

Session 4

May 16, 2021

LIVE THE MESSAGE

Colossians 3:1-3, 12-17

I always tell my students, “A good résumé doesn’t guarantee you will get the job, but a poor résumé guarantees that you won’t.” It’s the same way with your Christian testimony. A godly lifestyle doesn’t guarantee that you will win others to Christ, but a carnal lifestyle will guarantee that you won’t! While the gospel *messenger* is not as important as the gospel *message* itself, he or she is still vital when it comes to sharing the faith. Peter encouraged believers to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pet. 3:15). The only way anyone will ask us about our faith is if our lives give consistent testimony of that faith. In our focal text, Paul gives three ways to keep our testimony vibrant and godly.

Heavenly looking (vv. 1-3). The first characteristic of a vibrant testimony for Christ is that we keep our eyes on Him. More than any other people, Christ-followers are aware that we are only sojourners; we are only passing through (see Heb. 11:8-10; 1 Pet. 1:1). Jesus reminded His disciples to lay up heavenly treasures, rather than earthly possessions (Matt. 6:19-20), because heaven is where our future lies. Here, Paul reminds the church to “seek what is above.” The word *seek* means to *earnestly desire*, almost to the point of *demanding* it. Why is that such an important priority? Because coming to Christ means dying to self and identifying with Christ (see Gal. 2:20). Paul suggests our identity with Christ is so intimate that our very lives are “hidden with Him” (v. 3). When we are literally looking up to the sky, people will often stop and gaze upward as well, wondering what we are looking at. In the same way, when our hearts, and minds, and eyes are set on Christ, people will notice, and look that way, too. For reflection: *While we are to actively seek opportunities to share our faith, those opportunities sometimes sneak up on us. What are some ways that we can prepare ourselves to share Christ at a moment’s notice?*

Humbly loving (vv. 12-14). Someone has said, “We can be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good.” While I’m not sure I fully believe that, I do understand the sentiment. One of the arguments I sometimes have with the Catholic church is the veneration they have for cloistered nuns and monks. How can a life of devotion and service be lived out in quiet solitude behind thick walls? Jesus didn’t just talk *about* sinners...He talked *with* sinners! Here, Paul reminds the church that being *chosen, holy, and loved* (v. 12) does not isolate them—or insulate them—from others. Rather it equips them to care more genuinely for others. As fruits of the Spirit (compare with Gal. 5:22-23) the characteristics listed are distinctly Christian. The heart of the matter is genuine love for one another that manifests itself in forgiving those who offend us. The basis for that forgiveness is the forgiveness we received from God through Christ. In every case, our testimony is firmly founded on love; love of God and love for others (see Matt. 22:37-40). For reflection: *The word bond in verse 14 is like a belt. How does the “bond of love” compare to a belt used on a garment?*

Happily living (vv. 15-17). Of all people, Christians should be the happiest. Yet we sometimes don’t seem that way. Dr. Adrian Rogers used to say that when we should be *humbly grateful*, we

are too often *grumbly hateful!* Verse 15 serves to connect the *basis* of our fellowship (the bond of love) in verse 14 to the *behavior* of fellowship that follows. Notice that the activities listed are all filled with joy, enthusiasm, and thanksgiving. Notice as well the emphasis on singing. While music should never displace God's word in worship, it is enormously important in setting the atmosphere and advancing the fellowship. Take it from a pastor: when the church music is joyful, thankful, and uplifting, the proclamation of the word is easier, more fruitful, and a lot more fun! For reflection: *Think about the overall atmosphere of your church. Is it the kind of place that would attract a lost person? Or are there some attitudes and activities that might hinder visitors from returning?*