

## Show Me Colossians 3:1-4

### Introduction

My younger daughter, Alyssa and her family, live in Missouri. The “Show Me” state. I have always been curious how this state got its name, so I did a little research this week. The answer? No one really knows. But there are two strong possibilities that I found interesting.

1. The possibility loved best by our friends in that state say the nickname comes from a speech given by former congressman Willard Vandiver in 1899. He was speaking at a naval banquet and touting the virtues of his home state. In that speech he boasted that if anyone had any reason to think their state was better than his, they would need tangible proof. They would have to “show me.”
2. The version that is disliked refers to a group of Missouri miners who went to Colorado to replace striking Colorado miners. These Missourians were unfamiliar with Colorado mining practices and required frequent instruction regarding the regulations and procedures for mining in Colorado. They needed someone to “show them” how to do everything they needed to do.

Colossians chapter 3 could easily be titled the “Show Me” chapter. The writer, the Apostle Paul, spent the first two chapters of this book teaching his readers important Christian doctrines. He urged them to:

Declare their faith  
Defend their faith  
Demonstrate their faith

That third one – demonstrate their faith – is the key. There have been many Christians over the years who can “talk the talk” and even “fight the fight” but whose lives don't match what they say. As the Apostle Paul puts it in another one of his letters:

(Such people) claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good. (Titus 1:16)

So here in chapter 3, Paul tries to teach his first readers – and us – how to avoid being one of those Christians who is detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good. That's not a label I want, so this text intrigues me.

Living a Christian life consistently is hard. We know that. And so does the Apostle, so he tells us the secret for doing that. It is, he says, all in your focus point. Look at verses 1-2:

Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:1-2)

Author John McNeil tells the story of a baby eagle that he raised with his flock of chickens. He writes:

The out-of-place bird had never learned to fly. One day I thought I would teach this bird how, so I threw it up in the air. But each time the bird would look down and fall back to the ground. Then I had an idea. Lifting the eaglet's head, I made it catch a glimpse of the bright sun above. That did it! The eagle pushed out its wings. Then, lifting its head with a shriek, it jumped from my hand and began to soar higher and higher until it was lost to sight in the face of the sun.

Many Christians find themselves in a similar state. If we could just get our eyes off the things of this earth and onto the Son – S.O.N., not S.UN. we could soar on the wings of the Spirit to higher levels of spiritual maturity and blessing.

Now what does what does it mean to set you heart and mind on things above? First and foremost, it begins with an understanding of some pretty deep truths about your relationship to Jesus. Let me show you what I mean.

### **UNDERSTANDING #1: WE DIED WITH CHRIST**

Look at the first part of verse 3:

**For you died,** and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:3)

Jesus died FOR us. We call that the doctrine of “substitution.” But when we begin to walk with Him we also die WITH Him. That is called “identification.”

- His death broke the power and penalty of sin. That means that we can have victory over those old sins that want to control us. We are not helpless against the devil.

One of my favorite reminders – taken from Martin Luther himself – is captured in this simple phrase:

I am a child of God.

I am not a helpless victim to be controlled by a nasty devil. I am a child of God.

One Sunday morning a pastor asked the children who came forward for his Children's sermon: “If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale and gave all my money to the church, would that get me into Heaven?”

“NO!” the children all answered.

“If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into Heaven?”

Again, the answer was, “NO!”

Again the pastor asked, “Well, then, if I was kind to animals and gave candy to all the children, and loved my wife, would that get me into Heaven?”

Again, they all answered, “NO!”

By this time the pastor was feeling pretty cocky about how well these children had understood his teaching, so he asked one more time: "Well then how can I get into Heaven?"

A five-year-old shouted the response: "You have be dead!"

And he was right. And we are! We died with Christ, and by that death our sins have been forgiven – all of them – and we stand confidently in the presence of our God. We are His children! Claim that!

## **UNDERSTANDNG #2: WE ARE HIDDEN IN CHRIST**

That's the last part of verse 3:

For you died, and **your life is now hidden with Christ** in God. (Colossians 3:3)

Because we have died with Christ, we no longer belong to this world. We belong to Christ. We are hidden with him. That phrase talks about being in a place of safety and security.

All throughout nature we see examples of animals who hide their eggs: birds, turtles, crocodiles, frogs, spiders and fish, to name but a few.

- They do so to protect what belongs to them.
- They do so to allow those future generations to grow and flourish.

In Psalm 32:7 David praises God with these words:

You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. (Psalm 32:7)

And again, in Psalm 16:1:

Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. (Psalm 16:1)

That's we are able to say the words of Psalm 23:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. (Psalm 23:4a)

Dr. A.T. Robertson, one of the foremost Greek scholars, made this comment on this verse:

So here we are in Christ who is in God, and no burglar, not even Satan himself, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. (A. T. Robertson).

### **UNDERSTANDING #3: WE LIVE IN CHRIST**

We move on to verse 4:

When Christ, **who is your life**, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.  
(Colossians 3:4)

Someone once said,

Life is what you are alive to. (Anonymous)

A child may come alive when you talk about a baseball game or an ice-cream cone. A teenager may come alive when you mention cars or dates. Grandparents come alive when they see their grandchildren.

In his letter to the Christians in Philippi, the Apostle Paul wrote:

For to me to live is Christ... (Philippians 1:21).

Christ was Paul's life and he was alive to anything that related to Christ. So should it be with every believer.

The writer of 1 John proclaims:

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:12)

It is one of the great curiosities of the faith that Christians are both dead and alive at the same time—dead to sin and alive in Christ.

### **APPLICATION**

During Superbowl XXXVII (37), FedEx ran a commercial that spoofed the movie *Castaway*, in which Tom Hanks played a FedEx worker whose company plane went down, stranding him on a desert island for years. You might remember that movie.

In the commercial, a FedEx employee looking like the bedraggled Hanks in the movie, goes up to the door of a suburban home with a FedEx package in hand.

When the homeowner comes to the door, the FedEx employee explains that he was just rescued from a deserted island after five years on a deserted island, and despite all the trials and tribulations he endured during that whole time he kept her package in order to deliver it to her.

She responded with a simple, "Thank you."

But the FedEx employee was curious about what is in that package that he has been protecting for years. "If I may ask, what was in that package after all?"

She opened it and showed him the content, saying, "Oh, nothing special really. Just a solar-powered satellite telephone, a global positioning device, a compass, a water purifier, and some seeds to grow vegetables."

Like the contents in that FedEx package, the resources for faithfully living out your Christian faith are available for every Christian who will take advantage of them. They are within your reach.

And it begins by keeping your focus, not on the things of this world, but on heavenly things. Set your heart, set your mind on things above.

Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:1-2)

Amen.