

Word-Centered Worship

Colossians 3:16

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I invite you to turn your Bibles this morning to the Book of Colossians, Chapter 3, verses 12 through 17. The Word of God reads:

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

Father, we come before You now, asking that You would send the Holy Spirit to enable us to approach Your word with reverence and fear, but with joy and thanksgiving. For this is Your truth. So, I pray that You would work in our hearts and bring us closer to You and sanctify us through Your truth. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Last week, we considered verse 15, where Paul stressed the importance of peace in the church: "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful." We looked at the fact that peace is to be the rule by which the Christian community lives. We are to be a people of reconciliation, not a people of war or trouble, but a people that live in harmony under the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 16, Paul brings us to another commandment: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." He moves from the idea of peace ruling in the church to the importance of the Word and worship, the worship of God through the Word of God, or the centrality of the Word as it relates to worship. There's a connection in this passage between the Word of Christ in verse 16 and the teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Paul wants us to see that the worship that should exist within the corporate people of God should be a worship that

is centered on the Word of Christ, centered upon the Word of God.

This entire section, particularly Chapter 3, has one thread passing through it: the way we live as individuals affects our corporate life. You are a new man in Christ Jesus. Now, the way you live will affect the corporate life of the Christian Church. Paul wants us to be reminded that our relationship to the Word affects our worship in the Christian Church, just like our relationship to peace reflects the peace in the church. Our relationship to the Word of God should inform our worship in the church, and so there are things that we have to be mindful of in our own lives regarding our relationship to the Word of God as a church and as individuals that will affect the corporate worship of God's people. So, he shows us the connection between the Word and song.

Now, song or singing or music is a very, very powerful form, perhaps one of the highest forms of expression in the world. When we think of music, we're thinking of a very powerful form; when we think of singing, we're thinking of a very powerful expression. And what I mean by that is this: in a moment of a few minutes, a song can convey to your heart so powerfully a message, and the words of that song will not only convey so powerfully a message to your heart but can raise your affections so high, higher than maybe a conversation of 30 minutes, higher maybe than a discussion with a friend or even a statement. The power of song to communicate truth is really a universal reality.

I can't remember the philosopher's name, but he said something like, "If you let me have the music of the young people, I'll shape the entire society in which we live." It's been known through Greek philosophy all the way to the present day that music has a very powerful influence, and song has a very powerful influence over the hearts, over the minds, and over the lives of people. Now, what is a song? Well, a song is really a composition; it's the expression of the thoughts, the feelings, the convictions of its composer. You see, when someone writes a piece of music, they're expressing really what's in their heart. They're expressing their conviction, their life, their desire through the lyrics, through poetry, through whatever it may be, to convey their heart to someone else's heart, to convey their conviction to someone else's, to convey the message that is so important to them to others. And so, convictions, thoughts, and feelings are all transferred to the engaged listener of a song.

Now, the impact of that is really immeasurable. As I said, songs can affect culture, society, and people.

But Paul wants us to realize that there is a song for the Christians, a new song, a Christian song, a song that reflects the Word of Christ. And Paul

wants us to realize just as the power of song communicates so clearly the message of its composer, so we as God's people, filled with the Word of God, singing to one another, convey the thoughts, the convictions not of our own hearts, although they should be our own hearts, but of the Word of God. We should have conviction from Scripture, of the Word of God flowing through in song.

So, Paul wants the believers to realize that they are to be a people that are first and foremost filled with the Word of God. I want you to see this in Colossians 3:16, this connection here. He says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." You see, Paul begins not with singing; he begins with the Word. He first says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," and the expression of the Word of Christ dwelling in us richly is the composition and the expression of Psalms, of hymns, of spiritual songs. Whether they are already previously composed or new compositions, the point is simply this: that the truth of the Word of God should be communicated to the Christian community through song. And Paul wants us to understand that and to realize that.

But let us begin first by looking at what is this Word of Christ. You see, the Word of Christ, those three words, they only appear this one time in the entirety of Scripture. And if you have a modern translation of the Bible, it also appears in Romans 10:17, where it says, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ." In older translations, it's the Word of God there. But besides those two references, it only really appears here in the translation that we are using today. And the issue is simply this: that the Word of Christ is the words that are about Christ or the word that is about Christ. Some people have thought that the Word of Christ means the words which Christ spoke, but I don't believe that's what it's referring to because a lot of these people wouldn't have had the words that Christ spoke at that very time.

The issue that is at play here is the word that is about Christ, and really, the word that is about Christ or the word that concerns Christ is the Word of God. You say, "Well, how do you know this?" Jesus said this in Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus. What did He say? He said everything in the Scripture concerns Me. I can take you from Moses through to the Psalms, through all the way to the prophets, and there'll be one message: it concerns Me. And so, in one sense, we can look at the entire Bible as the Word of Christ. It is the word that concerns Christ, from the Old Testament figures, types, shadows, from the nation of Israel all the way through to the New Testament Church. All of it regards the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

Paul wanted the believers there to understand that when you read scripture, you read scripture in light of Christ. He is, it is His word, it is the Word of Christ. The totality, the sum and total of all biblical revelation is Christ, and he wanted the believers to have a Christocentric lens by which they viewed all of scripture. That's the way that we should view all the scripture as well.

But he says, "I want the Word of Christ to dwell in you richly." The word "dwell" comes from two words: the word "in" and the word "to reside." And the meaning is essentially, "I want the Word of God to indwell you, I want it to indwell you." God uses this word Himself in 2 Corinthians 6, where He says, "I will dwell in them, and they will be My people, and I will be their God," in the context of us being the temple of God. He realizes that, and He says there clearly, "God says, 'I will dwell in them.'"

Also, in Romans 8:11, the Holy Spirit is said to be the One that indwells us. He's the indwelling Spirit, the One that indwells God's people. He's the One that dwells in you. The Bible says, and even Paul uses this same term regarding the faith that was in, or dwelt in, Timothy's mother and grandmother, Lois and Eunice. And he says, "That's the same faith that is in you." And what he was simply saying is that there's this faith that dwells in, it resides in, it is at home in you.

You see, the idea of indwelling does not just mean entering. It's much more than entering. When we speak of indwelling, we are talking about residency. We're not talking about entry; we're talking about residency. We're talking about a moving in and a residing and an abiding of the Word of God within the hearts of God's people.

Let me illustrate. My wife, Natalie, and I have been married for about 11 years now, and we've probably lived in 11 houses. I don't know if that's true, but it's probably something like that, isn't it? We had an itinerant kind of ministry, so what would end up happening is we would almost every few years be in another house.

Now, what we learned very quickly is that there's a difference between moving into the house and then dwelling in the house. There's a difference between the first day when you entered into the front doors of the house and you're like, "Okay, a new house," and then you look around, and it's like, "Okay, we unpack the boxes, and things are happening." But even after you unpack the boxes, even after you put the picture frames up, it helps. But it's only a matter of time that it takes before the house becomes a home, before the house becomes ours, where we start to fill all of the crevices, fill up all of the cupboards, make sure that every space is being used accord-

ing to how we want it, when we discover that cupboard that was under the benchtop that we never knew existed, that we now could fill.

When we learn about all of the house, when we fill it, when it becomes our dwelling, there's a vast difference between people coming and visiting our house and leaving, and us dwelling there. Sometimes, when the removalists come in or when your cousins come and help you into your new house, it feels like it's just as much their house as it is yours at the time you move in. "Where's the PowerPoint for this? Where's that?" they tell you. But when you settle in there, when you live in there, when you abide in there, there is a vast difference between visiting there or coming and going there.

Anyone who's rented an Airbnb or stayed in a place over a holiday for a time knows that if it's just a night or two, you're not getting comfortable. It takes a while, perhaps weeks or even months, before you can actually feel at home. And so, what Paul is talking about here is not that the Word of God would have a cursory or superficial presence in the life of God's people. What he's referring to here is much more than that. He wants the Word of God to indwell us, to abide in us. He wants the Word of God to dwell in us richly, in abundance. He wants the Word of God not just to have a cursory or superficial influence, or have sprinkles of the Word of Truth within our hearts. He wants the Word of God to be abounding and overflowing in our lives, filled, crammed, and packed. This is the idea of having it richly within us.

He wants the Church of God to have a Christ-centered, complete, and full impact of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, not only entering into their hearts but remaining, residing in their hearts. He's talking about a heart that is saturated with the truth of God, a heart that not only has peace that rules it but also has the Word of Christ that rules it. Meaning, the Word of Christ so fills it that it governs the way we think, it governs the way we act, it governs the way we feel, and it governs the way that we respond to things in life.

The Bible speaks of this in many places. In Psalm 1:2, it's the man that is blessed that delights in the law of the Lord, and in His law, he meditates day and night. And the blessings are clear: he's like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in his season; his leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he does shall prosper. Why? Because he delights in the law of the Lord. He delights in the Word of God, not a cursory reading but a meditation and a delighting in day and night in the Word of Christ.

Not only that, the psalmist also says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Your word. Thy word

have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:9-11). Not only meditating but the hiding up and the treasuring of the Word of God in our hearts. I believe that may even be referring to the memorization of the Word of God. Not only do we meditate on it, but we commit it to our memories, that it becomes a part of our very being, filling all our heart.

The Bible speaks of the Word of God as food and as drink, and that is the idea that it's meant to be ingested, to go down into our bellies. Jesus said, "Let these words sink down in your ears or into your hearts" (Luke 9:44). The idea is that the Word of God should not just be passing in and passing out; it should be finding its home within the lives of the people of God. We eat it, for man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).

Charles Spurgeon once said, "It is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until at last you come to talk in scriptural language, and your very style is fashioned upon scriptural models, and what is better still, your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord." He goes on to give an example of John Bunyan, who he thought was a man that had the Word of Christ dwelling in him richly. He says of Bunyan, "Read anything of his, and you will see that it is almost like reading the Bible itself. He had read it till his very soul was saturated with Scripture. Why, this man is a living Bible! Prick him anywhere; his blood is Bibrine, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God." What a testimony! And I believe this should be the testimony of all the people of God.

It was the children of Israel at a young age that were to become sons of the law. They were to memorize, meditate, and learn the Scripture, and they were to become so full of the law of God that it would be as it were before their eyes, on their doorposts, everywhere. It was so that they would be filled with the word of truth, with the Word of God. And Paul is saying to us, let the Word of Christ be that way in your heart. Let it dwell in you richly, not just cursory reading, but plunging into its depths, saturating your life with its truth.

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," he says here. And Paul sees that not only the Word of God is important to be dwelling in us, but he now moves from the Word of God into the worship of God. He wants us to realize that the Word of God should dwell in us richly, and what should happen as a result of that is that we should be a people that sing the Word of God, as it were, that sing the truths of God, that sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, that are a church that reciprocates the Word of God back into the hearts of God's people. As we read it, as we meditate on it, we sing it, and as we sing it, it comes back into the hearts

of God's people, and as it's taught and as it's sung, and then it's heard and it's memorized and it's saturating us, it's then coming back out in song and teaching one another and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

You know, Paul wants us to realize that we, as the Church of God, when we get up on Sunday and sing the praises of God, we are engaged in ministerial activity. That we, by singing, are teaching, and we, by singing, are admonishing, meaning we, by singing, are educating God's people by the words that we sing, and we, by singing, are not only educating the people of God, we are admonishing, we are even correcting, we are even challenging the people of God. And I think that's a very important thing to realize, and I think most Christians don't think about corporate worship that way. But Paul wanted the church to realize that every time that you get together and sing the truths of God, you are ministering to one another in a very specific way, that is through teaching, that is through admonishing.

Let me give an example. We sang, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear, what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer." But then look what he says here, "Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer." Now, we just sang that, yes, unto God ultimately, but to one another. We sing to the Lord for His glory, for His honor, but that's an admonishment, isn't it? "Oh, what peace you and I often forfeit." It convicts us. "Oh, what needless pain we bear, why? Because we don't take things to God in prayer." And that's a hymn that teaches us and admonishes us. It not only teaches us that we can take everything to God in prayer, but it admonishes us that we don't take everything to God in prayer, and the result of that is that we forfeit the peace of God.

Now, that's very scriptural because it comes right from Philippians 4:6-7, "In everything by prayer and supplication, don't be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." But we forfeit that peace because we don't take everything to God in prayer.

The song itself not only teaches and admonishes us, it teaches us that Jesus knows our every weakness. That's Hebrews 4:15, that He sympathizes with us in our weakness, who is in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. You see, the songs that are Christocentric, they come from the Word of Christ. All the authors of the hymns or any sound biblical song should be rooted and grounded in Scripture. In one sense, if our hearts are filled with the Word of Christ as we sing these hymns, there should be references of Scripture or concepts of Scripture or truths of Scripture run-

ning through our mind. You know, "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" right out of 1 Timothy 6.

This is how God wants His people to learn, not only when I get up and teach the Word of God, but you realize that when we sing the Word of God, we should be paying very particular attention to that which we sing because we are educating one another and instructing one another and teaching one another and correcting one another in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

You know, we sing "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow." This is a call to worship. This song is not particularly directed to God; it's directed to the whole of creation, as it were. This is "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow." That's the command. Come on, let's praise Him. Praise Him, all you creatures here below. Praise Him above, you heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It's like Micah calling to the mountains and the hills to bear witness to what he's about to say. The idea is that we're calling upon all men, all creatures of our God and King, to praise Him who is worthy of praise.

And when we come to sing, it's not just something that we do as Christians, as churches, just purely for the sake of doing it. It's not because we feel like, "Oh, we just got to fill the time of the worship service," or because simply we have to make a nice sound or sound very nice and good and proper. No, Christian singing in the early church had nothing of the sort. I'm quite afraid to say that this modern generation has turned the entire concept of singing and song into professionalism. But I don't think Paul's talking about professionalism here. I think he is talking about people whose hearts are filled with the Word of Christ, that want to sing the praises of Christ.

And how are we to do this? Well, he says you do this with different forms of songs: there's Psalms, there's hymns, there's spiritual songs. Now, there's debate about this, but without delving into the entire debate, there are some that believe that this passage is teaching that we should only sing Psalms because the Psalms, the hymns, and the spiritual songs or Psalms, hymns, and songs—spiritual doesn't appear in the book of Psalms, but Psalms, hymns, and songs appear in the Psalms itself, in the book of Psalms itself. Some of the titles of the Psalms say a song, some of them say a hymn, some of them say a Psalm of David, right? And so they say, well, we just have to only stick to what the book of Psalms is. That's the worship book that God gave us to use, and therefore we're restricted to that. I don't believe that that is the case. I don't think it's restricted to Psalms only; that's the other view. I believe Paul's talking about a variety now. I don't doubt that there is overlap, and I don't doubt that all the Psalms, the book of Psalms, is full of Psalms, hymns, and songs. There's no doubt about

that whatsoever. But I don't believe the early church was limited in their worship to the Psalms themselves, and there's a few reasons for that.

I think, firstly, historically, it's not true. I think there is a case to be made historically. Let me read to you, actually, from Tertullian, who was in the 2nd century. He said, "Each is invited to stand forth and sing publicly to God, this is at the love feast he was describing, as he is able from his own knowledge of Holy Scripture or from his own mind or another translation of his words on his own composing." The implication there is that people would bring songs to the love feast, where they perhaps composed themselves, perhaps it was a spontaneous song that was in their heart that they would sing to the Lord before God's people or whatever it may have been, but the issue is simply this: that it was not only from Scripture, but it seems to be in the early church also from their own composing, also from their own mind.

Also, another man, Pliny the Younger, who was from 61 AD to 112 AD. He wasn't a believer, but he was reporting to Trajan, one of the emperors of Rome, and he was basically describing what would happen in the Christian assemblies, probably spying on them. I'm not sure, but he simply says this: "They were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsibly a hymn to Christ as to a God." You see, the pagans would sing hymns, which the word hymn means a praise, as it were; they would sing hymns to their pagan gods. And this pagan is saying, what they do is they sing hymns of praise to Christ as to a God.

Now, there's not really much direct address in the Psalms regarding direct address to singing praises unto Christ as God. Obviously, there are things there; Psalm 110 could be that way, but I don't believe that that was it. Also, in the New Testament, if some of you remember when we looked at Colossians chapter 1, we found a hymn there in this passage that Paul was referring to: "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. He is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead." Some people believe that that was a hymn that was sung in the early church. That what would happen is, and Paul, just like in preaching, we refer to hymns that we sing to support the passage that we're preaching. In another way, Paul, in his letters, was referring to songs that the early church sung to affirm and show them that these are the things that we sing in the church. These are the doctrines that are consistent with what I'm teaching.

So that's common. That's in Colossians 1; you have that right throughout Philippians and Philippians 2, and not to mention 1st Corinthians 14. People are singing, as it were, "Some of you have a psalm, have a hymn, have a doctrine," or whatever it may be. Others coming, and he goes, "I'll sing with the spirit as well, and I'll sing with the understanding," all in the

context of either prophetic or spontaneous praise and worship to God.

What I'm just simply trying to say is that the early church was probably a lot more free than what we knew. And their culture was that way, but not only their culture was that way, their communities were that way, and the church was perhaps even that way also. But what we have to realize is that singing was the expression of people's hearts to God. When you see Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, spiritual songs, I believe, actually refers to not just songs that are spiritual in nature because Psalms are spiritual in nature and so are the hymns, it praises to Christ. But I believe spiritual songs would be referring to more of those spontaneous praises that the Spirit of God prompts people toward or gives them to say or to sing and to speak to one another.

I think we have this example in even the Old Testament when David in 1 Chronicles 25:1 gathered people, musicians for temple worship, and he said, "Who shall prophesy with harp, stringed instruments, and cymbals?" You know, when you see Mary when she cries out, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," that's actually a hymn. She's starting to burst out in song. When Moses gets past the other side of the Red Sea, I don't think he transposed and composed something in Egypt. I think his heart just burst and said, "Yes, God has given us a victory," and he sung praises to the Lord, the song of Moses and Miriam. Miriam couldn't help herself but join in with the worship.

And what I'm just simply saying here is that the early church, the Old Testament Saints, I don't think were restricted to that which was written, but they expressed also their own hearts in worship to God. We have that even with Hannah's prayer. That's also either a song or a poem when she conceived after so much weeping before the Lord, and then she breaks out in song as a prayer to God and thanksgiving to the Lord.

So the Bible is teaching us here that there are Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. But whatever you think about here, wherever you land on this issue, the point is simply this: those things are to arise because of the Word of Christ that dwells within us richly. The issue is not mimicking the Psalms, hymns, and the songs but realizing their purpose. It is that the Word of God will come in us, through us, back to us, in us, through us, back to us. And that's something that we should never forget and lose sight of.

In fact, Jonathan Edwards said of himself that he used to meditate on the scripture so much so until his heart started to sing the meditations that were running through his mind. He said this, "It always seemed natural for me to sing or to chant forth my meditations or to speak my thoughts in

a singing voice." And I just think that almost happens somewhat naturally when we're getting so filled with the Word of God, so filled with sweet meditations of Christ, that our hearts rise and rise and rise. We may make an ugly sound in the ears of others, but it's precious in the sight of the Lord, and it comes right from the crevices of a heart that is filled, packed with the Word of God.

You know, I thank God for all the hymns that we have here and in the history of the church, whether they're modern and even now. But sometimes I think to myself, these people that wrote these old hymns, you know what, many of them were not professional songwriters. They were pastors, they were teachers, they were godly men, godly women that were filled with scripture, and it wasn't about going to a publisher necessarily who would make it all professional. It was just about them in their meditations.

I can't remember who it was, if it was John Newton, but every sermon someone preached, they always wrote a song that accompanied that sermon. Why? Because you'd be in the text of scripture for hours preparing to preach. Guess what happens? The Word of Christ is dwelling in you richly. What happens? Poetry, song, expression of those very thoughts, those very meditations back out unto the Lord.

There are thousands that the Wesley's wrote. We only have a handful. But they weren't writing for popularity. They weren't writing for praise. They weren't writing necessarily for any other reason but they were so filled with the Word of Christ, and they wanted to sound forth His truth and reciprocate His truth back into the Church of God through song. So we have these psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs which promote and admonish the Church of God.

Let me just give you one little thing about perhaps how it was like in the early church. I was listening to Lloyd-Jones on this passage in Ephesians 5:18, and he speaks about the society of his day in the Welsh society. And he spoke about the people of Wales, how they would have the unbelievers in Wales would have what they called happy nights, and in these happy nights, they would have a fire, bonfire or something there in the middle, and they'd all get around together, and someone would bring his harp and other people would just get around together. And he said what they would do is they would drink, they would get drunk, and they would drink, and someone would tell a story, someone would share a song, someone would say to the guy with the harp, "Play something for us." Someone may have composed a poem at home and brought it together. That was kind of like their festive type of environment.

And what he basically says is that this was probably similar to that in

the early church, where there was a lot of this communal gathering and sharing freely, whether around a meal or whatever it is, of things that people have been meditating on or whatever it was, songs or whatever it may be. But Lloyd-Jones basically takes it from there and said in Ephesians 5:18, it says, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." And he says instead of these drunken gatherings where they all sit around and drink and speak all kinds of things that are not glorifying to God, the Christian Church should be filled with the Spirit, gathered together around, praising the Lord together, singing from their heart, speaking truths of God together. That should be Christian fellowship; that should be Christian worship. And I personally would like to see more of it.

And God help us to be a people that aren't afraid to speak to one another, as with one another, each other's homes, and sharing around. It's okay. Talk about the Bible, talk about the Word of God. Share the Word of God if you've been having a word of truth in your heart, and you've got a poem there that you've been writing out a week, read it to someone. Don't be afraid. It's not about professionalism. It's about the Word of Christ dwelling in us richly, and it's about reciprocating that word back into the church life. And as we gather together and sing God's praises, as we gather together and hear God's Word, that this church becomes more and more entrenched and saturated by the Word of Christ.

You see, the world has their songs, and they arise from sorrows, they arise from their heartaches, their breakups, their drunken parties, their sexual immorality, and the depravities of their own hearts. But what about the Christian song? What about the Christian praise? Where is the people of God that praise God from their hearts, that sing what's in their hearts from their lips? That sing the songs of Zion? That sing the praises of the God of Israel? That sing the very word and the pages of God to one another, writing, speaking, talking to one another?

That will never happen, brethren, until we first let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly. If the truth be known, God's people memorize phone numbers, interesting facts, historical facts, things in society, news that has come up, but how many of God's people commit themselves to the memorization of His Word? How many of God's people meditate upon the Word of God? We're professionals in our sphere of work, fine, rightfully so. We're masters in our certain vocation, but what about masters of the Word of Truth? What about students of the Word of God? What about letting the Word of God dwell in us richly? What about taking God's truth and letting it sink down into our hearts, into our ears, so much so that we can speak forth its truth, and if someone pricked us, we would bleed Biline, as it was of

John Bunyan?

Do we need to be a people that are in the Word of God? Parents, start this with your children. Most of the things that I have learned today have been because of the gracious parents and teachers in my life who have taught me the Word of God, sung to me the Word of God, read to me the Word of God, and instructed me in the memorization of the Word of God. Those things that I had memorized and quoted as a nine-year-old boy still come fresh to me today. I just quoted Psalm 1. At nine years old, I stood before a church and recited Psalm 1, and it still came to me today, just like Psalm 1:2.

Why? Because the Word of God was dwelling in me richly. Why? Because my parents taught me, they fed me, God's people put into me, and I have to keep on doing that. As the kids grow up, they then take that and they realize how profitable it is, and they put it back into their own lives, becoming a people that are rich in Scripture, rich in the truth of God.

Let us read the Word, teach the Word. Let not the Word of God be a casual guest in your home. Let it fill your hearts, and don't be afraid to sing to that God who loved you and gave Himself for you. Pray when we come together as God's people, "Lord, help me to be engaged with what I'm singing. I'm not here just to mime the words on the page. I'm here to admonish, to teach one another, even to teach myself in song, and to teach one another in song, and to admonish one another, that the church can be built up and encouraged to receive God's truth in song."

Don't reject it; engage yourself in it and see what the Lord would do in building you up in your most holy faith. Let us pray.