

Christ Is All: Christ-Centered Life

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a Christ-centered life, where Jesus Christ is central in our thinking, actions, and decisions, and where we experience the peace of Christ and apply the word of Christ in our lives.

Duration: 48:10

Scripture: Isaiah 26:3, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:37-39, John 14:27, Romans 12:2, Philippians 4:6-7, Colossians 3:15-17

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the duty of every Christian to be active and productive in their faith. He explains that as Christians, we should be constantly getting rid of negative behaviors and replacing them with the graces of Jesus Christ. The speaker also highlights the importance of Jesus Christ being central in every aspect of a believer's life, including their thoughts, actions, and motivations. He encourages listeners to seek the peace of God in the midst of trials and challenges. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the transformative power of Christ in the ongoing Christian journey.

Transcript

I return in your Bibles to the book of Colossians, Paul's letter written to the church at Colossae, and we are going to read as the basis of our meditation this morning the passage that comes next in order, namely verses 15 to 17. Chapter 3, verses 15 to 17 in the epistle to the Colossians. I am reading from the New International Version.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing songs, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Now, Paul has been very clearly outlining the duty of every Christian man and woman, not only in ancient Colossae, but in the church of Jesus Christ anywhere and at any time, everywhere and at all time. Looking back over this chapter 3, you will notice that he has been telling us quite clearly in unambiguous terms that as sure as we are Christian, as sure as we are men and women in Christ, then we should be busy, we should be doing something. First of all, he puts our duties in terms of negatives.

He says there are certain things that we should be getting rid of. The metaphor is one of unclothing, disrobing, taking things off as you would take a garment off and throw it on one side. What he says is that all the characteristic features of our old Adamic and fallen nature we should get rid of.

If we are really men and women in Christ, then there is our inspiration and there is our strength and there is our grace. We should be getting hold of the old pattern of living and putting it all on one side. I'm sure all of us from time to time say concerning a suit of clothes or what have you, now I've had done with that and we pack it out and we get pack it and get rid of it.

Paul says that we should do that kind of thing with every aspect of behavior that relates to our old Adamic nature, but he doesn't end there. He says that we should be constantly robing ourselves with the graces of our Lord Jesus Christ. That we should be regularly coming to the wardrobe of divine grace and from there receiving grace upon grace and clothing ourselves spiritually with these beautiful garments that God has given us.

And when we feel we're reasonably clad we should belt the whole thing with a girdle of agape of love. And so we should go out into each new day and into each new week as men and women that are clothed spiritually for the task to which God has called us. Now the paragraph before us today takes us one step further and this is dominated by the theme of the centrality of Jesus Christ in the ongoing Christian life.

You may always know whether a man is growing Christianly by this. Is Jesus Christ central in his thinking, in his acting, in his living, in his planning, in his desiring, in his motivation? Is self central? Is this world central? Or is the Lord Jesus Christ right in the center of it all so that a man can say as the apostle himself did, to me to live is Christ. There you see Jesus Christ is dead center.

Everything else, everything else must take its due place around the centerpiece which is the living, reigning Lord Jesus Christ. Allow me to ask you therefore right at the outset this morning whether Jesus Christ is central in your thinking, in your living, in your learning, in your acting, whatever else you do. Now this is brought out by the use of three verbs found in each of these three verses before us this morning.

And for those of you who read the Greek New Testament, and quite a number do, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. These verbs are in the subjunctive. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. And then whatever you do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The peace of God ruling in the heart.

The word of God richly dwelling within. The word of Christ brother. And then the name of Christ sovereign over all else.

I want us to look at these three this morning in turn. And as we look at them we shall see the ongoing Christian life as the apostle and mouthpiece of the living Lord would address us and wants us as a community of people and as individuals to live in this 20th century. Now first of all the peace of Christ and its inward ruling.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Since as members of one body you are called to peace and be thankful. Now lest the readers of the King James Version may think that we've played a trick here just in order to have everything circle around the Lord Jesus Christ.

The King James Version says let the peace of God. Really these modern versions are more accurate when they refer to the peace of Christ because we now have older manuscripts that take us back nearer to the New Testament era and they all have the peace of Christ rather than the peace of God. Not that there is any major theological distinction but it does give us a particular concept of the peace that we are to allow to rule in our hearts.

It's not simply the peace of a God we have never seen but the peace of the God revealed in Jesus Christ the man of Nazareth. Now let's examine this the peace of Christ ruling in the heart. First of all what did Paul mean by the peace of Christ? What's involved there? Well one wonders how much Paul would put into that phrase.

I believe that he probably meant not simply the peace which Jesus Christ purchased for us. He did purchase our peace by the blood of his cross. We are told that in Ephesians.

He came and preached peace to them that were near that is to the Jewish community and to those that were afar off. He himself says Paul in another place is the embodiment of peace. Christ is our peace.

I have a feeling however that the apostle Paul would also imply and involve in this phrase the peace that Jesus Christ himself enjoyed. Surely this was one of the most remarkable of all things in the experience of our Lord Jesus Christ. How he enjoyed peace with God.

If you'd like to put it differently you can think of his life as a life of perfect harmony with his father. There was never a jarring note. There was never a battle to be fought.

On one occasion in the garden of Gethsemane it appears that Jesus had a doubt as to whether the cup was absolutely necessary after all. And so he came and he asked the father, father if it be possible let this cup pass from me. But when according to the father it was known to be impossible to evade that cup on he went with a willingness and a dedication that is evident in the record.

He was led as a lamb to a slaughter. No man takes my life from me he says but I lay it down of myself. In other words he never fought with his father.

He was never at variance with his father. Because of that he might have to face the opposition of men. But in the midst of it all even when the cross emerged on the horizon Jesus had peace so that he could turn to his disciples and say this remarkable thing.

He could say to them now he says not as the world gives do I give to you. I'm going to give you something that the world could never give. My way of endowing you as my people is quite different from that of the world.

Not as the world give give I to you. I'm going to give you my own peace. That in the first place reveals the fact that in the depth of his soul our Lord Jesus had peace with his father.

There was the perfect harmony of the obedient son concerning whom the father more than once said this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Now the apostle Paul would have us enjoy that peace in our hearts. Just imagine it.

Are you going through any period of trouble and trial and difficulty at the moment. Is it very boisterous in your life. Are there things that harass you from day to day.

They wait you at the dawn of each new day and they're with you in the evening when you go to bed at night. Listen my friend it is the plan and the purpose of God that his people should know this quality of peace. The peace of God which passeth all understanding.

But now here's another thought. That peace according to the apostle Paul is meant to rule in our heart. The peace of Christ is meant to rule in the hearts of the redeemed.

The noun that corresponds to the verb here would be translated umpire or referee if you like or arbiter. It was very often and most generally used in connection with the Olympic Games where you would have referees or umpires and of course you know what would be done if there was a question about anything. The appeal was made to the referee and his word was final in all matters.

Now says Paul the peace of Christ flood your heart fill your heart and as he does so as it does so let it be the umpire the referee that determines right and wrong. What's he getting at? The notion is that as those who are in Christ as those who have been crucified with Christ and are risen with Christ and ascended in Christ to the heavenly places all that's in the background and are awaiting the coming glory of Christ when we shall be glorified with him we have his peace. As those who are going on in the Christian life casting off the things of darkness and putting on the raiment of light as those who know something of an ongoing work of grace and not something that happened 40 years ago and period as those who know an ongoing work of grace in our hearts.

Now says Paul there's the peace of God also in your heart as sure as you're getting rid of that which is evil and that which is tempted by the flesh and as sure as you're coming to the divine wardrobe and putting on the beauties of your Lord's grace more and more you're going on with him you're growing up into him and you'll know his peace. Now he says you're to judge things by means of that peace. What he had in mind probably was something like this here you have an alternative will I choose this or that way shall I join that group and what they believe and the way they live or shall I join this group shall I shall I embark upon this particular mode of living and behavior or shall I turn my back upon that and go this way.

You judge what is right or wrong says the apostle Paul by the peace of God in your heart. If you can contemplate going on this particular way or that particular way and the peace of God in your heart is undisturbed it remains and it deepens then of course it must be right. But if you have a sense of the impropriety of it if you're afraid that the dove of peace is going to leave its perch in your heart don't do it.

Now word of warning this is not a message to the carnal Christian stuck in the mud refusing to leave his sin. Now let's be sure about that I must put my neck on the line this is not the kind of argument that a man or a woman is to bring forward who is living in open sin not necessarily immorality but other kinds of sin and you're stuck in the mud you were born again but you've never grown up you're just a little babe in Christ carnal as carnal can be in your own soul and you argue I don't see anything wrong in this or I don't see anything wrong in that this is not for you. Paul addresses these words only to men and women who are casting off the works of darkness who are putting off the things of the old Adamic nature and who are putting on the things that are in Christ Jesus.

If you're in that process if you're really living the Christian life day by day then this applies to you you may depend upon it says Paul. The peace of God in your heart is a barometer which will indicate right or wrong nearness to him or distance from him that's not all. We have all been called to enjoy this quality of peace within the community of the body of Christ since as members of one body you were called says Paul.

This experience of peace is no fanciful addition to the Christian program it is an integral part of our high calling and it is to be enjoyed in the fellowship of God's people in other words our attitude attitudes to each other. My attitude to everyone else in the fellowship of the body of Christ is to be determined by this one principle. You know we have over the years gained a concept of church membership which is so far from church membership in the new testament as to be incapable of recognition.

The member of the body of Christ as understood in the new testament is a person who is sensitive to what he says or how he looks at his brother or sister and there's a deep sensitivity here and by the knowledge of the spirit's pleasure or displeasure in his heart a person is able to do or not to do to say or not to say what he had in mind. In the fellowship of believing men and women you and I are meant to practice and enjoy the experience of this peace of God brought down to earth. Brothers and sisters in Christ I trust you and I know something of this but if you don't take the church seriously and you don't relate to other Christians properly you're not within reach of this.

If you're living an independent life if you're treating yourself as the only child in the family a spoiled child living all on your own off of the tangent going your own sweet way my friend you can't know anything of this maturity. Anything that you may have which approximates it only approximates it. Can I just say a word about this? This calling should make us intensely and increasingly grateful.

It's a kind of afterthought. Paul puts it in tersely and be thankful. Now there are men and women here this morning who will know what this means.

I know. Be thankful that you know anything about the peace of God. Remember who you were, remember what you were, remember where you've been, remember the pit from which you've been brought up and the rock from which you've been hewn.

Remember the way satan had mauled you and marred your testimony but you have the peace purchased by the blood of Christ ministered by the spirit of Christ perfected by the word of God. If you have that peace you don't need to be told be thankful for there is nothing in this world to compare with this little bit of heaven that the spirit by the blood brings into the heart of the believer. The peace of God and the peace that is with God.

That brings me to the second main point here. The first the peace of Christ and its inward ruling. The second the word of Christ and its rich indwelling.

Another subjunctive let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to the Lord. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. The word of Christ indwelling that's the main thought here and dwelling deeply.

Dwelling deeply. You see the Colossians had already received the word of Christ they'd received the gospel but but what Paul wants is that the word that they had initially received should get deeper and deeper into their subconscious minds into their hearts into the soil of their spiritual beings until there it thrives as a plant of heaven planted in the soil of earth. Now by the word of Christ of course is meant his teaching in its broad sweet and full significance both as evangel and as ethic.

The word of Christ is the teaching of the doctrine that he has given us and given us as Paul often says as a sacred deposit on trust. That we should keep it safely in one sense but that we should pass it on to

others in another sense. We keep it in order to pass it on we see that no one no one steals anything from it no one robs it of its wholeness.

We keep it in that sense but we keep it in that sense in order to pass it on in all its divine glory and potential to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Jesus Christ. It represents the fruit of three and a half years public ministry upon earth and actually practically corresponds to the entirety of our new testament. Now notice the word of Christ is meant to dwell in us and dwell deeply.

That is first of all it's to have a permanent abode in us. I was talking to someone at all that long ago and the image came through quite clearly that his concept of being under the word of God was that of coming to church and being preached at as he put it and being engaged in having to think of the scriptures for a half an hour or three quarters or so and go away and come back another Lord's day and he lived by this. Now you see this concept that Paul has here is quite contrary to that.

You and I are not to be arrested by the word of God occasionally and made to think about it occasionally and for a limited length of time. Then to cast off its influence and go our own sweet way until we are arrested again and we have to think again. But the word of God that we hear is to dwell in us.

We take it with us. We remember it, its impact, its influence, its message, its significance, it sinks into the depths of the soul. Now I guess I've seen no one, none of the commentators suggest this but it seems to me that there may very well be here a reference to the parable of the sower and the soils.

You remember for example taking Luke's version. Two illustrations of the soil that simply did not take in the seed properly. There was a third but we mentioned two only.

First of all there was the seed that was sown by the wayside. You remember the wayside. It's the path around the strip that had been sown in and some of the seed had fallen on the pathway but there were so many people walking on the pathway that the path was hard and when the seed fell on the path well it didn't penetrate.

And you remember you remember what happened in our Lord's parable. The birds of the air came and my they've got great eyes. They don't need spectacles.

They just look down and they see and they saw that there was a little meal there and down they came and they got rid of it all in no time and there was no seed. In the soil that is. There are some Christians who are like that and I have no doubt that there will be some of us who will leave this service this morning and everything that is said is just like that.

It'll be like seed falling on very hard soil and in no time the birds of worldly influence will have been after us and before we've had our lunch today we'll have forgotten all about the word of God. But then there's the other. Luke in his parable also refers to the seed that was sown on the rock or better on rocky soil because the picture there is of a thin layer of of of soil a top soil very thin not deep and it is on top of a thicker layer of rock.

So as you look at it you see some soil but underneath there is the rock and now the sower is sowing his seed you see and some falls into this soil now because the rock maintains the heat better than the earth generally there is warmth there and so the the seed germinates very very quickly it brings forth fruit I mean it germinates you can see the little flower or whatever it is coming up almost immediately there's immediate response but it can't grow because there's no way whereby its roots can go down and maintain

its nourishment it can't find subsistence it can't find nourishment because the rock underneath has been broken.

Brothers and sisters I find that this is one of the most challenging pictures in the whole of the book I wonder whether I'm speaking to someone here this morning and you and I have made an immediate response to the gospel of Jesus Christ but the rock of the heart has never been broken the heart of stone has never been taken out and so there is no rootage and everything you hear you might sit at the feet of an archangel nay nay of the incarnate Lord himself and you'd not grow in the Christian life because the rock has not been broken there's a massive rock that has to be broken and taken out and you have to receive a new heart in its place now there are many professing Christians who have never known that Paul is here requiring of us that the word of Christ should be allowed to dwell in

the very depths of our beings get right in not just into the mind momentarily but into the memory into the subconscious into the heart into the feeling so that the whole of one's inner life is radically transformed by the word of the living God now notice the richly indwelling word should then become the richly outgoing word I must call your attention to this if we don't call attention to this then we're going to miss something very precious here and I don't want to be guilty of it as you teach and counsel or admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God if the word of Christ dwells in us richly then it should of necessity find an avenue for expression for us to express its message and its meaning in life an

impression that begets no expression becomes a depression that's why you have so many depressed Christians now you will ask what more does it mean than what we've already referred to for the word of God the word of Christ to dwell in us richly well look at this in reply I would say from this verse 16 that it does not simply refer to the depths of its indwelling but also to such things as the wisdom it imparts and the worship it inspires Paul goes on immediately you see and he says in the light of what he said now he says as you teach let the uh word of Christ dwell in you richly as as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom in other words the word of God dwelling deeply in the soul of a man so that in consequence the word along with the spirit of Christ are working together in

that man's life and he enjoys the peace that Christ gives as an arbiter and a referee concerning right and wrong as this proceeds you will notice that a man has wisdom to admonish or to teach others and Paul says that this is something that should be seen in people now the apostle is here addressing not christian pastors or ministers or teachers in that sense he is addressing the whole church here so that you see he is expecting that a wisdom of God should be manifest in the way that a sunday school teacher teaches a sunday school class or a bible class leader leads his class in other words my friend if the peace of God the peace of Christ is dwelling within me and the word of Christ is richly indwelling me then something should be evident this that I am wise in my teaching and that I

admonish people wisely and that I shall never say the wrong things to people and send them in the wrong directions when the word of Christ dwells in us richly it imparts a quality of wisdom to teach and to admonish and let me repeat it is something that should be seen in every child of God but now along with that the worship it inspires as you sing this is something else that goes on at the same time as you sing psalms hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts notice the concept of gratitude in these three verses giving thanks or gratitude it comes in the three verses if the word of God dwells in us richly then it will create in us an attitude of worship yes worship even though we have to get rid of questionable things out of our lives worship in the process of coming to the

wardrobe which is Christ Jesus our Lord for grace upon grace worship whatever the cost worship especially as the peace of Christ begins to rule within worship as the word of God imparts inward wisdom worship worship worship not just on the Lord's day but at any time anywhere everywhere if you can confine your worship to one single hour in the week brother or sister there's something radically wrong you are blind and you need your eyes open still you are you are you are incapable of understanding the things of the gospel God requires the worship of the whole heart all the time as all these things are going on says Paul what's happening in the heart oh you're making melody and music to your God in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs you're going about and there is this Godward side of your

life friends do we know anything about it what catches your eye now I don't want to dwell at any length as to the division of these three here now lots of arguments have taken place in the church about how you divide these psalms and psalms and psalms some people say well I think that Dr.

Hendrickson in a very incisive comment puts it like this all in all he says it would seem that when in Colossians 3 16 the apostle uses these three terms apparently distinguishing them at least to some extent the term psalms has reference at least mainly to the Old Testament Psalter hymns mainly to New Testament songs of praise to God or to Christ and spiritual songs or odes as they are called mainly to any other sacred songs dwelling on the theme on one theme or another than Christ and the Father but something related to spiritual matters whatever their nature he proceeds to say this threefold mode of praise must be offered in a spirit of thankfulness and to crown the whole of this passage this morning there is one other thing and it is a capstone here the peace of Christ and its inward

ruling the word of Christ and its rich in dwelling the name of Christ and its absolute overruling notice verse 17 and whatever you do now this covers everything nothing could be more general than that and whatever you do whether in word or deed do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and again notice giving thanks to God the Father through him my all this man how this man expected us to praise God do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus the name of Jesus Christ should dominate the whole of the Christians life that means of course that we act because of our confessed relationship to him it means that we act and we live as we do because we are his representatives in this world it means that we act and live as we do because we are concerned for his glory and it means too that we act

consciously by his authority what right does a man to stand in a pulpit on the Lord's day morning and say these things to many if not all present who are much wiser than himself what right does any man to stand before a group of people and say these things with a dogmatism that you have heard this morning well I'll tell you and the only right is this that one does it in the authority and with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth go ye therefore or if you want it in pictorial form come with Peter and John day after Pentecost and they're going to the house of prayer bless them they went to that uh old temple with its formality even though the fullness of the spirit has been flooded into their souls they go back into the temple at

the hour of prayer yeah and as they go what do they see but a man lame from his womb sitting at the outside the gate the beautiful gate of the temple to make matters worse the beautiful gate and this ugly scene of a man lame from birth no one could do anything for him now bless them they they kind of gave him a little gift threw their coins to him and that helped him along and enabled him to keep body and soul together but they really couldn't help the man's physical condition until Peter and John came and I guess he was expecting money from them too well makes it clear that he was he asked and answered them Peter said no man he says we're not like these other folk we just haven't got a pocket we don't have we

don't have we don't have silver and gold silver and gold have I none but I have

something in the name in the authority because I've been sent by one with all authority in the name of Jesus of Nazareth stand up rise up and walk and if I understand the full significance of this statement here I believe there are things that the church that is in living touch with the reigning lord there are things that we should be doing in his name and with his authority still that would make the worldlings say God is in that place and I close with this the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is to integrate thus the whole of life whatever you do do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ giving thanks to God and the father through him your life is to be so Christ-centered that as you go along this is your one main ambition and this is the thread that is to run through every thought

and every deed and every desire and every aspect of your life Christ dominates the whole brothers and sisters I confess to you this morning I feel very unworthy of preaching this oh what do we know of this this this golden thread running through all our lives giving meaning to every word and every look and every desire and every motion of the spirit and every imagination says Paul this is the way we should be looking at things if you are in Christ Jesus crucified with him risen with him reigning with him this is your life now don't you push it off to anybody else this is your life believer you may be a visitor in Knox this morning I want to I want to bring this to you this is your life man or woman in Christ as well as to those who regularly worship here on the Lord's day and we're

members of this community this is my life to be of which I am very unworthy may the grace of God be given us then on this another Lord's day another earthly Sabbath on our earthly pilgrimage may the grace of God be given us first of all to see the plan see the line see the root that has been planned for us the duty that has been set before us and as the spirit and the word work within us may we know that wholesome desire that becomes an ultimate determination so we can feebly say even with the apostle to me to live is Christ let us pray our heavenly father the first thing that we must needs do when we have been browsing on your word have been looking at ourselves in it as in a mirror is to acknowledge that we have not obeyed and we are not what we have been called to be but we desire to

be what we are not we yearn oh lord by the grace of your spirit to be like our blessed redeemer we covet for your glory that you will make the formalities of our christian profession to be dynamized with reality

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