

Galatians 3: 26-29; “Putting on Christ”, Message # 22 in the series – “Christ has Made us Free”, Conducted by Pastor Paul Rendall on the evening of March 19th, 2014, at the church.

What does it mean to “put on Christ”; that is what we want to think about this evening. In verse 26 Paul has said, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” When he says, “you are all sons”, he is not addressing all men; he is particularly addressing believers. A believer is one who has become a son of God through faith in Jesus Christ. But this in its origination was all a matter of God’s mercy in His bringing them to Himself and adopting them into His family. We are not God’s spiritual children by nature, we cannot become His sons and daughters, except by faith in Jesus Christ. It is only by faith, then, and not by the works of the law, that a person is justified. This is what we have been seeing in our study of this book thus far. Real changes have taken place in the believer’s life both before and after they first believed. We will think about both here tonight. Concerning our text, there are 3 ways in which the believer should respond to the grace of Christ which has been given to them, as they consider that they have spiritually been baptized into Christ. 1st – A new believer consciously “puts on” Jesus Christ in their thoughts and by being willing to publicly profess Christ. 2nd – A new believer consciously embraces the unity of the body of Christ. And 3rd – A new believer consciously sees themselves as an heir according to promise.

1st – A new believer consciously “puts on” Jesus Christ in their thoughts, and by their being willing to publicly profess Christ.

The wording here in verse 27 is very interesting. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” I do not believe at that he is meaning to say that as many of them as had been baptized in water baptism were saved. He is speaking of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in regeneration in the first place, and then by implication, the public profession of faith in Christ before the church in the ordinance of water baptism, following that, in the life of a believer. This is putting on Christ. We can only put on outwardly as spiritual clothes, what we have been given inwardly by the Holy Spirit in our heart. I think that it is very important that we understand that Paul is speaking here about our being baptized into Christ spiritually, first of all. Turn with me over to Romans Chapter 6, verse 3. “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Now, Paul is most certainly not speaking exclusively of water baptism here in these verses. But water baptism, he is saying, pictures the spiritual truth and reality of this spiritual baptism into Christ. He is linking the reality of spiritual baptism with the outward profession and expression of faith in Christ, which is what we are publicly professing in the ordinance of water baptism. Let us understand that God the Holy Spirit’s work in spiritual baptism in the New Birth must come first, as a sovereign work of God, before a sinner can exercise faith in Christ. A sinner is dead in his trespasses and sins. He cannot make Himself alive. This great and merciful work of regeneration leads to faith being created in the heart of the sinner which leads then to their conversion, in connection with their believing in the gospel as it is preached or shared with them.

But having believed in Christ, all baby Christians become aware, through reading the Bible and hearing good preaching of the Bible, that a real change has taken place in their spiritual status, because of God’s favor being shown them, through the exercise of their faith in Jesus Christ. Because of the death and resurrection of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit taking place in their hearts and minds, a believer begins to realize that they do have the power to respond in obedience to what God has done for them through their Lord Jesus Christ. And they

also now have the desire to render such a response and such an obedience. Turn with me over to Psalm 116, verse 1. "I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplications." "Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live." Now look down at verse 8 – "For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." Now look at verse 12. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" "I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." "I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all his people." The vows mentioned here, I believe, if we think of them in terms of a New Testament, New Covenant response of the young believer, refer to the promises that they would make at the time of their water baptism; that is to publicly state that they believe in Christ, and will follow Him in newness of life. It is the response of an evangelical obedience which is what is being talked about here, not a legal obedience. They are willingly putting on what Christ has spiritually given them. The law could bring none of this response about. And it cannot bring it about, even following conversion to Christ. Before regeneration a person is really helpless to do any truly spiritual and God-glorifying thing. They cannot even exercise the grace of faith until they have been given the power by God to do so. The law shows the unbeliever their sin. But since it is the Holy Spirit who illumines a sinner's mind to their need of the gospel and Christ, once the gospel is preached, and accompanying power by the Holy Spirit is present and working, in accordance with the eternal plan of the Father, a sinner is then born again into the kingdom of grace. They exercise faith in the gospel, and they are justified, or declared righteous in the sight of God. God then clothes them with spiritual garments of salvation.

Turn over to Isaiah 61: 10. "I will rejoice, greatly in the Lord." "My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." You will notice that there are a number of garments mentioned here. There is specific mention of God clothing the believer in the "robe of righteousness". The believer willingly and joyful puts this on, for they realize that they cannot be saved by their own righteousness. And then there are other garments (plural) which are mentioned in general. The Bridegroom (Christ) decks Himself with the ornaments of her response of love for Him, and the Bride adorns herself with her jewels. There is spiritual activity on the part of each. The garments of salvation are something which are given to the believer by grace through faith; they are not of themselves, they are the gift of God. But when the Bride puts on Christ, she then begins adorning herself with her jewels, these precious spiritual truths of what Christ has done for her, and is doing for her, by His precious grace. What Christ has done for the believer leads to the response of their doing for Him what pleases Him. The first response for the new believer ought to be the desire to be baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is putting on Christ, their willingness to engage in this ordinance that relates to salvation; their desired intention, to show forth the spiritual reality of what Christ has done for them, and their identification with His finished work in obedience to God's law, and His suffering for their sins.

Now turn with me over to Romans 13: 10-14 and you will see that this "putting on Christ" is something that the Christian consciously continues to do all the days of his earthly sojourn. "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." "Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy." "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." You can see that even as you put on your clothes each day, you should put on Christ each day. You should

put on Christ's imputed righteousness because in doing this all your sins will be covered, and your good works still will be accepted, even though there is much imperfection in them. When you put on Christ's imparted righteousness, it means that you are eager and zealous for good works, which in several places in the scripture are spoken of as "linen, white and clean" which is the righteous deeds of the saints. Revelation 19: 8 – "And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints." When you put on Christ, you will, in this regard, be praying for grace to gird yourself with His truth in your inmost being. Your great desire is that you will become more holy. Revelation 3, verse 5 says: He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His holy angels." By faith in Christ, putting on Christ like spiritual armor and weapons, the shield of faith, using the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God; keeping as a helmet, the hope of salvation, you will then be able to meet and overcome the lusts of the flesh with Christ's strength and wisdom. You will be able to make progress in holiness.

2nd – A new believer consciously embraces the unity of the body of Christ.

This is what it means "to put on Christ" in regard to His great salvation coming to all kinds of people everywhere. You embrace the truth of the spiritual unity that Christ died to bring to all believers. You put on the mindset of verse 28 - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Now, I hope that you understand that it is not as though these distinctions do not continue to be made, even after Christ came and accomplished redemption. But what this verse is saying is that a certain mindset should be "put on" by the Christian in relation to all of these groups mentioned. In God's sight, all these people groups are on the same footing as regards their all being sinners. And all of these people groups are on the same footing as regards their all having been saved by grace through faith. All of them, after believing in Jesus, receive the same spiritual blessings of justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. We are all one in Christ Jesus. Look at Ephesians Chapter 2, verse 14 – "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace. This is saying that in Christ's fulfilling of the law that there is no longer any distinction between a believing Jew and a believing Gentile. There is nothing separating them from embracing each other as the one true people of God who now have the identical blessings of salvation. Look also at Ephesians 4: 1. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." This unity of the Spirit is something that all believers have because of their being "in Christ". This unity is not something man-made like in an ecumenical movement. It is something which all believers have because of Christ, and it needs to be kept, or maintained, in the bond of peace. This is something that each of us needs to consider whether we are peacemakers in regard to the unity of the universal body of Christ. There are not Jewish churches and Gentiles church which cannot have fellowship. There are not slaves churches and free churches. There are not male churches and female churches. No, there is only 1 universal Church of Jesus Christ, and all of the various churches need to realize that the barriers between them have been broken down by Christ. Therefore, we ought to receive one another as brethren; all who believe in Christ. This does not mean that all people are going to be like-minded with us; not all will be of one denomination as far as their respective understandings of what the Bible teaches, but with regard to Christ and our salvation, we are

one. This does not mean that we attempt to say that all denominational distinctions are wrong. Each person and each church stands or falls to their Master. But our disagreements concerning doctrines does not mean that we cannot see them as brothers and sisters if they have believed in the same Christ, and have the same Holy Spirit, and believe in the same Bible. We should never compromise the truth of the Word of God simply to try to establish an outward unity. Rather, let us learn to hold fast our Reformed Baptist distinctives of doctrine and practice, but still have love in our heart for other true Christians of other denominations. That is the unity of the faith. That is putting on Christ.

3rd – A new believer consciously sees themselves as an heir according to promise.

This too is what it means to “put on” Christ. “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the promise. When we put on Christ it means that we are declaring that we believe that we not only have been given something for which we did not work for, that is the gift of salvation, for Christ’s sake, but also we believe that we stand to inherit all things because of what Christ lived and died to bring us. A heir is one who receives something of riches or property because a relative has died. Jesus is our near-relative; our kinsman-redeemer. He inherits all things because of His obedience to God, and His sufferings on our behalf. In closing let us look also at Romans Chapter 8, verse 15. “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” When you believed in Jesus Christ, you received the Holy Spirit of God to dwell with you forever. You did not receive a spirit of bondage leading to fear, that spirit which thinks that somehow a person can be justified or sanctified by the law of God and thus inherit eternal life. That could never be. Rather the Spirit bears witness to your spirit that you are a child of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you are a child, you are an heir of God. God is your forever portion. And you are a joint heir with Christ as you have fully identified yourself with Him by faith in His finished work of righteousness and sufferings. Therefore, if you will hold to Him by faith, confessing your need of His grace all the way down through your life, suffering if need be in your identification with Him, you will be glorified together with Him and inherit all things. What a great salvation which is ours through Christ!