

**Galatians 3: 26-29; “Baptism and Putting on Christ”, Message # 22 in the series –  
“Christ has Made us Free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on  
October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, in the Morning Worship Service.**

What does it mean to be baptized and to put on Christ? That is what we want to think about at this time. In verse 26 Paul has said – For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. When a person believes in the Lord, real changes take place in their life when they come to Christ, and afterwards. How should I now live? How should I view this relationship to Christ, which I have now come into? In this message I want to ask 3 questions which will lead us to understand how we should respond to the grace of Christ which has been given to us, now that we have come to saving faith in Him. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – How is putting on Christ related to having been Spiritually Baptized into Christ? 2<sup>nd</sup> – How does a new believer consciously embrace the unity of the body of Christ? And 3<sup>rd</sup> – How should all believers think of their inheritance in Christ?

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – How is putting on Christ related to our having spiritually been Baptized into 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 all that Paul is meaning to say that as many of them as had been baptized in water baptism were saved. This passage could be very confusing if this is how you were to interpret it. Actually, Paul is speaking here, of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, His placing the believer into Christ’s Death, and into the new spiritual life of being a part of the universal body of Christ. They are spiritually adopted into God’s family, and this is why Paul says in Ephesians 3: 14 – “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that You being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints” the greatness of the love of Christ.”

That is, not only the greatness of what He has done in His death for you, causing you to die to sin. What a glorious truth that is! But he is also speaking of what the Spirit does, in connection with His work of regeneration, in the heart of the person who is believing the gospel. He is showing you the greatness of the Triune God’s purpose for every believer, to be placed in the body of Christ. Paul says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12, verse 13 – “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” It is very important that every one of us understands the difference between what takes place spiritually in the heart, from what is done by the church, as an ordinance commanded by Christ. They are most certainly connected, but they are not identical.

Christ has said to the apostles and to His whole church – Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded You. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. This is a very blessed truth of the responsibility which every true church of Christ has. Water baptism is a church ordinance. It is a responsibility given to the church by Christ Himself. But the responsibility of the church is not the same thing as the work of the Spirit, for it is the work of the Spirit alone, which places the believer in Christ into His spiritual body.

It is the church which brings the believer into the local gathered body of Christ, when they see that that person has a creditable profession of faith in Christ. What a wonderful thing this is, the public profession of faith in Christ, when a believer confesses before the church what Christ

has done for them, in saving them. This is what takes place in the ordinance of water baptism. This too, is a part of what it means to put on Christ. But we can only put on outwardly, as spiritual clothes, what we have been given inwardly by the Holy Spirit in our heart, already. 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. To prove this to you, I want you to turn over to Romans Chapter 6, verse 3, and see how the apostle describes this spiritual baptism. "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 the reality of this spiritual baptism into Christ. Paul, here links the reality of spiritual baptism, with the outward profession and expression of faith in Christ, which is what a person is publicly confessing in the waters of baptism. That person has died with Christ, spiritually, and they have been made alive by Him spiritually. Let us understand that God the Holy Spirit's work in the New Birth always comes first. It comes as God's sovereign act, opening the heart, and giving that person spiritual life, where none previously existed. "And you, He made alive, who were once dead in your trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2: 1)

So, saving faith is created there by the Spirit's working in connection with the preaching or sharing of the truth concerning Christ. Yes, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. But the sinner is dead in his trespasses and sins. The sinner, in his heart, cannot make himself alive. This great and merciful work of regeneration by God, leads a person to exercise their faith Christ for the first time. Light is shined into their heart by the Holy Spirit, illumining the darkness of the heart of a sinner. And in connection with this Divine and supernatural light, the Holy Spirit then turns the attention of that person to consider the beauty and glory of Christ and what He has done for them. He opens their spiritual eyes to see that Christ has obeyed God's law perfectly and fully. And He has suffered for their sins.

They then believe because they have been led to that place by the Spirit's working, and they freely come, they willingly come, to Christ. They want to come, because their heart has been opened, and the hardness and blindness of their heart has been taken away. The riches of Christ's grace are poured in. And so, all spiritual newborns become aware of the fact, through reading the Bible, and hearing good preaching of the word, that a real change has taken place in their heart. This is because of God's favor is being shown to them, and the truth of God's word is now being established to them through the exercise of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Because of the greatness of the redemption of Christ, and the greatness and the power of His resurrection, the Holy Spirit gives the believer power to respond in obedience to what God has commanded them to do. Repent and believe the gospel! And for as many as believe in Him, He gives them the power to become children of God. (John 1: 12) They now have this great desire to render a response to the gospel and to the truth of God's word, and their response is a willing obedience. If you will turn with me over to Psalm 116, verse 1, you will see this. "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." So, 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 are making 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. They exercise faith in the gospel, and they are justified, or declared righteous, in God's sight. God then clothes them with spiritual garments of salvation. You see this truth over in 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."

Now, you will notice that there are a number of garments which are mentioned here. There is specific mention of what God clothes the believer with – The "robe of righteousness". But the believer, in response willingly, and joyful wears it. For they realize that they cannot be saved by their own good works, or their own righteousness. And then, we see here, other garments which are mentioned here in Isaiah 61. The Bridegroom (Christ) decks Himself with the ornaments of the the Church's response of love for Him. The Bride (Christ's Church, every individual member of it) adorns herself with her jewels. There is spiritual activity on the part of each, the Bride and the Bridegroom.

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. And in doing so, she shows forth the reality of what Christ means to her. To you who believe, He is precious.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – How does a new believer consciously embrace the unity of the body of Christ?**

The true unity of the Church is embraced when you understand some things about the nations; Jew and Gentile, some things about being slave or free, and some things about gender, male and female, in light of Christ's death and His resurrection from the dead. For Christ is ruling over all nations and peoples, all through this Church age. Verse 28 of our text says – "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." What a revolutionary truth this is! And the implications of it are great for all believers; indeed for all people everywhere.

If you will turn over with me to Romans 13: 10-14, you will see that this "putting on Christ" that I have just spoken to you about, is something that the Christian consciously continues to do, all the days of their 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 just like you put on your clothes each day, you should put on Christ each day in terms of your attitude towards all people around you.

This truth is not only is being directed toward our neighbors in general, but I believe that there is a specific application here in terms of putting on Christ in relation to people who are in our local church now, or those who will come in the future. I hope that you realize that Christ's great salvation was designed for all nations and all peoples, world-wide. If you are a true Christian, you will embrace the truth of the spiritual unity that Christ died to bring to all believers. You put on this spiritual mindset of verse 28 of our text – "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 when you hear this verse, that it is not as though these distinctions do not continue to exist, even after Christ came and accomplished redemption. They do. 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 of people which are 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 in they have believed in Christ. All of them are God's saints, whether they are Jew or Gentile, whether slave or free. This was a very big deal when slavery was still a very reality in the Roman empire; that is, a slave being thought of, as having been given, the same spiritual blessings as the free man. After believing in Jesus, everyone without respect of persons, the apostle told them, received the same spiritual blessings of justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. But it was true nonetheless. We are all one in Christ Jesus.

What a great thing it was when Paul wrote in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6, verses 1 and 2 – “Let as many bondservants as under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor; so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed.” “And let those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved.” “Teach and exhort these things. You will notice that Paul did not attempt to try to start up a “Black lives matter” group to foment revolution, but rather, he inculcated a slave's counting his master to be worthy of all honor.

They were not to despise their master because their master was a brother in the Lord. Rather they were to serve him to show forth the goodness of the Lord to them both, in making them both brethren. The slave was to serve his master out of love Christ, for what the Lord has done for him. This was quite a revolutionary for both slave and master. The same could be said of gender distinctions and differences. Whether male or female, if we have believed in Christ, we have received the same blessings of salvation, and we are both in the one Body of Christ. Even though the commanded responsibilities of each gender have not ceased, the apostle Peter tells us in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3: 7, that men are to consider their wives fellow-heirs of the grace of life.

And you will remember that Paul commanded in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy chapter 2, verse 11 that a woman ought to learn in silence with all submission; that is, to her husband and to the church. He did not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. And yet he did not at all wish to convey the thought that she did not have the same spiritual blessings of salvation as the man. Responsibilities in the home, in the church, and even in society do involve gender distinctions, so that God's will can be done on every level. When we are doing the will of God, according to the Bible, and we are doing it so that He will be glorified in our lives, in relation to all that He has given us in our mutually shared salvation, He is pleased with us. And we can then serve Him and others in the church, because we have clothed ourselves with Christ. We have put Him on.

In applying this, we should ask ourselves whether we are peacemakers in regard to the unity of the body of Christ. There are not Jewish churches and Gentile churches which cannot have fellowship. There are not slave 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 do not mean that we cannot see those in other denominations 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, we should 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.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> – How should all believers think of their inheritance in Christ?**

This too is what it means to “put on” Christ. It says here in verse 29 – “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the promise.” When you put on Christ it means that you are declaring that you believe, that not only have you been given something for which you did not work for, that is the gift of salvation, for Christ’s sake. But you also believe that you stand to inherit all things because Christ lived and died to bring you into the reality of your eternal inheritance. An heir is one who receives something of riches or property because a relative has died. Jesus is our near-relative. He is our kinsman-redeemer. Because of the greatness of His Person and the greatness of His work, He inherited all things because of His obedience to God, and His sufferings on our behalf.

In closing I would like us to look at Romans Chapter 8, verses 15-17. “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 with 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 Jesus as you have fully identified yourself with Him by faith in His finished work of righteousness and sufferings. Therefore, if you will hold fast your confession of faith in Him, 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. It is this great inheritance of heaven and eternal life which will be yours if you will hold fast the word that the apostle Paul has given to us today in his letter. If you are Christ’s you are Abraham’s seed according to promise.