

Clothed in Christ

David Flatt

Last weekend, the golfing world descended on Augusta, Georgia for the annual Masters Tournament. Aside from golf, this event is all about tradition. Magnolia Lane. The Champion's Dinner. Pimento cheese sandwiches. And the famous green jacket (the official shade is called Pantone 342).

The winner of the Masters is dawned with the green jacket. However, there are rules for the jacket. The jacket cannot leave the golf course property. The tournament winner is permitted to take the jacket off-site for one year. If he wears the jacket publicly, he must first receive permission from Augusta National Golf Club. He must wear slacks and collar shirts with the jacket; no shorts. He is not permitted to drink alcohol when wearing the jacket.

I have watched the Masters tournament for years, but never knew about the rules of the green jacket. When I heard the rules explained last week, I was reminded of the Bible's imagery of being clothed in Christ.

Wearing Christ

1). The role of baptism. In the short letter of Galatians, Paul wrote, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). When believers are baptized for the remission of their sins, they put on Christ. This act initiates us in the kingdom of God and the community of believers.

In baptism, we share in the death of Jesus. And, like Jesus was resurrected, we are raised to begin a new life.

2). A new identity. What is the meaning of wearing Christ? In the next sentence, Paul explained the meaning of wearing Christ: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

When we see someone wearing a blue uniform with a gold badge, what do we see? When we see someone wearing a long white coat with a stethoscope, what do we see? When we see someone wearing a green jacket on a golf course, what do we see? What people wear tells us something about what they do.

When people look at a Christian, what do they see? They are to see someone who is one with Christ. The character and demeanor of a Christian is to reflect Christ. People should see someone at peace. They should see someone who knows who they are and where they are going. By the grace of God in Jesus, we can become known as His children. We can live and die in the hope of being welcomed in His kingdom.

3). The responsibility of wearing Christ. When we get new clothes, we are careful to keep them clean. In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, “So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Rom. 13:12-14).

We must remove the old clothes that have been ruined and worn-out by sin. Sin does not suit a Christian. Sin disgraces the One our clothing represents. As Christians, we cannot fornicate and get drunk. We cannot be prone to envy. We cannot be disgruntled and argumentative. None of this kind of behavior reflects Christ to the world.

4). The purpose of the new clothing. In Romans, Paul describes being clothed with the armor of light. This has two important implications. First, the clothing of Christ protects us. Our new identity in Christ enlightens the mind to the truth. It guards our hearts. Paul makes a similar point to the Ephesians when he writes about putting on the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18).

Second, the clothing of Christ is light. Light shines. Light is noticeable. Light exposes darkness. Light warmly guides us to safety. All of this corresponds to how we are to live in the world. Paul wrote, “Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life” (Phil. 2:14-16).

Conclusion

How we present ourselves to the world matters. The world sees something when they look at Christians. They must see a representation of Christ. They must see someone who can lead them to Jesus.

Being clothed in Christ is our only hope. Christ is our only hope for a better life now. He offers a new identity despite our past. He will protect us from sin. Christ is our only hope for a better eternal life in the future. If we are clothed in Christ now, we are promised to be clothed in immortality in the future.

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on

immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:50-57