



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Colossians 3: 12-17

Lesson 12 of 15

2018

"Above All, Love"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Mark. Good morning. We are continuing our studies in the book of Colossians. We're in chapter 3, and this morning we will look at verses 12 through 17. This is the application part of the book. Paul has developed the doctrinal part in the first two chapters. But even here, as he is 'applying' things; as he is drawing the implications from the doctrinal issues, he can't quite get away from doctrine altogether. So today, we have a very doctrinally oriented passage of Scripture. Paul begins in verse 12, "So", (and in saying that, he's drawing out implications from the things that he has already said):

¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Colossians 3: 12-17

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You for this time together. We thank You for this Lord's Day, when Your people can gather together, as we are doing at this time. We come together and have fellowship together. We greet each other; we visit, but the real fellowship begins with this: Uniting together in the study of Your Word. And I pray that as we do that, You would bless us. Paul says, 'Let Your Word dwell richly in our hearts...' (vs16). And this is essential to doing that: studying it together, learning the meaning of the passage that we are considering so that we know it and it dwells richly within our hearts. I pray that that will be the result of our time together this morning.

This is what transforms us: Your Word. Sanctify them with the truth. Thy Word is truth. The Word of God is the means that the Spirit of God uses to change us, to feed our souls, to transform our character to make us more like Your Son. And so, this is what we need, and I pray that You would guide us in an understanding of the things that we have read. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit: to open our hearts to receive the things that are present in this passage, and to conform us to the image of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, do a work within us; do a work of changing us.

Bless us in this hour. And we also pray for the meeting this evening; bless it as we come together, and God bless all who participate in it. Bless the meetings during the week on Wednesday night and throughout Tuesday morning. Lord, bless all of the meetings where Your Word is taught; be glorified, and may we be edified; and in so doing, build us up in the faith.

And Lord, provide the things we need, the material things of life. We look to You for that, and we're instructed to do that. The way we're to pray, according to Your Son, is to ask for our daily bread, and that really includes all of the material things of life that we need day-to-day. We are dependent upon You day-to-day for everything. So, bless all of us in that way, Father, with what we need – not necessarily what we want. (But the truth is You give us what we want so often.) In fact, You give 'exceeding abundantly

beyond all that we ask for' Paul says. So, we pray for what we need, and we know You are a gracious God who gives us so much more.

Bless us spiritually now as we sing our next hymn. Use it to prepare our heart for a time of study together. Bless us as the body of Christ. Build us through this time of study to Your glory. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Augustine was an African and the greatest Christian theologian of the first millennium of the Church. Reformers – Luther, Calvin, and the others – stood on Augustine's shoulders. In one of his sermons on 1 John 4, verses 4 through 12, he said, "Love and do what you please." Now, on the face of it, that's surprising, almost shocking. "Do what you please." But he went on to say, "Let love be within, for of this root can nothing come except that which is good." In other words, what is done from love – true love, biblical love – will be righteous. That's true.

And this is really the instruction that Paul gives in Colossians chapter 3, verses 12 through 17, where he continues to give moral teaching on how the Christian is to behave. He has told the Colossians that they are 'new creatures'; the old self is dead. And so, they were to stop living the old life with its vices: Like anger, wrath, and lying. They are finished with that.

So now in verse 12, he gives the positive side of that counsel. It's not enough to 'not do'. It's not enough to 'lay aside' bad things. They must also 'put on' what is right and good. Paul begins, 'So', (that is because you are new people), 'live like it; be righteous'. "So, as those who have been chosen of God, ...put on a heart of compassion..." (vs12). In other words, 'You are the elect of God. So, behave like it—like a chosen one.' And that means act with love. It even lists virtues to be lived, but it all culminates in verse 14, "Beyond all these things put on love..."

Well, there's nothing surprising in that. No one is against love. What is surprising, at least to some, is the standard Paul gives for love: divine election. In fact, on the face of it, Paul's statement to have compassion and love like the elect, like those chosen of God, is as shocking as Augustine's statement, "Love and do what you please." It is

surprising; it is shocking because some believe – they think, when they hear something like that, ‘What can be less loving than the doctrine of election? The idea that God excludes people and cares only for a very few people and damns the rest?’ It's all part of that notion of predestination. Even as great a man as John Wesley spoke of the blasphemy and the horrible decree of predestination. Predestination, (election), is a stumbling block for many people. And many Christians would actually agree with Wesley's description of it.

Not Paul – just the opposite. It's not the ‘horrible’ decree, but the ‘glorious’ decree. It is an act of God's infinite and unconditional love. It doesn't exclude; it includes. In fact, the more we understand God's choice of sinners to be His people, the more we understand God's grace and mercy and love. In fact, you cannot understand God's love apart from divine election. So, I'm going to spend a moment on that subject.

Who are the elect? Who are they? The beautiful? The smart? The rich and noble? The worthy? Is that who God set His love upon, those who deserve His love? No, just the opposite. And it's good to know that. It's necessary to know that. Paul had to remind the Corinthians of that in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 26. Right at the beginning of the book he reminds them of that fact: "Consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise...". So, Paul felt the need to begin his letter to the Corinthians by reminding them of who they were: fools in the eyes of the world; weak things, whose choice by God was made to shame the wise of the world and the strong of the world. They needed to know that because the Corinthians suffered from a problem that we all have: one of pride and self-importance. And all of this was leading up to Paul's later correction of them in chapter four and verse seven, where he asks the question, "Who regards you as superior?...", (well, the fact of the matter is they did; they thought pretty highly of themselves.). And so, Paul then asks, "...What do you have that you did not receive?" I don't know what their immediate

response to that would have been. But I can imagine, 'Well, there's a lot that haven't received. There's a lot that I've done.'

But the point of this question is, "Nothing." There isn't anything that you have that you have not received. So Paul goes on in verse 7, "And if you did receive it (*which you did*) why do you boast as if you had not received it?" Why do you boast as if this is all your work when it's not? Look, if something is a gift, there's nothing to boast about, especially if the gift is undeserved. And so, Paul needed to remind them from the beginning of what we might call an 'inconvenient truth', that they, (we), are not worthy...period!

It's good to remember where we came from. Isaiah reminded Israel of where they came from. He said in Isaiah 51, verse 1 – I'm quoting the *King James Version* – "Look to the rock from which ye are hewn, the pit from which ye are digged. Look unto Abraham" – Abraham's the source, look to him. And what you'll find as you look to him, he's saying is, 'God chose a pagan to be the patriarch of His people Israel.' Abraham and Sarah were living in ungodly Ur. They were living in the heart of darkness and in idolatry when God called them out. Abraham wasn't worthy. No one is worthy. There is no room for pride or a sense of entitlement in election – just the opposite. God chose the lost. God chose the dead.

And that is what Paul told the Ephesians. Beginning in the second chapter, (vs5), of his book by reminding them of that, 'You were dead in your transgressions and sins.' And not just "you" – all of us. He goes on to include himself and all of us because he says, "...we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh..." (vs3). And he added, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead...made us alive together with Christ..." (vs4&5).

Now, all of that together is, 'You were dead, but God made you alive.' It's God's work. It's all God's work; it's all a gift. What do you have that you have not received? Nothing. He chose us not because we were attractive or worthy; or because we merited it. — We did not; we were not any of those nice things. He chose us because He loved us.

Now, why He loved us with what Paul called "His great love" he doesn't say. We just know it wasn't anything in us that merited that love. Because that's the nature of His love. And because that is the case, His love is great – great because we were so undeserving of it. He had mercy. That's what Paul said in Romans chapter 9 and verse 16. It does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs. It does not depend on your thinking or your activity, your motives or your deeds. It does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. His love is unconditional. If it had not been for that, not one of us would have been saved.

Election does not exclude people; it includes people. Without it, we all would have been justly, righteously left in our fallen and doomed condition. But God elected some – not all, some. He chose out of a fallen, guilty race a people for Himself – not everyone. But not a few. In fact, a lot. In fact, a vast multitude He chose to believe and be saved. And He gave them to His Son to redeem by His death. Then they sent the Holy Spirit to gather the elect, to apply the blessings of the cross to them and bring them to faith in Christ: And He continues to do that. He's doing that today, tomorrow—in every day of every generation He is gathering His vast number of people, His elect. That is the love of God's election. It's undeserved.

‘Look to the pit from which ye are digged.’ (Isa 51:1). And if you look with clear eyes, you'll see that pit is deep and dark. Really, unconditional election is not the horrible decree, it is the humbling decree. It ensures that we would be lifted from that deep, dark pit and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, Paul was saying we are like that: As those who have been chosen of God, who are beloved of God, shown great mercy, ‘you be that way’. Be the same to others. So, if you're wondering am I of the elect, well ask yourself, "Do I believe? Do I believe in Jesus Christ? Am I trusting in Him alone for my salvation?" The elect do that. They are chosen to believe. "And do you love? Do you love one another?" That, too, is what the elect do. That is what Paul goes on to say. He says, "...put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." (vs12). Earlier he had told them, "...put

them all aside: anger, wrath, malice..." (vs8). Now he says, "Put on compassion." It's the picture of taking off filthy rags and putting on clean clothes. I've heard when a man is released from prison he's given a new suit. I don't know if that's the case or if that's still done, but that's a good picture. Because what it pictures is a man taking off the prison clothes and putting on civilian clothes. And really, that's us. 'Quit wearing the uniform of the old life', Paul is saying, 'and put on the new suit of righteousness which we are, in Christ, declared righteous'. It's a life of compassion and caring; it's a life of forgiveness; it's a life of giving help. That's what he's saying, 'Put that on, a life of compassion and caring.'

The virtues that Paul lists here, (all of them, each one of them worthy of a sermon), are the virtues that characterized the life of Jesus Christ. In Matthew chapter 11, verse 29, He described Himself as being "gentle and humble in heart". If the Son of God could humble Himself to become a man in order to serve us and even die for us, what should we then be, who are by nature rebels, who are by nature guilty of sin and saved only by God's mercy—His sovereign grace? What kind of people should we be? Well, we should be people like our Lord. We should be people like those Paul describes in Philippians chapter two, verse 4 & 5, which he is applying to all of us. He is telling us there how we are to live: 'Don't look out only for your own personal interests but look out chiefly for the interests of others. We should have the attitude in us that is in Jesus Christ. And the attitude that was in Him is that of a servant.' Compassion comes out of knowing who we once were and all that our great God and Savior Jesus Christ did for us. Compassion is a deeply felt desire of mercy and act of kindness. How different that is from the world which is not compassionate but callous and cruel. It's a realm governed by self-interest and the rule, "Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost." The Church is to be compassionate and merciful. And this is to be our behavior in even the smallest of matters; in the smallest of personal relationships that we have. This is what Paul is speaking about here.

We, of all people, are to beware of being hard, censorious, critical, self-righteous people. After what we have experienced, to do that would be hypocritical. We are to be

kind; we are to be helpful; we are to be generous and patient. And patience, (*long suffering*), which ends verse 12 is what is required to do what Paul counsels next in verse 13 when he says, we are to be "...bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you." Forgiveness is an easy thing to preach; it's a difficult thing to practice. Well, really, which of these virtues isn't difficult to practice? But certainly forgiveness. Vengeance is in the nature of man – that is in the nature of fallen man, the natural man. It's the human response to a wrong suffered. You see that all through the Bible; you see it all through the Old Testament.

In fact, one of the characteristics of the Bible, that in my mind, is an evidence of the veracity, the truth of it, is that it fits reality. It doesn't read like myth; it fits the way things are. We read what took place 2,000-3,000 years ago, and we see it happening in our own day—in our own hearts. But you see that in regard to vengeance; you see it practiced throughout. Things like Joab – what a great example of that is he who murdered Abner for the death of his brother. Blood feuds and honor killings are not uncommon in the world. Christians are to be different. Christians are to forgive. And we have the standard that encourages that response when everything in us says, "Strike"! We have the standard to do something different, just the opposite. And that standard is grace, as it is seen in unconditional election and in Christ, in who He is and what He has done for us. Forgive "...just as the Lord forgave you." How can we not do that when He has forgiven so much—forgiven everything—forgiven far more than you and I will ever have to forgive in someone else? This is why doctrine is so important.

Now, I would say, just as a parenthesis, "How can we not forgive?" Well, we still struggle as believers. So, how can we have this attitude of forgiveness and carry out all of these virtues? Only by the grace of God. Only by the sovereign grace of God. But there are things we can do. And one of the essential things we can do to produce a heart of forgiveness is studying the Word of God and considering the great truths that He set forth here—the doctrines that He set forth here. And so, that's why I say doctrine is so important; it is essential that we understand the doctrines of the Christian faith.

We need to know God and we need to know ourselves. That is how we learn about these things. But all of the doctrines of the Word of God are imminently practical. They are practical because they are the basis for our actions.

A Scott that I have quoted more than once, Thomas Erskine, put it very simply, "Religion is grace; ethics is gratitude." When you understand the doctrine of grace, which we are really studying here, the natural response is gratitude. — And so you behave in the right way out of a sense of thanksgiving for all that the Lord has done. The love of God for us inspires love in us for Him and for others; for all of these virtues are expressions of love.

Augustine was right, "Love and do what you please." That is really what Paul says next in verse 14, "Beyond all these things *put on* love..." The *King James* has, "Above all these things *put on* love...". 'Beyond/above put on love.' The idea of this is literally, 'On top of all of the others' (the other virtues), or to continue with the image that Paul has been using, 'On top of all of the other items of clothing, put on love; it is the crowning grace of it all.'

In Galatians 5, verse 22, Paul lists nine graces that are similar to those listed here. He calls them "the fruit of the Spirit." The word "fruit" is singular, (and not fruits of the Spirit'). Rather he is listing nine virtues of that 'fruit', because all nine are a unity. They go together and they cannot be separated. I don't know what image he had in mind, perhaps a cluster of grapes, a unity. But there are parts to the 'fruit', and they all go together. So, not just some of these virtues are to be found in us; all of them are to be found in us.

In Galatians, the first grace that's listed is 'love'. It's on top. And in Colossians, 'love' is chief: "Above all love...", it is the bond of unity, Paul says. Love binds together all of these graces, all of these virtues, and it is the impetus for us doing kindness, for behaving in the proper way, with humility and patience. And 'love' is what binds Christians together, as well as personally, and enables them to rise above their differences and stay united in their relationship. Because 'love' is giving—not emotive.

Now, I don't mean to suggest that love has no sense of feeling in it, and there's no emotion connected with love. I think if one truly loves someone, they will have a sense of emotion. But essentially, love is active; and essentially, love is selfless and sacrificial. Unity was Paul's great concern for the Church because it is so easily broken. And where a Church is divided, it is weak, and it is in danger of dissolving or becoming irrelevant. So, 'Above all, love.'

Now, Paul's concern for unity is given in the next verse, verse 15, when he moves from love to peace, but still, love is the impetus; love is the driving force for that. So, he says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful." (vs15). Christians have been called to peace; it is what Christ established between believers and God. That's Romans chapter five, verse one, "...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." A hundred years ago today, the Great War ended. It was the war to end all wars. On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. We call it World War I because it didn't end all wars; it was followed by World War II, which was really just a continuation of it. The reality is man cannot end all wars. Man cannot end war; man cannot establish peace. It's not in him to do it.

I'm reading a book titled *Six Days of War* by Michael Oren. It's about the Six-Day War that Israel fought in 1967. They fought Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. And in six days, they wiped them all out. Destroyed their air force, gathered lots of armaments: tanks and ammunition. They tripled the size of their territory. In six days, they became, it would seem, invulnerable, and all of those Arab states that had threatened them became vulnerable to them. It was an amazing thing. And one would think from all this, all that they gained, that they would have peace—and thought, no doubt, for years to come. And yet, just a few years later, they had the Yom Kippur War. On Yom Kippur, the Syrians and the Egyptians attacked and almost overran Israel. So on and on it has gone—there is just no peace there. And this was the call of the false prophets throughout the book of Jeremiah, "Peace, peace. But there is no peace." (Jer 8:11).

There will never be peace in this world because man cannot establish that. But God has done that. God has ended the greatest war, the oldest war, the war between Himself and man, and He's done that through His Son. The war is over for everyone who is a believer in Jesus Christ. We were formerly enemies of God, now we are friends. Christ has reconciled us to God; He has made us God's sons and daughters. We live in harmony with Him. And that harmony between believers and God must also exist between believers and believers. Peace is to 'rule the Church', Paul says. We can't be at peace with God and be at war with each other. And that happens, unfortunately. Because while we are a new creation in Christ, we still have a lot of the old life in us, and we are easily offended; we are easily set against each other.

The Reformers were right when they said that we are righteous in Christ. But what we are is righteous sinners – declared righteous and legally righteous with God, but we still struggle with the sin that's within us. So, we are set against each other. Again, the Church cannot function like that; it is crippled by disunity. We are a "body", Paul says here in verse 15, and this is a metaphor that he uses throughout his writings to describe the Church. We are a body; and a body can only function well when its various and many parts are in harmony with each other. Just think of the human body, how complex it is, how many parts it has, large parts and small parts, and all of it, in a healthy body, work in harmony.

Now, harmony is a work of the common grace of God that He gives to us. But how much that illustrates the reality within the body of Christ, we need the grace of God for that to happen; it's vitally important for that to happen. But we are to do things in our responsibility, and that is what Paul is urging here. And he urges it with some urgency. He says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." That word "rule" also means arbitrate. Let peace be an umpire between us and guide our relationships. Peace is active. We only see half of it when we see peace in a passive sense, in the sense of peace as the absence of war, the absence of conflict. Well, that's peace; that's true, but that's not really the sense of peace in the Bible. The Hebrew word for peace is familiar to all of you – *shalom*. And what that means is not just the absence of hostility. Rather,

it is something positive; it speaks of welfare, of well-being. And it is both together—a cessation of hostility and a promotion of well-being. We are to produce that. Peace is to rule in our hearts, the goal of preventing hostility and division and promoting well-being among believers. That's what peace is to produce, and it begins in our own hearts individually.

So, we are not to magnify our personal ambitions. Nothing wrong with having ambition in the sense of having goals for your life and striving for excellence, but never at the cost of someone else. Never do we run over someone in order to gain our own advancement. We are not to seek our own ends and desires above that of other people. We are to be humble. That's the prescription Paul gives in Philippians chapter two. That's how we serve, as Christ did, who humbled Himself to become our sacrifice. We are to do the same, and then God's blessings flow through us like clean water through a pipe.

A pipe is what you are. That's an analogy that William Still gave, a Scottish minister of about a generation ago. He likened us to a pipe. And he said, "A pipe doesn't function standing on end so that it is seen. It doesn't have any function at all like that. It functions when it's laid in the dirt, covered over, and water flows through it. That's how we get water. And we are rarely aware of the pipes, but we are grateful for them."

This is how we are to live; it encourages peace in a congregation. And what encourages peace in us and allows it to rule in our hearts is knowing that we have peace with God by the grace of God. We are under His protection and guidance. He will give us everything we need and more when we forget about ourselves and live for Him and His purpose. As we do that, He provides for us. He doesn't neglect us. He may not provide for us in quite the way we want, but He'll provide for us in the best way, and that establishes peace in our hearts, knowing that He's in control.

So also does this next statement that Paul makes, "...be thankful." How can we be thankful for all that God has given to us and all that we know He will give us? And in fact, what we can know about what He will give us is that we don't know a fraction of the greatness of it. So knowing all of this, how can we, debtors to mercy alone,

recipients of His grace and His abundance; how can we then be angry with each other, with all of that in mind?

In Matthew 18, Jesus told the story of a king who forgave a man an impossible debt, 10,000 talents. Now I read that, and I guess it's a lot, but what are 10,000 talents? And so, one of the versions of – the *New International Version* translated that 10,000 bags of gold. The point is it was a sum that he could never repay. But the king had mercy on him. He begged for mercy, and the king felt compassion and forgave the debt. What did the man do? Well, he went out immediately and found a man who owed him a hundred silver coins, a pittance compared to what he had owed. He had the man thrown in jail for not repaying it to him. When the king learned of it, he was furious. He handed him over to the jailors to be tortured until he should pay it all back.

The point is, we who have been forgiven so much by God should forgive our brothers and sisters—or we are not worthy. ‘Look to the pit from which you were digged, Isaiah said (Isa 51:1). Consider the kind of people you were and what God has done for you. That should produce gratitude. And those who are grateful, they really are grateful and understand what they have received. They can't be angry or spiteful. They will let peace rule in their hearts and be united with their brothers and sisters. And they will, “Above all, love.”

That leads Paul to another command which I think he comes to naturally from everything he has just said. He tells the Colossians to, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you..." (vs16). Now, does Paul mean within you individually or collectively? That is, as a church, as the body of Christ, or is this personally? Well, both make sense, and both are important. If it doesn't dwell in the individual, if the Word of God isn't dwelling within us, then it won't dwell within the church. But from the context and from his concern for the church as the ‘body’, as he has described it in verse 15, I think what is most on Paul's mind here is this collective idea of the church. Be a church that is devoted to the study of the Bible. That's what he's saying. The meeting of the church should be structured around teaching, the teaching of the Word of God. That cannot be emphasized enough.

And notice, it is "the word of Christ"; that is, Scripture proceeds from Him. The Word of God is His word, Christ's word, because He is God; He is the Son of God. And so, as we hear it, and submit to it, we are yielding ourselves to the authority of Christ. We are doing what Christ would do and would have us to do. And as we yield ourselves to the word of Christ, He transforms us; He conforms us to His image so that we are like Him. He desires us to do that; because then, His desires become our desires. His word dwells in each of us, and then the church, so that there is unity and harmony among us. The teaching of Scripture does that. The teaching of Scripture is vital for that. The teaching of Scripture feeds our souls. That is principally what the church is to do and be, a place where the Bible is taught.

Again, everything centers around the church. In 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 15, Paul calls the church "...the pillar and support of the truth." Now, that's not all that the church is, but first, 'it is the pillar and support of the truth.' That's what we are to be doing: supporting the truth and promoting the truth. Again, it's not all that the church is; it's not only a place to come and hear a sermon; the church is a body. It is a living thing of saints drawn together in a community for mutual blessing and service to each other. We are bound together to help each other grow in knowledge and wisdom so that we live to God's glory.

That's our chief end to do that and enjoy Him properly, personally, and bless one another and ultimately bless the world as we give light to the world. That's clear from what Paul says next, the result will be "...with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." That's what happens when the Word of God is the center of the life of the church. There is wise instruction, tactful instruction, clear instruction; truth is applied appropriately with correction and encouragement. This is to take place.

Now, that doesn't come from the pulpit only; it also comes from the pew. Paul is describing the church and how the members of the body are to minister to each other and worship the Lord. Worship is important. Congregational singing is an expression of a church's vitality. And if it's done properly, it's not forced or manipulated; it is natural; it

is what naturally springs from a grateful heart. "We sing from thankfulness in your hearts to God," Paul says.

In Ephesians 5, verse 19, Paul gives similar instruction. Singing was clearly an important part of the church service. It was intended to edify the body. Singing was intended to guide in praising the Lord, to give us direction in that, and all according to the truth of Scripture. Hymns are not any good if they aren't biblical. And so, they are to be an expression of the truth of Scripture. In Ephesians 5 and verse 19, the statement is "...making melody with our heart to the Lord;" – referring to Christ. So here "...in your hearts to God." has the same meaning, recognizing that Christ is no less than God. He's God the Son, equal with the Father in essence and power and glory.

And it is melody and psalms that arise out of gratitude for all that He has done for us. The more we understand that, the more we understand His grace and His love, the more we will love Him, and the more we will sing. Song is a means God has given to express our love for Him, and who doesn't enjoy hymns that magnify the Lord God and His glory? Hymns like "Amazing Grace" and "A Mighty Fortress." In fact, when the light of God's Word shines out, God's people sing. It was the Reformers who rediscovered Paul that reintroduced congregational singing into churches. All of this is the result of the teaching of God's Word; it's the consequence of believing it and responding to it. We care for each other, and we seek to build each other up in Christ, to be like Christ as the Word of God dwells within us. "For the word of God is living and active..." the author of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 4, verse 12, and as a living thing, it produces life within us, and it produces life-changing results in us. And what Paul is describing here is what all of that looks like. Never dismiss or depreciate the teaching of the Word of God.

Now, that's essential because the Word of God is Christ's word to us. The sermon isn't the Word of God. The sermon isn't Christ's word to you, but sermons and lessons are necessary to explain the Word of God, which is God's Word to us—His inerrant Word, the Word of Christ. And so, we are to be submissive to it. We are not to be dismissive of it. We are to pay attention. That's why Paul states this command, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you...". '*Richly*' – what's that mean? Well, *abundantly*.

The Word of God should dwell lavishly within us because it unlocks the treasures of the faith for your life: love, and joy, and peace, and all of these things. Do not deprive yourself of that wealth personally; and also as a church.

Finally, Paul sums up all of this instruction in verse 17, "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." That is the general rule of the Christian life. The New Testament doesn't lay out a detailed code of rules that govern every aspect of our lives as the Law of Moses did for Israel, (I mean it was very particular in all the things: dress, and diet, and whatever). What the New Testament does give is general principles that are to be applied to various situations as they arrive. And that will be done, as we understand the principles of the New Testament, and as we wisely look at life and apply them according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. All of that works together.

Now, nine of the Ten Commandments have been repeated in the New Testament, and they are inflexible rules, and all of the principles of righteousness are inflexible rules. But many of these areas are governed, as I say, by these general principles: Does my behavior honor Christ? We need to ask ourself that. Can I do this in His name? Is my behavior a responsive thankfulness for His grace? This is how we approach the issues of life. If we do those things that put the Lord first and do all that we do to His glory and not for our pleasure, if we seek Him first, then we will not make a mistake. We will love as Christ loved, which is sacrificially. Christ said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (Jn 15:13). He has done that. — Once for all. — The just for the unjust, the righteous for the unrighteous. You are His friend if you believe in Him.

If you have not believed, recognize your need, that you're a sinner. The warfare has not ended. His death alone ends that. His death alone wipes away all of the sin and guilt of all those who believe in Him. So, believe in Him. Come to Him. Live for Him as a new creation. How? As Paul has said, "Above all put on love." And as Augustine

counseled, "Love and do what you please." Because if you love, you will not harm; you will only bless. May God help us all to do that. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for Your goodness to us. We are in the practical section of the book, the section of application. But it is all grounded in deep, important, necessary theology, which Paul brings out in this book – in this portion of the book – to help us to understand who we are. And in light of who we are, how we are to act—and act upon it—to behave in a way that is truly loving; in a way that brings glory to You. We can do that only by Your grace. We thank You for Your grace, which is abundant. We thank You for the sacrifice of Your Son and all that He's obtained for us. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

(End of Audio)