

Blessing Other Believers

Colossians 3:16

Guest Speaker: Lazarus Phiri

May 29, 2011

Pastor David Sunday: We're so thankful for God's gift of music and His gift of our musicians. Please turn in your Bibles to Colossians 3. In a moment, I'll read the Scripture text of Lazarus' sermon. While you are turning there, I want to introduce our preacher this morning. His name is Lazarus Phiri (pronounced "Piri"). He comes to us from Zambia and is a good friend of many of us. He is one of the few missionaries who was supported by both former congregations before the merger of Fox Valley Bible Church and Grace Community Bible Church. He has relationships with both former congregations that go a long way back. We first met Lazarus when he was a student at [Wheaton College Graduate School](#) back in 1992 and we've been able to see the course of his life and his marriage to Rachel and the birth and growth of their two sons, Jeremiah and Immanuel. Jeremiah will begin his studies at Wheaton College this fall so Lazarus, Rachel and the boys will be back with us the end of July and throughout the month of August so you'll get to fellowship with their whole family.

Lazarus is here this week for a [missiologist](#) convention at [Judson University](#) in Elgin. We're privileged to have him preaching the Word this morning. He is the Director of Ministries in Africa for the [Pioneers](#) mission organization. He's the field leader and gives pastoral care and strategic leadership to all the mission work that goes on in the African continent. Furthermore, he is the Missiologist-at-Large for Pioneers and he travels frequently to speak about the Word of God and the advance of the gospel around the world. He has a PhD from Scotland so he's done much study in this regard but his first love is our Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel He's a good preacher of the Word of God so we are blessed to have him minister God's Word to us this morning.

Would you stand for the reading of God's Word beginning at [Colossians 3:12](#):

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let 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 dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Thanks be to God for His Living Word.

Lazarus Phiri: Let us pray. Our dear Heavenly Father, we pause yet again to give thanks and praise and glory that only belong to You. We ask now as we attend to the reading of Your Word and the preaching of the same, that Your Word be the only authority, the Holy Spirit our teacher and we'll be careful to return all praise and glory that belongs only to You. So help us God. In Jesus' worthy name, we pray. Amen.

When I was asked to come and share from God's Word, I was very mindful that I'm coming to a fellowship that I've been to before but nonetheless, I wish to register my gratitude to God and thanks to our brother David Sunday to take time to preach to the church here. Thank you for those of you who have prayed for me during this past week with a heavy schedule. After this week, then I'll be a week at home in Zambia, then off to Australia for the preaching ministry and teaching. Thank you, GO Team, for your hospitality and allowing me to stay in the Mission House. It is very restful and comfortable. I'm very grateful and also for the supply of foods that I'm eating and enjoying. Thank you also for a small group meeting that I had at David's home last night - very encouraging. It's the group that has been caring and praying for us over the past week or so. And we give thanks for your continued support as missionaries in Africa and for your continued support, both in prayer and financially.

When I was asked to share from God's Word, I was mindful that this would be Memorial Day Weekend. I stumbled over a poem that was written in 1814. The last stanza of that poem reads as follows. Some of you, if not all of you, will recognize this poem:

Oh! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved home and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,

And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

March 3, 1931, the American Congress declared this poem to be the [national anthem](#) of the United States of America. Everywhere in the world, national anthems have been a legacy of freedom. We remember men and women who have fought and sacrificed for the freedom that America and the world continues to enjoy. The national anthems have been written while digging deep in the past of a nation. They are also a declaration of freedom in the present but it does not end there. Every national anthem is a legacy of freedom for it projects the aspiration of freedom in the future. But if you wonder, dear friends, how we have attended to these national anthems across the globe, many times we sing these national anthems using only our lips without really thinking about the significance of the words. They are usually prefaces to a big sports gathering, such as the Super Bowl or the World Series. In those great gatherings, we can't wait for the national anthem to end because our main aim is not to sing the national anthem.

May I draw your attention this morning to the Apostle Paul, writing to the church at [Colossae](#) in the book that we have come to know as the Epistle to the Colossians? We will look at chapter three, verses 12 to 17 and our main text will be verse 16. [Colossians 3:16](#) reads as follows: *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

That exhortation is in the group of exhortations that Paul has written in his epistles called the "one another passages." He uses the Greek term - *allelois* - one another. He exhorts us with principles and practice of how we ought to live as brothers and sisters and Christians. In [Colossians 1:28](#), Paul says, *"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."*

What began as Paul's primary task, he now makes the priority of the Colossae church in Colossae in chapter 3, verse 16. There he says, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."* I want to suggest

this morning, dearly beloved friends, that we can be a blessing to one another by observing the expectations that Paul outlines in Colossians 3:16.

1. God's Chosen People

First and foremost, Paul identifies his audience very quickly and uniquely. He describes the church at Colossae *“as God's chosen people.”* Verse 12 reads: *“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience...”*

A. Chosen People. You and I at New Covenant Bible Church are God's chosen people. In a similar way as the church at Colossae we're regarded as *“God's chosen people.”* The assumption Paul makes is that we are a new creation. And a new creation requires a new ethical code of expectations. The titles he gives to the Colossians and the titles that he gives to you and me this morning – God's chosen people, holy and loved – were initially reserved for the children of Israel. No wonder the Apostle Peter will tell us later on in [1 Peter 2:9](#) (NIV), *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

“God's chosen people.” Who are they? Who are we? We are a saved people. God has redeemed us from the power and penalty of sin. So we can say when we read [Romans 6:23](#) (KJV): *“For the wages of sin is death; but the [free] gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* We have been saved and redeemed from the power and penalty of sin. God's chosen are people are saved.

B. Sanctified People. God's people are sanctified but not because of anything good in and of themselves. Peter will later exhort us to pursue holiness when he says, quoting the words in [Leviticus](#): *“...be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”* That holiness and that state of righteousness are imputed to us through Jesus Christ. For the Bible tells us that the Sinless had to die for the sinful. Yes, the comments in the seven sayings on the cross when Jesus was able to say, [“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”](#) And ultimately He cries out, [“It is finished.”](#) The

transaction has been done. The wrath of God has been paid for by the death of the precious Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. From then on, when we come to acknowledge Him as our Lord and Savior, we are declared righteous, not because of anything good in and of ourselves but because of that finished work of Calvary.

Paul captured that very well in [Ephesians 2:8](#): *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...”* God’s chosen people are saved people...sanctified people. Last but not least in any way, they are loved by God.

C. Loved People. [John 3:16](#) (KJV) – the famous and most memorized passage of Scripture – says, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* But come with me to [John 1:11-12](#) (KJV), there John says, *“He [Jesus] came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”* God has created you and me but not all of us are God’s children. There comes a time when you must repent of your sins; I must repent of my sins, turn my back on the evil one and acknowledge Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and as your personal Savior.

Could I be talking to someone who has been in doubt this morning? Could I be talking to someone who has been anxious, not knowing whether or not you are a child of God? Whether your sins have been forgiven? Jesus Christ says in [Matthew 11:28](#) (KJV), *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* You can come and know Him this morning as your Lord and Savior.

So to those who believed, He gave *“power to become the sons of God.”* Paul identifies the church at Colossae as God’s chosen people and I can safely and accurately declare those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ at New Covenant Bible Church are God’s chosen people. A hymn writer has captured the essence of this when he wrote, *“We have come into this place, Gathered in His name to worship Him.”* We gather at New Covenant Bible Church, not in our own right as Americans, but in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – we are God’s chosen people. We can be a blessing to one another by recognizing who we are.

2. God’s Word in His People

We can be a blessing to one another by recognizing God's Word must be in His people. Colossians 3:16 says, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

A. Distinctively Living Word. It is the Word of Christ - the gospel of Christ - that has turned your lives for eternity. I remember very well more than 30 years ago, as a high school student, I walked back home after attending a youth ministry. I went to my mother and said to her, "Mom, I've become a Christian." You must understand the response that came from my mother. She said, "I'll give you two weeks and you'll be back to your old self." She knew better. I was a son of the ghettos and I gave her a hard time. It's been more than thirty years - the Lord has changed my life because of the power of the gospel.

This Word of God with which Paul encourages the church at Colossae states, *"let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly."* In some versions, it says, *"let the Word of God dwell in you richly."* It is distinctively the Word of Christ. The author of this Word is Christ; the subject is Christ; the purpose is Christ; the end is Christ our Savior and our Lord. In the recent past and centuries, this Word of God has been attempted to be diluted by some, destroyed and burned by others. Manipulated by liberals. But it has stood the test of time. And Paul would encourage us to say of it, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."* ([Romans 1:16](#); NIV)

B. Comfortably Dwelling Word. This gospel, dear friends, is the very Word of God that is distinctively the Word of Christ and so Paul says to the church of Colossae, *"let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly."* The word "dwell" in verse 16 is the word that speaks of letting the Word of God be at home in you. In other words, let the Word of God comfortably dwell in God's people. Let it live in you. The Word of God must be familiar with you. It should not be a stranger to you.

C. Richly Dwelling Word. This Word of God must not only comfortably be in you and me as believers, but it should come abundantly. *"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly."* That word "richly" can be translated "abundantly" and in more modern

English we might refer to it as extravagantly rich. The Word of God must dwell in us as children of God in extravagant ways.

How does that happen? We must be eager receivers of the Word. [*Longing for it as the deer pants for the waters, so my soul longs after You.*](#) Longing after the Word of God must be our priority and passion. But we must not only be eager receivers, we must be passionate and zealous dispensers of the Word of Christ. In quality, we must receive the Word of God. In quantity, we must receive the Word of God. And the Word of God must be the source of instruction and the source of direction.

Is there such a thing as the Word of God dwelling in believers poorly? Sadly, friends, yes. You have heard the Word of God preached to you Sunday after Sunday, month after month, year after year and the Word of God has no effect in your life. The Word of God has no impact in your life. There's no sense of conviction of the knowledge of God. When that happens, dearly beloved brother and sister, the Word of God has dwelt in you poorly and it is not God's will.

Paul says, *"let the Word of God dwell in you richly."* How? Let the word of God permeate your mind and soul. Let the Word of God control every thought - every plan - so you would be able to say, "At every point in my life, what does the Bible say?" At a time of cross roads and crisis, you will not turn to anything else but say, "What does the Bible say?"

More than thirty years ago I went to high school and learned a scientific principle called [osmosis](#). I don't know everything about this scientific principle but I'm told that liquid moves from one segment to another through a thin membrane when the pressure is not in balance. This liquid will move naturally. Not so with the Word of God. I might stand side by side with Pastor David Sunday for ten, fifteen, twenty hours. Our heads may be linked together but the knowledge will not flow from one to another. It requires spiritual discipline of reading the Word of God. Studying the Word of God. Meditating upon the Word of God. Reflecting upon the Word of God. And when that is done, dear friends, we enrich our fellowship. We become a blessing to one another.

3. God's Word Among His People

There are meetings of grace in this church: Small group meetings – do not shun them but long for them. Sunday services – do not shun them but long for them. Sunday school – do not shun them but long for them. Oh dearly beloved friends, brothers and sisters at New Covenant Bible Church, may God grant us the grace to hunger after His holy Word. May we allow that Word to permeate our souls, to influence our souls, to control our minds and to saturate us so we might overflow with the Word of God. When you take a lemon, dear friends, and squeeze it, lemon juice comes out. When you and I are squeezed, let the Word of God come out of us. The Apostle Paul identifies his audience as God's chosen people and he says God's Word ought to be in God's people for us to be a blessing to one another.

Dear friends, God's Word must be among God's people. Colossians 3:16 says, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom..."* The assumption here is made, dear friends, that even in this individualistic society, we must long to learn to interrupt and to share with one another. We are social beings who are called to fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore be a blessing to one another. We must do so by teaching and admonishing one another.

A. Instruct One Another. This is the responsibility of every believer. Not just the pastor, not just the elders, not just the deacons. Teaching, discussing, sharing. Assuming that we must exchange the knowledge of God and the experience of God with one another, we must be interdependent on one another. What a privilege it would be if at the end of this service you don't rush to your car and leave. Seek an opportunity to bless someone this morning.

B. Counsel One Another. There's not only instructing one another, there's also the aspect of counseling one another – advising one another. Exalting one another involves warning each other, correcting each other, be it in doctrine or practice. But wait a minute, dear brother and sister, when we are exhorted to correct one another, to warn one another, there is a qualifier: *"teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom..."* and this wisdom is godly wisdom. Wisely teaching one another.

C. Admonish One Another. Wisely admonishing one another. Godly wisdom as we read in verse 12. You notice that godly wisdom, even described in Proverbs and other parts of the Scriptures, is based on love. Godly wisdom is gentle. Godly wisdom is caring. Godly wisdom is merciful. So when we attempt to teach one another, to admonish one another, we must do so with godly wisdom that is loving, caring, gentle, kind and merciful. It is no place to cut each other down. It is a place to build one another up.

Can we learn from our children? The last time I checked, when our children are born again, they are God's chosen people. They have the same Holy Spirit that you and I have. Can we learn from them? Yes, sir, we can and we should. Many a time the Lord Jesus Christ gave illustrations of how we can learn from children. In their attempt to trust God, in their attempt to put faith in God.

Can we learn from the youth - teenagers - with all the challenges of hormonal changes, different attitudes? The last time I checked, they are God's chosen people when they are born again. They have the same Holy Spirit that you and I have. Oh may God grant us the humility to learn from our teenagers because God is at work in and through them by His grace.

Can we learn from our women? Yes we can. The last time I checked, all my sisters who are born again have the same Holy Spirit that you and I have. May we learn from our sisters? May we learn from our wives? Paul elsewhere says, [knowledge puffs up but love builds up](#). May we, in love, learn and teach. May we, in love, humble ourselves and learn and teach.

One of the principles that comes out of this passage of Scripture - "*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, it is this principle...*" - is that fellowship is not monologue but rather dialogue. It is not a one-way street; it is a two-way street. It is giving and receiving. And those of us who are mature must learn the same. Oh dearly beloved friends, brothers and sisters, may God grant us His grace to be teachable while we teach. To be humble while we admonish one another.

4. God's Worship Among His People

Paul identifies his audience first and foremost as God's chosen people. Then he says, one expectation that comes is that God's Word must be in His people, dwelling richly. Then he goes on to say, God's Word must be in God's people in "...*teaching and admonishing one another...*" But now He says God's worship must be among His people. Colossians 3:16 says: "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*"

Before I go any further on this aspect of God's worship by His people, let me remind you - I'm sure you already know - that if there's one activity believers would do this side of eternity and in eternity to come, it is singing. There will be no preaching. There will be no Sunday School. But we will all be worshipers of God. Where do we get this idea? Listen to the words in Revelation 5:9, "*And they sang a new song [speaking of the life to come], saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.'*"

This concept is repeated in very similar words in [Revelation 7:9](#), "*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'*" The main goal of doing mission - which New Covenant Bible Church has continually and effectively supported - is to establish communities of worshipers. We will worship on this side of eternity and we will worship Him on the other side of eternity.

A. The Matter of Godly Singing. What is the matter of godly singing? The matter of godly singing, dear friends, is based on the Word of God. That word which Paul says, "*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...*" translates into worship by that same knowledge. It is based on the Word of God. I'm always encouraged when I hear churches in America, inviting on staff men and women who can primarily commit themselves to leading us and

guiding us in worship. Because their ministry is also the ministry of the Word in song. The matter of godly singing must be based on the Word of God because it is the ministry of God's Word in song.

B. The Manner of Godly Singing. How do we worship God? How must we sing? It is with thankful hearts. Verse 15 says, "*be thankful.*" In verse 16, the Apostle Paul says, "*with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*" In verse 17, he repeats again, "*giving thanks to God...*" Oh dear friends, who better to be characterized by thankfulness? It the believers who have been redeemed, saved from the power and penalty of sin. We should not be the ones who should be characterized by complaining, whining and criticizing. "Oh the weather is not good... Oh that supermarket..." Always looking for the negative. If there is anyone in this world who must rise up every morning and be able to give thanks, it is you and I who know God, not only as our Creator but as our Savior. The very fact that you are alive this morning must be a reason to give thanks for many would have loved to see this new day but they've not been able to and you know it is by the grace of God that you are alive. The fact that you've remained in your marriage as you are, it is the answer to prayer and to the grace of God for there are many marriages breaking up. The fact that you can have breakfast in this land of plenty and blessings must be cause enough for you to thank God because there are places where food is scarce. Oh dear friends, I can go on and on. There is no reason for a Christian to continually be whining and complaining. We have been blessed with blessings from heavenly places and in material wealth. May be we thankful, grateful, praising God always here at New Covenant Bible Church. The matter of godly singing is based on the Word of God. The manner of godly singing is characterized by thankfulness.

C. The Manifestation of Godly Singing. Our aim must be to glorify God. When there are visitors to New Covenant Bible Church, may it be said that the brothers and sisters here seek nothing of themselves but to honor and glorify God all because their worship and singing is a witness to those who do not believe.

D. The Main Focus of Godly Singing. I go back to the book of Acts and meet two men - Paul and Silas. They are in prison; they are in chains. They begin singing. Their singing is out of conviction. Their singing is contagious. Their singing is passionate. Their singing is focused on God. The result is the prison officers begin to ask questions. "These

are different prisoners. They have been in touch with their Maker.” That begins the witness to the prison officers. May it be said at New Covenant Bible Church, when we sing, may we sing passionately, may we sing with conviction, may we sing seeking to glorify God and not to entertain one another but rather edify one another, to the end that those in our midst who do not know Christ may turn to God and cry out saying they want what we have in Christ Jesus. May the Lord be gracious to us here at this fellowship. Worship spoken of in Colossians 3:16 is worship about God and not us.

Paul and Silas were thankful. Paul and Silas were joyful. Paul and Silas were passionate. May the Lord grant us a portion of that in the coming days. May God grant us grace, dear friends, here at New Covenant Bible Church, to worship God in spirit and in truth. The message of Christ - *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”* - may that be our passion and focus.

Now those of you who have done some reading, you realize that Paul in Colossians, it says, *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...”* In [Ephesians 5:19-21](#), which I will not have time to read, Paul says, *“be filled with the Holy Spirit.”* Beginning with verse 18, he says, *“do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.”* In both cases he speaks of us being saturated and being controlled by the Holy Spirit. He talks about us being saturated and being controlled with the Word of God. Then we ask the question, “How can we tell if a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit?” The answer, friends, is three-fold: He or she is thankful, joyful and submissive. We can ask that same question, “How can we tell if a believer is filled with the Word of God?” He or she is thankful, joyful and submissive. May God grant to us the joy. May God grant to us the spirit of gratitude. And may God grant to us the spirit of submission.

5. God’s Transformation in Our Living

Lastly as we close, the message of Christ is a transforming power of our lives. My mother gave me two weeks when I was first saved and I understand why - it’s been over 30 years and I long even more to see my Savior someday. The gospel of Christ changes our lives but it continues to change our lives as we seek to allow that Word of God to influence us and saturate us and control us and so to speak, to permeate our minds and our souls. In so doing, dear friends, we are conforming ourselves to the image of Christ. The Word and

message of Christ transforms our thinking. Suddenly our thinking is different; our thoughts are being influenced by the Word of God. Our imaginations are being impacted by the Word of God.

The message of Christ transforms, not only your living and thinking, but transforms your working. Your job, your vocation, is not just a means of earning dollars. Your work now becomes your worship. Your work becomes an act of worship. Your stay-at-home mom responsibilities become an act of worship. Whatever your vocation is it becomes a means of worshipping God based on His Word and our worship finally becomes a means of worshipping God in spirit and in truth. So may it please God, here at New Covenant Bible Church, that we will yearn to live according to the Word of God, to think according to the Word of God, to work according to the Word of God, to worship according to the Word of God. So God help us. Let us pray.

Our dear Heavenly Father, we humble ourselves before Your very throne of grace. We draw near to Your throne of grace in time of need such as this. We first, Lord, take time to thank You for Your mercy and Your love for us. We thank You for Your Word, the Holy Word of God. But oh God, we are quick this morning to ask for forgiveness. We humbly bow before You and cry out. Lord we have not sought Your face as we should. We have not longed for Your Word as we should. We have not hungered after righteousness as we should. But Father, we plead this morning, knowing that You are a gracious God, would you grant us Your grace and out of the abundance of Your grace, grant us a hunger after righteousness. Grant us a hunger and an awareness of the need for us to read Your Word. Help, oh God, our feeble knees and our feeble efforts. Strengthen us, oh God, from the inner man. Give us a hunger after You and Your Word. Because we ask and pray in that worthy Name of the precious Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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