

A DEFENCE OF THE AUTHENTIC GOSPEL: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

(LESSON FORTY-NINE)

“BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST”

GALATIANS 3:27

(ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

We will commence our Lesson this evening with the comments of **Warren Wiersbe**, relative to the section of Paul’s letter to the **Galatians** that we have been dealing with recently:

“With the coming of Jesus Christ, the nation of Israel moved out of childhood into adulthood. The long period of preparation was over. While there was a certain amount of glory to the Law, there was a greater glory in the gracious salvation of God as found in Christ. The Law could reveal sin and, to a certain extent, control behavior, but the Law could not do for the sinner what Jesus Christ can do.

To begin with, the Law could never justify the guilty sinner. ‘*I will not justify the wicked,*’ said the Lord (**Exodus 23:7**); yet Paul states that God ‘*justifies the ungodly*’ (**Romans 4:5**). King Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, reminded God to condemn the wicked and justify the righteous (**1 Kings 8:32**); and this was a proper request in light of the holiness of God. The trouble is, nobody was righteous! It is only through faith in Jesus Christ that the sinner is justified-declared righteous-before God.

Furthermore, the Law could never give a person a oneness with God, it separated man from God. There was a fence around the tabernacle and a veil between the holy place and the holy of holies."

Last week we said that in verse **26**, Paul explains why believers in the Age of the New Covenant, who have exercised faith in the historic Christ (the Christ who has already come), are no longer under the guardianship of the Law. He says, "*For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*"

In this verse, Paul changes from using the first person "we," which is a reference to the Jews in the Galatian church, to using the second person "you," which refers to both the Jews and the Gentiles. By so doing, Paul shows that the wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles had been broken down at the Cross, and that both races have become the sons of God in Christ Jesus.

The Greek word translated "*sons*" is **huios: (hwee-os')**, which properly means, "a son (by birth or adoption)." Figuratively, the word refers to anyone sharing the same nature as their Father. The word signifies someone who is of full age. Paul is saying here that under law, the individual was a minor and was therefore under a guardian. Now, under grace, the individual has attained to the status of an adult son, and has therefore outgrown the surveillance of his former guardian.

In verse **27**, Paul begins to inform his readers of his basis for claiming that believers in the Age of the New Covenant, who have exercised faith in Jesus Christ, are all sons of God in Christ. He writes, "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" Having spoken in verse **26**, of the Galatian believers as being "*in Christ*," referring to the mystical union which exists between Christ and the believer, Paul now reminds them of **how** they became united with Christ. He explains that when they put their faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, the Holy Spirit baptized, or placed them into Christ.

Brothers and sisters, when we were saved by grace through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, we were positioned in Him and identified with Him forever in a mysterious but very real spiritual sense. We were clothed with Christ, we were placed into the Body of Christ, and we were thus, united with Him. His life became our life, His righteousness became our righteousness and His inheritance became our inheritance—a life and righteousness and inheritance which is permanent. Paul refers to this as being *“baptized into Christ.”*

It is very important for us to understand that contrary to what we may have been taught previously, the “baptism” of which Paul is speaking in this verse is **not** a reference to water baptism. Paul is not alluding here to so-called “baptismal regeneration,” which is the belief that baptism is essential for salvation, being the means by which God actualizes the forgiveness of sins for the believer. To use this verse as a “proof text” for the view that baptism is necessary for salvation, is to ignore the context of the passage, as well as the overall context of Scripture, in order to try to prove an erroneous, pre-conceived, theological view.

In order to determine if this passage supports baptismal regeneration, or is even a reference to water baptism, we only have to read the immediate context. The overall context of Galatians is centered on Paul’s concern that some of the Galatian believers were turning from the authentic Gospel of grace to a false gospel of works (**Galatians 1:6-10**). The false gospel they were embracing was one that mixed God’s grace with the works of the Law, including circumcision, as a requirement for being saved, much like those who add baptism to faith as a requirement for salvation.

Paul’s message in **Galatians** is very, very clear. It is summarized in chapter **2** and verse **16**: *“Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and*

not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

This context of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, is seen throughout the first three chapters of **Galatians** and is reinforced in chapter **3** and verse **26**: “*for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*” This verse, along with all other passages of Scripture dealing with salvation, makes it clear that salvation is “through faith in Christ Jesus,” and since water baptism must always be preceded by faith if it is to have any meaning at all, we can know that it is faith in Christ that saves us, not the water baptism that follows faith. While water baptism is important as a way of identifying us with Christ, it only has meaning if it comes from saving faith which always comes first.

Is there any plausible reason **from the context of this verse** to assume that Paul is speaking here of water baptism? The obvious answer is no. There is no contextual evidence from which to draw such a conclusion.

The Greek word translated “*baptized*” in **Galatians 3:27**, is **baptizó**: (**bap-tid’-zo**), which pictures the placing of a thing into a new environment, or into something else. The word literally means, “to place into.” Since the ritual of water baptism involved that action, the Greek word meaning “to place into,” came to signify also what we mean by the act of administering the rite of water baptism.

Baptism has three usages in the New Testament.

1 There is a **ceremonial** baptism, where the saved person is baptized in water as a testimony of his or her salvation, such as **1 Corinthians 1:14-17**:

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.

16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)

17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

2 There is a **mechanical** baptism in the sense of something being introduced or placed into a new environment or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or relationship to its previous environment or condition. We have an example of this in **1 Corinthians 12:13**: *“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”*

3 There is a **metaphorical** use of the term. In **Mark 10:38-40**, we have an example of such a use:

38 Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

39 And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized,

40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

Paul’s use of the word **baptizó** in **Galatians 3:27**, is clearly **mechanical**. There is no mention of water anywhere in the context of **Galatians 3**! Paul is speaking here of the introduction, or placing of the believing sinner into the new environment of Jesus Christ and the Church, which is His mystical Body. This union radically and permanently alters his or her condition and relationship to his or her previous environment or condition. In this sense **baptizó** means, “to be completely identified with.” It is this “baptism” that Paul refers to in **1 Corinthians 12:13**, which we read earlier: *“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”*

The question we need to answer from Scripture is, “How does an individual get baptized into Christ?” Another way of asking the question is to ask, “What makes a person a believer?” The answer to these questions is found in **Romans 8:8-9**:

8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

What is it that makes a person a believer? It is his or her being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Which baptism is it that places a person into Christ, or makes him or her a part of the Body of Christ? Is it water baptism? Of course not. It is Spirit baptism that does so!

Is it not obvious brothers and sisters, that the baptism that **1 Corinthians 12:13** and **Galatians 3:27** are referring to, is not water baptism at all? Both verses are clearly referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit by which believers are made part of the Body of Christ as they are indwelt by His Holy Spirit, and are “*marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit*” according to **Ephesians 1:13-14**. The Spirit’s **baptism, indwelling, and sealing** occur at the time of conversion and therefore there are no commands in the New Testament for believers to be baptized, indwelt or sealed with the Spirit.

In **Matthew 3:11** John the Baptist said, “*I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*” It is the Holy Spirit Who baptizes the believer into Jesus Christ. The act of water baptism is merely an outward picture of this inward reality accomplished by the Spirit of God.

Holy Spirit baptism is the personal and private experience that identifies the believing sinner with Christ, while water baptism is a public witness

of the person's identification with Jesus Christ. In other words, water baptism is an outward picture of the inner work of the Holy Spirit.

It is the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which "baptizes" us into the Body death, and His glorious resurrection. It is a mystery as to how every person of Christ. Clearly, this baptism is a supernatural work of God. Being united to Christ means that we are connected to everything Christ ever did for our salvation. We participate in His life of perfect obedience, His who believes in Christ is transported back to the Cross, to die with Christ, to be buried with Him and to be resurrected with Him, but it is also a spiritual reality!

Galatians 3:27 is not referring to water baptism at all. Those who try to force baptismal regeneration into this verse have no scriptural grounds for doing so.

Paul says, those who have been baptized into Christ have "*put on*" Christ. The words "*put on*" are a translation of the Greek word **enduó**: (**en-doo'-o**), which means, "to clothe or be clothed with (in the sense of sinking into a garment)." **In Luke 15:22, the father of the prodigal son instructs his servants to, "Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him."** The words "*put it on*" are a translation of **enduó**.

Figuratively, the word conveys the idea of entering into an actual relationship with someone else. In the same way that a person who puts on a garment, envelops himself or herself in the garment, and is defined by it, so the person who is baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit, is entirely immersed in Christ and in His salvation, and is defined by Christ and His salvation.

The **New English Translation** renders the verse as follows: "*For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*"

The **New Living Translation** furnishes this rendering: "*And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.*"

The baptism of the Holy Spirit so unites and identifies believers with Christ, that Scripture says of them that they:

- **Died** with Christ, **Colossians 2:20**;
- were **Buried** with Christ, **Colossians 2:12**;
- were **Made Alive** with Christ, **Ephesians 2:5**;
- were **Raised** with Christ, **Colossians 3:1**;
- are **Seated** with Christ in the heavenlies, **Ephesians 2:6**;
- are to be **Manifested** with Christ in glory, **Colossians 3:4**.

All this is said of the believer at the present time, because he or she is “*in Christ Jesus,*” as a result of being baptized, or placed in Him by the Holy Spirit!

Warren Wiersbe comments that,

“The phrase put on Christ (**Galatians 3:27**) refers to a change of garments. The believer has laid aside the dirty garments of sin...and, by faith, received the robes of righteousness in Christ...But to the Galatians, this idea of 'changing clothes' would have an additional meaning. When the Roman child came of age, he took off the childhood garments and put on the toga of the adult citizen. The believer in Christ is not just a 'child of God'; he is also a 'son of God'...The believer has an adult status before God—so why go back into the childhood of the Law?”

But we must realize that with privilege comes responsibility. **Inwardly** we are clothed with Christ. We cannot get ever get any more of Christ than we got at the moment of salvation. But the big question is, “Is He being seen **outwardly**?” Our new **position** should motivate a new **practice**. Since we have clothed ourselves with Christ, we need to “wear Christ” so that others see Him on us, and thus recognize that He is in us. We need to live like Christ and the only way to do so is to depend on the Holy Spirit to give us both the desire and the power to live like Him.

The **New English Translation** renders **Philippians 2:12-13** in the following way:

12 So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence,

13 for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God.

It is our responsibility, by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, to work out in our everyday practice, the “Christ life” that has been worked in, just as the Lord Jesus did when He walked the earth, by a total dependence on the Holy Spirit.