

# WHAT ARE YOU WEARING? / GET DRESSED

## INTRO:

Romans 13:11–14 NIV

<sup>11</sup> And do this, understanding the present time: **The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber**, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> **Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ**, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

- It's time to get up and get dressed.
- Last week I closed my message with:
  - Put on Christ as your righteousness, identity, and strength.
- I want to develop that over the next couple weeks (get dressed—put on Christ), and although I'm usually not a sucker for cheesy acronyms, but its so fitting to completing a thought here:
  - RISE
    - Righteousness
    - Identity
    - Strength
    - Ethics (or everyday living)

We'll begin the series talking about putting Christ on as our righteousness OR clothing ourselves with Christ's righteousness and the importance of it.

- By way of introduction, a question: What are you wearing in order to meet God?
- There's a parable Jesus tells of a wedding guest who gets thrown out of the banquet (into hell) because he's wearing the wrong clothes! ([Matthew 22:11-14](#))
- The imagery isn't random or trivial, it's actually loaded

## RESEARCH ON CULTURAL BELIEFS:

- Barna's team at Arizona Christian University asked Americans recently: **"Will a generally good person, who does enough good things for others, earn a place in heaven?"**
  - 48% of American adults said yes.
  - When evangelical churchgoers were asked the same question. (People in a service last Sunday at churches like ours. People singing about grace.)
    - 43% said yes.
- Ligonier/Lifeway asked another relevant question/statement: **"Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature."**
  - 55% of evangelicals agreed.
  - Widen the lens to Americans who identify with a Christian affiliation and agreement rose to 69%
- Two independent research firms, two different questions, same finding:

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- People are essentially good AND good people go to heaven.
- Even crazier and somewhat perplexing to me was another Ligonier/Lifeway question: **“God counts a person as righteous not because of one’s works but only because of one’s faith in Jesus Christ.”**
  - 81% of evangelicals agree
- Wait. Hold all three together. (Evangelical responses)
  - 81% say righteousness comes by faith alone, not works.
  - 55% say people are basically good by nature.
  - 43% say good people will earn a place in heaven.
  - Same population, American evangelicals, measured by two independent research teams, with different questions. Same result.
    - Taken together, these studies reveal a common theology that is quietly emerging:
      - Jesus is the only way, but we’re basically good, and good people who do good things go to heaven.
    - OR another idea as Barna puts it in his analysis (based on their research and set of questions... note that I’m compiling different research):
      - ‘The study results raised another issue that concerned Barna. “Millions of people who regularly attend Christian churches believe that eternal salvation does not depend on the sacrifice of Christ because of our sins. They don’t understand this fundamental tenet of Christian belief.” “Instead, we have a majority of self-described Christians hedging their eternal bets by integrating multiple means of salvation into their personal security plan. They say they are relying on Jesus to wash away their sins, but they also expect their good works to gain them points with God, and they retain the possibility of other pathways to eternal peace, just in case.”’
- Consider what's happening: People know the doctrinal formula, but they’ve lost the system it belongs to.
  - In other words: People can recite the cure (Jesus) but they no longer believe [or forgot] the diagnosis (sin).
    - As in, if people are basically good and their good works grant them favor with God then grace stops being the rescue of lost sinners and instead becomes God’s help for basically good people.
  - R.C. Sproul had a phrase for this: "happy inconsistencies" — affirming biblical truths while unknowingly holding beliefs that contradict them. (Ligonier's own framing of their 2025 results: a discipleship gap, not a knowledge gap.)
- The question this morning isn't whether you can recite the formula, 81% can.
  - It’s what clothing are you putting on?
  - Your righteousness? Your goodness? Your best efforts and religious works?
  - OR Christ’s righteousness that is “IMPUTED” or “credited/given” by grace through faith?

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## Citations:

1. *American Worldview Inventory 2025*, George Barna, Report #11: "Most Americans Say Eternal Salvation Demands a Blend of Works and Grace" (Cultural Research Center, Arizona Christian University, Nov. 25, 2025). N=2,000 U.S. adults, fielded May 2025. Statement: "A person who is generally good, or does enough good things for other people, will earn a place in Heaven" — 48% all adults; 43% evangelical church attenders. ([web.arizonachristian.edu/CRC/2025/AWVI-2025\\_11-Most-Rely-on-Grace-and-Works-for-Eternal-Salvation\\_FINAL.pdf](http://web.arizonachristian.edu/CRC/2025/AWVI-2025_11-Most-Rely-on-Grace-and-Works-for-Eternal-Salvation_FINAL.pdf))
2. *The State of Theology 2025*, Ligonier Ministries / Lifeway Research (2025). Statement: "Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature" — 69% agree among respondents affiliated with evangelical, Black Protestant, mainline, or Roman Catholic traditions (all attendance levels); 55% agree among respondents holding evangelical beliefs (Lifeway four-statement definition). Data explorer: [thestateoftheology.com](http://thestateoftheology.com)
3. *The State of Theology 2025*, Ligonier Ministries / Lifeway Research (2025). Statement: "God counts a person as righteous not because of one's works but only because of one's faith in Jesus Christ." — U.S. evangelicals: 81% agree (59% strongly, 22% somewhat). Data explorer: [thestateoftheology.com](http://thestateoftheology.com)
4. NOTE: Barna's evangelical figure reflects adults who attend evangelical churches; Ligonier/Lifeway's reflects adults holding defined evangelical beliefs.

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## SINCE THE GARDEN, MAN HAS BEEN TRYING TO MAKE HIS OWN GARMENTS

### Genesis 3:7–8 NIV

<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. <sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

- Isn't it interesting, that they knew they were naked and needed a covering — it's their first response when their eyes were opened.
- They sewed their own garments of fig leaves, but knew it wasn't enough — they still hid from God when they heard him walking in the garden.
  - They somehow intrinsically knew that they weren't ready to meet God.
  - *unlike so many ignorant today, maybe its because they had a better grasp of who he is and his holiness?*
  - *That's part of the problem, as a culture, even church culture today can't comprehend the holiness of God.*

### Genesis 3:21 NIV

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<sup>21</sup> The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

- So God stepped in and covered them with adequate clothing.
- Notice that blood had to be shed, a life for life, a sacrifice on their behalf - a lamb that would point towards THE lamb of God.
- This is the gospel in seed form, a salvation that is given and not earned.

The problem as noted in the research is that people are still sewing fig leaves together by appealing to their own righteousness, goodness, and works.

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## BUT WHAT DOES THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAY ABOUT OUR 'RIGHTEOUSNESS'?

**Isaiah 64:6 NIV**

<sup>6</sup> All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

- Our righteous acts are like filthy rags.
- Filthy rags = menstrual garments/rags = our best righteous acts are basically used, dirty, tampons before the Lord.
- In context with the law, that would make us unclean and unable to enter the presence of the Lord.
- They're just another version of fig leaves.
- This is important to know in light of the research.
  - Your good deeds, 'good person' belief will NOT be enough.

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## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT PEOPLE'S INHERENT GOODNESS?

- **There is none righteous**

**Romans 3:10-12 NIV**

<sup>10</sup> As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

- **All have sinned and fall short of God's standards**

**Romans 3:23 NIV**

<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- **All share in Adam's sin, nature, and consequence (namely death)**

**Romans 5:12 NIV**

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<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

**Romans 5:18–19 NIV**

<sup>18</sup> Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. <sup>19</sup> For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

- **Therefore we are not by nature good, but rather we are corrupt and sinful.**
  - It is a lie of the enemy to think that people are inherently good.
  - We do have a God-given conscience, but that only serves to show us right and wrong... but even that can be corrupted and bypassed.
- **So ‘our righteousness’ and ‘our goodness’ is like clothing ourselves with filthy garments, fig leaves and showing up to the king’s wedding.**
  - Remember the guy thrown out?
  - Remember the 43% who think their good works will get them in?
  - Remember the 55% who think we’re good by nature?
  - Don’t be that guy.

BUT, the gospel of Jesus is GOOD NEWS...

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## IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS: RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT IS GIVEN BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

In the Bible, "impute" means to credit, reckon, or charge something to someone's account. Rooted in the Greek word *logizomai*, it is a legal and financial term.

- **We first see this clearly laid out (not just in seed form) in Genesis:**

**Genesis 15:6 NIV**

<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

- LXX uses *logoizomai* - impute - here translated as ‘credited’
  - Note that all Abram did was simply to believe (and trust) God
  - The call to believe and trust is the same thing we are called to... more on that in a minute
- **We also see the garments of God’s righteousness/salvation given to us in the OT — looking forward to what Christ would do for us.**

**Isaiah 61:10 NIV**

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<sup>10</sup> I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

- Of note: It's HIS garment/robe of righteousness that we are clothed with.

## **Zechariah 3:1-4 NIV**

<sup>1</sup> Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. <sup>2</sup> The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?" <sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. <sup>4</sup> The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you."

- Here Zechariah gets a vision of Joshua standing before the Lord and Satan is also present as the accuser.
  - We see that Joshua (the high priest of his day) stands filthy and accused before the Lord
  - But we also see him as one 'snatched from the fire' - a picture of rescue and grace
  - The Lord Jesus (in preincarnate form as the Angel of the Lord) intercedes and defends him before God, the father.
  - The angel of the Lord/Jesus commands a changing of his clothes
    - Notice the angel of the Lord - Jesus has
      - Taken away his sin
      - Provided new garments - fine garments
- **This righteousness (his righteousness, the fine garments) is given by faith.**

## **John 6:29 NIV**

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

## **Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV**

<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.

## **Romans 10:9-10 NIV**

<sup>9</sup> If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

## **Romans 4:4-5 NIV**

<sup>4</sup> Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. <sup>5</sup> However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.

## **Romans 4:22-24 NIV**

<sup>22</sup> This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." <sup>23</sup> The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, <sup>24</sup> but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

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## Philippians 3:9 NIV

<sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

## Romans 5:1 NIV

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

### Putting these key components together: Imputed Righteousness and Justification.

- Imputed is a financial term.
  - On the cross, he paid our debt, cancelling the charges against us...
  - But then he credits/imputes us with righteousness, his perfect righteousness.

## 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV

<sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Justification is a courtroom word.
  - Justification is God's legal declaration that a sinner is righteous in His sight. Not because of anything in us, but because Christ's righteousness is credited to us through faith.
  - Justification is a verdict, not a process.
  - God doesn't gradually make us righteous and then declare it — He declares it fully the moment we believe.

### One note before concluding.

- So are works worthless?
- Paul spends two whole chapter addressing this in [Romans 6](#) & 7.
- Good works are not the ROOT of our salvation, but they ARE the PROOF or the FRUIT that our faith is genuine and alive.
- James is also going to make the point:

## James 2:26 NIV

<sup>26</sup> As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

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## CONCLUSION: PUTTING IT TOGETHER

- **Story about Melvin that I like to share at funerals**
  - He was scared to die, even though he had been in the faith for a long time
  - He was concerned that he 'hadn't done enough' wasn't 'good enough'
  - He was worried about showing up in the wrong clothes.
  - It was then that I reminded him that we don't show up in our clothes, but in the clothes that Christ provides... his righteousness.

# ***WHAT ARE YOU WEARING? / GET DRESSED***

- I put it this way: It's not about who you are or what you've done, but rather its all about who He is and what He has done for us.
- **Think about everything we've seen today.**
  - Adam's fig leaves.
  - Isaiah's filthy garments.
  - Joshua's dirty robes.
  - The wedding guest.
  - Every one of them asks the same question.
  - "What are you wearing before God?"
  - Then...Paul answers.

**Romans 13:14 NIV**

**<sup>14</sup> Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.**

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## **RESPONSE:**

- **Don't trust in your own clothes or goodness**
  - You're not good enough, your best works are likely filthy rags
- **Reach out to Jesus**
  - Believe in who he is - the son of God, God the Son
  - Believe in what he's done for us
  - Receive by faith, his garment of salvation, fine garments, Christ's righteousness applied to our accounts.
- **Live lives of worship and faith.**
  - Let your good works be the evidence that you believe, the fruit of your salvation