

Put On Christ By Kent Heaton

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). The inheritance of the “saints of light” (Col. 1:12) is a relationship shared between the Father and His children whom he refers as “sons of God.” The privilege of being able to cry out, “Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6) is found only to those who have willingly given their lives to Jesus Christ. To be a child of God requires obedience to the will of God (Matt. 7:21).

The apostle Paul outlines the elements of faith in his letter to the churches of Galatia as key to the relationship of the spiritual children of Abraham (Gal. 3). The allegory of Galatians 4:21-31 will illustrate the freedom found in those who embrace faith in Jesus Christ. Faith works in the hearts of men to teach them the message of salvation that can only be found in the one true Son of God. This faith can only come from one gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Salvation is no longer from the works of the law but from faith (Gal. 3:1-9).

Faith alone cannot save and Paul does not suggest in Galatians that one can be a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus alone (James 2:24). It is in the agency of faith that one is moved to embrace the death of the Lord in obedience to salvation. Sons of God are found in those who through faith in Christ Jesus are baptized into Christ Jesus; thereby putting on Christ. The illusion to “put on Christ” is likened to putting on a garment. Paul uses the same language to describe putting on the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18).

Is it necessary to “put on Christ” to be saved? If one never “puts on Christ” will they enjoy eternal life? Faith does not put on Christ – baptism does. It does not matter if you are “Jew or Greek ... slave nor free ... male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:28-29). Saved people are the spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:9). To receive the promise one must be in Christ. The means by which one puts on Christ is baptism according to Galatians 3:26-27.

Putting on Christ comes from a heart moved by the message of hope found in the word of God. On the Day of Pentecost, 3,000 souls put on Christ because they believed the message of freedom and willingly accepted by faith the commands of the Lord (Acts 2:37-41). The Treasurer of Ethiopia put on Christ when he “went down into the water” and was baptized (Acts 8:26-40). Saul of Tarsus took off his robes of Jewish Law and put on Jesus Christ in the city of Damascus. Ananias said to Saul, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Paul uses the figure of “putting on garments” in his letter to Ephesus. There is a need to take off the garments of sin and clothe oneself in garments of righteousness dipped in the blood of Jesus Christ. “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:20-24). Put on Christ today in the fulfillment of your obedience to Christ.

Foolish Trades

A man walked into a convenience store, put a \$20 bill on the counter and asked for change. When the clerk opened the drawer, the man pulled a gun and asked for all the cash in the register. The man took the cash from the clerk and fled, leaving his \$20 bill on the counter. So how much did he get from the drawer? Fourteen bucks.

How often have we done the similar things, giving up something precious in an attempt to get something else of even more value, only to be disappointed in what we end up with? Remember Esau? He left his birthright on the counter as he grabbed a bowl of bean soup and ran. Not a smart trade.

Any time we trade God's favor for the favor of men, we do the same thing. Any time we trade an eternity with God to "live for the moment," we do the same thing. Any time we trade our character and reputation for a few minutes of passion or pleasure, we do the same thing. Don't make any foolish trades today. Hold on to that which is most important.

Hebrews 12:15-17 - "Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God... lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."

Ambiguous Recommendations

Robert Thornton, a professor of economics at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA, was, like many teachers, frustrated about having to write letters of recommendation for students with dubious qualifications, so he put together an arsenal of statements that can be read two ways. He calls his collection the "Lexicon of Inconspicuously Ambiguous Recommendations", or LIAR, for short.

Thornton explains that LIAR may be used to offer a negative opinion of the personal qualities, work habits or motivation of the candidate while allowing the candidate to believe that it is high praise. Some examples from LIAR:

To describe a person who is extremely lazy: "In my opinion, you will be very fortunate to get this person to work for you."

To describe a person who is totally inept: "I most enthusiastically recommend this candidate with no qualifications whatsoever."

To describe an ex-employee who had problems getting along with fellow workers: "I am pleased to say that this candidate is a former colleague of mine."

To describe a candidate who is so unproductive that the job would be better left unfilled: "I can assure you that no person would be better for the job."

To describe a job applicant who is not worth further consideration: "I would urge you to waste no time in making this candidate an offer of employment."

To describe a person with lackluster credentials: "All in all, I cannot say enough good things about this candidate or recommend him too highly."

Robert Thornton is right, isn't he? We don't like to hurt peoples' feelings, but we don't want to be totally dishonest either, so we are excited to find a way to be

ambiguous. We call it ambiguity, speaking a half-truth, using mental reservation, twisting the truth a bit, being ambivalent. Perhaps at least Thornton was more honest when he called his collection "LIAR".

It may be that no Christian characteristic has suffered more in the workplace than honesty. It shouldn't be that way. Jesus wants his people to be known as a people of truth. It is important that those around us can trust what we say without wondering whether we really mean it or not. "Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:25).