

Keeping Christ at the Core

Todd Burgett
Colossians 3:15-17
September 4, 2022

So please turn to Colossians, chapter 3. That's where we're going to be. Now this may be a shock to many of you. I am not a fitness expert. I know you're shocked at that just by looking at me. But a few years ago, I did notice in the fitness world that there was kind of a refocusing on what they call the core. The core is that central area, core of course, is the central essential area of the body that affects everything else. So there was a new re-emphasis on the abs on the back, the pelvic muscles, and sometimes even the digestive system, because being central in all of that, to our physical life, it affects everything, affects the rest of us. Some of us have struggled with a bad back and it affects how you stand, how you sit, how you sleep, all of that. It affects everything. Well, what's even more important than that is what the core of our spiritual life is.

We want to look at that tonight. As we open up Colossians 3, 15-17. What is central? What is essential? What is key in our Christian life? What is the source of our decision making? What is the source of our day to day living? What is the source of our purposes? Our worship, even. Our small and big tasks. We know what Christ said about this in Matthew chapter 6 and that is to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. Paul here in Colossians elaborates, and helps us understand that even more clearly of what it means to seek Christ first and have Him as the core of our life, and Colossians is a special letter that he wrote to the church in Colossi 2000 years ago.

Just like today, Satan was there at the beginning of the church influencing and trying to destroy what God was doing through the churches in particular and why Paul wrote this letter was that false teachers should come in and they were diminishing Christ. They were teaching things that diminished who Christ was. They were not taking everything away, but they were taking away his very essence. We see it today and those who want to say that Jesus is not God incarnate, but that He's just a good teacher or a moral example. No, He's so much more than that, and Paul makes this beautiful case for the supremacy of Christ in our lives to thwart that false teaching and to remind us of just how amazing our Savior is.

So those first two chapters Colossians 1 & 2, he focuses on who Christ is and what He's done. and he leaves a beautiful portrait of that. Understanding that and understanding the supremacy of Christ then has implications for how we live. It's not just nice to know, and we go that's nice to know, but rather it affects our life and should affect our life. And so Colossians 3 & 4, like Paul does in a lot of his letters, he starts with the theology, the understanding, the right doctrine. And then he moves into how does this affect our day-to-day life? And that's what he does in chapter 3 & 4. The beginning of chapter 3, he makes a similar focus that Christ did and said, look up, look to Christ. A metaphor, not literally look up, but rather in our hearts and our minds and our focus

in life. We look to Christ, not only that, but in verses 5-9 of chapter 3 he tells us in that as we live this out, we kill sin in our life. We still struggle with sin though we've been freed from sin and we are now saints because of what Christ has done and the gift of salvation that he's given to us. We still wrestle day to day with the old sinful self. And he tells us in wrestling with it, kill it. That's the negative side. The positive side comes in verses 10-14, where he tells us to put on the new man to put on the regenerate flesh, the Christ really. We're putting on the character of Christ in our life. And following of that train of reasoning then results in Jesus becoming our core. And that gets us to verse 15-17, is what we're going to look at. If He is the core then, if Christ is the core in our life, he will be exactly where he deserves to be, where he should be, where he needs to be in the life of a believer. Our main point, as we look at these three verses tonight, is this: keeping Christ at the core of a Christian's life is essential to a Christian's health, which in turn results in a heart of gratitude. Gratitude is the result we see through that lens, everything that we may face, and that leads us to the good health.

Would you stand as we read these verses, this is what we do here, that Redeemer Bible and honor of God's word. We value this word as the very words of God. and so we stand in one way of showing honor to it. So starting in verse 15, you can follow along in your Bible with me, and he says this, Paul's writing and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you, richly teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God and whatever you do in word or deed do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, the Father through Him. That's God's word. You may have a seat.

These amazing words here, what we find here, are three elements necessary to keep Christ at the core of a Christian's life. If you're a Christian, this is for you, what you need to do. If you're not a Christian today, please listen. Christ is Supreme, and He has offered to you free by God's grace through faith. He is our Savior, and we hope that by the end of this, or maybe even sooner, you'll place your faith in Him, and if you're in Christ today, we want to be encouraged. Paul is writing encouraging words, but sometimes along the way, as we read encouraging words, there's conviction that goes into and there could be that today, but the end result is not to frustrate you or leave you with a big burden on your shoulder, but rather an encouragement to walk in this newness of life and have Christ at the core of who you are as a Christian. In fact, the three things, these three elements you already have, it's a matter of what you do with them, and that's what Paul is making a case for. He's telling us what we're to do with these things that God has already given us in Christ so that we can keep the main things, the main thing, and not only that, it's not just for us as individuals. Paul is writing to individuals, of course, but he's writing to a church and this is the blessing. Not only that Christ is the core of your life, but if Christ is the core of your life and we're collection of Christians as the church, then Christ will be the core of this church. It's His church and he deserves to be the core of it all.

Well, *this first element* is this then, and that is *The Peace of Christ*. Peace we often think of as something of a feeling and that certainly we can have peaceful feelings, for sure. But this is something very specific, the peace of Christ. Something very objective, very tangible for us to understand. In general, peace means to tie together into a whole or wholeness from a national level, it is national tranquility. It's the opposite of war, peace. It can be between individuals, there's peace between individuals. What results can be security, safety, prosperity. Now for us as Christians, this take on and what we see here, the piece of Christ is something very specific in regard to those definitions. This is what this means. Here's one definition, of Christianity, it means the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot. It is peace that has been brought on by Jesus. This is the piece that was talked about by the angels when Christ was born, peace on earth, goodwill to men, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ. There is no greater blessing that we could have. That's another way of saying salvation, and yet specifically, knowing now that our relationship with God is now whole. We are no longer enemies of God. We are no longer at war with God. We are no longer under His wrath and judgment. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ. It's a gift. Jesus gave it to His disciples and John 14:27, He said this, peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives, do I give to you, let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. That's a perfect understanding of what we are to do with this peace. He says so right here and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. This is what we do with it. This is what we have as Christians. We have peace with God through Christ. And what does this piece do? It rules our hearts, but He says there let it rule. There's a willingness, a willingly giving way to the peace of Christ in our life to actively consent to the peace of Christ in our day-to-day life, this peace of Christ then keeps everything in check. It keeps our emotions in check. It keeps our temptations in check. It rules us.

Now often when we think of rule, we think of a king and Christ is a king and He's our Lord and that is 100% true. We follow Him, we obey Him because He's our Lord, not just our Savior, but He is our Lord. The rule here is not that rule, rule here is an athletic term. It's like a referee or a judge or an umpire. For them they had the Olympic games or the Isthmian games in those days. And just like we have today, we have referees umpires to make judgment call so that we know who ultimately wins, hopefully fair and square. Well in a similar way, what's this referee doing here in our life, this peace of Christ, it's selling us with the battles that we face, the internal battles, the passions, the emotions, the temptations.

We need something to bring that in check. And it's the peace of Christ. It's the referee. It's the rule. Your right standing before God through Christ helps you decide what is right amidst the chaos. It helps you with the conflicts that you face, the stresses of life, because you have peace with God. The God of the universe, the peace of Christ comes in great value to us. Maybe you were agitated by your boss this week. Maybe you were agitated by your co-workers, your fellow students, maybe there was anxiousness over money. Maybe there was some type of stirring, temptation, lust, or some other type of temptation that was stirring in your heart. The peace of Christ is there if we acknowledge it and we let it rule in us, it brings those things into check. I've

seen it in my own marriage. I sometimes get annoyed at my wife, my needs aren't met. I'm angry, I'm grumpy. I want my way. Well, my way and my view changes from beneath the shadow of the cross. As I understand how I am right with God and that He has forgiven me, that He has saved me. That humbles me, that secures me, and so with that view, I move toward my wife because I have peace with my savior. No longer does she have to be my God. I have a better God. Instead, I can serve her rather than expect to be the center of her universe.

Philippians 4:7 is another letter that Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, turn to Philippians 4:7. It's very similar to what he says there about the peace of God. Some of you have committed these verses to memory. I recommend for the rest of you, you do the same. These are some great verses that come in very practical ways in our life and you'll see this. Starting in verse 6 Paul says here to the church, do not be anxious about anything, which means in the Greek do not be anxious about anything. This is free, but in everything by prayer and supplication with Thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Colossians, it rules our hearts, here it guards our hearts, the peace of God. It doesn't necessarily mean your situation changes. It may not. Your circumstances may change, may not change, but what changes is you. And it's supernatural. I've been there in difficult situations where I've cried out to God for help. Nothing changes in that moment other than there's a peace that comes, that's beyond a feeling that I recognize all is well, God is in control. I'm right with God, what else do I need in that moment? That doesn't mean we don't have other needs, but it's how we can face that then. In fact, in Ephesians 6, Paul in the letter to Ephesus reminds them of six pieces of armor, helmet of salvation, breast plate of righteousness, shield of faith, sword the spirit, belt of truth, and then what's down? The shoes of peace. In fact, the shoes, the readiness given by the gospel of peace. We sang about this, our rock and our redeemer. Our rock is who we stand on. He's what gives us security and peace in our life. It rules our hearts. Cause our hearts can get us into all kinds of trouble, can it? That idea of follow your heart? Don't do it. Despite all that Disney says, do not follow your heart. It'll get you in trouble. Follow Christ, and He will guide your heart. He will rule your heart and notice too, how he says this, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in one body. There's that collective aspect. This peace of Christ is why we're all here. It puts us all on the equal plain field.

We're all together tonight. Some of us would never know the other people in this room if it weren't for Jesus. There would be no other reason to meet tonight. We come from different backgrounds, different ways of life, and yet what levels us and brings us all together is that we are former sinners who needed a savior. And now we're saints commissioned by God to make disciples in this world. And we're doing this together. Paul says this earlier in verse 11. Here in the gospel, there is not Greek and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians city and slave free but Christ is all in all. We're all one in Christ because of it, because of the peace of Christ. I'm right with Christ. You're right with Christ. There's no reason we can't be together and be unified in the same goal and the same mission. You see it moderates and regulates our relationships in the church. It's Christ church, so we're ruled by Christ and His peace. The

headlines frighten us, circumstances flip us, we need each other. As the church, we remain rock steady in the peace of Christ, our rock and our Redeemer. So let me ask you tonight. What rules your heart? What rules your heart this last week? Maybe the battles that you faced then have caught great tension. You need this reminder tonight, this encouragement that might be a lack of peace or maybe it's focusing on the wrong place for your peace or your hope. But here we have, let the peace Of Christ rule.

That leads to *Number Two, The Word of Christ*. That's not a singular word, but a singular set of truth. You could translate that, it wouldn't be off to say the word about Christ even. Now what is that? That's the gospel, in short, the good news of Jesus Christ. The short version is that Jesus came. He's the second person in the Trinity. He's God. He wrapped himself in human flesh. He lived the perfect life. The life we couldn't live as sinners. He lived it for us. He went to the cross to die in our place, a cross that we deserved. He took on so that we might have forgiveness of sins and have peace with God. He rose again on the third day, being vindicated for his sacrifice and victorious over sin and death. He ascended to heaven is seated at the right hand of the father and is coming back for those who are His. That's the two-minute version. That's the elevator version. What's the long version? This book, Genesis to Revelation, that's the unabridged gospel of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is pointing to the Messiah that would come. The New Testament is an explanation of how He came and what He did when He came and all the implications in us as Christians and as the Church as we await His return, as we await to go and be with Him. This is the long version, and this is what we have and it must be at the core of who we are.

If the word has little or no value in your life, the health of your life will not be well. This is what he says to do with it now. We have the word of Christ, we have this understanding. So what do we do with it? He tells us again, let, give assent to this, give permission for this in your life to do this. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. What a beautiful picture that is. That word dwell where we get our word dwelling, which is another word for home. He's saying, make the word of Christ, let it make its home with you. And if it has a home with you, then it's going to have influence over you. Our family's influences, good and bad, because we've made our home with them. Who you live with has that profound influence on us. That's why Paul says in first Corinthians 15:33, parents, it's one of our favorite verses to tell our kids, "Bad company corrupts good character." That's the flip side, that's the negative side of that. This here is good company. Let it live with you, let it live in your heart. What it does is it does not leave us impoverished, but rather it dwells in us richly, in plentiful supply. Peter reminds us of this in second Peter chapter 1:3 one of my favorite verses. "God has given us everything we need for life and godliness." What's most important in life? Life and godliness. And He has given us everything we need for, this book is sufficient. Yes, it doesn't tell you how to change a flat tire, but you don't need to know that to get to heaven, right? You need to know that if you get a flat tire and you can look it up somewhere, this tells us how to live life and godliness.

Second Timothy, 3:17, the word of God, the breathed out word of God makes us thoroughly equipped for every good work. It is sufficient. So then how do we let it in? What actions get it in there to dwell in us and make its home with us? Well, he gives us two practical implications of what to do in order to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. And it's not going to be shocking. The first one shouldn't be shocking to you at all. It says this, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom." Teaching and admonishing, it's one coin with two sides. To teach, it's the positive side. It's to impart instruction, to instill doctrine. The flip side of that kind of has a negative connotation, it's to admonish, to warn and exhort and they simultaneously takes place. Because we're not just robots looking to just take in information, but rather that information is there to transform us. And so now what do we do with this? We teach it and we admonish. It's not just a transfer of knowledge, but then there's an accountability that once you know that knowledge, that that's going to take place in your life and you're going to live it out becoming more and more like Christ. What's interesting here, he says, this isn't just for the pastor to do this. He says, do this to one another. This is hard because that means sometimes we might see our brother or sister and we have to put our arm around him and say something like, 'You know what? I've noticed that you're making choices in your life, It's putting you down a very dangerous path. It's a sinful path, and that leads to destruction. I love you enough to say, hey, I'm going to admonish you to come back to the truth. Not because I'm superior, not because I'm better than you, but because I love you. And I care for you.' There's a reason why that's really difficult to do because Satan knows that and he doesn't want you to do that. Just live and let live, is the slogan of the world. That's not the slogan of the church. It's I love you enough, I don't want to see you go down a path that could kill you spiritually. Teaching and admonishing, one another, amongst each other, in all wisdom. Wisdom, again, is more the knowledge it's knowledge applied in the life. It's applying it, experiential. So then what we see here in order to make the word of Christ to let it dwell in us richly, we need to be ready to be taught and admonished because the word of Christ is life.

Now this next one might be a little more surprising to us, but in the context here, how does the word of Christ dwell in us richly? By singing it, "Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God." We know that we're to sing in order to worship God, but there's another aspect of it too, to teach each other and to remind each other and to rehearse the gospel like tonight, when we're singing a song like Jesus, my rock and my redeemer. We needed to remind each other of that. We praise him that he is our rock and redeemer, first and foremost. It's that vertical connection, but then we're singing it to each other. Jesus is my rock and my redeemer, I needed to remember that tonight in my life, because there were times in my life this week, I didn't treat him as my rock or my redeemer. I needed to remember that and then we sing it during the week. We're singing these trues about the scripture. Jesus is our rock and our redeemer. You're going to sing that later in this week, I hope so. Or some of the other songs or other songs that have this rich content to it. What a beautiful gift music is. We're not robots, we're not emotionless. God has created music and especially when it comes to worship in this way.

Now music in and of itself can make us feel things. We don't even need lyrics for that. And so sometimes we get confused and we think we're worshiping because we feel something now we should, but sometimes that's the measure of it, right? We're talking about the content here of the worship as what decides what worship through music is. It's not about us, and unfortunately I feel, and I'm not saying this here, but for the last few decades, the church has done, and I'm talking broadly about the church in America, a horrible job in training Christians in understanding what worship truly is. We've turned it into a consumer aspect of church. There's one church that based on your musical style, there's a different tent that you went to go worship. Oh you like country music? Go to that tent. You like R and B? Go to that tent. If you like rock you go to that one and feel like the old stuff go over here. That's crazy. That's not what we're called to do to get our preferences met. Our view of worship often becomes subjective then, and it becomes divisive as Pastor Jon shared in his message last week. So aptly what then determines our worship? He tells us it's the content. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. How? Singing songs, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. What's referenced there in these three things is one, a variety, but all of those have to do with content. Psalms, the Psalms and the Old Testament. That's the only official hymnal ever given to us, 150 of them. Hymns, those are songs that describe glory to God for who he is and what he's done. Spiritual songs, songs that have that dimension of what Pastor Jon preached to us last week, spirit and truth. They're content driven, that's what determines for us what we should worship. I know this might get a little bit personal and you might feel like your toes are getting stepped on a little bit as I share some of what the heartbeat of this is for us as a church.

I remember a gentleman came up to me years ago in my former church and he says, how come we don't sing any hymns on Sunday? I told him, well, frankly, we sing hymns every Sunday. So let me translate what he meant. This is what he actually meant by that. I have a hymnal at home with my favorite songs in it. You're not singing my favorite songs because it's about me and me getting what I want in order to worship my savior. So I got to explain to him, though, hymns are songs that describe glory to Christ. There's some great songs in there and we sing them and we will because of the content. But there are some that we don't because they don't match to the scriptures. They may be sentimental. They may remind you of our childhood or some situation, but the content doesn't show up. Now what's the point of this? What am I trying to get at here? There's a great irony, we've turned worship music into an idol of preference. How can that be? It happens. I remember a man who was in my church, said all these songs that we sing and it's like, they're each one's a sermon. He was trying to say that that was a negative thing. I said, thank you, that's exactly what we're trying to do. These are many sermons that we can remember. You may not. This is an ego smash for me. You may not remember everything I preached, but you're going to remember these songs as you continue to sing them, you will remember them, and you'll remember this week that God is our rock and our redeemer and the other songs that we sang tonight and the one that we'll close with tonight and the ones that we sing on a regular basis, because here's the point in this. I got this approved by Jason, I actually preached it before I got his approval, but he approved it afterwards, and he didn't pay me to say this because this is what

we believe as a church and listen closely. We may not always sing your favorite song and or sing it in the way that you want it sung. But here's our commitment as a church, we will always sing about the Savior that you call Lord. We are called to worship and it's determined and focused on biblical truth. That is our commitment that will never change, and you can count on it. When you walk through these doors, as we gather that we will sing and worship Christ and we will sing these truths together. So when we teach, when we admonish, when we sing the Word of Christ dwells in us in a way that is deemed rich and that is true prosperity, as God sees it. It's the core, the peace of Christ, the word of Christ.

And then *lastly*, as we can finish this out, *The Name of Christ* in verse 17. Now, he says it a little bit differently. He doesn't say let this time. But rather there is something that we do. He says in whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, the name of Christ. That's our brand. When we see a brand and we see a name on it, oh, that's whatever that is. That's us. We're Christians, Christ ones. So we bear the name of Jesus and all that His name represents. What do we do with his name? He tells us, we attach it to every word and deed, or at least we should be able to. So then everything you do in word and deed. Are there things in your life that you say and do that you can't put the name of Christ on?

Oh, James gets us in James 3,9 and 10. Some of the most convicting words. He reminds us of our mouth and what we say. He says with the mouth, "We bless our Lord and Father, and with it, we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth, come blessing and cursing" and this is what he says, "My brothers, which includes sisters, these things ought not to be so." Paul says elsewhere in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it all for the glory of the Lord." It's taking what we have to do. We have to eat and drink and it's elevating it to something that we can glorify God for. That's the backbone of why we pray for meals, is to acknowledge God's provision. Even the sustenance that he gives us.

This really helps us in our decision making in life. When you're faced with the decision, can you put the name of Christ on it? How do you do your business? Can you put the name of Christ on it? How you do school? Can you put the name of Christ on it? How about your leisure activities? Can you put the name of Christ on it? How you parent, can you put the name of Christ on it? How you treat your husband or your wife? Can you put the name of Christ on it? Your singleness, does it have the name of Christ on it? Every word or deed? In fact, all three of these points really help us in decision making, the peace of Christ, knowing that you are secure in Christ and you are right with him. We have the word of Christ that tells us God's will. It's not a mystery. And those things that he doesn't tell us, then we have the freedom to choose, and as we choose, we can ask ourselves, can the name of Christ go on it. So if we can't put the name of Jesus on it, don't say it, don't do it. It's that simple. It's that hard.

Now, as we conclude this out, maybe you're paying attention there and you go, you forgot parts of this. You're only teaching us part of this. Well, it was intentional because there's a thread that binds these three together. And maybe you did notice it in verse 15, "Let the piece of Christ rule in your hearts and be thankful." Then verse 16 says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly

and as you sing and you do so with thankfulness" and then verse 17, "Whatever you do in word or deed do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, the Father through Him." This is that thing that binds all of these together, is the gratitude that we have to Christ for all that we face. We can look anything in the eye that comes our way, so to speak, and our heart converse with gratitude. That's what James says in James chapter 1, right? "Count it all joy, when you encounter trials of many kinds" Why? Because God is with you, Christ is with you, you have the peace of Christ, you have the word of Christ, and you have the name of Christ. And so we can be grateful. It shows us the health of our life.

Can others describe you as one who is filled with gratitude? Again, the circumstances may not change, but the perspective does, and we can trust Him, whatever it is that we face because He is our Supreme Savior and Lord there's no one greater. Christ has given us so much to be thankful for. We have the peace of Christ. We have the Word of Christ. We have the name of Christ. And because of that, we are truly grateful. Let's pray.

Jesus, we are grateful. We probably can confess that we have not always been grateful this week. And yet here we are encouraged by the greatness of your name tonight and reminder of what needs to be the core of how we live. We can't do it apart from you, help us to let your peace rule our hearts, help us to let your word dwell in us richly. Help us in word and deed, to place your name on all that we say and do apart from you, we can't do it. I pray for those tonight, who this is not true of them. I pray that they would place their faith in You and find new life in you as their Savior and Lord, thank you for this congregation as it is a willing to be taught and admonished to live, like you've called us to live and we pray this in your name. Amen.