

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**  
**Senior Pastor Titus Green**  
**May 25, 2025**  
**COLOSSIANS – Hope of Glory**  
**A Thankful Community**  
**Colossians 3:15-17**

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Almost 20 years ago, my wrist started itching. It was under the wristband of my watch, so I really didn't think much of it. Within a couple of days, parts of my hand and arm were itching. Then, one morning I woke up and pretty weird. When I went to the mirror, I found a person staring back at me that I hardly recognized.

I was completely covered in hives from head to toe. My lips felt like they were about to burst. My eyes were nearly swollen shut. It was bizarre. That began a crazy journey of doctor's appointments and tests and trying out various medications, all in an attempt to find out what was going on. Even though no one could figure out the underlying cause, it was clear that something wasn't right. So, for about a year or so, I was consistently breaking out in hives.

One day, I was meeting in my office with a college student. We were having a deep conversation about Jesus. I noticed he started to get increasingly distracted and uncomfortable. Finally, I had to ask him, "Is my lip swelling?" He said, "Oh, yeah." To which I asked, "Is it too distracting to keep talking about Jesus?" He said, "Ummm...yeah, I think we need to just call it a day."

It was a wild year in my life. It all started right after Logan was born, which made me think I was allergic to him which triggered my anxiety which worsened my hives...it was a vicious cycle.

Finally, I went on a strict, all-natural diet and, after about 6-8 weeks, the hives went away and never came back again. After I took out the junk food and put in the healthy food, my body started operating the way it should. This story in no way constitutes medical advice from me, FBCMI, or any of its subsidiaries.

And, in some way, that's what this section of the book of Colossians is addressing. The bible says we are the body of Christ. And for us to function the way we should function, there are things we need to keep out of our lives and community and things we need to make sure are present in our lives and community. Or, we'll break out in spiritual hives.

**Colossians 3:5–17**

***Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (building toward a community dynamic) 12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones (God's chosen people), holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let***

***the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 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. 17 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.***

We've been looking at this section for several weeks, and I want to start by reminding you that everything in this section is rooted in our identity in Christ. That identity comes from a miracle that happens when we place our faith and trust in Jesus. We are united to Jesus in a way that unites us to His life, death, and resurrection. That's how our sins can be forgiven by God. That's how we can live a brand-new life. We go from sinners to saints, from rebels to sons and daughters of God. We have a new identity in Christ.

And verse 15 says part of that new identity is that we are part of the body. That's talking about the church, the people of God. (1:18) Since we are united to Jesus by faith, we are united to everyone else who is united to Jesus. Like a body is interconnected and interdependent, the church is connected to each other and Christ is our head. That's part of our new identity in Christ.

And this section is all about how we contribute to the health of the body. We are called to keep certain things out of the body that would make it unhealthy. We are called to put certain things into the body of Christ that make it healthy.

- Verses 5-11 ***Put off sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, and lying***
  - Notice that those sins are connected to relationship with other people. Those sins destroy our lives and the lives of the people around us. So, our individual lives and the community of the church won't be healthy when they are present.
- Verses 12-14 ***Put on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and above all these, put on love, which binds everything together...***
  - These things are characteristics of Jesus. They are part of the life He empowers when we depend on Him and He lives in us. And they are all relational in nature. Our lives and our relationships are healthier when they are present in our lives.

So, really, this whole section is about how Christ is calling us to contribute to healthy relationships within the body of Christ. And our text for this morning adds two more things to what Paul has already said.

- In verse 15, Paul says we are to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.
- In verse 16, Paul says we are to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly.

And when you put all of that together, you get our big idea for this morning.

**BIG IDEA: WE CONTRIBUTE TO HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WHEN WE ARE RULED BY CHRIST'S PEACE AND RICH IN CHRIST'S WORD.**

Now, let's take those one at a time.

1. We contribute to healthy relationships when we are ruled by Christ's peace.

**Colossians 3:15**

***And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.***

When Paul says, "the peace of Christ," I take Him to be referring to the peace Jesus enables us to have with other believers now that we are at peace with God.

**Ephesians 2:13-16**

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*

Sin is an act of rebellion, or hostility, against God. It separates us from Him. But, at the cross of Jesus, God placed our sin on Jesus and punished Him in our place. So, when we trust in Jesus and are united to Him in His death, our sin is taken out of the way. We are forgiven and no longer separated from God. We are brought near to Him through Jesus. *We have peace with God.*

And since the cross takes our sin out of the way, it not only opens the door for us to be brought near to God, it opens the door for us to be brought near to each other. In Ephesians 2, Paul is clearly emphasizing that when he says that Jesus is our peace and has made us one with each other. He says that Jesus has created one new man, one new body, through His work at the cross.

Peace is now possible because Jesus has decisively dealt with our sin at His cross. He enables His cleansing power and forgiveness to flow through us. He enables the things that make for peace with others. That's what I take Paul to be referring to in our text.

**Colossians 3:11**

***Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. – Christ brings all these people together as one by His peacemaking work at the cross.***

And our text is calling us to let that peace do something in us. Verse 15 says, *let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.*

In the original language of the New Testament, the word "rule" described the job of a referee in a sporting event. The referee was the one who would point out when someone was out of bounds. He was also the one who would declare the winner and award the prize. Paul says that the peace of Christ should be like a referee in our hearts. What's that mean?

I believe it means that as we are living in relationship with each other, the reality of Christ's peacemaking work at the cross (Our Lord and God died to crush the division and friction, and destruction sin brings) ...that peace should constantly be refereeing the things that go on in our hearts. His peace should be blowing the whistle on things that are out of bounds and will disrupt the peace Jesus died to give us.

For instance, relational sin will disrupt the peace Jesus died to give us. Just think about the list of things we saw earlier that Paul tells us to put off. Sexual immorality, sinful anger, wrath, malice,

slander, obscene/inappropriate talk, lying - those things will destroy peace in our relationships. And when you sin in those ways, you are disrupting the peace of Christ in His body.

So, whenever those things start to well up in our hearts, the peace of Christ should blow the whistle as a signal that those things are out of bounds. And the impact will affect the people around you. They destroy peace.

And when you give into sin, the peace of Christ should be like a referee that causes you to see that you are at fault in a way that stirs you to genuinely repent and seek forgiveness. Without those things you will never live at peace with others.

And, on the flip side, the virtues of Christ help us restore and preserve peace with others. Think of the things we talked about last week we are called to put on - compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Those things contribute to peaceful relationships. So, as we are relating to other people and there's a struggle in our hearts about how we should treat them, the peace of Christ is like a referee that decides which things in our hearts should win out over the other things.

Let's say you are relating to a difficult person (spiritual sandpaper) and you are struggling between showing them kindness or treating them harshly, the peace of Christ should make kindness the one that wins.

We are called to contribute to peace in relationship with others.

That's one of the reasons I believe Paul is directing our attention to our own hearts. We can only do our part. Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Preserving and Restoring peace requires both sides to choose the things that make for peace. And our call in Christ is to make certain our hearts are seeking to cultivate peace as far as it depends on us.

As I was preparing for this morning, I was reminded of Onoda's War. During World War 2, a man name Hiroo Onoda was a lieutenant in the Japanese army who was fighting in the Philippine Islands. At some point in a battle, Onoda got separated from the main army and fled to the jungle. He had been ordered to fight to the death, and that's what he did for the rest of the war. On September 2, 1945, World War 2 came to an end, but Hiroo Onoda was hiding in the jungle, so he didn't know. So, he kept on fighting. He raided local villages. He attacked small groups of people whenever he could. He hid in the jungle and just kept on fighting until March 9, 1974. For almost 30 years, he fought battles in a war that had already come to an end. He was a one-man army who kept the conflict alive.

What Paul is saying in our text is sort of like that dynamic. Jesus has already won the war against the sin that destroy our relationship with God and our relationships with each other. So, don't prolong the battles in places Jesus wants to enable peace.

Before we move on, take a moment to consider your relationships.

- Is the peace of Christ ruling in your heart?
- Are there places where you've been out of bounds and need to repent?
- Are there places where the character of Jesus, His love and compassion and humility, need to be declared the winner in your heart?

Don't prolong battles in a war that Jesus won at the cross. We contribute to healthy relationships when we are ruled by Christ's peace.

## 2. We contribute to healthy relationships when we are rich in Christ's Word.

### **Colossians 3:16**

***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.***

What does Paul mean by "the word of Christ?" I believe he is talking about the truth of the gospel that is revealed in the word of God that was given to us through the prophets and apostles God used to write it down.

There are several places in Colossians that make me say that (1:24-28; 2:2-3; 4:3). Let's look at one together.

### **Colossians 1:24–28**

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*

Paul had a ministry that was a stewardship from God, an apostle. He says that ministry of apostle was to make the Word of God fully known. And that Word of God isn't just the Old Testament. It is the fullness of truth about Jesus revealed in the Old and New Testament through the prophets and apostles.

So, when Paul says, "the word of Christ," I take him to mean the whole Bible that reveals the truth that is all centered around and focused on Jesus.

And what are we to do with the word of Christ? Let it dwell in us richly, not just a little bit, but more and more and more.

To dwell means to live in a place, to make a place your home. The Bible should have a home in our hearts. We should open the door of our lives to the whole word of God and say, "Come on in. Make my heart your home. There's no room or closet or basement or attic that is off limits. It's your home, so choose the color and the décor." As Pastor Mark said last week, make sure the couches say hello to the tables.

We should read and study and memorize and meditate and believe and obey the whole Word of God.

But this isn't just a call for us to have the word of God in our lives as individuals. Remember, this is talking about our relationships. And Paul identifies three ways that the Word of God lives richly among us.

***v16...teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.***

Teaching, admonishing, and singing. That's how the Word of God dwells richly among us.

Teaching is what I'm trying to do right now. It's instruction or explanation that clarifies or informs others about the truth of the Bible. And this is a critical element of church life. But what I'm doing now isn't the only way that teaching happens. It happens in small groups when we study the word together. It happens one on one when we help each other understand more and more of the Scriptures. Sometimes it's planned and formal. Other times happens spontaneously in conversation with each other.

Admonishing is warning or counseling someone about an improper course of conduct. When we admonish someone from the Word of God, we are warning them of something the Bible says is wrong or unwise. And I love that Paul adds the phrase "in all wisdom." We aren't called to be the conduct police or replace the Holy Spirit. We have to be wise in the way we approach each other with teaching and admonishment. Wisdom helps us determine when it's the appropriate time and place to admonish someone in a way they will be blessed and not demoralized.

Singing is, well, singing. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs represent different types/styles of songs. And not every bible scholar agrees what those terms are exactly referring to other than the fact they represent variety. Singing has always been a part of the gathering of God's people. For most of us, it would feel very weird to gather in a setting like this and not sing. But I'm not sure most of us think of singing as a form of teaching biblical truth, but this verse is saying that it is. One of the ways we cultivate an environment that is rich in the word of God is by singing songs that are full of Biblical truth.

And here's what I take away from what Paul is saying here: the Word of God is so critical to healthy relationships that we should make every effort to infuse it into all of our relationships. From teaching in large groups to one-on-one conversations to singing songs that convey biblical truth, we should desire for God's word to be alive and at work in every facet of our life and relationships.

So, let me just ask you to think about your relationships. Your marriage, your parents or children, your friends, your small group. Is there a whole lot of God's word being shared in those relationships?

What would change about those relationships if you invited the word of God to dwell there, to come in and redecorate your life? We contribute to healthy relationships when we are rich in Christ's Word and ruled by God's peace.

One last thing before we go.

As Paul writes these verses, he puts something on repeat. Three times, he tells us to be thankful.

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

***And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 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. 17 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.***

Why would he stress our need to be thankful as he is talking about all these relational dynamics? I think it's because relationships are such hard work. People are broken and sinful. And it's hard to choose the way of peace. It's hard to admonish and teach people. It can be hard when other people try to teach and admonish you. It's much easier to grumble and murmur and complain and get

annoyed and frustrated and wish you could move to a sub-tropical island. But being part of Christ's body and God's family is worth it. It's something to be thankful for.

Even more, we can be thankful that we aren't trying to do it alone. As we trust Jesus, He will live in us. He will enable us to say no to sin and yes to right living. He will do it as we trust in Him. And He will transform our relationships if we will yield to Him. And, when you actually believe that, it makes you thankful.