

Colossians 3:15-17

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church, again. I just moved over a few feet. My name is Josh. I'm one of the pastors here at Lampstand, and I have the joy of preaching for us this morning.

And I need to say, preaching is something that does make me quite nervous. I'd much rather hide behind a guitar. But I take comfort in the fact that I'm not here to make you laugh.

I'm not here to astound you with my wisdom. My job is simply to open up God's Word and together point us to the glory of Jesus and the truth of our God.

So with that said, let's turn to our passage this morning, Colossians 3. We're going to be in verses 15 through 17. Colossians 3, 15 and 17. And this is the Word of the Lord. It says this.

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.

[1 : 18] Let's pray.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do yet again give thanks. Father, we are a people who should be known by our thankfulness.

Without you, we were dead in our sins and wandering far from truth, but in your graciousness and your mercy, you sent the light of Jesus Christ into our lives, redeeming dead sinners into those who are alive in you.

So, Father, we give thanks. And I pray that as we work through this passage this morning, that we will be a people who are grounded in the truth of the gospel, that this list of traits that we're going to talk about will not be seen as ways to earn our salvation or rules for the sake of rules, but may they be an overflow of who we are in you, Lord God.

I pray that you'll fill me with your spirit and give me the words to speak. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Alrighty. Well, yes, the worship guy is going to preach on singing this morning.

[2 : 38] And I'm excited to do that, but our passage goes far beyond singing this morning. Our passage speaks towards the very core of who we are as Christians.

And that is that we are a people who have been transformed by the gospel. We are a people who once were dead in our sins, far from God, having an eternity of separation from life himself before us, but now we have been transformed, brought near to God, and given new life in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

And that transformation that we have is not skin deep. It's true all the way down into the very core of who we are, into our very hearts. The world that we live in tries its hardest to tell us what we should value, how we should act, what our identity is.

But church, we are in the world, but we are not of the world. We have a different perspective than the world does, different values than the world has.

Because of Jesus, we are different. We have been transformed by the gospel. So here's my big idea for this morning. Hearts that are transformed by the gospel will overflow with gospel traits.

[4 : 02] Hearts that are transformed by the gospel will overflow with gospel traits. Hearts that are transformed by the gospel are different.

They have this tendency, this habit of overflowing, both in worship and adoration to the Lord, but also with encouragement and edification for the church around us.

And I want to call these overflows, gospel traits. Our passage this morning is looking at some of these traits, some of the ways that we overflow because of the gospel. Like when a kid pours too much milk into a cereal bowl and it overflows over the sides.

But before I get ahead of myself, let's look at the context of our passage. Here in chapter 3 of Colossians, we find ourselves in the second segment of this book. So the apostle Paul has this

tendency in his letters to break his books into two big sections, two big parts.

The first half usually is all gospel. It's Paul declaring the goodness of Jesus, what Jesus has done for us on the cross and who we are in Jesus.

[5 : 10] But then the second half of Paul's books are a response to the gospel. If this gospel is true, then what does that look like in your life practically? And usually in the context of the local church like this passage is today.

So we're in the second half of Colossians. But before we get there, I want us to look at Colossians 2.13. Turn in your Bibles to Colossians 2.13, just one page back probably.

Because before we look at our response to the gospel today, we need to be reminded of what the gospel is. Colossians 2.13 says this, Church, that is good news.

But it's good news that starts with bad news. Because of our sin, all people are born spiritually dead and are separated from God. Instead of worshiping God and living for him as we ought, we serve ourselves and we seek things that only lead to death.

A death that ultimately leads us to eternal separation from God in hell. But the good news is that Jesus Christ, who is fully God, fully man, lived a perfect life without sin.

[6 : 34] And he died on a cross in our place. In doing so, he removed our sins, took them upon himself, and instead gave us his perfect righteousness.

When he died, he was buried in a grave, but he rose again from the dead, destroying the power of sin and death so that now everyone who repents of their sin and puts their trust, their belief in Jesus Christ, receives everlasting life, everlasting joy and reconciliation with God.

Church, that's good news, amen? That is the good news that we believe, that we hold to. That's the good news of our salvation. Salvation that has taken us from spiritual death to everlasting life.

A salvation that has brought about within us a radical transformation. What Paul is speaking of in this verse is conversion. The tremendous and powerful transformation that happens through the sovereign purpose, plan, and power of the triune God.

One way that the Bible speaks about this transformation in other passages is with the language of our hearts. When we repent and believe in Jesus, we are given a new heart.

[7 : 52] A heart that once was cold and hard as stone to God has now been replaced with a living, beating heart. One that is no longer a slave to sin, but instead is free and finds its purpose in living for God.

That is the kind of heart that gospel traits come from. In chapter 3, where we are today, Paul takes a turn. If you look at me at Colossians 3, verse 1.

He says, If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. If you have repented and believed in Jesus, if you once were dead in sin and are now alive in Jesus, respond to the gospel in these ways.

This is that hinge verse. So what I want us to see is that all of the rest of this book hinges on our understanding of this. The list of things to put off that Eric talked about two weeks ago.

The list of things to put on that Eric talked about last week and that we'll continue to talk about today. All of that is to be done in response to the gospel. It's in response to who we have become because of Jesus.

[9 : 08] These are not lists of moralistic demands. They're not rules for the sake of rules or a way for us to earn salvation. These are simply descriptions of what the natural overflow of a transformed Christian heart looks like.

So with that in mind, we come to our passage this morning. Let's look at verse 15 of chapter 3. It says this, So the first gospel trait that we overflow with is peace.

Peace. True peace. A peace that passes all understanding. Have you ever truly felt at peace? We live in a world that is the opposite of peaceful, don't we?

We're bombarded with stress after stress, surprise after surprise. The upcoming election. The political divide in our culture. Wars raging around the globe.

Inflation. Fear of recession. Mortgages. Rent. Bills. Trying to find good jobs. Broken relationships.

Ah! It's all too much. And we're definitely not in a world that is at peace.

[10 : 25] But despite all that, this passage calls us to be at peace. And not just to be at peace, but to let our hearts be ruled by the peace of Christ.

The opposite of peace is conflict, irritation, struggle. And those words seem to more accurately describe our day to day. And it can be easy to let those struggles rule over us to define our thoughts

and our attitudes and our actions.

But Paul is calling us to a peace that is beyond the struggle of this world. He's calling us to the peace of Christ. Well, what is the peace of Christ? Well, it's the peace provided by Christ.

It's the peace found in Christ. It's a peace that is beyond the struggle of this world because its implications are not limited to this world.

The peace of Christ comes from knowing that you are a dead sinner apart from God. That your sins have separated you from a holy God. But, instead of giving you the punishment that you deserved, God poured out his wrath upon his only son, Jesus Christ.

[11:36] Your sins have been taken away. And in return, Christ has given you his righteousness. Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Church, do you see how that kind of peace goes beyond this world's circumstances? This is a peace that's not crushed by the weight of this world. Yes, we feel the weight of the circumstances around us, but as 2 Corinthians 4, 17 says, this light, momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

As we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. Our peace is found in the eternity that Jesus has provided for us in him.

from being certain, sure, that the gulf of sin that separated us from God has been forever bridged by the work of Jesus Christ. So that when we pass on, or when Jesus comes back, we will behold him face to face, delighting in the glory of the living God.

Church, that brings true peace. Peace that goes beyond our day-to-day struggles. Even the day-to-day struggles that seem enormous when we know that our relationship with the living God has been restored.

[13:07] So church, don't let the world rule your heart. Let the peace of Christ rule your heart. True peace is found in knowing Jesus.

This passage says that peace should not only be in our lives, but that it should rule. And when something rules, it has power, it has dominion. A king rules over his domain and he chooses how his dominion is run.

He makes decrees, he receives taxes, he upholds justice and order. A kingdom will directly reflect how its king rules it. So church, don't let the world rule your heart.

Don't let conflict, fear, or struggle sit on the throne. If they do, then our lives will reflect those things. Fear will sow and reap more fear. Struggle will sow and reap more struggle.

Instead, let's let the peace of Christ rule our hearts. For through the peace of the gospel, we will sow and reap peace upon peace. Peace that cannot be shaken by this world.

[14:16] The next gospel trait that we overflow with is unity. Look with me at the middle of verse 15. It says this, to which indeed you were called in one body.

The oneness that I see here is what I mean by unity. Because we've been transformed by the gospel, we've been called into one body. One body ruled by the head, Jesus Christ, and made up of you and me.

And the body of Christ is made up of every believer that ever has been and ever will be. Millions upon millions. But despite that, differences that we have in culture, language, nationality, economic status, gender, race, we are all one in Christ.

That is the unifying nature of the gospel on a global scale. The body of believers, you and me, we are united together.

And not because of anything that we've done, but simply because we've been transformed by the gospel. I'm a sinner. You're a sinner. We're all sinners. And we've all been saved from our sin by Jesus Christ.

[15:31] That's unifying. My first year of college, I had the privilege to take a semester abroad in Italy. And I had a wonderful time. I got to drink a lot of cappuccinos and have lots of pasta and see lots of cool art.

And I can remember this interaction happening multiple times when I was in Italy. I'd be walking down some boulevard somewhere or sitting in a restaurant and I would often hear someone speaking very loudly like down the street somewhere in American English.

Like really loud. Americans are known to be really loud. And never fail, I would walk up to them and I would simply ask, hey, what state are you from? And their faces would light up and they'd instantly

be, oh, I'm from Alabama or I'm from New York or whatever.

There's instantly a connection that we had. We were brothers meeting in a foreign land. We were fellow countrymen. We were united and we had this bond even though we had only just met.

And church, that's you and me here in Christ. We are fellow countrymen except instead of being citizens of the United States, we are unified as citizens of the kingdom of God.

[16:43] The same comfort and fellowship that I found when I would meet Americans abroad is what we should feel when we gather together on Sunday mornings. When we gather for coffee throughout the week or meet in our home groups.

We are brothers and sisters and we have a connection of fellowship that is deeper than any earthly creed, any nationality that we could be a part of. We are united as one.

All right, the next gospel trait that we overflow with is the gospel itself. Look with me at verse 16.

It says, 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.

Our passage says that the word of Christ dwell in you richly. And Paul's wording here, dwell in you richly, it makes me think of a succulent and fine meal, like a brownie that's just sweet and smooth and fudgy.

[17:46] It's rich. It means that you're absolutely filled with this thing. You're saturated with it, you could say. And what is the word of Christ? What should we be richly filled with?

Well, it's the word about Christ. It is the gospel. It's the proclamation of who Christ is and what he's done. And Paul's use of the word dwell here goes back to that connotation of ruling.

Paul is commanding us to fill our hearts with the gospel. Let it have dominion in our lives. Because if the word of Christ, if the gospel is dwelling in you richly and taking up your heart, there's no room for other things that will distract you from God.

And also, there's ways that your heart will naturally overflow, that it will respond to that feeling, things that we've been talking about today. Now, you may be asking, what if I don't feel like I have that kind of heart?

What if my affections often wander to other things? What if I don't see these gospel traits in my life?

Well, first of all, you're not alone. All of us are prone to wander and set our hearts on other things.

[18:56] But what I want to point us to is really simple. Look to Jesus. Look to the glorious throne in heaven where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

If you have repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, the Bible says that you are saved. Not of any work of your own, but entirely through the grace of God.

And part of that salvation is that you have been given a new heart. So, fill that heart by looking to Jesus, seeing his glory and the goodness of the good news of the gospel.

Remember the sorry state that you were in in your sin, undone through your sin. But then remember what Jesus has done for you through the goodness of the gospel. Let that saturate your heart and overflow.

And this morning, if you have never repented of your sin and believed in Jesus, if you're hearing about this transformation of hearts and know that this is something that you need, I urge you, even this morning, repent and believe in Jesus.

[20:05] Turn from your sin and turn to Jesus, trusting that he is God, that he died on the cross to forgive you of your sins. He will not turn away anyone who calls on him in faith.

And church, we never, ever, ever outgrow our need for the gospel. Amen? We need it every single day. Amen? Don't ever think of the gospel as that's how I get saved.

No, we need the gospel from day one of salvation to the day that we drop and even beyond. We are strengthened by the gospel every day.

We are to live in the gospel every single day. So let's fill our hearts with the gospel. All right, the next gospel trait that we overflow with is song.

Gospel hearts that are transformed overflow with song. Verse 16 says, Let the word of Christ dwell on you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

[21:14] Our hearts should overflow with song. I love this verse and I know I'm the worship pastor so of course I love this verse. But this verse doesn't just call us to sing, it tells us the why of our sing.

Why do we sing? Why do we do this weird thing where we gather together and all face the same direction and blow air over our vocal cords in these vibrating frequencies? It's kind of a weird thing, right?

Singing, when you really think about it. Why do we do it? Well, I think there's two reasons. One, to worship God in thankfulness. To worship God in thankfulness.

And two, to build up the body of Christ. Because we are transformed and filled with the gospel, our hearts will overflow with song.

But that has two purposes, two axes, if you will. Both a vertical and a horizontal. Vertically, we are called to worship God in thankfulness.

[22 : 15] And horizontally, we're called to build up one another. As we reflect on Christ in the cross and the salvation that he brings, the natural response for our hearts is to overflow with song.

Thankfulness in our hearts over the mercy and grace that God has shown us sinners. So when Paul says to sing songs, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God, he's telling us out of the abundance of thankfulness in our hearts, sing out of that overflow.

Sing. Sing praises to the Lord who brought us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Sing to the Lord, praise his name, rejoice in him. Proclaim his praises like David did of old as the church has sung for centuries and as the angels in heaven never cease to do as they cry out, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty.

Singing is a natural response of a transformed heart. And the reason that Paul says here psalms and hymns and spiritual songs isn't to prescribe exactly what we should sing.

It's actually to convey freedom in our worship to God through a variety of ways. So here at Lampstand we sing a mix of hymns and also some more modern music, spiritual songs as you were, as you might say.

[23 : 41] And God is glorified through both. So singing is firstly a response to God, it's vertical, but secondly horizontal, it builds up the body. Now I love this. This is the body of Christ, I think, at some of its most beautiful.

Paul says that as we sing to one another here on a Sunday morning that we are teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. This means we are not singing for ourselves.

You're not singing just for you. We are singing for the benefit of those around us in this room. One of my favorite passages in scriptures is Ephesians 4.

Nathan, if you could put that on the screen. In this passage, Paul is giving instructions for the local church. Starting in verse 11, he says, and he, that's Christ, gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

That means that my job as a pastor, Eric's job as a pastor, all the elders here, it's not our job alone to do the work of ministry. Our job is to equip you, the saints, to do the work of ministry.

[25 : 01] And what does that ministry look like? Well, it looks like building up the body of Christ.

And one of the most powerful ways I think that we do that is through song, through our singing on Sunday mornings.

When we gather together and sing, we are singing to encourage that sister in Christ who is struggling with self-worth and doubt. We are singing to lift up the brother who's had a rough week at work and is struggling to lead his family well.

We are singing to the children in this room and modeling for them what lives of worship look like.

We are speaking to one another in song. And because of this, the songs that we sing together are important.

If we're teaching and admonishing one another, we need to be singing songs that are gospel-filled, scriptural, filled with Jesus. Honestly, no offense, Eric, but most likely you're going to have the worship song that we sang on Sunday in your head midway through the week and not one of Eric's main sermon points.

That's just the way it is. You'll have a song stuck in your head. And partly, that's the power of music. And music is a good, God-given thing for us. So when we gather and we sing, let's sing songs that are filled with truth and filled with scripture so that that's what's going through our head throughout the week.

[26 : 23] Okay. I want to take out my two-shell elephant gun and kill the two elephants in the room right now. Firstly, some of you may say, I can't sing.

Everybody can sing. Everybody can sing and worship the Lord. I don't care if you sound like a dying cat on Sunday mornings.

When I hear a fellow saint in the chairs behind me or beside me bellowing out in worship, that encourages my heart more than almost anything else. They are worshiping the Lord their God and building up the body around them.

They have the peace of Christ and they don't care if they don't sound pretty. Everybody can sing. And then the second elephant in the room, I don't like to sing.

It's uncomfortable. It's not, maybe not manly. Well, friends, I want to call us to die to that selfish mindset. Like I've already stated, we aren't singing for ourselves.

[27 : 28] This singing is not about you. We are singing to worship the living God and to build up those around us. So hear the call of this passage and die to self.

Take inspiration from King David, a king and a warrior poet who fought battles but simultaneously sang to the Lord his God. Think of the church throughout history who have sung together in times of tribulation and trial.

Singing is powerful. And one powerful opportunity that we have when we sing together is yes, building one another up but also to model and declare to a watching world what our king is like. Who is this Jesus that we believe in and that we follow? If someone who doesn't know Jesus visits us on a Sunday morning, I want them to see the joy and faith on our faces as we sing to Jesus. I want them to hear the gospel proclaimed boldly as a united people as we lift our voices together. I want them to walk out thinking, wow, those people love Jesus.

[28 : 38] Did you hear how loudly they sang? But not only are visitors, wouldn't we want to make that same impression on our children? What a powerful testimony it is when a child sees and hears their parents singing out in worship, leading them in adoration of the Most High.

I urge you, parents, don't miss that opportunity. Sing for the Lord, sing for one another. May we overflow with song as our hearts are filled with the gospel. All right, the last gospel trait that we overflow with in this passage is thankfulness.

And if you've been following along in your Bible, you know that I've skipped over thankfulness a couple times. both in verse 15 and 16, but in verse 17, we read this. 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. Did you hear that? Do everything, word or deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus. Everything. There's no exception there. And when I hear that, at first it seems pretty daunting, doesn't it?

But it's actually simpler, I think, than it first appears. If our hearts have been transformed, we naturally will orient our lives to Jesus.

[30 : 07] You see, our hearts are really like compasses. Where we set our affections is where we will go. And without Christ, without the transformation of our hearts, our compasses are busted.

They point whatever direction, anywhere other than Christ. They seek truth and meaning and things lesser and we bump into things and get lost. But when we are converted, when Jesus becomes our true north, the compass of our affections is working how it ought.

It will direct us and guide us through everything in life. And we will naturally give thanks to God for all of those things. So that means that all of life is an opportunity to give thanks.

If our hearts are oriented first and foremost on Jesus, then everything else in life is in its proper place. And we can view them and do them and enjoy them in the proper way.

This world that God has created is filled with good things. Beauty, color, family, friendship, work, cheese, coffee. And these good things that God has created were meant to be enjoyed.

[31 : 24] But when the compasses of our hearts are busted, what do we tend to do? We tend to make those things idols. We make those things our true north and our lives go astray because of it.

But when Jesus is our true north, we can freely enjoy those things how we ought and give glory to the one who created those things. If we have that mindset, we will see all things as good gifts from God that we are freed up to enjoy because we have been made right with God.

Our relationship with God has been restored. Now we can fully and freely live as He intended. And when we live that way, God is glorified.

So church, thankfulness should and can be seen in all that we do. When we wake up in the morning and we feel a warm blanket above us, be thankful.

When you have that delicious greasy burger for lunch, be thankful. And when we remember what Christ has done for us on the cross and through rising from the grave, be thankful.

[32 : 33] We have so much to be thankful for. The peace of Christ, the unity of the body, the gospel, the opportunity to worship through song. Let's let our lives be filled with thankfulness.

So in conclusion, as we wrap up, peace, unity, singing, thankfulness, these are some of the traits that Christians overflow with because of the gospel.

And as an application for us this morning, I want to draw attention to the fact that living our lives with these gospel traits is a witness to the world around us.

So going back to when I was in Italy, I remember standing in a train station one time waiting for my train to arrive, and I saw someone at the end of the station standing like this.

He was taking up real estate, like there on the platform. And where most Italians that I saw would stand with their feet together like this, this guy was like, you know, he was standing very confidently.

[33 : 33] And I said to myself, he's an American. I can tell. And sure enough, I walked up to him and I met him and he was an airman from an Air Force base a few miles away.

But my point is, as people transformed by the gospel, we stand out in the world around us. These gospel traits that I've talked about this morning, they stand out to the world.

And these traits are, they're weird to the world. They're weird to unbelievers. That we sing together, that we are united despite our many differences, that we're seemingly at peace despite the unpeaceful world around us.

The world doesn't have these traits. And this is one of the biggest ways that we declare the goodness of Christ to the world around us. So church, let's live as those who have been transformed.

In response to the gospel, let's overflow with these gospel traits. Let's be a people who radiate thankfulness, sing boldly, are united as one, and are truly at peace in all circumstances.

[34 : 46] Let's fill our hearts with the gospel and we will overflow. Join me in prayer. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your goodness.

We thank you for the gospel. The gospel that has redeemed sinful people, taken us from death to life. Father, may our lives be lives that overflow with these gospel traits this morning.

May we glorify you as we stand out in the world. May these traits be what is seen by unbelievers when they walk into our midst, Lord God. Father, we thank you that you do transform lives, that we can have confidence that you will work in our hearts and minds, and I pray that you will do so even this morning.

So be glorified, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.