



Cultivate Your Christian Life

Colossians 3:15-16

- 1. Let the Peace of Christ Rule in You (verse 15).**
- 2. Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You (verse 16).**

If any of you have a garden, you know what it takes to produce a crop. It takes a lot of work. In the winter, you need to plan ahead and purchase your seeds. In the springtime, you till the soil. Perhaps you even mix in a little manure into your soil to help make it richer. And then, you plant the seeds. Then, you soak the ground in water, helping the seeds to germinate. As your plants come up, you continue to water them, that they might grow healthy. You might add some miracle grow. You might place some straw or grass clippings around the plants to protect them a bit and keep the moisture in. As the summer rolls on, you pull any weeds that might happen to come up. You are constantly checking on the status of your plants. If it doesn't rain for a few days, you put a sprinkler in your garden to water your plants. If some insects start eating your leaves, perhaps you look for some insecticide. If your plants start growing too big, you trim them back. Finally, when the harvest comes, you need to pick the fruit. Only then can you enjoy the produce of your field.

Every farmer (or gardener) knows that harvest time doesn't simply come. There is work involved. There is patience involved. But, in the end, there is joy, as the harvest comes in. So also with our Christian lives. When we come to faith in Christ Jesus, all our problems aren't solved immediately. We aren't sanctified completely all at once. To be sure, we are justified instantly. That is, God declares us righteous through the merits of Christ alone. Before Him, we have no need to fear the judgment, because of Christ's work on our behalf. But, we aren't sanctified instantly. There's more work to be done in our lives.

This morning as we come to our text, we see the ways in which we ought to cultivate our Christian lives, so that we bear much fruit for God. Now is not the harvest time. Rather now is the time in which we till the soil, and plant the seed, and pull the weeds and water the plants.

Colossians 3:15-16

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

My first point comes from verse 15, ...

1. Let the Peace of Christ Rule in You (verse 15).

I've taken the verbiage from this point straight from verse 15. It's right there as plain as day. Paul writes, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts."

We all know what peace is. (1) We know what inner peace is. It's that tranquility of heart that comes when you have no fears and no worries. (2) We know what peace is with other people. It's the openness that you have with others when you know deep down inside that there is nothing between either of you. (3) For those of us who have trusted Christ, we know what it is to have peace with God. It comes when you don't fear the judgment to come, because we know that we have been washed clean through the blood of Christ.

The question in this verse comes naturally, "What kind of peace is Paul talking about here?" Is he talking about inner peace or peace with other people or peace with God? The best answer to this question is, "Yes." He's talking about all of these things. He's talking about a peace that you experience with God through faith in Christ. He's talking about an inner peace of mind that you have as a result. He's talking about a peace that flows toward other people.

I think that you need to keep the order in mind. He's first talking about the peace that you experience with God, which gives you a peace, that you can experience toward other people. This is always how the Bible speaks. What you experience personally, and individually with God flows through you in your relationships with other people. That's why the church is so important. It gives you an avenue to practice these things. Remember the flow of verses 12-14? "As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, etc." (Col. 3:12ff). As God has chosen you to be His own, and as God has made you whole, and as you are assured of His love for you, so walk in a way that's consistent with these realities. Treat others with compassion. Be kind and gentle and patient with one another. Humble yourselves before others.

I believe that this is what the point of verse 15 is. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. First know what it is to be at peace with God. So let it show in your relationships with other people, “to which indeed you were called in one body” (Col. 3:15). That’s talking about the church. Let peace reign among you.

When you believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, it does something to your heart. When you believe that Jesus Christ “is the image of the invisible God,” (Col. 1:15), in whom “all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Col. 2:9), when you believe that in Jesus Christ, “you have been made complete” (Col. 2:10), when you believe that you have been transferred “from the domain of darkness ... to the kingdom of [Christ]” (Co. 1:13), when you believe that “you have been reconciled” to Jesus Christ “through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20), when you believe that your sins are forgiven (Col. 2:14), when you believe that you have a “hope of glory” (Col. 1:27) -- sharing “in the inheritance of the saints in Light” (Col. 1:12), and when you believe that you have a “hope laid up for you in heaven” (Col. 1:5), it does something to your heart. It will give you a peace that surpasses all comprehension (Phil. 4:7).

When troubles and difficulties and guilt and persecution and hardship come upon you, the peace of Christ can make you stand firm. You know that “to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). You know that the worst that people can do to you is kill you, but, such will only bring you into the presence of the Lord.

I love the words of Psalm 46, which express this inner peace very plainly, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. ... The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold" (Psalm 46:1-3, 7). The peace of Christ works the same way. Though the world would come against us, we will not fear. Though every comfort that we know should vanish, we will not fear.

As Habakkuk says, “Though the fig tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail, and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation” (Hab. 3:17-18). This is the peace we know. There is nothing on earth that can shake us. There is nothing in heaven that can shake us. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:38-39). It

simply can't be done--not because we are so strong in our resolve not to let these things affect us. Rather, it's because of the peace of Christ that comes upon our heart when we believe.

Look back at Colossians 1:20. We see here the peace that I'm talking about. It's the reconciling peace through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Paul writes, beginning in verse 19, "It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:19-20). God was pleased to reconcile us to Himself through the blood of His cross. Here's the greatest news of the world! The God of the universe has provided a way for us to be reconciled to Him. Our sins have caused a separation between us and God. And yet, Jesus came upon the earth, lived as a man, and did what only God could do. He provided the way of salvation: through faith in Him.

When we believe in Christ Jesus, the penalty of eternal punishment for our sins is cast aside. It's not cast away. It's cast upon Jesus. Believing that we are reconciled gives us the courage to face death without fear. It gives us the courage to face the resurrection and the final judgment without fear. It gives us the courage to face the most difficult situations we will have in life, because we know that we are safe in the arms of God.

This peace with God that we know will result in having an impact upon the relationships of others within the body of Christ. Our vertical peace with God should have the effect of producing a horizontal peace among the brethren. Back again in our text, we read, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body." The word translated "rule" literally means "umpire." In other words, Paul is telling us here that the peace we know and experience with God should be the umpire governing our relationships with one another. The peace of Christ that you experience in having your sins forgiven and being reconciled unto Him, should direct you into what is right and what is wrong in dealing with other people.

It works like this: You have a conflict with somebody. They sinned against you. You sinned against them. They let you down. They bother you. They want you to do something that you don't really want to do. Whatever. Some type of conflict has taken place between you and another person. As you consider how you should act toward this person, you need to allow the peace that you have found in Christ act as your governor in the relationship. If you have been reconciled to God, different though you be, you ought to be reconciled to another believer, for you

have far more in common than you and God have in common. He is holy and transcendent and sinless and infinite. While you, on the other hand, are finite, imperfect and full of sin. As God has granted you grace in establishing peace between you and Him. So also should you grant great grace toward those with whom you are having a conflict.

Conflicts within the body of Christ are going to happen. (If they wouldn't happen, then there was no need for Paul to even comment upon having peace in the first place). By nature, the church is made up of different kinds of people. We come from different walks of life. We have different experiences. We are not a group of people who all have rallied around a similar cause. We are not a group from the same social status. We are not a group from the same economic status. We are not a group sharing convictions about personal preference issues. By nature, we are a diverse group of people. And diverse groups of people will rub against one another and have friction.

The early church experienced this. In Ephesians 2, Paul addressed the issue of how the church was made up of both Jew and Gentile. They were as different as different can be. You think that we have differences? That's nothing compared to the differences that the early church faced. Suppose we had an influx of a dozen African-American families into our church (which, by the way, I would love to have take place). What sort of differences do you think there would be? There would be vast differences. They are coming from a different background than many of us are. They do things a bit differently. They like more swing in their music. They like more passion in their preaching. They want more action and less talk. But, whatever differences we might experience pales in insignificance compared to the differences that the early church faced. We mix on a daily basis with African-Americans. They speak our same language. They hold many of our similar American values. But not so with the Jews and Gentiles of the early church. Their languages was different. Their dress was different. Their culture was different. And yet, they were called together to be one body in the church. So also, we are called into one body, through the peace of Christ, which guides us in the process.

This is one way in which to cultivate our Christian life.

1. Let the Peace of Christ Rule in You (verse 15).

Let's turn now to my second point this morning,

2. Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You (verse 16).

Again, I've simply taken this phrase from verse 16, where the phraseology is almost identical. Verse 16 tells us, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you." Literally, the idea here is that the word of Christ is actually taking up its residence inside of you and living there, in much the same way that you live in your house. The word of Christ should live with you, eat with you, drink with you, play with you, and sleep with you. When you take it out of the metaphor, it simply means that the gospel ought to live in your heart. You ought to welcome it into your heart. You ought to think upon it. You ought to meditate upon it. You ought to allow it to have its full impact in your life.

I believe that this is thrust of the entire epistle to the Colossians. It's in Christ alone that you stand complete. You don't need the Jewish ceremonial law. You don't need to eat certain sorts of food (Col. 2:16). You don't need to celebrate certain feasts and festivals (Col. 2:16). Keeping the Sabbath doesn't help your standing before God in any way (Col. 2:16). You don't need to seek mystical, spiritual experiences. You aren't made perfect before God by having some type of heavenly vision (Col. 2:18). You aren't fulfilled spiritually when you worship angels (Col. 2:18). You don't need to submit yourself to severe ascetic practices, like keeping away from certain objects (Col. 2:21), or like staying away from certain practices (Col. 2:21), or beating your body each time you sin (Col. 2:23). No! None of those things will help you in your Christian walk. Rather, the message of the book of Colossians is that you stand complete in Christ. Colossians 2:9, 10 are central, "In [Jesus Christ] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete."

When Paul said, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you," (Col. 3:16). Paul's instruction here to the Colossians was that they needed to allow the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ have an effect upon their hearts and as it affected their own hearts, it was to have an effect upon others.

I have heard many people talk about this verse and quickly say how important it is for us to memorize the Scriptures and meditate upon them. It's because they read this verse like this, "Let the word of God, that is the Bible, richly dwell within you." And then, the call is for Scriptural memorization. And as the Scriptures are memorized, they will help you conquer sin. Psalm 119:11, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You." I'm all for Scriptural memorization. I believe this is the only way that you can talk rightly of God, "when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:7). Large dosages of Scriptural memorization will only help you greatly in your walk with Christ, as you will be able to pull up the appropriate verse at the time

when you need it most, and you can believe it and trust in its truth. But, I'm not sure that this is what Paul was taking about here in Colossians 3:16. Paul isn't primarily pointing to the Scriptures at this point. Primarily, he's pointing to the saving message of the gospel. He's saying, "Let the full reality of everything that you have in Christ Jesus dwell in your hearts."

Now, it's not that I'm minimizing at all the important of Scriptural memorization and meditation. It's simply that I don't believe that Paul's focus here isn't so much upon the Scriptures as it is upon the truth of the Scriptures as it relates to Jesus. The "word of Christ" is the "word of the Messiah." It's the message of how the Messiah came and lived among us and died and rose again for our sins.

Just think about those in Colossae. How much of the Scripture did they have? I believe that they had the entire Old Testament. They may have had a few of the gospels. But, I don't think that they had many of the epistles. I'm doubt whether they had 1 or 2 Corinthians or Galatians or Philippians. The pastoral epistles (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) probably weren't even written at this time, as they seem to have been written near the time of Paul's death, several years from the writing of Colossians. Many believe that John's gospel and epistles and the Revelation wasn't written until long after Paul's death. They probably didn't have any of Peter's epistles either.

So, they were in Colossae with the Old Testament, with the preaching of Epaphras, and with a letter or two from Paul (Col. 4:16), and possibly Matthew, Mark or Luke in their hands. And Paul says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (verse 16). "Let everything that you have heard and been taught of Jesus of Nazareth coming and dying and promising eternal life to those who believe, dwell within you." Certainly, as the Scriptures which were in their possession spoke of Jesus, they would be immensely helpful in pointing them to the gospel, especially from such verses as Isaiah 53. But, ultimately, it was the saving message of the gospel that was to dwell in them richly.

But, just think of the opportunity that we have to let the word of Christ dwell in us! We have the full revelation of God. We have all four gospels, that tell us about the life of Christ. We have the records of the apostles teaching and preaching as recorded in Acts. We have all of the epistles that interpret the life of Christ for us. As we read these over and over, the fullness of all that God wants us to know will dwell in our hearts and minds. Any effort that we put into memorizing these things will bear fruit in our lives.

Consider the following verses that are found in the New Testament that are available for us to memorize and meditate upon, all of which focus on one aspect of the gospel in one way or another:

Matthew 17:22, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day."

Mark 10:45, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Luke 19:10, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 3:3, "Truly, Truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Acts 2:38, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

Acts 4:12, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Romans 5:1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Galatians 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'"

Ephesians 1:3-6, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

Ephesians 2:8-9, " For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Philippians 1:6, "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:9, "not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God on the basis of faith."

Colossians 2:9-10a, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete."

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

2 Thessalonians 2:13, "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth."

1 Timothy 1:15, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."

2 Timothy 4:7-8, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Titus 3:5, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."

Philemon 6, "I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake."

Hebrews 2:12, "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted."

James 1:2-3, "Consider it all joy, my brethren when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."

1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God."

2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness."

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Revelation 5:9, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

You put these sorts of words upon your heart and you will be transformed by the gospel of Christ. And again, just like the peace of Christ, it's not merely an individual thing. The "word of Christ" should have its effect upon all of us. This is what the next phrase of verse 16 is talking about. "... with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16).

Here's the picture. The word of Christ is dwelling within each of us. As is appropriate in various settings and in various different ways, we are talking with each other. We are **teaching** one another about Christ. We are **admonishing** one another to walk worthy of the gospel. We are **singing** about the redemption. These are the three participles in this verse, which modify how the word of Christ is manifesting itself among us: teaching, admonishing, and singing.

The role of "teaching" in the church isn't something that is merely reserved for the pastors to do on Sunday mornings. It's something for all of us to be involved in. For instance, suppose that at some point before (or after) the worship service, you find yourself in a conversation with someone in the body. As you talk with them, you can be thinking about how the gospel applies to their particular situation, and help to relate it to the gospel. The message of the cross has an amazing way of addressing each of us exactly where we are.

For instance, suppose this person tells you that he feels condemned because of the sin that he committed this week. You can remind him of how in Christ Jesus, we are forgiven our sins by faith. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). Suppose this person want to be more bold in her witness for Christ. You can tell her to think upon what God has done for her soul and pray with her for opportunities (Col. 4:2-4). Suppose this person is having difficulties at work because of his faith in Christ. You can remind him that Jesus suffered as an example for us to follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:24). Suppose this person is suffering from some sort of illness that is really weighing her down. You can urge her to "set her mind on things above" (Col. 3:2). Heaven is a place of grace! Heaven is pleasure beyond measure! In heaven, we will all live in spiritual bodies that will never be sick again.

Suppose this person is having financial difficulties. He has lost his job or made a foolish financial decision in the past or faced an unexpected illness without insurance. You can help encourage his spirits by telling him of the inheritance that awaits the saints in Light, which is coming to all who believe (Col. 1:12). Suppose this person feels as if she isn't living up to a certain standard of righteousness that she has set for herself. She has been so burdened with her children and her family, that she has found difficulty finding time to read her Bible and to attend the Ladies Bible Study and to attend the flock and to reach out to her neighbor and to have a family from church over for dinner. As a result, she's feeling guilty that she's not being the Christian that God wants her to be. You can tell her that these things don't make her righteous before God. It is Christ Jesus who has accomplished all that we need. Don't be burdened by all of the things that you haven't done. Rejoice in the things that Jesus has done!

Suppose this person is anxious about the upcoming elections and is fearful that the wrong people will get in and our country will continue its slide on the moral scale. You can tell him that Jesus is the one who is ruling and reigning over the entire universe. It may well look as if we have much over which to despair. However, Jesus made the world and is "head over all rule and authority" (Col. 1:10). Things aren't out of his control. Suppose this person is feeling depressed and discouraged with life. Her marriage isn't what she wants it to be. Her children are experiencing some difficulties. It seems as if they are barely making it financially. You can encourage her with the hope that is laid up for her in heaven, where these things will be perfect (Col. 1:5).

I'm continually amazed at how applicable the message of the cross of Christ is to every situation in life. It's applicable to those who don't know Christ. They need to hear of their sin. They need to hear of the good news of a redeemer in whom they need to trust. It's applicable to those who do know Christ. Whether convicted of sin or thinking wrongly of their own righteousness or discouraged with the difficulties of life, the Lord uses the message of a savior to comfort, encourage and convict, wherever needed.

This is what Paul sought to do. Perhaps you remember back in chapter 1, verse 28. Paul said, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Col. 1:28). What was Paul proclaiming? He was proclaiming Jesus! How was Paul proclaiming Jesus? By "admonishing and teaching." Why was Paul proclaiming Jesus? Because it was in the proclamation of Jesus that we are able to be presented complete in Christ on that final day.

And in chapter 3, and verse 16, Paul gives a vision for an entire church doing this. The entire church should be walking around “teaching and admonishing” one another. Now, this doesn’t give you permission to go around telling everybody what they should be doing and correcting everybody when and where they are wrong. Please notice that both in Colossians 1:28 as well as Colossians 3:16, it speaks about doing these things “with all wisdom.” This means that there’s a skill in doing these things. There are times when your word of admonishment might come across as the perfect word that is needed. There are other times when such a word might be crushing to an individual. So, there are times to speak, and there are times to comfort, and there are times to be silent. This is why Paul said at the end of 1 Thessalonians, “Admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thess. 5:14). This is what it means to teach and admonish “with all wisdom.” It’s discerning the one you are talking with. It’s discerning the need of the moment. It’s discerning the words to help. I can think of many ways in which I have failed in these things. I’ve not spoken as I ought to have spoken. For those who were unruly, I failed to admonish as I should have, but have remained silent instead. For those who were fainthearted, I failed to encourage as I should have, but have discouraged them instead. For those who were weak, I failed to help as I should have, but I hurt them instead. In Ephesians 4:29, we are told to speak “only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment.” Oh, for wisdom to give grace.

Notice also in these words is a musical element. Paul makes mention about singing with thankfulness in our hearts to God (Col. 3:16). There are various ways to do this: (1) with Psalms; (2) with Hymns; and (3) with Spiritual Songs. I’ve heard people talk about seeking to understand the difference between these different types of songs.

1. Psalms. Many commentators say that this is referring to the usage of the Old Testament Psalms in musical form. However, there are some that seek to expand this term to describe any sacred song with musical accompaniment (i.e. 1 Cor. 14:26).

2. Hymns. When we hear this term, we often think of typical hymns found in our hymnal, with four or five verses with easy accompaniment. Most commentators say that this term is referring to songs of praise to God that deals with Christian themes. However, one commentator said that this is referring to those songs which are “divested of Jewish imagery and theocratic allusions, and more adapted to the heathen mind.”

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3. Spiritual Songs. When we hear this term, many think of choruses, which have fewer words, but are more musically interesting, thus, in some measure, it becomes more “spiritual.” The commentators are all over the map on this one. Some say that these songs are specifically inspired by the Holy Spirit. Others say that these are songs that deal with themes other than praise to God (like testimony or admonishment). Others say that the “spiritual songs” are a songs with free form that express a personal experience of piety, perhaps like our Jazz music today, that is free-form and experiential.

If you try to figure out exactly what these terms are talking about, you will be confused. But, there is a point: Musical styles and expressions that we use at Rock Valley Bible Church should be varied. There’s no one style of music that is appropriate. There’s no one theme that is appropriate. There’s no one way of doing music in the church. If anything, the proper way to have music in the church is to make sure that it contains a measure of variety. Consider the various moods of the inspired hymnal that we have, the book of the Psalms.

There are songs in the Psalter that you can still hear from 2000 years ago. It was loud! It was sung with great enthusiasm. I’m talking Psalm 150!

Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse.

Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre.

Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe.

Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!

This is rock-concert loud and enthusiastic. This is percussion. This is hands raised and dancing and swaying.

There are other songs in the Psalter that you read and are filled with sorrow for the Psalmist. There is no way that it was sung with loud, cheerful praise. It must be sung in the minor key. I’m talking Psalm 13, which was written by David, “For the choir director.”

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?

How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

And my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.

But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

I will sing to the LORD, Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

There are other songs in the Psalter that are simply testimony of trust in the Lord. They aren't grandiose theology. They aren't flowery artistic impressions of God. They are testimonials to the blessedness of following the Lord. I'm talking Psalm 61.

Hear my cry, O God; Give heed to my prayer.

From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

For You have been a refuge for me, a tower of strength against the enemy.

Let me dwell in Your tent forever; Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings

The emotions of the Psalms are all over the place. I simply say this: our music and our singing ought to be varied to capture the entire range of emotion that is appropriate for the people of God. Yes, there is great reason to sing loud and enthusiastic songs of praise to God, especially as "the word of Christ" indwells you. You can't help but to be excited at the good news of the gospel. But everything in this life isn't all fun and happy. There are sorrows of the Christian life as well. Our music ought to express it. Minor key with a deep-down hope and trust in God's grace to carry us through the difficult times. There is place for songs of personal testimony to the Lord His faithfulness during times of our trusting in Him.

Do you want to cultivate your Christian life? (1) Let the Peace of Christ Rule in You (verse 15); (2) Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You (verse 16).

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 22, 2006 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] John Eadie, Commentery on the Epistle to the Colossians, p. 252.