

Building Core Strength by Fulfilling Your Calling in Christ
Col 3:12–17

Introduction:

I want to begin with a little quiz this morning ... ready. Each of the items has only one of two answers (it is not T/F ... that is way too boring and much to “school-like”. The first possible answer is “Epic” ... let’s try that together [that is the good one in case you were wondering] ... The second possible answer is “Epic fail.” Got it? Two possible answers ...

1. Football fan or not. The Baltimore Ravens in the last 30 seconds of the game against NE last weekend. “Epic fail” ... the dude dropping the touchdown pass to win the game and then the kicker missing the field goal to send the game to overtime.
 - a. Man alive ... I would not want to be that kicker going into that locker room!
2. Dentist who used paper clips in root canals. I don’t think I can comment any more on that one! “Epic fail”

What about this one ...

1. Alaska woman, 5’ tall 97 lbs and 85 years old beats a moose with a shovel to save her husband. “Epic”
 - a. That is one bad woman. I would never want to be a dinner party with her. I mean, how in the world could you beat that story?! “Your story is pretty cool, but try this on for size ... I beat the living tar out of a MOOSE”!
2. The article in the newspaper about how pleased the neighbors are with Faith West ... “Epic”
 - a. We are not done by any means, but remember a couple years ago. That article could not have been written.
3. The fact that 1700 people are planning to come to the BCTC two weeks from today. “Epic”
 - a. This year many of the conferences around the country (including some we have done) have not had that kind of attendance. The fact that we do is an unbelievable blessing from the Lord.

We played that game to illustrate a very important point this morning. I can use, and you can use, the focus this year on core strength to actually strengthen; resulting in something that is “Epic” or you and I can squander the opportunity resulting in something that is “Epic fail.”

For three weeks PV has been explaining the content of core strength

- Shoring up foundational areas in our walk with Christ and our church ministries that comprise the basis of godliness and effective community service.
- Planning and praying for the construction of Faith West and the successful launch of a cluster of new ministries in West Lafayette.

- Preparing for the next round of ministry dreaming as we embark on a new strategic planning process in 2013.

One of the questions that we could be asking this morning is how do we get this core strength?

I understand the value of dreaming, I understand the importance of preparing for FW, I understand that I need to be growing closer to Jesus. What does that look like? How do we grow in our walk with Christ and strengthen the ministries? How does the stretch result in strength as opposed to injury?

With that in mind, I would like to start that discussion this morning by having you turn with me to Colossians 3:12-17 (page 158 in the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you).

The title of the message is **Building Core Strength by Fulfilling Your Calling in Christ** Let's begin with a quick summary of the passage. In your bulletin we have printed the text with a few items in bold and a couple of lines in italics.

Bold = Commands from Paul

Italics = God's Calling of His People in Christ

12 So, as those who have been *chosen of God, holy and beloved*, **put on** a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

14 (SUMMARY) Beyond all these things **put on** love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

15 **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 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.

17 (SUMMARY) Whatever you do in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

In other words, the bold represents commands given by God to his people that is the heart of what core strength is. The italics are your position in Christ that makes doing commands like this possible.

- Notice in verse 12, as those – *chosen*, dearly loved. If you know Christ as your Lord and Savior this is a description of who you are. “dearly loved” ... your hope and security is found in one who chose you and dearly loves you.
- Notice in verse 15, to which you have been *called* ... in one body – that is the body of Christ.
- The Lord is helping us see that because of who I am in Christ, certain things can be true of me by the power of Christ in me. That is also why the Lord reminds us in 1:13-14 that we were rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of his dear son [our citizenship in the Lord's kingdom is firmly established]... and in 3:1 that you

are raised with Christ so seek the things where he is [because I am positionally already with him].

- Give the gospel here ...

You see, friends, part of what the “Epic” look likes for us is recognizing our position in Christ. Then, it is by God’s grace to begin living out our calling (Ephesians 4:1 puts it this way, live in a way that is worthy of your calling). So let’s get to the first point ...

I. We must clothe ourselves with the righteousness of Christ.

Col 3:12 So, as those who have been *chosen of God, holy and beloved*, **put on** (clothe). The imagery there is of garments being put on. *Clothe yourself with something ...*

Garments attract, garments detract, and sometimes they define who you are or what you are doing.

1. I had a savings account when I was 4, but my first real trip to the bank came at 11 or 12. Family members had purchased savings bonds for me when I was very little and now, at 11 or 12, it was time to cash them in. I had to wear a sport coat and tie. This was a big moment because I was getting my first CD. My dad wanted my clothed with my best.
 - a. When we walked in the bank everyone understand that we were not here for the run of the mill business. This was not about putting another dollar in my account. Something was going down.
2. When you think about garments attracting how can you not talk about Bill and Peggy Strunk. Not only do they dress with vibrant colors, but they match perfectly. The garments attract attention.

Sometimes the way you are dressed, identifies you –we call them uniforms (football player, a police officer, or a ballerina).

God uses the imagery of garments to describe what living out your calling looks like. The point is very clear – you are responsible to do this. Just as you get dressed in the morning, you are expected to put on, to clothe yourself, with certain qualities.

When a person is clothed with (read v. 12-14) what do you see? ... You see Jesus. These garments or “qualities/actions” identify you as a person like Jesus. They attract attention. Everyone around recognizes that you are with Jesus (much like the apostles in the book of Acts when the leaders acknowledge that they have been with Jesus).

- In his incarnation and/or his exaltation we see his compassion, humility, patience, gentleness, bearing with us, forgiving, and ultimately his love!

With the big idea already in mind, let me apply this for a few moments

Compassion (the willing to care about others)

- For each other. Honestly, if a bar can be a place where people know your name and they are always glad you came ... [honestly there are quite a few bars like that] ... then how much more should that be true in the church house?
 - o One of the ways you can develop core strength is put on a heart of compassion that looks like this ... look in the area where you normally sit and make sure you know every name in the 30 people around you and greet them by that name.
- For your neighbors. Isn't what we are doing the most important thing that people could be doing at 11 am on a Sunday morning?
 - o I get that it can be awkward. I understand that the second you invite a neighbor to church or to pray for them, they might get uncomfortable.
 - o Sometimes it is that stretch that really helps you reach out and it may be the means by which your neighbor comes to Christ.
 - o Invite them, not solely out of duty, but because you really believe your neighbor is missing out on something wonderful.

Kindness (the quality of bringing goodness to others)

- In the home ... sometimes the people we love the most and are around the most are the people we are most harsh with.
 - o When your spouse frustrates you, irritates you. Ask yourself... by the power of Christ in me, am I putting on kindness?
 - o If you are a single mom or just a single ... have you clothed yourself with the kindness of Jesus in your relationships?
- In this service ... When you come into service at 11:00, are you trying to get here 5-10 minutes early in the hopes of showing kindness to someone? Greeting them by name and finding out something about them?
 - o Or are you scampering in here 5 minutes after the service begins and leaving during the prayer or announcements without saying a word to anyone?

Here is my take, every week, there are people in this room that could use a simple dose of genuine kindness. So I hope one of the practical steps you will take is be in this room before the service countdown greeting those who will sit near you.

Humility – (thinking of others as more important to you)

Do I have to say anything more about humility?

Gentleness—(the acceptance of God's dealing with us good)

Patience—(Graciously responding over the long haul during provocation)

Examples of this all over the place.

- With our children, with our parents, with our teachers, our co-workers (who never seem to deliver what we want when we want it).

Bearing with one another (Choosing to put up with)

The applications to this are practically endless. But let me highlight a couple of them

1. We are creatures of habit. We might all laugh when Steve tells us that he goes to McDonald's every morning for a coffee. But the fact is, that many people come to service and sit in the exact same seats every week. They are practically assigned. What happens when someone (a newer person for example) takes your seat? Do you sit beside them, and learn their name OR are you irritated that you have to sit somewhere else because a visitor took your seat? Clothed with the righteousness of Jesus does not get would up about that. Instead, they would happily give of their seat for the goal of ministry purposes.
2. I am sure that most of you have noticed that the 11:00 is pretty full (last week there were 20 people sitting in the foyer). So it is likely that some of you in this service will be asked to switch services. Maybe go to the 8 hour or maybe your ABF will be asked to move to 11 and go to 9:30. While we will always do this with an attitude of asking and a recognition that one service fits your family schedule much better, we hope being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus will also allow you to think about how a particular move might help our church accomplish its overall mission.
 - a. Then, if there is a seat open we would seek to invite someone because there is nothing else going on at 11:00 on a Sunday morning that is more important than worship through song and study of the Word.

Forgiving (Choosing to relinquish offenses)

Relationships without forgiveness are relationships that cannot last.

- Our forgiveness is motivated and characterized by the forgiveness of Jesus. So in those moments when you do not want to forgive or you think they deserve to suffer a little bit too. Remember that forgiveness is not based on the merit of the person you are talking to, it is based on the forgiveness that you have already received in Jesus.
- That is a picture of core strength. That is clothing yourself with the righteousness of Christ.

LOVE (summary of all)

- The final picture is that of love. A wonderful summary of that Christ embodies.
- If we are putting on love (Eph 5:1-2), then we are putting on Christlikeness.

The second series of commands defines yet another aspect of our call and gives us a picture of what core strength looks like.

II. We must let the peace of Christ be decisive in circumstances and relationships.

Col 3:15 **Let the peace of Christ rule** in your hearts, to which indeed *you were called* in one body; and **be thankful**.

Let's notice first what is doing the "ruling." Because something always rules the heart. Something is in control of the way you and I make decisions. Something determines whether we follow one course of action or a different course of action.

The Bible says that the "peace of Christ" deserves this ruling privilege. This is Christ's peace not yours and not one that you can conjure up on your own. It is the something that Christ gives.

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

2 Thessalonians 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!

There are probably a couple ideas that Paul is bringing together.

1. In 1:20 Christ embodies peace and when we are reconciled to him, we are in a state or condition of peace before God because of Christ. We have a state or condition that provides all that I need. I have abundant spiritual blessings through the peace that Christ brings.
2. But this also seems to indicate something going on inside us that results in a unity on the outside similar to Phil 4:7 where the results of prayer during times of anxiousness results in the peace of God dwelling in our hearts. This means I don't have to clamor after things in order to have peace in my life.

When I am recognizing the peace that Christ brings that allows me to respond in such a way that unity is developed rather than splintered apart. When I allow the peace of Christ to rule my decisions the natural outflow is that all of us will enjoy that peace together.

Here is looks like to live this out ... When the peace of Christ determines my decisions ...

- You will not be jealous about a friend getting a dream that you wish you had. Maybe that dream is a better marriage (and it is just not happening right now), maybe that dream is getting married (and it is just not happening right now), or maybe it is having a baby (and it is just not happening right now). When Christ's peace controls my thinking I can rejoice with them because I have what I need in Christ.
 - o Friends, this attitude can exist at virtually every level...
- You will not be insensitive to those hurting around you. Just as you want them to rejoice with those who rejoice, you will weep with those who weep – because Christ's peace controls you.
 - o That is why you can be genuinely concerned about your friends who are honestly hurting.
- When the peace of Christ rules your heart your boss' criticism will encourage you to do better rather than enrage you in bitterness.
 - o Isn't that a good thing?

- When your spouse does not treat you the way you desire, you will be able to respond with kindness because you are allowing the peace of Christ to control your decisions.
- Even when that ministry assignment or ministry task does not happen just like you want it to, the peace of Christ will allow you to respond well.
 - o Who doesn't want our ministries to go well and to accomplish their mission? Sometimes a ministry even has to die or be put on sabbatical for it to be evaluated. When those moments come we can be offended that our thing got dumped. But when the peace of Christ rules, we can look at the bigger picture.
- When people do not seem to appreciate you or value you, the peace of Christ will help you serve for Jesus knowing that the reward is in heaven.
- What happens when we sin against each other? Does the peace of Christ rule in such a way that the sin is handled in a godly fashion? Even in the midst of failures, the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts will allow us to overcome those failures and continue to work together.

Here is why you can do that ... because the peace of Christ is fulfilling every need that you have. There is nothing lacking, there is nothing missing.

In this text do you see where that leads ... unity in the body. The psalmist writes, how good and how pleasant it is for the brothers (and sisters) to dwell together in unity. As each of us allows the peace of Christ to rule us – to determine the our decisions – we all will experience the wonderful blessings of unity.

But notice the way the text puts this again ... Let the peace of Christ ...

- Let's face it, sometimes we are ruled by a lot of things that have nothing to do with the peace of Christ.
- When we lust or clamor after those things it leads to a path of anger, bitterness, entitlement, and no productivity.

I want you think for just a minute ... what would an 11:00 service ruled by the peace of Christ feel like?

- People, lots of people, who are genuinely friendly.
- People, lots of people, thinking not only about what I will get out of the sermon, but how I can minister to someone to promote unity.
- People, lots of people, knowing the names of especially the people who usually sit around them.
- People, lots of people, who want others to join them so that they do not miss out on the blessings available right here.

One of my ministry goals period – not that I am there yet, but a dream - (11:00 service, my ABFs, Sunrise at 8 and YC at 9:30, our conference training, our seminary classes) is that people do not have to be guilted into coming. They come and encourage others to come because anyone who is not there is missing out on the blessing. Wouldn't it be great if people at 11 came because

the opportunities to give blessings and to be blessed were so great that only emergency issues would keep them away?

In case we forgot ... be thankful too.

We have seen the command to clothe yourselves with the garments of Christ's righteousness and the command to allow Christ's peace to determine your decisions. The third command is in v. 16.

III. We must let the Word of Christ saturate our inner being.

Col 3:16 **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.

Just as the peace of Christ was to rule in our decision making so now we are encouraged to let the word of Christ richly dwell in us.

I think it is very reasonable to say that God expects us to know his word. While Sunday morning and the FCI classes on Wed nights are valuable times of teaching, it is also important to develop a habit of reading and meditating on the Bible. It is allowing your mind to dwell and to think on the Scriptures.

- Counseling training is the next step, not because you are necessarily going to be counselors, but you want to be mentors.
- Some of you taking an FCI class to enrich your understanding of the Bible is the next step
- Could greatly benefit from the ABF ministry where a portion of the time is given toward understanding Scripture.

When the word of Christ dwells in you richly, it comes out.

- Isn't that true with whatever I might be fired up about at the time? If you kids are participating in some activity, then you tell others about it. Hey, my daughter has a ballet recital, or a piano performance, or a basketball game. You, as a parent, are stoked about it.
- If Christ's words saturate your being then they will come out.

As intimidating as this might be ... we all will know what is saturating your being. Because the text makes it clear that **IF YOU ARE INGESTING THE WORDS OF CHRIST, THEN THE WORDS OF CHRIST WILL COME OUT OF YOU.**

With the result that the Word overflows from our lips in:

A. Wise edification (teaching and admonishing) of one another

- When the word of Christ is saturating I am able to teach and admonish people with the words of Christ rather than my just own opinion or rather than my emotions might initially lead me.
- Isn't that what we need? Don't we need teaching and at times a little admonishing?

An old song writer wrote these words, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love."

Those who are saturated with other things will teach and admonish others to go after their other things.

B. Grateful celebration (singing) with one another

When the word of Christ saturates us, it also results in celebration. I am not talking about putting on a show (some are more inclined to music than others), but I am also not talking about being a stoic either.

A person who has his or her life saturated by the Word of Christ gratefully celebrates.

Check out the summary in v. 17 ...

Whatever you do, do that in the name of Christ!

Friends, we are representing Christ. That is one of the reasons that he saved you. He was calling a group of people to be his possession to show the glories of Jesus to the world.

He has given you every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, he has transferred you from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his dear son, he though you were dead in your sins made you alive together with Christ.

Now, God says, clothe yourself with the righteousness of Christ, allow the peace of Christ to determine your decisions, and be totally saturated by the word of Christ.

That is how you will be able to exhibit core strength in the areas of (1) growing in your walk with Christ; (2) launching FW; and (3) ministry dreaming.

It is also the way that this service will be a service that people want to attend. It will be a place where people know your name and they are glad you came. It will be a place where you can serve and be encouraged just as it is a place where you can serve and encourage others.

Most importantly, if we get this done, we will be a people who represent well the name of Christ. So let pray and lets works toward this year being "Epic."