

## **The Word of Christ (Colossians 3:16)**

**By Pastor Jeff Alexander (3/9/2014)**

### **Introduction**

1. Christ is the center of everything—the creation; the unseen spiritual dimension; the gospel; and the fruit of the gospel, the church. “Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11b).
  - a. We must keep this truth close. As important as we are to God individually, Jesus is building His church (Matt. 16:18).
  - b. Individual believers must understand that they are members of His body (Eph. 5:30) and thus share in His glory in that capacity, but they are, as individuals, not the cause nor the focus of that glory (2 Thess. 2:14).
  - c. Individual members, as they make up the body, exist for the glory of the head (Col. 1:27; Eph. 3:21) and not solely for individual benefit.
2. When Christ appears (returns to this world), the church will also appear with Him in His glory (Col. 3:4). Because of this, the church’s business is to make Him glorious now.
  - a. The individual members of Christ’s church are to put off the sinful deeds of their past unregenerate old self (flesh) along with carnal attitudes and thinking patterns (Col. 3:5-9).
  - b. These issues of the old self are to be replaced with new patterns of the new regenerate self that is being renewed after the image of the Creator (Col. 3:6-14).
  - c. Specifically, they are to act in love, which is the bond of genuine spiritual integrity.
    - 1) This integrity evidences itself in a sphere where Christ’s peace (*shalom*—covenantal harmony) arbitrates everything in that one body.
    - 2) Indeed, believers are *called* to this business. That is, salvation finds its fruit and end here. Jesus made it clear that by this covenantal harmony the world would know that God sent a Redeemer (John 17:22, 23).
3. The question: how it is possible for covenantal harmony to function in the church?
  - a. First, Paul described what shalomic harmony looks like and exhorted the church to let it function, arbitrating or ruling its life (Col. 3:15).
  - b. In the text before us (Col. 3:16) Paul tells us how to maintain this harmony: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”

### **I. The Command: “Let . . . Dwell”**

1. We are to let the Word dwell or abide in us.
  - a. The Word of Christ (used only here in the NT) is the message concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ (the gospel). The emphasis: the permanency of Christ
  - b. What does it mean to let the Word dwell in us?
    - 1) The Word is to dwell or inhabit.
      - a) Metaphorically, it means to reside in one’s mind so as to have an influence on thought and behavior.

b) Paul may have had John 15:7-11 in mind; although *abide* in John 15 means to *remain, continue, or endure*.

2) The Word is to dwell *richly*.

a) To have abundance of wealth—to be rich (1 Tim. 6:17; Rom. 2:4; Col. 1:17)

b) As we saturate ourselves with Scripture, it should be prominent in our thinking, permeating all of our thoughts about life.

2. “In wisdom,” could modify either “let dwell” or “teaching and admonishing.” The KJV has wisdom modifying the former; the ESV, the latter, which is best.

a. Wisdom governs how the Word abides in us.

b. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge—the skill to apply understanding.

1) Practical and superior insight into matters

2) By wisdom we understand the fear of God (Prov. 2:1-14).

## II. Its Purpose: *Edify the Church*

1. The purpose for having Christ’s Word living in our hearts is for our enabling to edify the church, not necessarily for our personal growth. This purpose is seen in the three principles:

a. Teaching—imparting instruction from the Word to others

b. Admonishing—encouraging others through warning, exhorting. Admonishing means to counsel and encourage others to conform to the teaching of the Word.

c. Singing—responding to the instruction and counsel of the Word through song as a means to express joy and gratitude in worship.

1) Singing is always to the Lord (1 Cor. 14:5; Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Heb. 2:12; James 5:3; Rev. 14:3, 15:3).

2) Three song types given: psalms (OT Scripture), hymns (composed by NT saints, ex: 1 Tim. 3:16), and spiritual songs (general designation for spiritual music).

3) Singing, an old word meaning to express devotion from the soul, is to be done in grace (*en chariti*)—through the enablement of grace in the heart. While *chariti* can refer to the offering of thanks (as in the ESV), two things argue against this interpretation here: (1) Paul addresses thanksgiving in vv. 15 and 17, using the word *eucharistos*. (2) The preposition is *in*, not *with*.

2. The aim: mutual edification (“one another”). This is body ministry as it is intended—for the mutual building up of each other in the Lord. Here the regulatory principle is set forth—the God-ordained order of worship to be conducted in the body.

In light of this passage, we need to ask ourselves—

1. Do we prepare ourselves to be used of God in the church to help and encourage others in the Lord?

2. Do we saturate our minds with the Word of Christ so that it naturally flows from us to bless others?

3. Is our worship the expression of the grace of God that fills our hearts and is released in song to praise and glorify the Lord?