

Lesson 17: “THE INNER, COMPLETE LIFE” 3:15-17 Craig Crawshaw

Colossians 3:15-17 *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 richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

Our theme of Colossians is “Be Complete” because the goal of Colossians is to teach us that we are complete in Christ. The goal is not to teach us “how to” be complete, for it is declared in 2:10 that *“in Christ you have been made complete.”* But we do need some reminding!

At the outset of chapter 3, as Paul begins his practical teaching, he reminds us believers that we have been *“raised up with Christ”* (3:1). His point is not that we need to strive to be raised up with Him – we already have been raised up. But we do need some reminding! So he tells us to *“keep seeking the things above”* and *“set your mind on the things above.”*

We have *“died with Christ”* in his crucifixion (3:3). And we have *“new life”* in Christ through His resurrection (3:4). These are statements of accomplished fact for the believer. But we need some reminding how these must play out practically. So, Paul has reminded us to “consider as dead” those idolatrous, impure passions of the body and to “take off” those thoughts of anger and abusive speech. He then listed 8 specific characteristics of the Holy Spirit within us that we need to “put on” to magnificently demonstrate our new and complete life in Christ.

So thus far we have been reminded of the “outward garb” of the complete Christian – that which will “show off” the glorious character of God to others. But in today’s passage, he goes inward, to the inner life of completeness. Now again, we have been made complete on the inside – after all we have the perfect Holy Spirit of God living in each of us believers. But yes, we need some reminding what that inward life should look like practically. So, in today’s passage, Paul gives us reminders of what our inward life in Christ should look like.

THE INNER, COMPLETE LIFE

1. Peace ruling
2. Word dwelling
3. Music singing

God has made our mind to be like a motor ever running, thinking, meditating, considering, deciding. Yes, there are times of rest, when we are sleeping – and blankness when we are, well, in shut down mode. But for the most part our mind is constantly engaged. We think about bills to pay, schedules to keep, errands to run and such. These are necessary thoughts. Paul doesn’t want us to neglect these thoughts. But he reminds we who are complete and “raised up” followers of Christ to transform our thoughts to a higher and more beneficial spiritual plane.

After all, we are “new creatures” and “born again,” so we should have a new and fresh inner life as well as a new spiritual wardrobe of outward garb. This is the ultimate complete life in Christ – when not only our outer self is transformed, but so also is our inner life of thought transformed.

I am sure you have times when there is peace in your heart – but does it *“rule”* continually? I am sure you think about the Word of God – but does it constantly *“dwell within you?”* And I am sure you have spiritual songs sometimes, even often, come to mind – but are they like a never-ending MP3 player running in your brain to God?

I want you to see the word that is at the beginning of both verse 15 and 16 in almost every contemporary Biblical translation. Do you see it? It is the word “let.” “Let” peace rule. “Let” the word of Christ dwell in you. “Let” the songs flow. God is instructing and admonishing you to “let” your mind be so constantly engaged. It is a choice. It is even a discipline. And it is a

reminder of how the Christian mind should be engaged, complete in Christ. So let us be reminded of the importance of each of these three disciplines of the inner self. And then we will see how all three are bound together in similarity.

PEACE RULING (verse 15)

Most every Biblical commentator out there is agreed that “rule” is to “umpire” or “make the call.” So, for peace to “rule” in in your heart, is for peace to be the final decider on how I am to think about something and then act on it. Should I be angry, vindictive or sullen about something? No, peace is the “rule,” so I will respond in peace. Should I be conflicted, anxious or fearful? No, peace is the “rule” of my mind and heart, so I will respond in trust and confidence that God is in control.

When I think about Biblical peace, comparing the concept with other Scriptural passages, I come up with four pretty basic and helpful corollaries.

1. Peace is freedom from anxiety. And when anxiety is conquered, peace rules.

Philippians 4:6-7 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God, And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

So just as antiseptic is the remedy for germs, sincere and thankful prayer to God is the remedy for anxiety. And freedom from anxiety brings inner peace, which is God’s will for His children.

2. Peace is contentment. When I am content even in my most difficult and challenging circumstances, I am at peace.

Philippians 4:12-13 *I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

What is Paul’s secret of contentment in all circumstances? It is full confidence that with Christ he truly and surely has everything that he needs to both survive and thrive. And peace rules.

3. Peace is acknowledging the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the very peace that Jesus left for each believer upon his departure from this earth. He is the very source of peace.

John 14:26-27 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

We believers already have God’s peace. We only need to acknowledge and access it by faith.

4. Peace is being reconciled with God. This is not peace from anxiety or circumstances. This is peace in knowing that I am secure in my relationship with God and bound for heaven. It is freedom from the guilt and penalty of my sin because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for me.

Romans 5:1 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This, dearly beloved of God, is “ultimate” and eternal peace of mind, heart and soul!

WORD DWELLING (verse 16a)

To “dwell” is to feel “at home,” and comfortable over a long time. So the Word of God is not to feel uncomfortable or foreign to us. We must feel “at home” in the pages of the Scripture. And that simply but surely takes disciplined time in its pages. And then those blessed concepts and truths are to be our continual deliberation and mediation. They are to both instruct (“teaching”) and provoke (“admonishing”) our inner selves. And as they do so, we can then wisely teach and admonish others in the body. To “richly” dwell is to allow that teaching and admonition to go deep into our soul, guiding our thoughts and intentions.

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

I remember when Curt, my son, came to me as a younger man, impressed that I knew so many Scriptures by memory and could so wisely pass on their truths. He said to me, “Dad, I wish I could do that.” And I remember responding, “You can, but it won’t happen overnight. You will need to spend lots of time throughout your life in the Scriptures, and you will do that too.”

Oh, dear child of God – are you “at home” in the Scriptures? God wants them to “*richly dwell within you.*” Let it happen for you, and you will ever be rewarded with godly wisdom aplenty!

MUSIC SINGING (verse 16b)

The Christian heart is to be the ever-singing heart. That does not mean that you must be a great, or even OK musician. It doesn’t mean you need to sing in the choir, or even sound good singing in the shower. But your mind and heart must ever be singing to God in praise. The parallel passage in Ephesians says it even sweeter, in that we are to “make melody.”

Ephesians 5:19 *Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.*

Both the Ephesians and Colossians passage speak of “*psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*” which seem to indicate three different categories of song. We can’t know exactly of what Paul was thinking from his first century perspective. But I have always considered “psalms” as songs coming directly from Scriptural references; and “hymns” as songs sung “to Him,” that is prayers to God. And “spiritual songs” would be any other songs of a spiritual nature that teach about God or godly things. Under that consideration, there would be some of each of these three category of songs in both the hymns of yesteryear and the contemporary “praise songs” of today.

Often, I just can’t get a song out of my head. And it used to bother me, especially when I was trying to get to sleep. But as long as it is a song from Scripture, of a prayer song to God, or a song teaching of His greatness – I’m OK with it filling my mind and heart now. God says, “let it be!” It is part of the inner life of the one complete in Christ!

THE TIE THAT BINDS

There still remains a couple of critical points to be made from this passage. Consider: what binds these three qualities of the believer’s inner, complete life together? Or to ask it another way, what two words or concepts are prominent in each of the three verses of Colossians 3:15-16?

1. **First, THANKFULNESS** is at the “heart and soul” of our inner Christian life.

Vs 15 “... *and be thankful*”

Vs 16 “... *sing with thankfulness in your hearts to God*”

Vs 17 “... *giving thanks through Him [Jesus] to God the Father*”

I have noted in my study of the Holy Scripture that there is no command of God given more repeatedly than the command to “be thankful.” God does not want our inner life to be a “glass half empty” – always viewing life through a negative and critical lens. We are to be “glass half full” folk – always seeing the best in people. In 1 Corinthians 13, as Paul is describing what “love” is, he relates that love “*bears all things, believes all things and endures all things.*” That is the glass half full, positive, thankful spirit that we believers must always have.

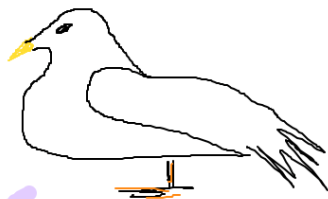
2. The second recurring element in all three of today’s verses is that **JESUS CHRIST** is the center of each. It is the peace of *Christ* that is to rule our hearts. It is the word of *Christ* that is to dwell richly within us and cause us to continually sing thankful praise to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, “you are to do all in the name of the *Lord Jesus.*” And that mention of “whatever you do in word or deed” encompasses everything of life, but especially in context if

refers to your inner life of peace, the Word of God and of song to Him. JESUS must be at the center of your inner life, provoking an ever-THANKFUL heart.

FINAL CHALLENGE

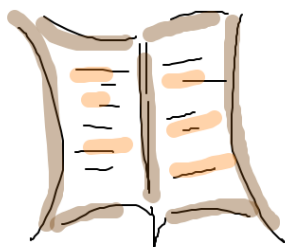
Ok – what fills your inner thought life? On what do you think most? Yes, you will think of people, bills and errands. But does the peace of God truly rule your inner life? Does the word of Christ richly dwell within? Do you continually sing with melody of thankfulness in your heart to God?

God says, “let it be!” This is your “reminder” of what the inner, complete life of the child of God should be!



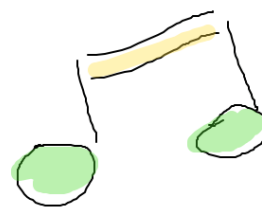
PEACE ruling
of Christ
in your heart

and be THANKFUL



WORD dwelling
of Christ
dwelling within

RICHLY



MUSIC singing
to Christ
in your hearts

with THANKFULNESS

SAY and DO ALL
in the name of JESUS
giving THANKS