PUT ON THE NEW SELF

The new self that comes from sharing in Jesus, *Colossians 3:1-11*

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 efforts involves choosing an annual theme to direct their activities. They selected the following theme for this year:

Equipped for the mission: every disciple, every place

Their theme motivates our current sermon series, which explores the question, **"What does it look like to be equipped for the mission?"** We are focusing our study on Paul's letter to the Colossians because it records his instruction to his audience to "put on"[1] certain attitudes and practices (*Colossians 3:12-14*), which, together, form the portrait of an equipped disciple. This lesson begins the series by examining Paul's introductory comments – *Jesus' preeminent identity should motivate people "to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (Colossians 1:3-23).*

Put on a new self

- Paul opened his letter to the Christian community in Colossae by reminding them of the inheritance God had given them in Jesus' kingdom (*Colossians 1:12-13*).
- More profoundly, Paul wrote that the inheritance God gave to the Colossians included sharing in Jesus' royal identity (*Colossians 1:26-27; 2:9*).
    - Their participation in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection through baptism became the symbolic way God "made alive" their "dead" identities (*Colossians 2:11-13*).
    - But the Colossians were not simply resurrected versions of their previous identity; God "filled" them up with Jesus (*Colossians 1:27; 2:9*), replacing their dead identities with his living one.
- Although God gave the Colossian Christians a new identity through Jesus, Paul told them they were responsible for "walking in a manner worthy" of that identity (*Colossians 1:10; 2:6-7*).
- Paul emphasized his audience's responsibility because corrupting influences threatened to undermine their new identity (*Colossians 2:6-23*). Deceptive human wisdom and distracting religious traditions sought to steal them from Jesus and "disqualify" their citizenship in his kingdom (*Colossians 2:8, 16-18*).

[1] All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

- The last half of Paul's letter outlines how the Colossians were to "walk in a manner worthy," a way of living that defused the influences endangering them while also honoring their Jesus-centered inheritance. "Walk[ing] in a manner worthy" involves:
    - Focus one's mind on Jesus, meditating "day and night" on his kingdom and rule so that corrupting influences find no foothold in one's life (*Colossians 3:1-2; Psalm 1*).
    - Focusing on Jesus ought to lead to acting like him by removing attitudes and behaviors inconsistent with Jesus and replacing them with practices that remake one "after the image of [their] creator" (*Colossians 3:5-15*).
    - Focusing one's mind and body on Jesus expresses itself in specific ways. For example, that focus:
        - Changes one's relationship with Jesus, prompting a thankful obedience that welcomes him into every part of one's life (*Colossians 3:15-17*).
        - Changes one's relationships with the people in one's life, reshaping them around Jesus (*Colossians 3:18-4:1*).
        - Changes one's behavior towards "outsiders" by infusing it with Jesus-shaped wisdom (*Colossians 4:5-6*).

Applications

Paul applied the Colossian Christians' identity and inheritance in Jesus to their everyday lives. His application to the Colossians offers us insights. Consider the following:

Following Jesus requires intentional effort in every area of one's life.

Belief and action cannot be separated.

Proper living offers the appropriate response to false teaching.

Proper living focuses on relationships.