

AM Psalm 147 & Colossians 3:15-17 Heartfelt Religion

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[0 : 00] Later on we're going to look at a few more verses from Colossians, but first I'm going to read Psalm 147. Psalm 147.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars. He gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord and abundant in power. His understanding is beyond measure. The Lord lifts up the humble.

He casts the wicked to the ground. Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving. Make melody to our God on the lyre. He covers the heavens with clouds.

He prepares rain for the earth. He makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food and to the young ravens that cry.

[1 : 28] His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor is his pleasure in the legs of a man. But the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem. Praise your God, O Zion. For he strengthens the bars of your gates. He blesses your children within you. He makes peace in your borders. He fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends out his command to the earth.

His word runs swiftly. He gives snow like wool. He scatters frost like ashes. He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs.

Who can stand before his cold? He sends out his word and melts them. He makes his wind blow and the waters flow.

[2 : 38] He declares his word to Jacob. His statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation.

They do not know his rules. Praise the Lord. Which we'll look at later. Continuing our series on Colossians.

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.

[3 : 42] Giving thanks to God the Father through him. Let's bow together again in prayer. Let's turn now to the word of God.

Those verses that we read in Colossians. Beginning at verse 15. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

It says in Proverbs chapter 4 verse 23. Keep your heart with all vigilance.

For from it flow the springs of life. And the heart we might say. Lies at the heart of this passage.

It's mentioned twice. In verse 15. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts. And in the second half of verse 16.

[4 : 49] Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. With thankfulness. In your hearts. To God. And it's implied also in the first half of verse 16.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you. In other words. In your heart. And I've therefore called this sermon.

Heartfelt religion. Let me remind you of the background. Paul is writing to the church at Colossae.

To encourage them. To hold fast. To hold fast. To Christ alone. He's speaking in this chapter.

Of what it means to be a follower of Christ. Verses 1 to 3. He's spoken of heavenly mindedness.

Verses 4 to 14.

[5 : 55] Holy living. And now in 15 to 17. Heartfelt religion. Going to divide it into five parts.

Heartfelt peace. Heartfelt thankfulness. Heartfelt love for the word. Heartfelt worship. And a life. Heartfelt devotion. Heartfelt devotion. To Christ. And for the most part. It's all very simple. The challenge.

Is not to understand. What Paul. Is saying. The challenge. Is to do it. But there is.

The rather thorny. Issue. In the middle. Of those. Psalms. And hymns. And spiritual songs. And we will spend. Rather.

[6 : 54] Longer. On that. Than the rest. So first then. Heartfelt peace. In verse 15.

And let the peace of Christ. Rule in your hearts. To which indeed. You were called. In one body. Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Is the. Prince. Of peace. And he came. To bring peace. As the angel. Said at Bethlehem. Glory to God.

In the highest. And on earth. Peace. And there are three ways. In which he brings peace. First.

There is peace. Between God. And man. Our relationship. With God. Has been. Shattered. By sin.

[7 : 50] But Christ. Restores it. By dying for us. On the cross. Dying for our sins. To give us life. Life.

That peace. Is ours. By faith. Paul says. In Romans. Since we have been. Justified. By faith. We have.

Peace. With God. Through our Lord. Jesus Christ. Secondly. There is peace. Within. And that peace.

Is ours. By trusting. In God's. Sovereign. Loving. Care for us. Paul says. In Philippians. Do not be anxious.

About anything. But in everything. By prayer. And supplication. With thanksgiving. Let your requests. Be made known. To God. And. The peace.

[8 : 45] Of God. Which surpasses. All understanding. Will guard your hearts. And minds. In Christ. Jesus. Peace. But then also.

Thirdly. There is. Peace. With. One another. And that. I think. Is what he. Especially. Has. In mind. Here. Because he speaks.

Of being. Called. To peace. In. One. Body. And that. One body. Is the church.

Peace. In the church. It is extraordinary. How the. Love of Christ. Unites people.

Paul's day. It was a matter of astonishment. That Jews. And Gentiles. Who. Previously. Had hated. And despised. One another. Were.

[9 : 44] United. In Christ. And today. There are people. Of every. Nation. Every. Every background. Every.

Temperament. Who are joined. Together. In the church. That is a wonderful thing. Something to praise God for. But that peace.

Has to be very carefully. Maintained. And quarrels. Avoided. Peace. The same principle. Applies in the church.

As in. Marriage. That which. God. Has joined. Together. Let not man. Put asunder. Now.

Peace. Ruling. In our hearts. Might sound. A strange idea. But the. Thought is. That peace.

Prevails. Over. Every. Other. Emotion.

[10 : 42] Anger. Jealousy. Bitterness. They. All. Have to be. Put away. From us. And peace. Maintained. Among. God's.

People. Historically. It has to be said. The church. Hasn't been. Very good. At that. We find it easier. To argue. And separate. And go. Our own way. Sometimes. Perhaps. Division. Is. Inevitable. But always.

Our aim. Should be. As Paul says. In Ephesians. To maintain. The unity. Of the spirit. In the bond. Of peace. Bear that in mind.

As we come on. To more contentious. Matters. Later. In this passage. Now. The battleground. For that. Peace. Is our. Hearts.

[11 : 41] If there's no. Heart. For peace. Then. No amount. Of words. No amount. Of papering. Over the cracks. Will. Create it. We must let. The peace.

Of Christ. Rule. In our. Hearts. Not just. In our minds. As an idea. Not just. On our lips. As a pretense.

But in our hearts. As a reality. Secondly. We have. Heartfelt. Thankfulness.
 End of verse 15. And be. Thankful. Thankful. For salvation. Thankful. For peace. With God.
 Thankful. For peace. In all the storms. Of life. Thankful.
 For our brothers. And sisters. In Christ. First. Thankfulness. Runs. Through. This passage. Doesn't
 it? Mentioned. In all three verses. Here in verse 15.
 [12:35] Be thankful. Verse 16. Singing. With. Thankfulness. In your hearts. To God. And then
 again. Verse 17. Do all. In the name. Of the Lord Jesus.

Giving. Thanks. To God. The Father. Through him. And we could say. It runs. All through. The
 Bible. Especially.
 In the book of Psalms. Psalm 100. Which we sang. Enter his gates. With thanksgiving. Psalm 105.
 Which I read. At the beginning. Oh give thanks. To the Lord. Call upon his name. Psalm 147. Which
 we read. Sing.
 To the Lord. With thanksgiving. Giving thanks. Is an acknowledgement. Of our. Dependence.
 [13:28] On God. Everything we have. Comes from him. It's an acknowledgement. Of his love.
 Pouring out. Gifts. Upon his children. And good gifts.

At that. What then. Does a love. A lack. Of thankfulness. Show. That we don't think.
 We need God. That we don't like. His gifts. Imagine a child. Showered with gifts.
 Maybe on their birthday. And either. They don't bother. To even open them. Or they open them.
 And throw them aside. Because they don't. Like them. What a horrible child.
 God. Don't. Be horrible children. To God. Give thanks. But again. It must be from the heart.
 [14:26] Not just words. But real gratitude. To God. David says. In Psalm 138. I give you. Thanks.
 Oh Lord. With. My whole. Heart. Thirdly.

A heartfelt. Love for the word. Verse 16. Let the word of Christ. Dwell in you. Richly. Teaching and
 admonishing. One another. In all. Wisdom. There is a flow of logic here.
 As there always is with Paul. How will we maintain peace? What will motivate us? To give thanks?
 The word of God. The word.
 Is the foundation. Of the Christian life. Everything we believe. Everything we do. Must be based. On
 the word. The living word.
 Christ. Dwells within us. As Christians. But the written word. Also. Must be. Written. On our hearts.
 Again.
 [15:32] There are many scriptures. We could quote on that. Psalm 119. Verse 11. For example.
 Which we sang. I have stored up your word. In my heart.

That I might not sin. Against you. Psalm 119. 111. Your testimonies. Are my heritage forever. For
 they are.
 The joy of my heart. Psalm 119. 161. My heart stands. In awe. Of your words. Christ himself.
 Had the word of God. In his heart. Didn't he? Think of how he used it. In the temptation. Out there in
 the desert. He didn't need to. Rush off. And find a scroll.
 And look these passages up. He knew them. He loved them. He could quote them. On the road to
 Emmaus. Beginning with Moses.
 [16:27] And with all the prophets. He showed them. All the things concerning himself. He knew it
 all. From beginning to end. And he loved. Every word.

Paul reminds Timothy. How from. Childhood. You have been. Acquainted. With the sacred writings.
 Which are able to make you. Wise for. Salvation.
 That's true of many of you here. Or if like myself. You only came to the Bible. Later in life. Well.
 Read it all the more. Avidly. In order to catch up.
 On lost time. If you're able to. It's good to memorize. The word. Some people's memories. Are
 better than others. Mine is not too good.
 These days. It's probably easier. To memorize. The scriptures. In childhood. So. You boys and
 girls. Now is the time.
 [17:24] To be memorizing. The Bible. Bible. If you can memorize. At least. Some portions. Of the
 word. It will stand you. In good stead. That there are stories.

Of Christians. Being thrown into prison. Without a Bible. But no problem. Because it's in their
 hearts. And they remember. The scriptures. And find encouragement.
 From them. But even if you can't. Memorize them. Read them. Meditate on them. The old prayer
 book.

Puts it. Read. Mark. Learn. And inwardly. Digest. And don't just read. The odd verse. Here and there. Paul says. Let the word of Christ dwell in you. Richly. Make a big thing. Of it. Feast. On the word. As you would. On a luxury meal. [18:22] If a sumptuous feast. Is set before you. You wouldn't. Just take one sausage. And leave all the rest. You'd eat it all.

Likewise with the Bible. Enjoy it to the full. Paul adds a communal dimension. Also. Teaching and admonishing.

One another. In all wisdom. Wisdom. One of the many. One another. Texts in scripture. Love one another. Forgive one another. Bear one another's burdens. Hear. Teach one another. I'm aware that some translations attach this phrase to the singing that follows. That is definitely what it says in the similar passage in Ephesians. Chapter 5 verse 19. Addressing one another. In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. And we do learn through what we sing. But here it says that we sing to God.

[19:24] So I think it's more natural to attach the teaching here to the word. Obviously the main duty lies with preachers.

That's what I'm attempting to do today. But all of us can encourage and help one another with the word. Maybe share with one another portions of the word that have been precious to you. Maybe say to your brother or sister in Christ. I was reading this morning the book of Ruth. What a wonderful book. I found it so helpful. And tell them how it helped you. And maybe it will help them as well. To do all this of course you have to actually read your Bible. Paul didn't say let the word of Christ dwell on your shelf. He said let it dwell in your heart. Make that a reality. Fourthly we have heartfelt worship.

[20:37] Again verse 16. Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. With thankfulness in your hearts to God. Again there's a logical progression. Reading the Bible should fill our hearts with worship.

All over the world today people will be singing the praises of God. Because that's what Christians do.

David says in Psalm 40 he has put a new song in my mouth. A song of praise to God. But we still need to be encouraged to sing.

Because we allow the world to get on top of us. And to bury that song. Again there are hundreds of texts I could quote in the Bible to support this.

Just to quote a few. Psalm 47. Sing praises to God. Sing praises. Sing praises to our King. Sing praises. Psalm 95. Oh come let us sing to the Lord.

[21:41] Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Psalm 96. Oh sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord all the earth. Psalm 100.

Come into his presence with singing. Psalm 147 again. Praise the Lord. For it is good to sing praises to our God. Obviously we sing when we come together on Sundays.

But none of those verses is limited to Sunday. We can sing to the Lord at any time. There is however this thorny issue here.

What shall we sing? Most churches take these words at their face value. As three kinds of song. Usually taken to be the Psalms of the Bible. Hymns of praise. And other songs of a spiritual nature. Traditionally though the reformed churches.

[22:51] Have taken them as a collective description. Of the book of Psalms. And following the regulative principle. That we should worship only.

In ways commanded by scripture. They have insisted. On exclusive. Unaccompanied. Psalmity. Now the last thing that I want to do.

Is to disturb the peace of the church. Over this. Especially after what I've just said. About peace. In verse 15.

But it is good to understand. Each other's viewpoint on this. I know that within this congregation. There are different views on this subject. Strongly held views.

It is good to understand one another. The exclusive. Psalmity position. Rests on the fact that.

[23:54] In the Greek translation. Of the Old Testament. Known as the Septuagint. Which was used by Paul. These three words.

Psalms. Hymns. And spiritual songs. Are all used as titles. Of the Psalms. Now there is a problem with this.

Because it's only true of some of the Psalms. 67 are called Psalms. 6 are called Hymns. 36 are called Songs.

That only makes a total of 109. 41 of the Psalms. Don't bear. Any of these three titles. Psalms. Even so. Even so.

Those who hold this view. Would say. Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Is a figure of speech. We're getting a bit technical here.

[24 : 54] I know. But. It's called a synecdoche. Where the parts are listed for the whole. And that it means collectively. The book of Psalms.

In much the same way. As the law. The prophets. And the writings. Means the whole of the Old Testament. In the Hebrew Bible.

Those who hold the exclusive. Psalmity view. Also say that they have. History. On their side.

The Psalms have been sung. Throughout the history of the church. For most of the time.

Exclusively. Hymns were actually banned.

By the Council of Laodicea. In the 4th century. But I wouldn't put too much weight on that. Because. That same council. Also banned. The book of Revelation.

[25 : 54] They also say. That. We're on. Safe grounds. With the Psalms. They're the word of God. We know. They're true. Some have even suggested.

That the. Singing of Psalms. Is one way. In which. The word of Christ. Dwells richly. In us.

Whereas. Hymns. Hymns. They say. Are.

Quote. Uninspired. Don't take that. The wrong way. That doesn't mean. They're uninspiring. Just that they're not scripture.

They're not scripture. And therefore. They are prone to error. Finally. Those who hold to exclusive. Psalmity. Would say. That the Psalms. Cover the whole. Of. Biblical doctrine. And experience. Confidence. And they contain.

[26 : 53] Many. Rich. Prophecies. Of Christ. And therefore. They're quite sufficient. For us. So what do the hymn.

Singers say. Well. Firstly. They would say. That the New Testament. Is different. From the old. Christ. Has now come. The spirit. Has been poured out. Giving us a new. Freedom. Of worship. And we're able.

Now. To sing of Christ. In the light. Of the New Testament. And to use. The actual. Name. Of Jesus. Precious.

Though. The Psalms are. They would also. Point out. That they are. In. Old Testament. Language. And often.

[27 : 48] Not easy. To understand. As we sing. The Psalms. We're often singing. About bulls. And goats. And the temple. And Israel. I do wonder.

At times. If. Even in. Good. Reformed. Congregations. They all. Understand. Quite what. They're saying. Without the preacher. Having to give.

A mini sermon. Before every Psalm. Historically. We know. That. There were. Hymns. That were sung. In the early ages.

Of the church. Some of them. Have survived. For example. The. Te Deum. There we are. Another little bit of Latin. For early. Te Deum. Laudamus. Te Deum.

Confite. Temur. And so on. And many. Great men. Have written. Hymns. Down through the ages. Luther. Wrote 39.

[28 : 42] Hymns. And the tunes. To go with them. Most famous. Of them. Is. Ein Fester Burg. A safe. Stronghold. Our God. Is still. Which became.

A kind of anthem. For the reformation. Luther. And Calvin. Differed. Over this. Both of them. Agreed.

That. Congregational. Singing. Was what. Was needed. Rather than. Choral. Singing. But Luther. Felt free.

To write. Hymns. Whereas. Calvin. Felt that. They should stay. With the psalms. The great. Revivals. Of the 18th century.

Produced many. Great. Hymns. Such as the. Hymns of Wesley. And even. Free church men. Like. Horatius. Bonner. Have written. Hymns. So there's.

[29 : 38] Two. Views. Set. Before you. Now. It has to be. Admitted. There are. Dangers. With hymns. Often.

When. The hymns. Come in. The psalms. Go out. This. Verse. Means. At the very. Least. Even if. We do. Sing. Hymns. We certainly. Should also. Sing. Psalms. The psalms. Are. A wonderful. Treasury. Of worship. Given. By God. And we should. Use them. I heard.

Recently. That at. Colvend. Where I. Occasionally. Go to. Preach. The minister. There. Has. Started. Having. Two psalms. At each. Service. Excellent.

In recent. Years. Also. Traditional. Hymns. Have gone. Out. To. In favor. Of contemporary. Songs. Which. Often. Have. No. Real. Content. And that's.

[30 : 38] Not. Good. The official. Position. Of the. Free Church. Of Scotland. Is. That in. 2011. Churches. Were. Allowed. To. Decide. For. Themselves. And. Currently. In our. Own. Church. One. Hymn. Is. Allowed. At. Each. Service. If. Visiting. Preachers. Wish. The fact. That I've. Chosen. A hymn. At.

Each. Service. Tells. You. Where. My. Own. Convictions. Lie. I. Know. That. There. Are. Others. Of. You. Who. Have. Come. To. A. Different. Conclusion. Whatever.

Our. Views. May. Be. We. Need. To. Live. At. Peace. With. One. Another. Over. This. Respecting. One. Another. Discuss. It. By. All. Means. Because.

[31 : 33] We. All. Want. To. Do. What. Is. Right. But. Discuss. It. In. Love. As. For. Musical. Accompaniment. Well. That's.

Another. Issue. I'm. Not. Even. Going. To. Attempt. To. Get. Into. That. Today. One. Do. Sing. And. Come. Back. To. This. As. Perhaps. The. Most. Important. Thing. Whatever. We. Do. Sing. It. Must. Be. Heartfelt. With.

Thankfulness. In. Our. Hearts. To. God. Paul. Says. How. Easy. It. Is. Whether. It. Psalms. Or. Whether. It. Hymns. Just. To. Sing. The. Words. Without.

Even. Thinking. About. Them. While. Our. Hearts. Are. Elsewhere. Whatever. You. Sing. Think. About. The. Words. Make.

[32 : 28] Sure. That. You. Mean. Them. Finally. Let's. Come. Back. Now. To. More. Uncontroversial. Territory.

A. Life. Of. Heartfelt. Devotion. To. Christ. In. Verse. 17. Whatever. You. Do. In. Word. Or. Deed. Do. Everything. In. The. Name. Of. The. Jesus. Giving. Thanks. To. God.

The. Father. Through. Him. There's. A. Similar. Thought. In. Ecclesiastes. Whatever. Your. Heart. Finds. To. Do. Do. It. With. All. Your. Might.

1. Corinthians. 10. 31. Whatever. You. Do. Do. All. To. The. Glory. Of. God. That. Includes. Singing. It. Includes. Everything. We.

Do. On. A. Sunday. And. Everything. We. Do. Words. And. Deeds. Everything. Must.

[33 : 21] Be. To. The. Glory. Of. God. How. Wonderful. If. We. Could. Live. Up. To. The. Words. Of. That. Hymn. Or. Is. It.

A. Song. Take. My. Life. And. Let. It. Be. Consecrated. Lord. To. The. Take. My. Moments. And. My. Days. Let. Them. Flow.

In. Ceaseless. Praise. As. Christians. We. Belong. To. Christ. Holy. And. Completely. You. Were. Bought. With. A. Price. He. Didn't. Buy. Part. Of. You. Leaving. The. Rest. Of. You. To. Yourself. He.

Didn't. Hire. You. Like. Some. Part-time. Worker. For. One. Day. A. Week. He. Didn't. Buy. You. Like. A. Times. Share. Property. To. Share. With. The. And.

[34 : 17] Entire. And. Our. Whole. Life. Must. Be. Devoted. To. Christ. Whatever. We. Cannot. Do. In. His. Name. We. Shouldn't. Do. At. All. And.

Once. Again. It. Must. All. Be. Done. With. Thanks. To. God. To. Whom. We. O. Everything. So. As. We. Come. To. A. Close. Let.

Me. Urge. You. Once. Again. To. For. some. Perhaps. That. means. First. of. all.

Coming. To. Christ. In. Faith. As. Your. Lord. And. Saviour. Paul. Is. Writing. Remember. To. The. Church. To. Christians. If.

You. Are. Not. Yet. A. Christian. You. Need. First. To. Be. Reconciled. To. God. Only. Then. Will. You. Have. Peace. Only. Then. Will. Your. Heart. Overflow.

[35 : 11] With. Thanksgiving. Only. Then. Will. You. Want. To. Sing. Only. Then. Will. You. Want. To.

Live. For. Christ. Yes. You. Can. Do. All. Of. These. Things. Out. Of. A. Sense. Of. Duty. You. Can. Come. To. Church. And. Sing. Along. With. Everyone. Else. But. Unless. Christ. Is. In. You. It. Will. Be. An. Empty. Formality. I. Remember. Before. Now. I. Can't. Read. Enough. I. Remember. Singing. Hymns. In. School. Assembly. And. Some. Of. Them. Made. A. Deep. Impression. On. Me. But. There. Was. No. Song. In. My. Heart. Now. There. Is. And. Every. Christian. Can. Say. The. Same. But.

[36 : 09] If. You. Are. A. Christian. Make. These. Words. A. Reality. Make. Peace. With. That. Brother. Or. Sister. That.

You. Haven't. Really. Been. Getting. On. With. Remember. All. The. Things. That. You. Haven't. Given. Thanks. To. And. Give. Thanks.

Take. That. Bible. Off. The. Shelf. And. Read. It. This. Afternoon. Sing. Our. Final. Psalm. With. All. Your. Heart. Heart. And. Resolve. That. From. This. Time. On. By. The. Grace. Of. God. You. Will. Live. For. Christ. And.

May. God. Be. Glorified. In. Us. All. Amen. Amen. Thank. you.