



Let This Word Dwell Richly

Colossians 3:16

October 4, 2026

We are back in our study of Colossians this morning. So if you would turn in your Bibles to Colossians 3:16, Colossians 3:16. And while you're turning there, I'll read that text to you. It says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God."

I have a lot to say about this verse, and it's more than I can get in in this sermon. And so I will say what I want to say this morning, what I've prepared for you. But I will have some more that's going to leak out next week as well.

This week, one verse, and in this verse, Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," it would be very easy for us to rush past this phrase, "the word of Christ," to rush past that concept in this sentence, which we often tend to

do, and then fail to see the uniqueness of that expression, "the word of Christ," what it points to, what it reveals, what it means for it to dwell richly in us and among us. And so we're not going to let ourselves be robbed of the joy of learning what is in that phrase, what is in this sentence.

As it's written in the Greek language, *ho logos*, that's, the word; *tou Christou*, that's, of Christ. That phrase as it's written in the Greek language is unique in the New Testament. This is the only place where you're going to find that exact expression in this exact form.

He doesn't simply say, Let the word dwell richly in you. He doesn't say, The word of God, let that dwell richly in you. But it's specific: "Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you."

Some of you may be thinking to yourselves, well, what about Romans 10:17, that "faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ"? Isn't that the exact same expression? And I thought that, too. But then when I checked the Greek of that text, I found it's not the same. In the original it is different. There are no definite articles in Romans 10:17. So, no "the," the word of the Christ, those are, those definite articles are not there.

And it's also a different word for, word. Instead of the word *logos*, like we find here in Colossians 3:16, which is a very common and broad comprehensive word, Paul uses in Romans 10:17 uses the word *rhema*, *rhema*. *Rhema* refers to the sayings of Christ or the teachings of Christ, his message, his Gospel, what he said, what he spoke, what his teachings were, which is very fitting if you follow the context of Romans chapter 10.

But here for this context, the most fitting expression for this context in Colossians 3:16 is the broader word for word, which is *logos*, and he modifies it, here, with "of Christ."

It's the perfect way, as we've been studying through the Colossian letter, this is the perfect way for Paul to correct the precise error that was facing the Colossians in their own context, in their own church, because this is what we've been studying together for this past year. Some in the Colossian church had stopped regarding the word of Christ.

They had become susceptible to error. They were set adrift from simple faith in Jesus Christ and sought to add other things to it. So they were in danger of being taken captive, Colossians 2:8 says, "being taken captive through philosophy and empty deception," philosophy and empty deception regarding traditions and opinions of men.

So instead of progressing in the faith, they were regressing, they were actually returning to pagan thinking, pagan religion. They were being re-enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world, and we covered that in some detail when we went through that section.

So Paul is, here in Colossians 3:16, he's reasserting the supremacy of Christ, and he's doing that also in the entire letter, reasserting the supremacy of Christ. He needs, here once again, to remind the Colossians of what at least some in their church had forgotten.

And he's also reasserting to the rest of them, there is no higher and better philosophy than Christ. There is no better, higher teaching. There is nothing else. "For in him," Colossians 2:3 says, "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

So get digging, he's saying. Get into those treasures, open them up, look at them, handle them, make use of them, is what he's saying. Let this word dwell richly in and among you so that you keep on reminding yourself, and so that you never take for granted that in him and in him alone, in the precious word of Christ, there's unmitigated glory, there's unparalleled clarity, unrivaled beauty, and unequalled supremacy.

If you're taking notes, those are key words for the four points in an outline: glory, clarity, beauty, and then supremacy. So I'll give you those words: glory, clarity, beauty, supremacy, repeat them as we go. But here's the first word, first point, number one, the glory of this word, the glory of this word, number one.

We could argue that the highest Christology in the New Testament is found in Colossians 1:15-20. Christ is set as equal to God. He shares the essence of God. He is the divine agent of creation and redemption.

And so, as the New Testament teaches, and as Paul taught to the Colossians, if you have Christ, you have God. If you claim to have God, it is only going to be in and through Christ. There were many false teachers in Colossae that were saying, you can have God; you don't really need Christ. Okay, if you Christians want to have him, that's okay. But you also need to kind of placate these other mediators as well, to get the fullness of God, to get the full experience of God.

So some of the Colossians were failing to discern the implications of the false teaching that they've been listening to. Add anything to Christ, whether as expedient to commune better with the divine, as the false teachers were saying, that

is really to diminish Christ. It's an affront to this one perfect mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. It's an affront to that mediator God has provided, to add anything to him.

Another error is to distract people from Christ even slightly, to draw the focus away from Christ, whether it's for religious or social reasons, as with the Colossians, or whether it's for cultural or political reasons, as with us American evangelicals. This is to detract from Christ, which is to face the peril of denying Christ. The Apostle John warned, "He who denies the Son," that is the Christ, "he who denies the Son does not have the Father," 1 John 2:23.

One must confess the Son, and in confessing the Son, the word confess is *homologeo*. *Homo*, understand, is same. *Logeo* is to say or to speak. So you must say or speak in your confession the same thing that God in his revelation about the Christ says and speaks about him.

To confess the son does not mean just to walk around saying, I'm a Christian, I'm a Christian, I'm a Christian. It means to know who he is and live according to that truth, confessing the son. One must confess the son, 1 John. And in confessing the Son, we confess him as he truly is: Jesus, the



man of Nazareth, and also the Christ of God. "That one who confesses the Son, he has the Father, also."

The false teachers of Colossae taught that there were other important deities, smaller deities, maybe, but deities that they had to placate, satisfy in order to get the fullest experience of communion with God. There were other mediators that could aid them, boost them in gaining access to God.

And their teaching in their own time, in their own context, in the first century in the Lycus Valley, their teaching for them was subtle because it mixed the principles of their contemporary philosophical, religious thought and language and the forms of Judaism and Christianity.

They took revealed things from the Bible, they took concepts from the Apostles and blended them in and layered them over their own principles and teaching. They just layered biblical doctrine, biblical language, theological argumentation on top of a foundation of pagan principles that had never been uprooted and cast away.

So Colossian Christians were emerging from the exact same soil as the false teachers came out of, and so they were susceptible hearing to the siren song of the errors that those



false teachers promoted. Those tunes sounded familiar. The words sounded refreshing.

Kind of like Christians today who do not see the implications of evolutionary thinking, evolutionary ideology that is really, evolutionary thinking, spilling the banks of biology to encroach on every area of science, hard sciences and soft sciences as well, ideas of evolution that really infect our economics that our children are raised with in their education systems, and is rife within our politics as well.

Or we could point to the many areas of psychology, all built from an atheistic foundation from Sigmund Freud and others that denies God, denies sin, denies the immaterial aspect of man's nature.

When you deny those things, you're not even close to the truth. You cannot fix the human condition if you deny sin. They claim to. Now this psychological thinking has saturated everything, and I could mention economics, politics, all culture that has so saturated our system that the healthcare industry, businesses feel they must compensate employees who need to take a mental health break.

What is that? It's an adulterated psychology. Mental, refers to mind, the immaterial aspect of man's nature. Health, refers to the physical health of mankind. You blend those two words, mental and health, and you've got an oxymoron. You've got something that doesn't fit together. And yet people throw around those terms all the time. You hear them. I hear them.

And it saddens me when I hear Christians use these terms. Sometimes we use the terms just to, we're in the conversation with people in the world, and I understand that. I'm not trying to condemn anybody who uses the word mental health.

But listen, we need to understand this comes straight from psychology. It is irrational on its face. How do they think that with irrationality they can get to the actual human condition and heal anybody, help anybody?

Do we need to speak in our day of the Marxist thinking that is winning elections everywhere, isn't it? Economic theory that is, that casts the world into two classes of oppressor and oppressed.

And this Marxist ideology shapes not only the social and political instincts of all the generations younger than you, but also how they react to relational difficulties, how they react

to things they don't like. They cast everything into oppressor-oppressed categories and move on from there.

Don't like your parents criticizing how you and your spouse raise and parent their grandkids? Oh, oppressor-oppressed. Set boundaries. If they cross them, if those parents cross them, then force a no-contact policy.

I don't know if you've been reading the articles out there, but the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, they're all picking up on this "no contact" rule coming from the adult kids toward their adult parents. They want to avoid being harmed psychologically, traumatized by toxic parental control.

You don't like pastoral correction, especially if it offends an uber-sensitive wife and kids? Let's just label those pastors and those elders as oppressive. They're toxic leaders, controlling, harmful narcissists, those guys. You go online, you gather yourself a little band of sympathizers, post about your trauma, and never let yourself come under toxic leadership ever again.

Listen, I could go on with example after example. These are the things that we all see, we all experience. Some people in this room have experienced these kind of, flip the script on you

and turn your love into oppression kind of stuff. If you've experienced this personally, it's hurt you. I understand that.

We need to realize, though, that Christians today, professing Christians, true Christians, we emerge from the same native soil as the non-Christians of today. We come from the same stuff. And that means we are just as susceptible to the errors of our culture as the Colossians were to the errors of their culture.

And so when we look at the Colossian context and say, How could anybody be tempted to placate deities to get to Yahweh in Christ's name? How could they ever be tempted to that? Well, just maybe consider some of the errors that we are susceptible to, and it'll give you a gracious way of thinking about them. And you will also be able to principalize Paul's instructions to them and port it over to your own time, your own situation, so that you can apply it here.

The way to keep emerging from your native soil, the way to escape from its grasp and remain truly free, is by an increasingly clear vision of the glory of God in Christ, the glory of Christ in the word of Christ, to bring it back to our first point.

It is "in Christ in whom all the fullness of deity dwells bodily," Colossians 2:9; and then in verse 10, "It is in Christ that you have been filled."

Interesting word. Just a note about the verb, "You have been filled." It's germane, really, to what Paul is driving at and prescribing in Colossians 3:16. The verb, to be filled or to fill is *pleroo*. Here, it's in the participle form. It's a perfect passive participle. So the perfect tense describes what's been done to believers by God's sovereign grace.

Passive tense means it's done to believers. This is what God has done. He has filled. You have been filled. It's been done to you. This is really a declaration in the perfect tense, a declaration about their position in Christ.

But the perfect tense also points ahead to an, a continual filling, to an ongoing need for filling and filling up in him. "You have been filled," Colossians 2:10, "You have been filled," completed action in the past that asserts the believer's position in Christ.

But the result of our position in Christ, those results continue into the present, points us to a continuous, ongoing filling, which is what we are to do in Colossians 3:16, "Let the

word of Christ dwell in you richly." Don't go for a glass half empty or even half full. Go for filled to overflowing in Christ.

If we're not being consciously, continuously filled, increasingly filled with a clear vision of Christ and his glory in the word of Christ, we, too, can become susceptible to the same kinds of errors of the Colossians. We'll fail to see the supremacy of Christ.

And that weakness is dangerous. It makes us open to every other kind of error as well. To put anything above Christ, to see anything in our life as supreme, to see family as supreme, to see work commitments as supreme, to see money as supreme, to see bills, health, relational issues, to see anything else as supreme and more important, then you are risking idolatry. You are risking putting anything over as a rival to Christ. Don't do that. The only way to avoid it is to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

Now, no need to re-preach what we've already studied in chapter 1, but I do kind of want to remind you from Colossians 1:15 if you go back there. Then, just, this will help us to consider this point about the word of Christ in Colossians 3:16 and the glory aspect of it.

It says in Colossians 1:15 that "he is the image of the invisible God." He's talking about Christ, here. "He's the image of the invisible God. He is the firstborn of all creation, for in Him all things were created." Paul is, here in this verse, backing up prior to the act of creation, prior to the creation of matter and motion and time.

He backs up to before Genesis 1:1. We don't call it the time before Genesis 1:1 because time was created in Genesis 1:1. How do we say that as humans trapped in time and space? Before Genesis 1:1. That's how we say it. It's before Genesis 1:1 when God created the heavens and the earth.

The only thing prior to that verse in the Bible is the subject of that first verse in the Bible: God, one being whose essence is to exist. His existence is his essence, and it's an essence that is perfect, singular, simple, infinite, eternal.

It's an essence that is spiritual, so therefore not visible. This Being who is being itself exists eternally in three Persons, and one of the three Persons is the "Who" of Colossians 1:15. He is set apart from another of the three Persons in this verse. So two divine Persons in this verse. One is the image, the *eikon* of God, and the other is the invisible God, two Persons.

The idea, here, in Colossians 1:15, we learned this when we studied it, I'm not going to re-preach it, but this image is the image of God, not in the terms of, of manifestation, making the invisible visible since this is prior to Genesis 1:1. Nothing is visible there. So this is not manifestation, that happens at incarnation, right, when God took on human nature, human flesh in Jesus Christ.

Image, here, is about representation. The Son perfectly represents God. Christ perfectly represents God. The second person of the Trinity perfectly represents the first Person of the Trinity. Christ represents the true essence of God as he is the true essence of God in all his attributes.

The Father, in the eternal generation of the Son, a mystery that we do not understand or comprehend for sure, the Son relates to the Father in terms of affiliation. The Spirit relates to Father and the Son in terms of spiration.

But this eternal generation, Father to Son and affiliation, it's beyond our understanding. There's no beginning. There's no start. There's a conceptual relation there that we don't comprehend. The Christ is the true essence of God.

So we take this incomprehensible teaching concept from Colossians 1:15 and we trace its implications through the rest of the section. So of course, he's the firstborn of creation. When everything comes into being, he's there. Yeah, he's pre-eminent over all. He's the highest rank.

He is supreme as the divine agent of creation, "For in him all things are created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities."

All these things: the invisible foundation of intangible, immaterial laws, and then the superstructure of the physical world that rises up from that invisible foundation, not to mention the entire realm of angelic beings.

All these things, verse 17, Colossians chapter 1, are contingent. They're dependent on the almighty power of Christ, none of them necessary beings, all of them freely created by God's freedom, his grace.

Paul's not finished. Reasserting Christ's glory for the Colossians, Paul is reminding the Colossians that Christ is not only God, the creator and sustainer of all creation, heaven and

earth. He's also the Redeemer and the reconciler and the head of the church.

Keep reading in verse 18. It says that "He is the head of the body of the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything, both in creation and in redemption."

He is preeminent. He's the firstborn. He's the highest ranked, supreme. "For in Him," verse 19, "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross, through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

"And although you were formerly alienated and enemies in mind and in evil deeds, but now He's reconciled you in the body of His flesh through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach, if indeed you continue in the faith, firmly grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you've heard, and which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister."

Paul saw his ministry as an ambassadorship among other things; but as an Apostle, he was an ambassador of Christ. And

as was preached eloquently and well a few weeks ago from 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 20. Paul says, "We beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God."

He says that as a, as an emissary, as an ambassador, as if he were deployed from the throne of Christ himself in heaven and deployed down to earth and deployed down to the Colossians, deployed down to the Corinthians, deployed down to these churches.

And he's saying, Listen, I represent a different kingdom. I represent a different realm. I represent a different king, and I'm begging you on his behalf, I'm sent by him. And here's what he's saying: Be reconciled to God. Be reconciled to God. Now is the time of salvation. Today. This is the favorable time. Heed the warning.

Christ reconciles us to the father by the merit of his death and his resurrection. He's the atoning sacrifice for our sins, an atonement that he offered as our substitute on the cross. He offers it to us and gives to us the righteousness of his perfect life.

And that righteousness, that perfect righteousness, which God demands of every single one of us and cannot be met in any

one of us, that perfect righteousness of Christ given to us, by that we are accepted and approved by God. Christ was accepted by God. He did not remain in the grave, but he was resurrected the third day. And in him we, too, will be resurrected one day. That's reconciliation, that's redemption.

And Christ is not only the Creator, but he is the Redeemer of a fallen humanity. And those who refuse that offer of peace, they will be reconciled later, because God will reconcile all things to himself. But they'll be reconciled by force. At Christ's second coming, when he comes to execute God's judgment, he comes then on a mission of pacification, to subdue all God's enemies, to force them all to bow the knee in homage to him.

But we live in an age of grace right now. We live after the advent of his first coming, which was a mission of peace, a mission of mercy, a mission of God's compassion to send the message that sinners can be reconciled right now by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. As he says in verse 20, he's made peace through the blood of his cross.

If they refuse to repent and believe in the age of grace, during this time, they will be made to reconcile when Christ comes again to judge. Because he will, not he might, not he's planning to, he will reconcile all things to himself.

This Christ that the Colossians were being tempted to turn away from, to minimize, to be distracted from, do you see the glory of this Christ, that there is none more glorious, that there's no greater savior, there's no greater king, there's no greater mediator?

So Paul's trying to show, here, all this glory is revealing God's chosen one is truly God. He's the Creator and the sustainer of all things. He's the lawgiver, the judge, the executioner of divine justice as well.

And Christ is also the agent of grace. He's the agent of divine redemption. He's the one who won divine redemption. So he's the reconciler. He's the one mediator between God and man, and he is our mediator. If he's your savior, he's your mediator, too. You belong to him, but by divine right he belongs to you as well.

As our mediator, he occupies and uses three offices of his grace: prophet, priest, king. As God's final prophet, he reveals and preaches and proclaims and teaches, and he sends the Holy Spirit to illuminate the truth to us, to teach the truth to us, to motivate us to understand the truth, give us curiosity, a holy curiosity to investigate, to study, to learn, to know God as he's revealed himself in his Word.

If you do not have that curiosity, and if you are superficial in your understanding, my friend, will you repent? You're ignoring your birthright. You're, you're not here on this earth to become wealthy, to pad your nest, to make your life comfortable, to do that last little thing on your bucket list. No, your birthright is to know God. Don't sell yourself short. That's God's offer to us of a great high priest, final high priest.

This is really a huge subject in Hebrews. As our great High Priest, Christ cares for us. He sympathizes with our weaknesses as we heard earlier out of Hebrews 4. He's been "tempted in all points, as we are, and yet without sin."

He's the only one who is in the position to help us. He's been tested and proven, shown to be sinless. He's the one who, as we struggle and suffer, as we're anxious, he prays for us, intercedes for us. He's very close in proximity to the father, being at the father's right hand. He sends the Spirit, who also "intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words," and then the Spirit comes to comfort us and encourage us.

So much more we could say. But as our perfect king, prophet, priest, and then king, he's a king like no other. Christ himself, I mean, think, is there any president, prime

minister, king, royalty in the world ever in history who's gone out in front of his army and said, you guys stay home. I'll fight this entire army myself. No.

Kings, presidents, governors recruit. They institute a draft, and they force people into service to protect the country. This King goes out to fight the great enemy of his people on his own. It's the only way it could, the victory could be won. And he did win. He didn't recruit an army to fight his battles. He did what none of us could do. He won the war, the greatest war, against sin and death and the devil.

Colossians 2, look at Colossians 2:14-15, which we've studied. But here's what our king has done. "He has cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us which is hostile to us." God's "taken that out of the way, having nailed it to the cross; and having disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them in Him." Who's that? The king, Christ.

Listen, we need to know him, we need to learn him, we need to bow down and worship him. Our souls cry out for an outlet to praise this one for his glorious grace and to thank him for ministering to us, continuing to minister to us in these ways as our prophet and priest and our king.

This is why we must, in our church, in our own hearts, "let the word of Christ dwell richly within us." Because it's the Word of Christ about Christ that points us to who he is, what he's like, what he does, what his heart is for sinners, what his heart is for you and me.

It's this word of Christ that tells us about these offices, about his continuing ministry to us, tells us about his eternal ministry to us. We need to know this, this message we've received, which we believed, this message that we've loved about a Savior that we love. This is what we now teach, the message about Christ and all his glory. It's a message that our weary, sin-sick souls so desperately need to hear, to go deeper in, every single day.

Now, before I come to the next point, we need to know what it is for this word, to dwell richly in us. What is this? Interesting imagery that Paul employs, here, isn't it? He takes something conceptual, "the word of Christ," which I actually haven't fully unpacked for you. I'll do that the next point.

But he takes this conceptual thing, the word of Christ, and he kind of personifies the concept as if he's telling us to treat the word of Christ as a most honored, highly esteemed house guest. The word that Paul, the verb that Paul uses, here,

in Colossians 3:16, to live in or dwell in, is the verb *enoikeo*. *Oikos* is the word for house or home. *En* is a preposition. It means in, inside, within, among. It's actually a pretty versatile preposition in the Greek.

But he joins these two things together. In the home, is what this verb means. Let the word of Christ dwell richly in your home, in you, among you, in your church, in the midst of your fellowship, and most certainly in your own hearts.

Now, how might you show hospitality to a most-honored guest, one that you want to dwell richly in your home? Think of some noble person, highly esteemed in your own mind, in your own heart. I know for every single one of us, we have people like that.

And it kind of depends on our gifting, depends on our bent, our disposition, maybe our field of expertise. We have certain people that we're like, Man, if I could get 24 hours with that guy, that person, that woman, to understand and unpack and learn and grow from what they have to say. And I'd love to show them how much I think of them and esteem them by how I show hospitality to them.

What rich abundance would you want that one to enjoy in your home? Would you close off any portion of your home to that person? Obviously not. You'd want him to have the run of the house, enter every room, wherever he wants to go, at his pleasure.

To dwell richly: refers to a comprehensiveness, doesn't it? Would you limit the use of anything in your home? Would you keep him from enjoying access, keep him from using whatever he finds expedient and convenient? Obviously not. You wouldn't say, Well, I'm sorry, that that bathroom's off limits. Oh, I'm sorry, that refrigerator is kind of for the family. Oh, that pantry, that's where my goodies are, so don't, I bought these for you. You'd want him to abide in your home in luxury, wouldn't you? Make use of everything in your home?

So dwell richly, certainly means luxuriously, intensively. Would you deny this one any desire of his? Would you refuse any request? Would you stifle any inquiry? Would you limit any interest? No, no, and no. So dwell richly and abundantly in your home means to dwell attentively, to show great attentiveness, seeing, searching out his interest and serving it, if you can.

The imagery, though, speaks more specifically than this. Because it's not our personal homes that Paul is thinking about,

here, though they're affected by implication. It's not even our hearts that Paul is thinking about, here, though they are affected and involved by necessary implication.

It turns out that, rather than us making Christ feel at home in our house, turns out God is making us his personal home in this text. For the word of a deity, which is to dwell richly, which is attended to daily, comprehensively and intensively, all that happens, what's the other word for the home of a deity? Temple. All that happens in the temple of the deity, which is God's home. He's the host, then. We are the servants of his Word in his temple.

So Paul is calling on imagery familiar to these Colossians, who are versed, read in the Old Testament Scriptures. And as they understand, as in the temple of the Jews, every dimension was dictated by the Word of God, wasn't it?

Every measurement dictated by the Word of God, every stitch and seam, every material, every fabric, every piece of furniture, every accoutrement of worship, the manner of entering and exiting that home, that temple, the work of the priest and the servant within the temple, everything dictated by the Word of God, wasn't it?

As Paul explains in Ephesians, which is parallel to Colossians, he says in Ephesians 2:22, "We are in Christ and it's in Him that this whole building being joined together is growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

Same imagery is being used and employed in Colossians 3:16. This same word, *enoikeo*, is used in 2 Corinthians 6:16, where you find more temple language. "For we are the temple of the living God, just as God said, 'I will dwell in them.'" That's it again. "'I'll walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'"

Listen, when the word of Christ dwells richly in and among us in our churches, the Christ who indwells us by the Spirit, the will of the God who sent him to minister his word to his redeemed. A prophet is there to teach us, our priest is there to care for us and console us and comfort us, our King is there to provide for us and protect us. He won the war. He's going to win all of our little battles, too.

This is the glory of the incarnate God in Christ. And the word about this Christ is what we need to see with greater and greater clarity and understanding, that he's glorified to us, in us, through us, kind of as the Shekinah glory of God of old,

only ever brighter and fuller and more glorious as we learn, as we gain clarity.

And that brings us to a second needful thing, the second word, clarity; number two, the clarity of this word. The clarity of this word. How will the glory of Christ be known among us and made manifest and dwell richly within us as a chosen race, as we, a royal priesthood, we become agents of Christ?

And notice how Paul is continuing, here in Colossians 3:16, he says we're to "let the word of Christ dwell richly within us with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another." That one another says we are all involved in training one another.

You know where you can't obey this verse? At home, online, not gathered. You know where you can't obey this verse? On the lake, fishing. You know where you can't obey, you know, fill in the gap, right? What's required to do this one another? People, faces, relationships, a body, a church, a local church, a gathering, an assembly, in person. We're all involved in this project.

Christians are a priestly class. And so we with all wisdom we teach and we admonish one another, and we do that to gain further and greater clarity about the Word, about Christ.

Now, in the interests of clarity, let's clarify an interpretive point, here. Is the word of Christ, the word that Christ speaks, the word that Christ himself spoke? That would be to interpret "of Christ" as a subjective genitive. Or is the word about, is the word about Christ, that is, to treat of Christ as an objective genitive, that is, he is the object of the teaching and of the speaking.

If this is talking about the word that Christ speaks or spoke, then Paul is telling us, here, to use in our own teaching, in our own admonishing, whatever Christ himself spoke, whatever he taught. Use his words, use his teaching. Make that the theme of your own ministry. Teach with that, admonish with that. Find wisdom in it, and use that wisdom in your teaching and admonishing.

We could really see merit in this view. We just learned by virtue of who Christ is in all his glory as the essence of God, the divine agent of his creative and redemptive work, that whatever Christ speaks, God speaks. No difference.

So when he speaks, considering his essence, he speaks an eternal, or you could take all of his attributes and use them as adjectives in front of the word "word." When he speaks, he speaks an eternal word, an immortal word, an unchanging word, an

immutable word, and so on and so forth, because all of them come from his divine essence.

Since Christ is the Creator and the Sustainer, he speaks a living word. He is life itself. He speaks a powerful, effectual word. He's able to call worlds into existence. He sustains all things by his word. If he says the word, speaks the word, or withholds a word, things evaporate. They disintegrate. His word is an almighty word. It's an omnipotent word. It's an all-knowing word.

All that is true by virtue of who Christ is. And when Christ speaks, God speaks; and that's why there should be no difference in your thinking about a Bible that has red letters and black letters. They're all letters that come from God by his Spirit.

Paul's point, here, is different, though. When Paul writes, "the word of Christ," he's not referring to Christ's word as in the word Christ speaks, though that is contained in what this, the real view is.

Paul focuses, here, the attention on the word about Christ. It's an objective genitive. He's, he's not, it's not a subjective genitive. It's an objective genitive. It's the

message about Christ. It's what's spoken, what's said, what's taught about Christ. He's the object.

It's the Word that proclaims Christ, preaches Christ, teaches Christ, instructs about Christ. That's why Jesus, in all his teaching, remember that he was so Scripture-focused. He's always going back to the written Word of God. He's eager to teach its true meaning. It's, God's Word has always been perverted, distorted, chained, twisted by sinful men and sinful teaching.

And that's what he came to do in the Sermon on the Mount. He says, "You've heard it said, but I say to you." Remember that pattern in Matthew chapter 5? He's doing that all the time. He's correcting their misunderstandings about the written Word of God. He's helping them to see and interpret it truly, rightly, for its benefit and profit.

But why does he do that? He does that, eager to teach its true meaning, because that Scripture pointed people to salvation in him. He said to the Jews, John chapter 5, "'You search the Scriptures because you think in them you have eternal life. But it's these that bear witness of me.'"

So my Jewish brothers and sisters, quit persecuting me. Don't turn away from me. You search the Scriptures, but you treat them as a dead word. You don't see that in them you have life because in the life, it comes from me.

Go to your Bibles, yes, but go to true Bible study which glorifies Christ. It's after the resurrection, Jesus told his disciples to study, Luke 24:44, "'all the things which are written about me in the Law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms.'" That's the entirety of the Old Testament. For the Scriptures glorify Christ. It's Christ we need.

Same sense here as well, as Paul's using here. The "word of Christ" refers to all that God has revealed in Holy Scripture about Christ. All the revealed Word of God is pointing to Christ, from the Old Testament to the, through the New Testament.

So in other words, "the word of Christ," not just another synonym for the Word of God. Paul's being more specific, here, knowing that the Colossians needed clarity from Scripture, that it all points to Christ and all will be fulfilled in Christ, and they dare not turn away from Christ.

So any text that these false teachers tried to use in their systems, anything that they tried to marshal from Scripture, whether the law, the prophets, or psalms, if the arguments ended up detracting from Christ, diminishing Christ, turning attention away from Christ, they're false. The system's false. That theology is false. The teachers are false. The lot of them are to be disregarded, rejected.

That's the clarity that the word about Christ, that's the clarity that's needed, for otherwise, we are all prone to drift into that which is not at all glorious, but instead is odious, sinful, which brings darkness to the mind, not light. It brings obfuscation and confusion, not clarity and conviction.

We need teaching. And by the way, we need admonition. We need both of those in wisdom. That's what the apostolic ministry was all about. Colossians 1:28, as Paul is unpacking his own ministry to the Colossians, he said, "We proclaim him."

Paul said, we Apostles, all who are working with me, that's what we do. "We proclaim him, and we are admonishing every man, and we're teaching every man with all wisdom so we may present every man complete or mature in Christ."

Now, here he enlists the entire church to join in the work. Teaching: common verb *didasko*, declare, teach, explain the truth, instruct using the truth. So teaching the Bible: expositional ministry. Expositional ministry is to be the beating heart of every evangelical pulpit. It's the chief means that the Word of Christ is going to be made clear to Christians.

Teaching the truth, it aims at mental reasoning in the heart. It brings clarity about sin, righteousness, and judgment. It brings clarity about Christ and his great salvation. It brings clarity about God. Our great eternal reward brings clarity to us about what our life is for, the stewardship that we have of this blessed, eternal life that we've received from him. We need teaching.

Also admonishing: the verb *noutheteo*. The positive expression is called exhortation. Its negative expression, though, is admonition. So, strong encouragement, strong encouragement. There's kind of, in admonition, kind of a bite sometimes in the warning.

Biblical instruction in the church is always to come with authority. We're not to be mealy-mouthed about what the Word says. We're to be clear, authoritative, give the voice of command. Exhortation is for that; it commands obedience.

Admonition prohibits disobedience, censures disobedience. Why do we need this? Why do we need admonition? Come on. You know yourself. I know myself. We need admonition because we need to turn from our sin, don't we? We need to turn away from what's so alluring, so tempting, so enticing.

Sin is a great hindrance, a great, great obstacle that keeps us from seeing with clarity Christ in all of his glory, in all of his mediatorial glory. Sin clouds the vision, it darkens the mind, it distorts the reasoning, it corrupts the heart. Got to get rid of it. That's what admonition's for.

The Colossians needed this admonishment. Some had strayed from Christ, clearly darkened in their understanding. And the others in the church, couldn't be just Paul doing it, couldn't just be Epaphras. The others in the church need to look out for one another, in love and in wisdom, by exhortation and by admonition, too.

To exhort, admonish, confront, correct. This is to be a ministry that we all take up together, not just ordained ministers, pastors, elders, shepherds, overseers. They set an example for the church, but the whole church has to be involved in this.

Paul told Timothy, as his apostolic emissary, as his appointed man, and kind of sets the tone for pastoral ministry for us, Timothy and Titus both, Paul told Timothy, In speech, conduct, love, faith, purity, Timothy, you show yourself to be an example of those who believe, primarily in the public and private ministry that he had of teaching, admonishing the flock with all wisdom.

But then he says this, "Timothy, preach the word," 2 Timothy 4:2. "You be ready in season and out of season." That is to say, doesn't matter if it's popular or not, you preach it. "You preach it with authority, and I charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, preach the word."

That's the teaching part. And then he says after that, Reprove, rebuke, exhort. There's the admonishing part. But then he says do this ministry carefully. He says, "Do this with great patience and instruction," which is the "with all wisdom" part. Timothy does that as a matter of course in his ministry, but he's setting an example for everyone else in that church.

All of this brings clarity about the Word of Christ, about the message about Christ: truth apprehended by the mental reasoning of the heart. It's embraced by the emotional affections of the heart for the volitional decision-making of

the will of the heart. So we obey from the heart. That's what all this is about. This is how the Word of Christ dwells richly within us. We think, speak, act with clarity about the Word about Christ.

And with that clarity, we have a deepening conviction which fills out our life, which strengthens us in our ministry as the Word of Christ is growing us into the temple of God that we are. As that happens, Paul told the Ephesians, the manifold wisdom of God is going to be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places.

What do the angels admire most in God's wisdom? Well, with bright clarity, they see in the wisdom of God, in the church, the manifold wisdom of God, they see the beauty of Christ's glory. So we come to a third point, number three, beauty, the beauty of this Word, the beauty of this Word.

The angels respond to God's wisdom on display in the church with worship and praise. And we, we Christians, we redeemed, we get to join the angelic chorus, as Paul says here in Colossians 3:16, "with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

Never minimize your role in the church service to be singing, to be teaching one another with all wisdom, and to be

doing so with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, which is the height of our instruction to one another.

As we gain increasing clarity about Christ, as the truth is taught clearly, wisely, as our lives conform more fully to him by the exhortation and the admonition that we receive; the more Christ is glorified to us, the brighter his glory comes to us, the more beautiful he's revealed to be; we simply must find fitting expressions of beauty to respond to the beauty that we find in him.

There's a call in Psalm 96, verse 9, to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." That verse, and others like it, has kind of opened up an entire field of study called the theology of aesthetics. Its aim really is to understand more fully so that we meditate more deeply on divine beauty.

And if it's a divine beauty, then there is an objectivity to it because God is one thing: He is true. And so beauty is one thing and it is true. When we see that beauty in God, in Christ, in his Word, in the Word about Christ, in the way that Scripture tells the story about Christ, it resonates in our hearts because we're creatures created in his image. We respond. We love what we hear, what we see. We just, we just got to sing.

Contrary to the false modern notion, romanticism, all that stuff, that beauty is subjective, beauty is entirely in the eye of the beholder; and so you take some weird thing from Picasso, two eyes on the side of a face. It's not beautiful, it's grotesque. We can all admit it. You can even walk through the Louvre and admit it openly. Say it.

Beauty is an objective thing. There are objective properties, transcendent elements that are recognized by all, known and responded to innately, intuitively, universally about beauty. Of course, that's right because God is a creator of beauty, and he is objective. He's true. Since we're made in his image, we respond to what's true and good and beautiful, as the Triumvirate is put.

In writing about theological aesthetics, or the theology of beauty, Jonathan King says this, "Beauty is discerned via objective properties." And he lists several of them: "proportion, unity, variety, symmetry, harmony, intricacy, simplicity." These and other properties are objective. We can see them. We respond to them. We know them when we see them.

He goes on to say that when we perceive, the human heart perceives beauty, beauty that's revealed about God, about Christ, revealed by God about Christ, that beauty, he says,

quote, "pleases the mind by displaying a certain kind of fittingness."

There's a fittingness in beauty. You can see when someone is put together on the outside: hair done well, they've showered in the last week or so. They put on a fresh clean suit of clothes, they're pressed, doesn't look like they've slept in their suit. There's a fittingness to that. But if he wears the suit to a baseball game down at Rockies Stadium, it's not fitting, but you still note: put together, right?

There's a fittingness, an appropriateness that pleases the mind in what God has revealed about Christ, everything. And when the mind finds pleasure in what is fitting, in the proportionality of truth; in the unity of truth; in the variety of truth in all that God has created and made; in the symmetry of the redemption story that starts with the Fall and ends with a redemption; in the harmony of the truth, how every part harmonizes and complements and supports the other; in the simplicity of the truth; all of this thrills our hearts with delight, energizes our wills to act, gives us confidence to move forward because we know we're standing on something true and beautiful.

We recognize beauty, don't we, because it's grounded in metaphysical reality. What do I mean by that? Beyond physics, beyond the physical properties, is the metaphysical. The immaterial God, a transcendent God, grounds all of our understanding of beauty. So our notions of beauty are grounded in real things, like the essence of the transcendent God. Beauty corresponds to the attributes of God, and it's revealed in Jesus Christ.

So whether in the triune God, the hypostatic union of the God-man, Jesus Christ; in the accomplished work of redemption; in his ongoing application at redemption by the Holy Spirit to us, his people; we see beauty in him. We see beauty in the story. We see the integrity, the clarity, the proportionality in Christ. We see it in his finished work. Beauty incarnate is beauty supreme.

How does our regenerate, converted, sanctified heart resonate with that beauty? With delight. With joy, as Peter describes as "joy inexpressible and full of glory." We're filled with a longing for him. We wonder in amazement at him. We're eager to gaze upon his glory and marvel over all of his works.

The beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ evokes from us and calls forth from us the need to produce something, to do

something. The beauty of his holiness and the splendor of his glory as it resonates in our hearts, it does so such that we just can't help but respond to what is awe-inspiring, wondrous, with things that are artistically, aesthetically pleasing, with poetically excellent expressions of worship.

Our delight in perceiving his beauty comes forth from us in verbal expressions of praise. So when the Word of Christ dwells richly in us, when we perceive his glory, when we gain clarity, it ignites our affections. It directs our wills. It delights our hearts to worship him like this "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

Just quickly, psalms refers to the Hebrew psalter. It's talking about the, the canonical psalms of Scripture revealed by God through these human writers. Many of them were written by David, sweet psalmist of Israel, but that was the official song book of Israel.

And it really is the quintessence of literary poetic and lyrical beauty. And the key feature of Hebrew poetry is not that it rhymes. They're not meant to be catchy, popular ancient tunes of Middle Eastern culture that everybody dances to. No. Hebrew poetry is so brilliant in targeting the mind with truth.

And if you understand Hebrew, if you can read Hebrew, you see it. You see it graphically portrayed before you on the page. It's incredible, it feeds the mind and stirs the affections to worship in the truth.

You know this even being an English reader, and that's good enough to appreciate the Psalms and all their beauty. They're comprehensive, aren't they, in covering the full spectrum of human emotion, everything from the sublime heights of joy down to the depths of dark valleys of shadows of death, even times when the heart is dead, cold against God.

Man, the psalms are comprehensive. They're written by the God who knows us and the God who loves us. And he gave these psalms to minister to our souls.

Also, though, he gives us the psalms, these divinely inspired words that are so perfectly fitting, these appropriate forms of expressions of worship. So he gives us the form, the fitting form, to verbalize our response to truth, the substance, to give voice to our praises, thanksgivings, meditations, petitions, commitments, and many other things we could say.

The word hymn, just briefly, the word hymn is a broad term for religious praise given to a deity. The term is in existence

and in use in the Greek world and the Roman world. But as Christians, obviously we sing hymns to one deity. There is only one God, the true and living God.

We sing hymns to him, but unlike the psalms, hymns are not inspired poetry. They're not inspired, but they do use inspired truth, doctrine, theology put to poetry, lyrical excellence so that we can sing about doctrine, sing about theology, sing about truth. They're instructive, they're meditative.

The word songs, specifically spiritual songs, here, I believe these are responses of the believer to the truth that's revealed in the psalms and to the doctrine and the theology that's revealed and taught in the hymns.

So these three terms, in response to the beauty of Christ, we express our thanks and our praise. Our hearts ascend from the mundane to the sublime according to our design in an aesthetic of beauty, literary beauty with lyrical excellence set to pleasing music that's fitting accompaniment, to put the words on display so we can hear one another as we sing to one another in these psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

This is the heart's response to the beauty we find when we get clarity from the Word of Christ about Christ, when we see

with increasing clarity the beauty of Christ. Lyrical, musical beauty put, puts revealed beauty of divine truth on display. It gives our hearts opportunity to do what we long to do, which is to sing praises and give thanksgiving to God.

With the glory of the Word of Christ, with the clarity of the Word of Christ, shows the beauty of the Word of Christ, and our hearts rejoice, finally, just briefly, in the supremacy of this word, number four, the supremacy of this word.

The supremacy of the Word of Christ is in its singular power to accomplish the mission of Christ, which is to reconcile us to God, which is the proof of that, end of verse 16, that we sing "with gratefulness in our hearts to God."

Christ came to bring us to God, to redeem us for God, so that we would give honor and glory and praise and thanks to God. So if Christ is glorified in the message that points us to him; if the message is taught with clarity, and we're admonished to obey it, so that we see it with even greater clarity because our eyes are unobstructed by sin; if the clarity of this Word that allows Christ's glory to shine ever brighter in our hearts and our mind shows the beauty of Christ in his Word; well, we know that the Word of Christ is dwelling richly within us when our



hearts are filled with grateful singing to God, when our church is filled with grateful singing to God.

The supremacy of this Word is that it reveals the true supremacy of Christ, our redeemer. And the end of his work is to bring us the supreme delight, supreme satisfaction in our soul of being reconciled to God, join us to him who is our eternal reward.

It's in God, through Christ, in his unmitigated glory, his unparalleled clarity, his unrivaled beauty, and unequaled supremacy that we find our heart's delight. That's what happens when the Word of Christ dwells in us richly. Believe it or not, I've got more to say, but we'll close now.

Father, thank you. Thank you for who you are, for who Christ is for, for giving us the privilege and the, the joy of having hearts filled with gratitude, that we can express our our praise and worship in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to you.

We thank you for redeeming us in Christ. We thank you for introducing us to such a savior as this, who is the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. And this mediator is a mediator perfect in every way, fulfilling the roles and the

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offices of prophet, priest and king to each and every one of us. What brilliance in your plan, what beauty in it, and what joy we have to discover!

And I just pray for any cold heart here today, maybe someone who's been sitting in churches for decades, but they've grown stale, stagnant, complacent. Perhaps there's nothing but just a faintly smoking wick, a bent reed, bruised and bent over and unable to support any weight.

I pray that you would cause that faintly burning wick to grow into a flicker, then a flame, and then a roaring fire, that you'd take that bruised and broken reed, you'd make it whole, that it would grow up as a mighty stalk and then a trunk to support branches and leaves and bear fruit.

I pray that you would do these things for us, that we would bear the weight of your glory; that we would seek out, search out, be curious about above all other curiosities, that we'd be curious about you because you, father, you are our reward. You are heaven to us.

We long to be with you. We long to know you more fully. We long to be, to shed these dying bodies and put on our eternal



home, to be glorified, to be in the company of Christ and his angels, to gaze on your glory.

We love you, father, we thank you for what you've taught us this morning, and we pray that you would press it into every heart today. Save some. Sanctify all, for your glory. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.