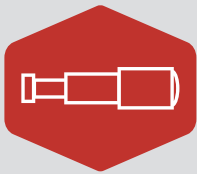




Lesson 8: Put on Christ

Main Idea: Paul addresses the idea of *being* right, not just *doing* right. He uses the metaphor of putting on Christ. In this lesson, you will learn what it means to be immersed in Christ's character.

Scripture: Galatians 3:26–29



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In the last session (Galatians 3:15–25), Paul contrasted the Law with God's covenant or promise to show that before the Law was given to people, Abraham was declared righteous by his faith. The Galatians needed to remember that they were made right with God through faith in Jesus, not lawkeeping, and this Old Testament lesson illustrated his point.

In verse 26 of Galatians 3, Paul shifts from using the pronoun “we” (verse 25) to using “you”—directing his next statements at those who were not Jewish by birth—that is, the Galatians and, by extension, all other Gentiles, or non-Jews). He tells the Galatians that they became sons of God by faith in Jesus, not by keeping a bunch of rules or adapting to Jewish culture.

He uses the phrase “sons of God” here in a specific sense. God created all humanity in His image and His likeness, so in a general sense all are children of God. But now, through faith in Jesus, the Galatians have become sons of God, born spiritually into His family.

In verse 27, Paul says that the Galatian believers have “put on Christ,” meaning that they are metaphorically clothed in Him. Imagery for this verse comes from the Roman culture of that day: when children were considered to have come into adulthood, they would take off children’s clothing and put on the toga of an adult, officially becoming Roman citizens with all the attendant rights and responsibilities.

Paul also could have had in mind Isaiah 61:10:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult 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 like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

The picture here is of a day when God will take off our old, filthy, unrighteous garments, and give us the very robes of His righteousness.

Paul uses this idea of putting on Christ or being clothed in Christ throughout his letters (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:12). Clothing is connected to people’s image and likeness, all the way back to the first instance of clothing in the Bible—Genesis 3:21. Once God found Adam and Eve hiding because of their nakedness, He clothed them with animal skins. When a person sees somebody, they do not just see their face and hands, but they also see the clothing as part of the person’s image. Paul is communicating to the Galatians that their overriding identity factor is now Christ: and Christ overrides other identity markers such as ethnicity, social standing, and gender—a point he communicates vividly in the next verse.

Think about Paul’s own identity transformation. Remember, Paul was originally Saul the Pharisee. Now Paul writes that his number one identity is Jesus: a massive shift for someone who once persecuted Jesus’ followers. Paul begins verse 28 with, “neither Jew nor Greek,” referencing ethnicity and culture as entities that bow before Christ’s finished work on the Cross. No longer does one have to take on Jewish culture to be in right relationship with God. A person can be in right relationship with God and follow Jesus no matter their culture.

Paul then writes, “neither slave nor free.” In the world of Paul’s time, there were clear class distinctions. The lowest class, making up one-third of the population, was the slave class. When someone joined the Body of Christ, everybody was on an equal playing field in Christ, so much so that slaves and masters called each other brother. In the church, someone could actually be a slave and preach the Word of God to their master sitting among the listeners.

Gender barriers, too, have been removed, as Paul notes with “neither male nor female.” He writes this not to erase distinctions between the genders but because,

in that day, women were considered inferior to men. New Testament scholar Craig S. Keener sheds some light on inferior treatment in the arenas of family and property: “Roman law generally allowed women to inherit. Biblical law allowed daughters to inherit only if there were no sons (Numbers 27:8) and if they married endogamously (within their clan).”¹ Women were often treated as property. A Jewish woman could not be greeted by a man out in the marketplace. A Jewish woman was not able to testify in court because her testimony was considered completely unreliable. Yet even if Roman laws look superior in these areas, they could not offer women the finished work of Christ. Both legal systems were incomplete. However, because Christ’s life, death, and resurrection applies to all humans equally, men could no longer hold that women were inferior: they were equal recipients of God’s grace. A believing woman’s identity was Christian first, female second. So too the males: Christian first, male second. Paul was telling his audience that because of the Cross, men and women are equal in worth.

Keener writes, “Paul is thus posing not an elimination of differences but rather a unity that encompasses diversity, as in his treatment of diverse gifts in the body in Romans 12:4–8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4–30.”² Paul’s argument culminates in verse 29 where he articulates that people who belonging to Christ are all Abraham’s offspring—the true Israel of God.

¹ Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 305..

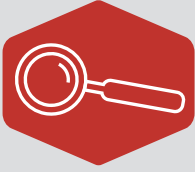
² Keener, 308.



My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through studying the biblical explanations and principles in the text and bullet points below, you will better understand what God's Word is saying to you today.

- Faith is what brings us into God's family (v. 26).
- What we put on identifies who we are, so choose carefully (v. 27).
- The Lord does not relate to us on the basis of our ethnic origin, citizenship, socio-economic position, employment, or whether we are male or female (vv. 26–29).



The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Write down your answer to the following question here or in your journal:

- Circle and write down any recurring words in this passage.

- Who appears in this passage?

- Where is this passage taking place?

- When is this passage occurring?

- Why is this passage important?

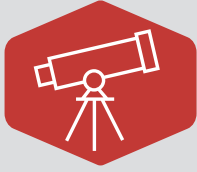
- What is happening in this passage?

- How does this passage apply to my life?

- How does the concept of being an adopted son of God impact you?

- What aspect of being “clothed in Christ” is most significant to you and why?

- How can you be a part of removing the barriers Christ came to tear down?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My *Fire Bible*

Read the study notes for the following verse in the Fire-Bible and answer the accompanying questions.

- **Galatians 3:28** Consult the *Fire Bible* notes on verse 28. What are the five barriers Paul removed to a spiritual relationship with Christ? Why does everyone who is “in Christ Jesus” have equal inheritance?