision for His people, or one of the many provisions, I should say.

one of the many provisions for His people. God has provided us with many things, His own Spirit being the main one, the preeminent provision for us, His Spirit to guide us, to equip us, to grow us, and His Spirit concentrates its attention, its activity in us on Christ.

So God has given us the power of His Spirit, He has given us the focus on Christ, but He's also given us the agency, or the, I can't think of a better word, the agency of each other.

[13 : 22] His Spirit is in each of us who trust His Son, and He uses us, He provides us to each other, to help each other, to teach each other, to guide each other, to rebuke each other, to push each other on.

by the power of His Spirit, always focusing on His Son. It's mainly that last one, the provision of us to each other, that Paul draws attention to in verse 16, though he still keeps the focus on Christ.

Verse 16 says, Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish each other, with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God.

You see, the focus is on the Word of Christ dwelling richly among us, but it's through us teaching and admonishing each other, through song indeed, that that, at least here, that that happens.

I'll explain what I mean by that a little bit lower. I want to remind you of the focus throughout this whole letter, and in fact, all of Paul's writings, the whole New Testament, the whole Bible actually, the focus on Christ.

[14 : 47] He was writing to a group of people who were tempted to go to all sorts of sensual excitements, to let go of what they had in Christ, and follow something else as the guide for their Christian life.

And over and over again, in this letter in particular, Paul hammers home, Christ is supreme. He is the preeminent one. In creation, through buying you, Christ is the preeminent one.

Cling to him. That's the message of Colossians in some ways. And we saw that this morning. Christ is the heart, the root, the essence of the Christian walk.

Christ is all, and he is in all of us, all of us who believe. And because he's in us, we therefore can help the word of Christ dwell in each other. So let's look at that phrase for a few moments.

What does that mean? Let the word of Christ dwell among us. You'll notice that the words in the NIV say, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

[15 : 58] And that's fine, in you. I just said dwell among you, among us. It's plural, which could mean that he's talking about us together.

Let the word of Christ dwell richly among us as a group. Or it could mean, let the word of Christ dwell richly in you personally as one of the group.

And I think both are certainly true. The word of Christ needs to dwell richly in us personally. We have to take personal ownership of this word of Christ, which I'll explain in a moment.

Personal ownership, but I think the emphasis that Paul's actually getting at is the group. Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you. Notice in a few verses before, in verses 11, right on to verse 16, his focus is on you as the group.

Here, among you, there's no Greek, there's no Jew, there aren't all these divisions. And in fact, clothe yourselves with things that look like Christ in relation to others.

[17 : 07] Clothe yourselves with compassion. That's toward each other. With kindness, with patience toward each other. Bear with each other. Forgive each other. His focus is on our interaction with each other.

And so then he gets to, let the peace of Christ, this is verse 15, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body, you were called to peace.

He's focusing on us as a group of believers. And then he says, let the word of Christ dwell in you all, dwell among you. And he's going to elaborate, as you teach and admonish each other.

So, let me reiterate, we personally do need to have the word of Christ dwelling in our hearts, to make it our own. And that's really the only way that it can dwell among us.

But Paul's emphasis here is how do you interact with each other? As a group of Christians, in whom Christ, Christ is in each of you, how do you interact with each other?

[18 : 09] Well, let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in your time together. Paul has in mind here in this passage, general Christian interaction.

wherever Christians are together. Now, I'm sure some of you are already thinking ahead to the debated phrase of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

But we should focus on the fact that Paul in this whole passage is talking not specifically about church. Just when you're here, let the word of Christ dwell among you.

But everywhere, every time you're together with other Christians, let the word of Christ dwell among you, richly. Now, he doesn't exclude church from that because we are together here.

And I'll mention that a little bit lower. But he's got something much broader in mind. Whenever we're together, let this happen. But what does it mean exactly? Let what dwell in us, among us, as Christians?

[19 : 11] Let the word of Christ, what does that mean exactly? Well, there are a lot of options of what that might mean. Does it mean the word spoken by Christ?

Let Christ's words, the things we have recorded in the Gospels, let those dwell richly among you. That's what some people say. Or does it mean, let the word that is about Christ, that is the Old Testament, their scripture at this time, let the Old Testament that's really about Christ, let that dwell richly among you.

or, as I think is proper, does it mean let talk about Christ, let explicit discussion about Jesus dwell, make its home among you as a group of believers.

Let the word of Christ, explicit talk about Christ. Now, of course, one and two can be true. We're supposed to have Jesus' own words dwelling among us. That's true. And, of course, we're supposed to have the Old Testament, God's word, that is about Christ, dwelling among us richly.

But I think his focus here, let the word of Christ, is he's talking about our discussion of who Christ is, explicitly with each other. Let that dwell among you.

[20 : 35] And there's a reason I think that. I'm not just pulling that out of the air. I try not to do that. I'm sure I'm guilty of it many times. But look at Colossians chapter 1. I'll just flip back one page.

Colossians 1, verses 27 to 29. Paul here speaks about his own personal task regarding Christians.

In verse 27, he says, excuse me, to the Gentiles, or to the saints, I'm sorry, to Christians, God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect or mature in Christ.

To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy that so powerfully works within me. Do you see what he says in verse 28? Our task, Paul's task, his companions, is to proclaim Jesus.

[21 : 43] Admonishing and teaching each other with all wisdom. Does that sound familiar to what he then writes about our task as just the ordinary Christians? Not the great apostles, but just ordinary Christians.

He looks at what he says. Let the word of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish each other with all wisdom. Paul has in mind talking about Christ, declaring the glory of who Christ is, the majesty of what he has done for us, and talking about it openly and explicitly and fully.

Now of course, that contains the Old Testament in it because the Old Testament lays the foundation for understanding God's activity in Christ. The Old Testament contains pointers, pointers, sometimes very clear ones, sometimes not so clear, pointers to what God is going to do in Christ.

But the word of Christ really has a focus on talking about the Lord Jesus, using the Old Testament to fill this out, but really talking in focus about the Lord Jesus explicitly with each other, what he's done for us.

Let the word of Christ, that is the truth about who he is, what he does, explicit and full in light of God's full revelation, let that be the topic that is at home among you, that dwells among you, that dwells among you richly.

[23 : 15] That's such a beautiful word. You can picture a treasure chest, but picture an empty treasure box, and then take one gold coin and put one gold coin in that. Can you picture this empty treasure box with one gold coin?

That's not dwelling richly. Load it up with coins. Fill it. That's dwelling richly. Let that happen with your talk about Jesus among each other.

Let that dwell richly among you. In a mount, talk a lot about Jesus with each other. Whenever you're with people, each other, talk about him.

Not just a mount, though, quality too, as it dwells richly, as we understand in further and further depth the reality of what God has done in Christ for us.

Let it live, be at home, richly among us. And so Paul's challenge in this verse, after admonishing us to be at peace with each other, he tells us to let the word of Christ dwell richly among us.

[24 : 29] His challenge for us is whenever we interact with each other, wherever we do that, have this be the case, cause our individual hearts, yes, and then our time together, whether it's one-on-one, whether it's just hangout times, whether it's tea times with friends, neighborhood fellowships, teens group, YF, senior citizens, prayer meetings, or in church, wherever you're together with people where Christ is in you, let that be a home, a natural habitat for explicit, full, deep discussion about Christ.

Elaborate on Christ to each other. Praise Christ with each other for who He is and what He does. Talk about how Christ affects you. How I'm personally affected by the living God as He has shown Himself to me in Christ.

Have Christ-centered talk be at home among us that is rich in both its amount and its depth of quality. I think that's really what Paul is getting at and is challenging the Christians to do.

That's what he did as he proclaimed Christ, admonishing and teaching each other, teaching us with all wisdom, and that's what he challenges us to do with each other. Let that be the case.

But how? How do we do it? Well, there would be a lot of ways, and I hope that we could be creative. With how we can do that.

[26 : 10] What Paul mentions next is an example of how to let the Word of Christ dwell among us richly. It's an example. There would be other ones. But what he draws attention to here is singing.

The singing ministry of the Word, some people have called it. Now, to make this clear, there's a translation issue. I don't usually like to get into these because, on the whole, the translation you have in front of you is great.

But sometimes, sometimes it's not exactly helpful. Here, right here, it says in the NIV, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Paul, in this version, Paul basically mentions two ways to let the Word of Christ dwell among you richly. Teach and admonish each other with all wisdom, and the second way, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts.

That's not exactly what Paul says. Now, it's fine, but Paul says something, well, let me explain. What Paul says is, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom with psalms, with hymns, with spiritual songs.

[27 : 39] Now, some other translations actually get that closer, but that, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, this is God's provision for what we use to teach and admonish each other so that the Word of Christ dwells among us richly.

Teach and admonish each other with all wisdom with psalms, with hymns, with spiritual songs. And let that be done, the next phrase kind of fills that out, let all that be done, that teaching and admonishing, singing with gratitude in your heart to God.

It's actually in these songs that we teach and admonish each other. In a real sense, we are God's gift to each other according to what Paul is saying here.

It's our job and our joy to strengthen each other. And we're to do it with all wisdom. Now, this draws our attention to something else that's very important for us.

Teach, let the Word of Christ dwell among you richly by teaching and admonishing each other with all wisdom. This focuses our mind on another provision that God has given us.

[28 : 56] And that is the provision of His Spirit. What His Spirit does for us. Think about Colossians 1.9. You can turn there just a little bit earlier in the letter. Thinking about wisdom.

Speaking to each other with wisdom. Paul says his prayer for Christians is this, in verse 9, we have not stopped praying for you, asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Spiritual wisdom and understanding. Now, when Paul uses the word spiritual, almost always, not always, but almost always, he's talking about that gift that the risen Lord Jesus poured out on His people to equip us.

The Spirit's, the Holy Spirit's presence and activity with us. What the Spirit does in you and among us, Paul calls spiritual. That's his main way to use the word spiritual.

This is God's rich provision for His church. Listen to 1 Corinthians 2 because this really fills out well what this Spirit-given wisdom and understanding looks like.

[30 : 14] 1 Corinthians 2, verses 6-14. This also demonstrates to you that spiritual usually refers to the Spirit's activity in us. Paul says, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden, that God predestined for our glory before time began.

What Paul's referring to is Christ crucified, by the way, in the context. Christ. That's God's wisdom that He predestined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age have understood it.

If they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written in Isaiah, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.

but God has revealed that to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him?

In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. And we have not received the Spirit of this world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given to us.

[31 : 38] This is what we speak. That is, Christ crucified for our glory. Who He is, what He has done, and what that means for us. The Word of Christ. This is what we speak.

Not in words taught by human wisdom, but rather in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God for they're foolishness to him.

He cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned, enabled by the Spirit, this gift of God to his church. That's how Paul talks about spiritual things.

It's the Spirit's activity in us that grants us wisdom and understanding. So although Paul in Colossians 3 does not mention the Spirit's activity in this one verse, I think this is what is in his mind, in the back of it anyway.

As we teach and admonish each other, we do so with all wisdom, that wisdom that is spiritual, that is given by God. He is enabling us to teach and admonish each other with all wisdom.

[32 : 53] So, let me summarize a few things. God has provided richly for his people, for his church, for those who trust his Son, those who are holy and dearly loved by him.

He has provided this explicit testimony about Christ, the Word of Christ, filled out by the Old Testament, but focused on Christ.

He's provided that. He's provided wisdom and understanding by his Spirit in us. And he's provided each other. He's provided you for me and me for you and you for each other.

This is not simply an act of preaching that you receive the Word of Christ in you richly. It is as you talk with each other wherever you are with the wisdom that God's Spirit is enacting in you.

But that does lead us to the following question. With what are we to do this? What are we to use to teach and admonish each other? Now again, I don't think this is exhaustive, but one thing that Paul mentions, the thing he focuses on here is song, like I mentioned.

[34 : 11] Singing to each other. And he mentions teaching and admonishing each other with all wisdom, with psalms, with hymns, with spiritual songs.

singing with gratitude in your hearts to God. Now many of you will be acquainted with a debate about this verse.

Some of you won't be, but some of you will be. As to what exactly Paul's talking about by using psalms, using hymns, using spiritual songs to teach and admonish each other, so that the word of Christ is at home richly among you.

And people have always debated this. It's been a long time. Since Paul wrote it, pretty much, people have disagreed on what this means. Some people talk about how psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all three of those together refer to the 150 psalms, the book of psalms that we have.

John Calvin disagreed with that in his commentary on Colossians. He didn't think that these were all talking about the psalms, but his student or friend, his successor, Theodore Beza, thought adamantly that these were all about the psalms.

[35 : 27] There's always been debate among very respected people about what these mean. Now, most modern Christians, perhaps 95% of the modern church, just assume that these three things are not simply referring to the psalms, the 150, but that the word psalms does, but the hymns, that's sort of like our old hymns, you know, those written in the 1700s and 1800s, and spiritual songs, that's kind of like our modern praise songs, these praise choruses that you repeat so often, you repeat the phrases over and over again.

That's what a lot of people assume that this is talking about, but that's not understanding it properly. However, I don't think that understanding them to be only about the 150 psalms is a proper understanding either.

I think both of those are missing something. We don't have time to go into detail about what these are, but I want to offer to you some thoughts that we can talk about later, that you all can talk about later.

Hopefully, the discussion of this will gear all of us again towards Christ, because that is the goal, teaching and admonishing each other toward that end. But let me offer just some thoughts to you.

It would be most natural, a lot of people claim this, but I'm going to claim it too, it would be most natural for the early Christians, even those with the Jewish background in the Old Testament, most natural for them upon hearing the word psalms, but not the three together like this, upon hearing the word psalms, to think about the 150 psalms.

[37 : 12] Paul says, teach and admonish each other with psalms, and they would have thought the 150 psalms. That's how the word is used the rest of the New Testament. They also, I think, would have been clear on what spiritual songs were, and it's not the psalms.

You remember how it mentioned that for Paul, when he uses the word spiritual, it almost always is referring to something that the Holy Spirit of the risen Christ is doing now, equipping his church with now, or now in Paul's day.

The New Testament church, the Spirit's activity there. That's usually how he uses it, that's how he uses it in this letter, and in fact, in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, and we don't have time to read and wrestle with the passage, but you do it as you go home, perhaps.

In 1 Corinthians 14, we're given a concrete example in the church of the first century where they offer a psalm to each other, but they also offer singing by the Spirit, is what Paul calls it there.

Singing by the Spirit, in his own spirit, but by the Holy Spirit. He says, I pray with my spirit, but I also pray with my mind. And what that refers to is I pray in tongues given by the Spirit, but I also pray in Greek, so everybody can understand.

[38 : 42] Then he says, I sing in the Spirit, but I also sing in the mind, meaning I sing in tongues, but also I sing in Greek.

And that singing in tongues in 1 Corinthians, and I'm not making an argument one way or the other as to whether that should happen in our churches today. In Paul's day, they offered psalms to each other for the purpose of edifying each other.

That's the point in 1 Corinthians 14. It's to build the church up. They offer psalms to each other. They also offer singing in the Spirit, then singing in tongues, which was not psalms.

In fact, most people, I don't know anybody who would actually claim that singing in tongues, when it was translated by the Holy Spirit, that it would be the psalms. Nobody argues that because most people understand tongues to be New Testament revelation.

God giving His church this gift of understanding Christ in all its fullness in a New Testament revelation. That would be the content of the tongues song.

[39 : 47] What Paul would call spiritual songs, with how he uses the word spiritual. You see, I'm piecing together bits of the Bible to try to show that there were types of singing going on in the church that Paul was encouraging.

One was psalms, one was spiritual songs that would have been like New Testament revelation, what we have in the New Testament. At least those two were going on in the church.

In Colossians here and also in Ephesians, Paul says, just like in Corinth, those were supposed to build the church up, well here, teach and admonish each other with psalms, with hymns, with spiritual songs.

I think they would have naturally understood 150 psalms and singing in tongues in their day. Perhaps in our day it would be singing the New Testament. The third word, hymns, is hard to figure out.

Because psalms and spiritual songs are different, concretely so, I believe, I can't see how hymns is identical with either one of them. It seems to me that since two of them are different, probably all three are different.

[40 : 57] But it's hard to determine what exactly hymns are. Other than just general praises. I'm not going to go in to try to speculate on exactly what that would be. I'll leave that to you to talk about.

But this is what God has provided for His people. Singing the Old Testament, which fills out His character and lays the foundation for what He's going to do.

His gift to the church, to us, is also to sing about Christ explicitly. Let the Word of Christ dwell among you.

Not just in church, everywhere you are. Dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish each other with psalms, with hymns, with spiritual songs.

Singing with gratitude in your heart to God. So I would challenge us, and I'm going to draw things to a close now. I'm sure a lot of you have received more challenge than you were ready for.

[42 : 00] But I'm going to challenge us not just about our activity of singing in church, although I think that is addressed in Scripture, but wherever we are.

Can we take this on? Can we take Paul's challenge to teach and admonish each other so that the Word of Christ is at home richly among us all?

I think the focus of singing a Christian song, the focus is brought out well in a quote that our moderator at the General Assembly just said in his talk.

And he said, on the biblical form of worship, we have differing opinions among ourselves and with other denominations, but I do wish to say that if worship is to be in spirit and in truth, then it must adore and exalt the glory of Christ.

Let that, the adoration of the glory of Christ, let that dwell richly among us as we teach and admonish each other by the Spirit's power.

[43 : 15] Now please pray with me. Our great Father, we have a very dim understanding of your ways.

And if it were not for your gift of the Spirit within us, we would not be able to contemplate, let alone understand properly, your ways, your desire, your will.

But thank you for your gift of spiritual wisdom and understanding. Would you help us here in church, everywhere that we are, would you help each of us to clothe ourselves with compassion and forgiveness and humility toward each other and to spur each other on as you have given us in your word.

Would you equip us with understanding by your Spirit and fix our eyes on your Son. Please glorify him in our corporate and individual lives.

we pray for his glory to the end of you, Father, being glorified. And so we pray it in his name, Jesus.

[44 : 39] Amen. Now we are going to sing again praises to our God. We are going to sing Psalm 40 in Sing Psalms.

Psalm 40 verses 1 to 5. Psalm page 50, 5-0. Psalm 40 verses 1 to 5.

I waited long upon the Lord. He heard my cry and he turned to me. He raised me from the slimy pit and from the mire he pulled me free. He set my feet on solid rock, a place to stand both firm and broad.

He put a new song in my mouth, a joyful hymn of praise to God. Many will look with godly fear and on the Lord alone rely. Blessed are they who trust the Lord, who shun the proud and gods that lie.

The wonders you have done, O Lord. How many and how great they are. Your plans for us are far beyond our power to number or declare. Please stand and worship God together with this psalm.

[45 : 47] Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[48 : 10] Be with you all. Amen.