

Christ is Your Life — Colossians 3:1-4

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Save Me! Hide!

I may be biased, but my kids are pretty awesome. My son turns one next week, and my daughter is a bundle of blonde-toddler-joy. Kelina and I will often say that we sure have our hands full ... of blessings. And one of the things that Mare loves is being chased around our house and also “hiding”—all it takes really is covering your face. The two games of “Chase” and “Hide-N-Seek” will often morph into one or the other. So I’ll be chasing her from the kitchen to the living room and back again as we’re both yelling and laughing. Then she’ll see her Mama and run straight for her yelling, “Save me, Mama! Save me!” before latching on to a leg like a life raft.

And, of course, this rescuing leg certainly averts my threatening tickles, so I turn and run for the couch, calling for Mare to come and find me. I plop down and get a pillow over my head just in time for her to come blitzing in to discover my oh-so-secretive spot. As she hesitatingly uncovers my head, I explode with a tickle attack straight for the belly. And as I scoop her up and bring into my lair-of-a-couch, I urgently whisper, “Hide! Hide!” We’re concealed together, hidden away in the couch and under the pillows, until Mama pauses from making dinner to come and reveal us.

I love how this common interchange really speaks to our chief calling as parents: to make God known to our kids *through* our parenting. My kids’ perception of who God is will be shaped significantly for many years by their perception of Kelina and I as their mom and dad. And it is so fitting for the common plea in our home to be, “Save me! Hide!” because that is exactly what God desires for his children to declare. It is so right for us, time and time again, to run to the Lord crying out, “Save me, O God! Save me! Hide me! Hide me away!” It’s an expression of dependence and faith and trust and confidence. This is the very thing Paul is commending in our

passage. Because of who we are as ones united with Christ, we must seek after him to be saved and hidden away.

Seek & Set (v.1-2)

And it is that kind of intentionality that Paul is calling us to; that's why he uses two imperatives in v.1-2. If we're just lackadaisical in the Christian life, we will so easily submit to things that have "an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion" (v.23). Our lives won't be marked by orienting on Jesus but in foolish, periphery things that "are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh" (v.23). These things that have the appearance of wisdom won't aid your sanctification.

What will help facilitate your sanctification is recognizing your status in Christ and putting off sin in order to put on righteousness. That's why Paul follows our passage with two long sections describing the sin we must turn from—v.5-11—and the characteristics of righteousness we ought to embrace—v.12-17. But this Christlikeness isn't just going to happen. *POOF*! Yes, it absolutely is the work of God, yet Paul says strongly, "Seek! Set your minds!" That tension of God's work and ours in our sanctification is hinted even at in v.1. We only seek and set our minds *if* we are raised with Christ. Apart from being identified with Jesus, our seeking and setting would be vanity, a chasing after the wind.

But Paul is confident that the believers he is writing to *are* indeed raised with Christ. That's why some English translations here read, "*Since*, then, you have been raised with Christ" (NIV). Because you were raised with Christ, live differently; live with intentionality; live with tenacity in the fight of faith. The saving work of God applied to you who are in Christ is so transformative and definitive that Paul can say that you *were* raised—past tense. It already happened. When God overcame your rebellion and the Spirit caused you to be born again, at that

very moment you died and were raised. Paul says in chapter two that this death and resurrection you have experienced is put on display in baptism; “having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God” (2:11-12).

Being so confident of your new status in Christ, don't try to stop the indulgence of the flesh or pursue your own sanctification by orienting ascetic regulations. Pursue holiness by orienting on Christ. Be so heavenly minded that you *are* of some earthly good. Be so satisfied in all that God is for you in Christ that sexual immorality, covetousness, the praise of man, and the exaltation of yourself lose their luster.

And that won't happen without an action plan. The idols of our hearts are too deceptive and too alluring for us to think we'll find our joy in Christ alone by just setting the cruise control. We need to strategize. We need to have a game plan. It's like Black Friday shopping—you can't just show up at Wal-Mart and stroll through the aisles. No, you tell your sister to break left and out-manuever the dazed dad and your mom goes right to scoop up the toy for your niece as you shoot up the middle, making a beeline for a new TV. Or it's like getting out of the house with little kids—Mom is changing the diaper while prepping the bottle; Dad is starting the car, packing the diaper bag, and corralling the other kid. If you don't have a clear action plan, you'll never get out of the house.

So what are you doing to put to death what is earthly in you? Where do you see remnants of worldliness still at work? But don't just stop at faith-filled, Spirit-led self-evaluation. Make an action plan. Talk it over with your spouse and trusted brothers or sisters in Christ. Bring others in to your life to help execute the plan. Establish a Bible reading and memorization plan so you have something readily available to set your mind on. And then do it. Do it in faith and hope in Christ. And when you trip up and drift away from the plan: confess, repent, pray, and get back at

it. Don't just ditch the plan. Diligently pick up right where you left off. It ultimately isn't about keeping the plan but making steady progress in the right direction.

And extend grace to yourself and others in this pursuit of holiness. You and your brother have not been perfected yet. You will still sin. Something my wife often says is, "There's grace for people like you." Ah, yes, there is grace for people like me, who despite our best plans and efforts still succumb to sin. And there is grace for people like you. That's why Paul lingers in his application of these verses on forgiveness down in v.13, "[Bear] 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." There is grace for people like you, so be quick to extend grace to those who sin against you.

Hidden in God (v.3)

But Paul does not leave us to merely strive in our own strength in this fight of faith. He is quick to remind us in v.3 of how it is that we are empowered for such faith-filled intentionality. He tells us that we *must* seek and set our mind on the things that are above *because we died*. Grounding our whole understanding of our pursuit of holiness *is* the gospel. We don't have the imperatives of v.1-2 without the indicative of v.3.

Just as certain it is that you were raised with Christ to a new and living hope, having the sanctifying power of the Spirit coursing through you, so certain it is that you who are in Christ have died. Put to death what is earthly in you *because you died*. The old, earthly Brett is dead, so I must not live as though he still lives. He was crucified with Christ. And the life that I now live, the life that you live by faith in Christ, "is hidden with Christ in God."

But what does that mean? In what way is your life hidden with Christ in God? It means at least two things. First, it means you *are* what you do not presently look like. You don't appear to

have the full benefits of being united with Christ, enjoying an undefiled, resurrected life. I think Paul is getting at the same idea that John does when he writes in 1 John 3:2, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” What we will be as new creations, redeemed image bearers, is presently hidden. This is the tension that we live in, what is known as the “already-not-yet” dynamic that New Testament authors develop. We *already are* dead and raised with Christ, but we do *not yet* enjoy the full measure of all that new identity is for us. That is why we still struggle with deceiving, idolatrous hearts and must seek and set our minds on things that are above.

The second thing that having our lives hidden with Christ in God means is that we are preserved in God our refuge. We run to God declaring, “Save me! Hide me!” and he does both. Like how I would scoop up my daughter, holding her tight, and hiding her with me beneath the pillow, we are hidden with Christ in God. You are hidden for safety; nothing can assail you. Just think about that for a second.

You are *with* Christ, united with him. You are folded into relationship with the Triune God. And nothing can prevail against you. The sin that besets you will *not* be victorious. The suffering you are enduring will *not* get the final word. The trouble that you are walking through will *not* deprive you of your eternal hope. The broken relationship you are reeling from will *not* always hurt you.

And that is true for us corporately, as a church. Paul uses a plural form of “you,” speaking to this church. “*You all* have died and the life of *you all* is hidden with Christ in God.” Five Points, nothing can prevail against you because you all, together, are hidden with Christ in God. It may feel at times like that isn’t true. The last few months have been particularly trying.

We had four funerals in fifty-one days. We have had cancer diagnoses, a stroke, broken marriages. And there are far more burdens that each of us carry in silence. And if the Lord tarries, there is sure more to come. But Five Points, remember this: nothing can prevail against you because you are hidden with Christ in God.

Appearing With Your Life (v.4)

As greatly encouraging as that is, there is greater hope still yet. “When Christ appears, who is your life, then you also will appear with him in glory” (v.4). *When* Christ appears, not “if.” There is no doubt in the apostle’s mind—nor should there be in ours—that Jesus is returning to establish his eternal and sovereign kingdom, to reconcile to himself all things. So we press on in diligent endurance in the hope of the coming of Christ. “We do *not* lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond *all* comparison” (2 Cor. 4:16-17). So when it feels like all is lost and there is no hope, when it seems bleak, when the night is darkest, know that Spring is coming—the Morning Star will rise. The Lord Jesus *will* appear.

And this Jesus *is* your life. The Second Person of the Trinity *is* your life—that is how profoundly united you are right now to Jesus. Apart from him, you are nothing and have nothing. Because of the certainty of his coming and the certainty of your union with him, you can know that you *will* appear with him in glory. The woes and sorrows of life are not the end. The troubles you face are not the last word. Our God has not left us as orphans; he has given us his indwelling Spirit and will come again to make all things right.

Your deceiving, besetting sin will be finally undone, never to burden you again. Your relationships will all be made right. All will be forgiven and restored. Christ is your life, Church,

and you are hidden with him in God for your holiness and endurance until the day *when* he appears and you appear with him in glory.

Our God in Heaven, may we join David in his confidence and assurance when he said:

*[1] For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.*

*[2] He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.*

*[3] How long will all of you attack a man
to batter him,
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?*

*[4] They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.
They take pleasure in falsehood.
They bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse. Selah*

*[5] For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.*

*[6] He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.*

*[7] On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.
(Psalm 62:1-7)*

O, God, save us! Hide us away in yourself! Because we have died and our lives are hidden with Christ in you. Sanctify us as we seek and set our minds on things that are above, pursuing holiness and extending grace. Magnify Christ in us and through us.