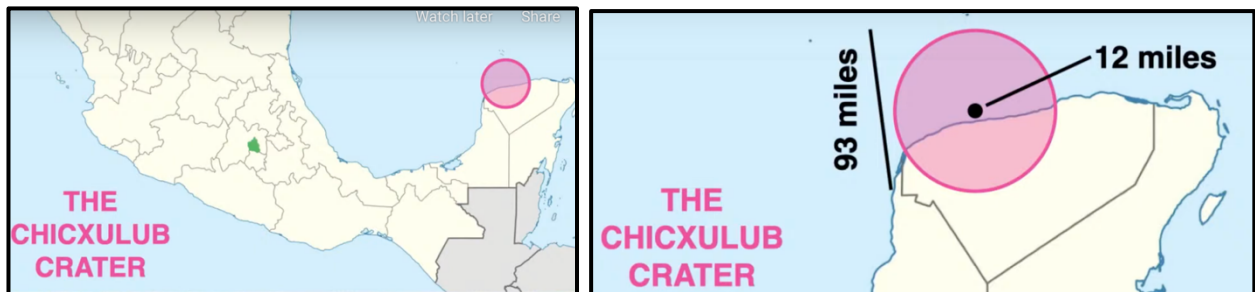




Good morning, brothers and sisters of PBCC! Welcome to part two of our series on the Apostle Paul's Letter to the Colossians. Last week, we started our sermon with a lesson on gravity; today, I'd like to share with you a real-life example of its effect. I'm sure many of you already know about this, but here, on this map of most of North and Central America, you can see a circle in hot pink straddling the Caribbean Sea and the northwest tip of the Yucatan Peninsula. This is the site of the Chicxulub Crater.¹ It is the second-largest crater of its kind in the entire world – but it is arguably the most famous crater on earth because of the role it is theorized as having played in the extinction of the dinosaurs some sixty-six million years ago. The pink circle is a representation of the size of the crater in its current state.

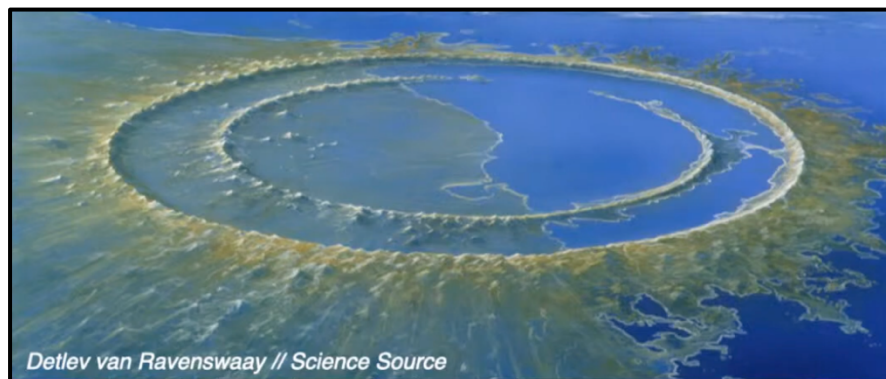


If we zoom in on Mexico, we can get a better sense of the size of the crater; that green blob in the center of Mexico is Mexico City, with a population of about 9 million people – just tuck that factoid away for a moment as we zoom in even closer to the Yucatan Peninsula. In this close-up, we can see that the Chicxulub crater hangs over the edge of the Yucatan Peninsula; most of it is underwater. Nevertheless, using a variety of tools and instruments, scientists have been able to measure the size of the crater: Ninety-three miles in diameter (one hundred fifty kilometers for you metric folks). It would take a car moving at sixty miles an hour just over one and a half hours to drive uninterrupted from one end of the crater to the other; it's about the driving distance between Cupertino and Santa Rosa.

¹ "Chicxulub Crater", Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicxulub_crater.

There would be enough space in this ninety-three mile crater to fit at least ten Mexico cities with ample room to spare. Of course, craters are shaped like bowls – they aren't flat like a plate, they have depth. At this point in geological history, the crater has been filled with rocks and soil and vegetation – but studies have confirmed that a bowl exists underneath the geologically recent growth. And at its lowest point, underneath all the sediment and growth, the Chicxulub crater is about twelve miles deep. Twelve miles deep – that's about ten times the lowest depth of the Grand Canyon. So here, at the northwest tip of the Yucatan peninsula, we have 6,800 square mile bowl, ninety-three miles in diameter, twelve miles deep at its lowest point. What could have caused a crater this large?

Well, brothers and sisters, craters are caused by impactors, impactors like meteorites. Whatever it was that caused this impact – let's call it a meteorite for today – it is theorized to have been at least about seven miles across. Scientists estimate that when it crashed into the earth's surface, it did so with the same force as anywhere from twenty-one billion to nine hundred twenty-one billion Hiroshima atomic bombs. The impact would have been enough to send tsunami waves a hundred or more meters high ricocheting around the world; the impact likely triggered volcanic eruptions all over the planet as the earth's crust absorbed the impact; and the impact would have launched a thick cloud of smoke, debris, and dust into the air, blocking out the sun's rays and leading to a nuclear winter for years afterwards.



Here is an artist's rendition of what the Yucatan peninsula might have looked like in the decades after the impact, once the atmosphere cleared and vegetation slowly returned to the area. And we can see today that vegetation did, in fact, return to the area – but the dinosaurs didn't; no dinosaurs survived the impact of this seven-mile meteoroid, either here on the Yucatan peninsula or anywhere else on earth.

The point this morning is not to debate whether or not dinosaurs were real, whether the earth actually is that old or was only created to appear with age – the point this morning is that there is this crater on the Yucatan peninsula, and none of us were around to see how it was formed. But based on its dimensions, looking at its size, at its shape, and at the geological formations around it, our best guess is that the crater was formed by something big. Something with weight, with gravity. Whatever it was, it left a mark – because massive things make an impact. They leave a mark, a mark that points to their reality in ways that are difficult, if not impossible, to deny. Last week, we thought about the gravity of Christ; today, we look at His impact on the lives of His people.

Paul's Thanksgiving: Faith, Hope, & Love

Our passage, **Colossians 1:3-8**, is the first paragraph of the body of Paul's Letter to the Colossians, and it begins with this happy confession:

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. (Col 1:3 ESV)

It's always nice to hear that someone is praying for you, and it is even nicer to hear that, as they pray for you, they are moved to give thanks to God: "*We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.*" But it is also nice to hear specific reasons for that gratitude – what was worthy of Paul's celebration and gratitude to God the Father? What had God the Father brought about in the lives of the Colossians that deserved recognition and celebration? The answer is in verses 4-5a:

The Pauline Triad: Faith, Hope, & Love

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. (1:4-5a)

For what was Paul grateful to God? The Colossians' faith, hope, and love. Some of us might recognize these three words, 'faith', 'hope', and 'love', as a familiar triplet, especially among Paul's letters. Indeed, they and their synonyms occur frequently enough in Paul's letters to make them a recognizable Paul-ism, the so-called "Pauline Triad."

For example, in his First Letter to the Thessalonians, Paul recognized and celebrated the faith, hope, and love evident in their lives, just as he did regarding the Colossians – **1 Thessalonians 1:2-3:**

We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thes 1:2-3)

Later in the same letter, we see faith, hope, and love appear together in Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians to persevere in their commitment to Christ:

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. (1 Thes 5:8)

There are numerous other examples of the Pauline Triad across his letters, sometimes with one of the three terms being implied or expressed with different words. Why was Paul so fond of these three words? Because for Paul, these three words summarize the work of God the Father in the lives of His people through Jesus Christ. These three words represent the impact of Christ; just as we can measure the impact of a meteorite by taking the length, width, and depth of the crater it leaves behind, so faith, hope, and love are the dimensions of the impact Christ makes on all who come to believe His Gospel.

Or to put it another way, for Paul, faith, hope, and love together are the evidence of genuine Christianity. Their existence in the life of a believer outweighs all other expressions of spirituality and religiosity; they are greater evidence than spiritual gifts and powers, than religious habits and practices, than the loudest songs, than the most eloquent prayers, than the most impressive acts of giving and serving.

This was one of Paul's main points in his First Letter to the Corinthians, where he spent a great deal of time and parchment and ink explaining to the superficial Corinthians that what truly mattered was not their spiritual gifts and religious exercises but the presence of faith, hope, and love in their lives – a truth Paul summarized to the Corinthians: *"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three"* (1 Cor 13:13a). Faith, hope, and love are the abiding dimensions of Christian life – both here, in this life, and into the life to come (perhaps with some modification). These three abide, they will remain, they will

continue long after the last prophecy has been uttered and the last tongue has been spoken, long after the last song has been sung, long after the last mountain has been moved, long after our bodies have been swallowed up in death and renewed in resurrection glory. Faith, hope, and love, in some sense, in some way, will define us for all eternity to come – and so they define every genuine believer now, imperfect and immature as they might be this side of the Second Coming of Christ.

But what are they, really? What are faith, hope, and love? That is a big question – how can we adequately define faith, hope, or love in the space of a single sermon – or in a lifetime or sermons? There are levels to understanding, even with such concepts as faith, hope, and love: We might not master these realities in our lifetimes, but we can learn enough to walk genuinely with Jesus. Shawn’s reminder to us some weeks ago regarding the Gospel of John applies to all the truths of Scripture: They are deep enough for elephants to swim in, yet shallow enough, approachable enough, comprehensible enough even for children like us to understand.

Simple Definitions: Faith, Hope, & Love

So how might we understand faith? The definition I gave to my middle schoolers back in my youth ministry days was simple:

**Faith is believing God is who he says he is,
and that he does what he says he does.
And we live out that belief in the way we trust God.**

In other words, faith is depending on God because He has proven Himself to be trustworthy. When we consider all the ways God has proven Himself trustworthy, from His promises to Abraham to the Exodus from Egypt to the Kingship under David to the Coming of Jesus Christ and to His Resurrection from the dead – when we consider the history of God’s faithfulness, His resume of trustworthiness, we can see that we can depend on Him to meet our needs, whatever they may be. We can depend on God to forgive our sins and redeem our pasts because of what He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to do for us on the Cross. And we can depend on God to redeem our suffering and to sustain us through it because that’s what He did for Jesus Christ when He rose Him from the dead.

In a way, we can say that faith points to the **past** – the resume of God’s faithfulness in the past. If you’ve ever wondered why the Bible is so long, at least part of the answer to that question is: It’s long for our sake, for us to have plenty of material proof of God’s trustworthiness; it’s for us to look into the past to see what kind of God He has been. And in looking at the past and seeing God’s proven character, the Christian grows in confidence in God, in continued dependence on God.

As one of my professors, Dr. Scott Hafemann, put it in his book, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith*:²

“Faith” is not believing the unbelievable but trusting in God’s word because of what one has come to know of God’s character. [...] Faith is trusting God to do what he has promised because we are convinced by his provisions that God is both willing and able to keep His Word.

If faith is depending on God because of His trustworthiness proven in the past, then hope is simply faith anticipating His continued trustworthiness in the future. The definition for hope I gave to my middle schoolers builds off of the definition for faith:

Hope is faith looking *forward*.

Part of God’s revelation to us, whether through His Written Word, the Bible, or through the Living Word, Jesus Christ, is His promises for the future – promises that are already being fulfilled in part but will be completely fulfilled when Christ returns. God has promised to send Christ again to complete His purposes for this world, to defeat His enemies, to vindicate His people, to execute justice, to put an end to the brokenness of this world, to create a new heavens and earth, and to establish an eternal kingdom where God’s people will live forever in His presence, happy and content and without any fear or crying or grieving any more. Hope is faith believing in these promises for the future.

² Hafemann, Scott J., *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 76, 84.

Once again, Dr. Scott Hafemann³:

Hope in God's promises [...] is not a wishful longing, but a faith-filled confidence for the future. [...] To know God is to trust Him. And to trust God is to trust His promises. And to trust God's promises is to be sure of their fulfillment. This assurance concerning the future, anchored in God's promises, is what the Bible calls 'hope.'

Between faith and hope, then, the Christian's past and future are covered: Faith looks to how God has secured their past, and this leads to hope, which looks to how God has secured their future. We no longer have to spend our time and energy and thought-space trying to escape our past guilt and shame; and we no longer have to spend our resources and relationships and opportunities trying to guarantee a happy future.

Instead, we can use everything we have not only on ourselves, but also on other people, on the people around us, on the people we call our brothers and sisters, on people who might become our brothers and sisters in the Lord. And that is the definition for love that I gave to my middle schoolers:

Love is meeting the needs of others.

Love is meeting the needs of others out of the abundance we gain when we entrust our own needs to God. This kind of love goes beyond fuzzy feelings to actions and truth; this kind of love escapes the pull of co-dependency because it is looking for nothing in return; this kind of love needs nothing from the people being loved, because in faith and in hope it has already found all it needs in God.



³ Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith*, 109.

Once again, Dr. Scott Hafemann:⁴

Depending on God to meet our needs [...] sets us free to meet the needs of others (loving our neighbor).

Faith and hope liberate us from self-centeredness so that we can actually obey the command to love our neighbors as ourselves. This is why at the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul declared that, though “**faith, hope, and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love.**” Though faith, hope, and love are each part of the impact of Christ in the life of the believer, love is the fullest and clearest evidence of Christ alive in our hearts. Why? Because love is the fullest and clearest expression of faith and hope.

So how did I illustrate this for my middle schoolers? With hamburgers: Imagine you’re standing in line at a fast food joint to buy a dollar menu hamburger – it’s all you can afford at the moment, and you’re awfully hungry for anything. The line moves forward; you’re at the front now; you buy your dollar menu hamburger; and you sit down to eat it. But just as you’re about to take your first bite, a friend of yours appears out of nowhere and slaps the hamburger out of your hand!

“Don’t eat that hamburger!” they shout. “I just got back from the butcher and bought the most glorious piece of ribeye steak. I’d like to prepare it for you. It’s going to take a couple more hours, but I promise you: It will be worth it!”

This isn’t the first time your friend has done this – they’ve got something of a reputation at this point. You think back to all the smiling faces you’ve seen leaving their dining table; you yourself have even tasted their cooking before. So without much hesitation, you do as your friend says: You put down the hamburger, and you decide to wait for what’s to come. But right at that moment, seeing you put down the hamburger, someone else comes up to you. They don’t have a dollar to buy their own hamburger. They look at you, and they ask, “Hey, if you don’t need that hamburger, can I have it?” And of course, at this point, it’s easy to give away, isn’t it?

⁴ Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith*, 100.

That's faith, hope, and love, brothers and sisters: Faith is remembering the culinary history of your friend the cook; hope is anticipating – with drool – the steak to come; and love is giving away the hamburger you don't need to meet the needs of others. You can chew on that metaphor the next time you have hamburgers of your own!

This is faith, hope, and love. Of course, faith, hope, and love also reinforce one another: Our love for other reminds us of the love God has for us, which stirs up our faith; and reflecting on our hope for the future encourages us to hold onto our faith, even in times of suffering; and when we see the love in our lives growing more and more Christlike, our confidence that God will fulfill our hope and bring us all the way home only deepens. Faith, hope, and love feed one another, pushing the dimensions of Christ's impact on our lives ever farther outward and upward.

And this was what Paul had heard about the Colossian believers; this is what had been reported to him about them: *"We heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven."* The Colossians believers had begun entrusting themselves to Christ Jesus, depending on God through Jesus Christ; and in this faith, they looked forward to the promises that awaited them in heaven; and because of this hope for the life to come, they were able to demonstrate genuine and generous love, especially for their fellow believers, their brothers and sisters in God's family. Christ's impact among the Colossians believers could be seen in their faith, hope, and love. And this impact began when God the Father sent someone to carry the good news of Jesus Christ to the people of Colossae. Paul reminds the Colossians of this truth in the next verses.

Bearing Fruit & Increasing: Faith, Hope, & Love

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit." (Col 1:5b-8)

The Colossians heard the truth and the promises of God through the preaching of the gospel when it arrived in Colossae. And by the grace of God the Father, through the

secret work of the Holy Spirit, they *“heard it and understood the grace of God in truth”* (v. 6c). The Colossians did not merely understand the content of the Gospel in an intellectual sense; they did not merely comprehend its propositions. They *“heard it and understood the grace of God in truth”*: They saw in the Gospel of Jesus Christ the grace, the heart of God; they gazed into His glory; they received His fullness; they embraced Him wholly; His truth became their truth, the truth at the center, at the very bottom of who they were.

Like a meteorite transforming the landscape, so the grace of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ left an impact on the Colossians. Christ made His impact on the Colossians, an impact that could be measured in faith, hope, and love, an impact that bore the fruit of security, assurance, and service to one another. Paul affirmed that this was what was happening not only among the Colossians but throughout the known world, wherever the Gospel of Jesus Christ was being preached and the impact of Christ was being felt – verses 5b-6: *“Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing – as it also does among you.”*

This language of *“bearing fruit and increasing”* is a clear allusion to Genesis 1:28, where God commissioned the first humans, Adam and Eve, to *“be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”* As God’s representatives on earth, humanity was created to reflect throughout the world His glory as they filled themselves up with His abundant, Edenic provision. We were created, brothers and sisters, to depend on God, to hope in God, and to love others out of our faith and hope.

Paul’s point in **verse 6** is that, through the Gospel, this was finally happening; the commission to be fruitful and to multiply, to bear fruit and to increase, was finally being fulfilled. But this fruitfulness and increase was not being achieved through childbearing – it was happening through another commission, the Great Commission of Jesus Christ:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt 28:18b-20a)

The fruitfulness and increase Christ commissioned and the Colossians experienced and Paul witnessed was not achieved via sexual reproduction but through discipleship, through Spirit-empowered transformation; the Great Commission is about faith, hope, and love growing and increasing in the lives of God’s people as they feel the

impact of Christ in their lives, the impact of His Gospel, the impact of His truth, His promises, and His love.

The Colossians were products of the Great Commission as carried out by a believer named Epaphras – *“Just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit”* (vv. 7-8). Epaphras had carried the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Colossians – and he had come to Paul to share with him about the impact Christ had had on the Colossians. Like a seven-mile meteorite leaving a 6,800 square mile crater, so Christ made an impact on the lives of the Colossians, reshaping them in faith, hope, and love.

For Paul, this was worthy of celebration. You see, brothers and sisters, faith in Christ, hope in His promises, self-denying love for others – these do not form naturally in the hearts of broken, sinful human beings. No matter how hard we try, no matter how much we learn, no matter how much we do, we cannot, on our own strength, overcome the sinful tendencies in our hearts to doubt God, to be suspicious of His promises, and to live self-centered lives concerned primarily with our own survival – and comfort, if we can afford it. Just as twelve-mile-deep craters do not form naturally without some sort of cosmic collision taking place, so the human heart does not simply generate faith in God, hope in His promises, and selfless love for others unless it is acted upon by something – by someone – of greater glory. Unless someone of greater glory, of greater mass, of greater substance and power and authority pulls the pieces of our hearts back together and bends and reshapes them into His image, genuine faith, hope, and love are impossible. This is why Paul couldn’t help but thank God when he saw the Colossians growing in genuine faith, hope, and love.

The Impact of Christ: Faith, Hope, & Love

And this is also why it is so tempting for us to look for other ways of measuring the impact of Christ on our lives. Like every generation of Christians before us, we are tempted to measure the impact of Christ in ways besides Spirit-wrought faith, hope, and love. We are tempted to measure the impact of Christ instead by the number of people showing up to our church or by the number of people we can personally influence for the Kingdom; by the number of times we go to church in a year, a month, or a week; by the number of minutes we spend reading the Bible or praying; by the number of times we do these activities throughout the week; by the number of Christian books we’ve read; by

the number of facts about the Bible we have stored in our heads; by the number of mission trips we've gone on or the number of retreats we've attended or led or the number of times we've gone to the altar at the call to dedicate our lives to Jesus Christ.

And brothers and sisters, none of these things I've mentioned are bad things – not at all! Quite the contrary, we need to do all the things I've mentioned: We need to dedicate our lives to Christ, we need to read His Word and whatever other materials that help us understand it, we need to meet together and pray together and do service together and worship together, and we need to bring others into these walls, to connect with the people of the South Bay, the people of Cupertino and San Jose and Santa Clara and wherever else we call our neighborhood.

But it is frighteningly easy to take these things which are meant to put us in a position to grow in faith, hope, and love, and to try to use them to replace genuine faith, hope, and love. The spiritual disciplines God has given to us and instructed us to use were always intended to create spaces for us to encounter God, to let His glory collide with the hardened parts of our hearts and to allow Christ to grow in us faith, hope, and love. But it is so tempting to use the spiritual disciplines and activities – things we feel we can control and execute and optimize – as replacements for genuine faith, hope, and love.

And not just the spiritual disciplines, but other things as well: It is tempting to make Christianity be about political influence, as if the way someone voted was surefire evidence for the genuineness of their devotion to Christ; it is tempting to make Christianity be about health and wealth, as if the relative ease and comfort someone experiences in life guarantees their closeness to God; it is even tempting to make Christianity and the impact of Christ be about the clothes someone wears to church, how close or how far from the front they sit, whether they lift their hands in praise or shout 'Amen' during the sermon.

And it's particularly tempting to replace genuine faith, hope, and love with these things when we have them. When we have the numbers, when we have the habits, when we have the routines, when we have the votes, when we have the health and the wealth and the clothes and the Christianese, it's easy to feel like we're doing something right, like we've figured this Christianity thing out. It's easy to feel good and confident about ourselves when we attain our standards and meet our expectations and fulfill our

definitions of Christianity, of the life impacted by Christ. And that only makes it harder to let go of these false Christianities.

But the Apostle Paul knew the genuine article when he saw it – he knew what to look for when it came to the impact of Christ. The researchers who originally discovered the Chicxulub crater did not identify it based on the appearance of the land – they didn't look out the window of an airplane and shout, "Oh, look! A giant bowl!" A lot of sediment can form over the sixty-six million years it is theorized to have been there, to say nothing of the rainforest and the sea that cover the crater today.

No, the researchers discovered the crater by searching for gravitational anomalies in the area, places where there was an unexpected change in the magnetic pull, the density, the matter, the substance of the earth. And what they found was a circular rim of anomalies, clear evidence that something of great mass and substance had made its impact on the peninsula.⁵



In the same way, Paul knew what to look for when it came to the impact of Christ: faith, hope, and love. And these he found in the Colossians believers – they weren't perfect, but their growth was real. The impact of Christ on their lives was unmistakable.

Brothers and sisters, what do we use to measure the impact of Christ in our lives? What do we use to define the Christian experience, the Christian life? Are we distracted by numbers and rituals, by head knowledge that never grows into anything more, by traditions that we perpetuate for their own sake? Or are we able to see past those things, to place them in their proper places, to use them not to replace but to support faith in Christ and hope in His promises and selfless love for others?

⁵ "Chicxulub Crater", Wikipedia.

And brothers and sisters, when we do see past these secondary things and look at ourselves, do we see faith, hope, and love growing in our hearts and shaping our lives? Do we see ourselves depending on God in more and more parts of our lives? Do we see ourselves liberated from insecurity and guilt and shame because of what we trust Christ to have done for us? Do we see ourselves liberated from uncertainty about the future, growing in hopeful anticipation for the promises Christ will fulfill for us soon and very soon? And is our security and assurance in Christ liberating us to love others selflessly, sacrificially, in conformity to Christ Himself?

Please allow me to adapt an illustration from Pastor Paul Washer, one he delivered at a youth conference nearly two decades ago – it is nonetheless relevant today:

Let's imagine that I show up late and I run up here on the platform, and all the leaders are angry with me and say, '[Eugene], don't you appreciate the fact you're given an opportunity to speak here and you come late?' And I'd say, 'Brothers [and sisters], you have to forgive me.' 'Well, why?' 'Well, I was out here on the highway, and I was driving and [as I was driving, the sky above me turned impossibly bright, brighter than lightning, and I felt the air get hotter and hotter until it began to burn, and I heard a sound like a hundred thousand freight trains. Then saw it – a meteorite! It had to have been about seven miles across, and BAM it landed right on me! Crushed my car to pieces, my insurance is calling it a total loss. That's why I'm late – I got hit by a meteorite.'

Now, there would only be two logical conclusions. One, I'm a liar or, two, I'm a madman. You would say, "[Eugene], it's absolutely absurd. It is impossible, [Eugene], to have an encounter with something as large as [a seven-mile meteorite] and not be changed." And then my question would be to you [brothers and sisters of PBCC] – What is larger? A [meteorite] or God?

Where do we see the impact of Christ in our lives? What shape does it take? Can we measure it in faith, hope, and love? As with last week, I ask these questions not to accuse anyone of anything – I ask them for the sake of self-reflection and self-assessment. God has loved us faithfully and generously, and I have no doubt that He moves us to ask these questions of ourselves out of that same, unchanging love. But the Word of God does confront us, however gently, however compassionately, because it would have more of us, because God would have all of us, recentered and rebuilt around His glory. If we want

to be rebuilt, we need to know what we're working with, where we stand, who we are. So in the voice of love, we ask ourselves, "What does the impact of Christ look like in my life?"

As we come now to the Table of the Lord, I encourage you to focus on a specific aspect of the elements, the bread and the cup: Note that they have already been prepared for you. You did not bake this bread; you did not make this juice. It was prepared for you, for all of us, and it is laid on the table ready for you to consume. In the same way, we do not create for ourselves faith, hope, and love – this is something that only God can do for us. And in Christ, as we abide in His love, as we sit at His table both literally and figuratively, He does His work. He makes His impact. As we will see in coming weeks, God-willing, it is this that changes us: Seeing and knowing the glory of God. One of our members messaged me this week in response to last week's sermon; they wrote, "I think for me, it's not as much about bending myself to Christ as it sometimes feels like I need to allow myself to be bent and shaped by the Spirit." This is exactly right – and this is exactly the purpose of the Lord's Supper.

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