PUT ON THE NEW SELF

Remaining Rooted in Christ, *Colossians 1:24-2:23*

Several of our deacons have been meeting regularly over the past couple of years to develop plans for implementing our elders' vision through improved communication and collaboration. Part of their effort involves choosing an annual theme around which to organize their activities. They selected the following theme for this year:

Equipped for the mission: every disciple, every place

Their theme motivates this lesson, which continues a series considering the question, ***"What does it look like to be equipped for the mission?"*** We are exploring Paul's letter to the Colossians, focusing on the traits he instructed them to 'put on,' which form the portrait of an equipped disciple. This morning, we will explore how Paul describes the nature of gospel ministry, the importance of remaining rooted in Christ, and the danger of teachings that attempt to supplement or replace him (*Colossians 1:24–2:23*). These ideas help us see what it means for disciples to remain equipped for the mission.

Equipped Disciples Participate in Christ's Mission

- Throughout his ministry, Paul experienced repeated hardship, including imprisonment, opposition, and rejection (*cf. Acts 16:19–24; 17:5–9; 19:23–41*). These events could have appeared to signal failure, but Paul understood them differently.
- Jesus warned that proclaiming the kingdom of God would bring resistance (*John 15:18–20*).
    - Because of this, Paul viewed his suffering as participation in the same mission Jesus began.
- Paul explains that his ministry involves making known a 'mystery' that had once been hidden but has now been revealed (*Colossians 1:26*).
    - The content of that mystery is summarized in the phrase *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (*Colossians 1:27*).
- For much of Israel's history, God's presence was associated with places such as the tabernacle and temple (*Exodus 25:8; 1 Kings 8:10–11*).
    - Through Jesus, however, God's presence now dwells among his people, and that people includes both Jews and Gentiles (*Ephesians 2:11–22*).
- Paul describes the goal of this ministry clearly: *"Him we proclaim"* (*Colossians 1:28*).
- Although Paul labors and struggles in this work, he recognizes that the power sustaining the mission ultimately comes from Christ himself (*Colossians 1:29*).

Equipped Disciples Remain Rooted in Christ

- Paul emphasizes that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ (*Colossians 2:3*).

    - Some teachers apparently offered deeper spiritual insight or additional knowledge.
- Because of this, Paul urges the Colossians to continue living in the same way they first received Christ (*Colossians 2:6*).
- Paul describes this stability using several images.
    - They are rooted in Christ.
    - They are built up in him.
    - They are established in the faith (*Colossians 2:7*).
- This imagery echoes Psalm 1, where the person who delights in God's instruction is described as a tree planted by streams of water that produces fruit in its season (*Psalm 1:1–3*).
- Disciples who remain rooted in Christ draw their life and strength from him. When they remain connected to that source, their lives begin to reflect the fruit of God's work.

Equipped Disciples Reject Substitutes for Christ

- Paul warns the Colossians not to be taken captive by 'philosophy and empty deceit' rooted in human tradition rather than Christ (*Colossians 2:8*).
- Paul responds by reminding the Colossians who Jesus truly is.
    - In Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (*Colossians 2:9*).
    - They have been filled in Him, who is the head of every authority (*Colossians 2:10*).
- Their transformation did not come through human effort or ritual but through what God accomplished in Christ. Paul describes this change as a spiritual circumcision; the removal of the old life controlled by sin (*Colossians 2:11*).
- Paul connects this transformation to baptism.
    - They were raised with him through faith in God's power (*Colossians 2:12*).
- Because of this, a real change has taken place.
    - Once they were dead in their sins, but now God has made them alive together with Christ (*Colossians 2:13*).
    - The record of debt that stood against them has been canceled and nailed to the cross (*Colossians 2:14*).
- Because of what Christ has done, they do not need additional spiritual systems or teachings. Everything necessary for life with God is already found in him.

Applications

• Christian maturity does not come from moving beyond Christ but from growing deeper in our understanding of him.
• Remaining rooted in Christ protects from teachings and ideas that attempt to move Christ out of the center of faith.
• Because God has removed the old life through Christ, we are called to live according to the new life we have received.
• When the church holds fast to Christ, the whole community grows and becomes equipped to participate in God's mission in the world.