

The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians

Clothed With Christ

Galatians 3:27

1. Having “Clothed Yourselves with Christ” Refers to Forensic Justification.
God has providentially used the epistle to the Galatians in drawing a clear line of division between the one true gospel message and all false gospel messages.
 - A. Justification and not Sanctification
The continuing context of Paul’s argument thus far is over the sufficiency of faith for justification. This is the explicit conclusion at which he has just arrived (v.24), and it is the idea that is being described in terms of both baptism and clothing.
 - B. Forensic and not Organic
The justification that Paul is writing about is best understood as a legal declaration that God has made concerning the sinner on account of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is a declaration that is set in stone, it is not something that improves over time. It is a legal declaration of status, not an achievement of a moral standard. This is the result of an imputation of an alien righteousness, not an infusion of Christ’s righteousness that mingles with our own to result in our justification (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).
2. Forensic Justification is Indivisible from Substitutionary Atonement (cf. Gal. 2:20)
This is an important point to remember and to hold fast. When either forensic justification by the imputation of Christ’s righteous or the substitutionary nature of the death of Christ is abandoned or compromised, the other does not long stand.
3. “Putting On” Christ Often Refers to Sanctification.
The use of this imagery that the Holy Spirit inspired in the Scriptures is not monolithic. In the Old Testament, it was used to describe both the activity of the righteous as well as the picture of forensic righteousness (Job. 29:14; Zech 3:3-4). Paul uses the imagery to describe both a past action that is not repeatable and an ongoing activity in which all Christians will persevere in the same passage (Col. 3:10-12). Very often, the imagery of “putting on” is used in an instruction for how Christians must now live (Rom. 13:12-14; Eph 4:24; 6:14; 1 Th. 5:8).