

## **Colossians: On Things Above Part 6**

### ***Colossians 3:15-17***

**Preached by Rev. Craig T. Smith on August 20, 2023**

#### **Full Will Overflow**

Occasionally I am encouraged by my wife to go wash the car. However, the act of washing the car is interpreted completely differently by my wife and me. I wash it by paying ten bucks to have a drive through machine wash it. She wants me to save the ten bucks, hook up the garden hose, fill up some buckets with soap and go out and do it all myself. One time she took the lead and decided to wash the car herself. And while I enjoyed her washing the car, I did not appreciate the tone she washed it in.

When I have decided to wash the car in the driveway, I inevitably end up carrying buckets that are full and the water and soap splashed over onto my feet. That is fine. It is what happens when you have a bucket of water and have to walk it more than five steps.

British preacher R.E.O. White commented on our text this morning, Colossians 3:15-17. He said, “The surest sign that you are carrying a full bucket is wet feet.” It is a true statement. Things that are experiencing fullness will overflow. Have you ever attempted to carry anything that was full? Maybe a bucket of water to wash the car? You always get wet feet. Like that, when our lives are full, they will spill over.

And our lives are full, aren't they? To sound super high churchy, each life is a vessel. To sound more Oklahoma, every life is a bucket. And any vessel, any bucket is easy to fill. Each life is full of something. If it is full of grace, grace will spill out. If it is insecurity, that spills out. If a life is full of anger or resentment, that splashes out. Things that are full overflow. Paul wants to encourage his readers as to what a Christian's life is to be full of. We are to experience the fullness of Christ's peace, the fullness of his Word, and the fullness of his name. I invite you to Colossians 3:15-17 this morning. (read text)

#### **The Fullness of His Christ's Peace (v.15)**

We talk about the peace of Christ often. And when we do, we understand that the peace of Christ is a different sense of peacefulness. So, what is Christ's peace really like? Do you ever remember experiencing the peace of Christ?

Christ's peace is different from any other type. Before Jesus was crucified, he told his disciples, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful."

The peace that Christ gives us he refers to as "my peace." He gives us his own *personal* peace. That is not just the sense of calm that we feel when there is a lack of conflict. It is more like a sense of wholeness and well-being. It is feeling complete. Totally, fully complete.

But it is even more than that because it is the *presence* of Christ. His peace and his presence are beautifully associated with Old and New Testament Scriptures, such as Numbers 6:24-26, in the lovely benediction given to the priests: "May the Lord bless you and protect you; may the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace." It is his presence that provides that sense of peace in our hearts when we are reconciled back to God through salvation.

We have peace with God. Through Christ, there is no longer hostility between us and God when we receive salvation. This feeling, this sense of the end of the hostility between us and God, that sense of well-being is the experience of His peace and His presence. It marks your life. It changes you. It provides a way for you to feel that sense of calm when everything else rages around you.

Paul gives clarity on what we are to do with the peace of Christ. It is to rule in our hearts. F.F. Bruce wrote that the word "rule" carries with it the idea of "arbitrate."<sup>1</sup> The Greek word used here was often used to refer to the function of one who took it upon himself to decide what is right in a contest. The sense here is, "Let the peace of Christ be the umpire in your heart amidst all of the conflicts of your life. Let Christ's peace decide what is right for you. Let Christ's peace be your counselor."

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Salvation Army shared a story of a strong-willed woman nicknamed "Warrior Brown" because of her fiery temper. She was belligerent and would get drunk and angry. And then one evening she was converted to Christ through the outreach of the Salvation Army. Her entire life was transformed by the Holy Spirit. Later, at an open-air meeting, she shared what Jesus had done for her and someone who

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<sup>1</sup> F.F. Bruce and E.K. Simpson, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), p.281.

doubted the validity of her testimony threw a potato at her, bruising her. Everyone expected a furious response. Instead, she did not say anything. She did not even respond. All she did was bend over and put the potato in her pocket without a word. And she never brought it up again.

In fact, the incident basically faded away until later that year at their annual Harvest Festival, Warrior Brown brought as her offering a sack of potatoes. She explained that after that open-air meeting, she had cut up the “insulting potato,” and planted the pieces. Now she was presenting “the increase” as her offering. She had allowed the peace of Christ to be the umpire of her heart.

Imagine how much misery a person could avoid if they simply allowed the peace of Christ be the umpire or arbiter of their hearts. Of the peace of Christ was in control, how many words would you have held back rather than say or text? How many sleepless nights would you have forgone? Imagine how profoundly united the Church would be if we were all truly “called (to peace) in one body?”

Paul concludes the exhortation in v.15 by saying, “And be thankful,” a command repeated at the end of verses 16 and 17. When the buckets we carry are full of Christ, our lives are bathed with the peace of God in thanksgiving.

### **The Fullness of His Word (v.16)**

How can we allow the Word of God to dwell richly among us? Well, for starters, read it. While there are some passages of Scripture that are difficult to understand, most of it is not that hard to comprehend. Mark Twain once said, “Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I have always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I do understand.” The Bible is understandable, and we need to read it. We need to allow the Scripture to comfort us. We need to allow Scripture to bother us. We need to allow Scripture to soothe us. We need to allow Scripture to trouble us. It will do all of these things and more in appropriate moments for each of our lives.

But reading the Bible alone does not guarantee that the Word of Christ will dwell in us richly. Paul has a parallel teaching in Ephesians 5:18-19, which lists the same results from the filling of the Spirit.

There Paul teaches us that the presence of the Holy Spirit must influence our reading and meditation of Scripture. That is the only way that the Word of Christ will dwell in us richly, through the working of the Holy Spirit.

When we surrender to the Spirit, we experience the richness of the Word of Christ as we meditate and contemplate passages. We experience the richness of the Word of Christ when we memorize others. We experience the richness of the Word when, after meditating and memorizing Scripture, we actually do what it says. It isn't enough to study it academically. It is a matter of the heart. We are to have Spirit-filled participation in Christ and his Word. When that happens, we realize how rich it truly is.

I remember the first time I truly engaged and surrendered to the Spirit in reading the Bible. I was in high school and decided that I would read the thing every night before I went to bed. So, like I did any other book, I started at the beginning in Genesis and began to read through it. I read big chunks of it and had powered through the entire first book in a few days.

Somehow, someone planted the idea to pray before and ask the Spirit to help me read and understand. So, I went ahead and tried it. And to be honest, the first day or three, it was fine. I liked that I finished Genesis. I liked that I read it. But it didn't really connect with me.

And then I read a few more days and a growing light began to illuminate the Scripture. I was reading through the book of Exodus at that point. All five chapters over and over again. And then God spoke clearly to me about forgiveness and love. And in that moment, something clicked within me, and I started to sing a song by a Christian singer named Rich Mullins called *I See You*. "Lord, you're leading me with a cloud by day and then in the night the glow of a burning flame. And everywhere I go I see you." Mullins repeated that line a few times and I just kept singing it. Up to that point, singing in church had been an exercise that I had undertaken like I did singing happy birthday for someone I didn't really know. The best part of singing Happy Birthday is ending the song. But the Spirit moved, and the text came alive and meant something to me in that moment. I liked music fine but as far as church was concerned, my soul was pretty unmusical. But in that moment, in the fullness of Christ's Word, I was moved to express it through song.

So many believers aren't moved to sing. And yet, Paul says that is the what happens when you experience the fullness of Christ and his Word. Singing is a natural response to the fullness of the Word of Christ. Second century theologian Tertullian writes about an early church service, described as a Christian love feast:

"...after water for the hands and lights have been brought in, each person is invited to sing to God in the presence of the others from his own heart."<sup>2</sup> For believers, singing is a sign that Word is richly dwelling in our hearts.

Throughout the history of the Church, whenever God's Word has been richly received, that joy is inevitably expressed in song. When the buckets of our lives are full of God's Word, we cannot move without spilling over into singing.

Worship isn't supposed to be a time where God meets our needs. It is a time in which we give glory to God. If a person is coming to worship to have needs met, the chief purpose of their worship is to glorify humans rather than God.

In worship, we glorify God. For many people, though, if worship fails to meet their needs, they have little use for it. Maybe you have seen that feeling communicated from someone who said, "I have so much I could be doing on a Sunday morning. I just don't have time to allocate for church."

Because the peace is Christ's, because the Word is Christ's, the thanks are due to God alone. And our worship should be marked by joy and gratitude for the name of Christ.

### **The Fullness of His Name (v.17)**

This is a comprehensive exhortation from Paul. "Word or deed" sort of covers everything. "Deeds" can be preaching, teaching, eating, exercising, driving, cleaning, working, shopping, visiting, studying – everything. Our words are everything that passes through our lips, even in those unguarded moments when our mouths get ahead of our brains. *Everything* we say or do is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Our actions, our words, must reveal that Jesus is doing and has done exactly what He claims in Scripture. Just a few seconds of sin can tarnish even the best and greatest of names.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 284

In Hebrew the name *Judah* means “praise.” The New Testament equivalent of that is *Judas*. When our lives are full of Christ, praise to his name in word and action overflows out of our lives.

The fullness of Christ comes from an overflow of his peace and his Word and his name. And it is also seen in our thankfulness.

Verse 15 ends with, “And be thankful.” Verse 16 with “thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Verse 17 reads, “giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Verse 15 is the most direct of these three exhortations to thankfulness. “And be thankful” literally means “become thankful.” We are to keep striving for a deeper gratitude than what we have yet experienced. The word for “thankful” is the word *eucharesteo*. We get the English word *Eucharist* from that, which is another word for the Lord’s Supper – a time for giving thanks.

A few months ago, I was cleaning out the basement at Stately Smith Manor and I left a smaller trash can outside. I didn’t realize I had left it and it was obscured from my normal routine. So, it was out there for a while. A few days ago, I went out and noticed it. It was no longer empty. It was full of water. To the very top. And the water had started to turn. There was lawn debris in it and also a handful of dead bugs. It proved a spiritual truth. Even vessels, or buckets, that seem to not be moving or doing anything become easily full. And they are not always full of things that are beneficial, encouraging or God-pleasing.

This morning, understand that your life is being filled with *something*. And whatever that something is will ultimately splash out onto your feet and sometimes even on to another person.

Full lives overflow. They cannot help it. What is filling your life? For believers, we are to experience the fullness of Christ’s peace, the fullness of Christ’s Word, and the fullness of Christ’s name.

A life full in these ways leads a heart to respond in praise and ultimately leads us to grateful, thankful hearts.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**Wednesday Bible Study at 10:30AM.** We will continue our study in the book of Mark.

**Women's Ministry Bible Study: Launches Tuesday evening September 5<sup>th</sup>. 6-7:30PM.** Led by Cindy Gresham at the church building. The study is *Abide* by Jen Wilkin.

**BAPTISM SUNDAY: August 27<sup>th</sup>.** If you are interested in baptism, contact Pastor Craig.

**FBC Kids Resumes Wednesday Night Sept. 6!** See Pastor Jason for details!

**MESSY KIDOLYMPICS! Saturday September 9<sup>th</sup>. 10AM-Noon at Ridge Road.**

**SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 10<sup>th</sup>:**

9AM: Biblical Community (Bible studies, Sunday school for all ages)

10:30AM: Worship Service

Until then, we will maintain the summer schedule of 9:30AM Bible study and 11AM worship.