

Putting On Christ

Romans 13:8-14; Galatians 3:26-29

Sunday, November 27, 2022 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction: You've got the uniform, now act the part. Soldier, police officer, clergy, etc. I went to a college and seminary that, at that time, had a fairly strict dress code. Young men were expected to wear a button-down shirt and a tie for every class. I was not unusual to see young men in suits. Except for my friend Ed, from India. I've mentioned him to several of you over the years. Ed had no use for ties, but in order to maintain the code he bought a brightly colored plaid tie during freshman orientation, wore that same tie all through his four years of school and then threw the tie away right after graduation and just before he returned to India. The dress code didn't work for him. I was quite comfortable with it, however, as I liked the dress code and the structured environment of the university. Wearing a shirt and tie or a suit reminded me that school was serious business and that I needed to do my best. I had a friend in ministry, Steve Schaeffer, explain the idea behind the clerical robe I'm wearing. It is a reminder that ministry is serious, sacred business and that I needed to do my best. There's something about a uniform, and while the Scriptures do not speak of uniforms, they do tell us to "put off" the works of darkness and to "put on" Christ. Let's look at that today.

- Set the Stage: Galatians and Romans
To set the stage, so to speak, the Book of Galatians speaks of baptism as a "putting on" of Jesus Christ. There is not differentiation, there is no "Jew or Greek". All who have faith in Christ are one in Christ and are heirs of the promises made to Abraham. The Book of Romans warns us that there is a matter of being spiritually awake we need to put on the armor of light, put on Christ and put off works of darkness listed there.

- Main Point
People put on a badge or uniform of service like that of the soldier, or a police officer.
We recognize a police officer by his uniform, and the uniform is, perhaps, a reminder to the officer of his training, and of the honor and standards of the position. In this key passage, the Bible tells us to "put on Christ". This is done in several places, in fact. The passage in Galatians informs us that we have put on Christ in baptism, but the passage in Romans indicates that there is an ongoing effort, or process, to putting on Christ. We know that putting on involves putting off some practices that were old and improper. We know that the word for "putting on" implies at its root a person sort of "sinking into" the role symbolized by the uniform. That is, it is something that we grow into, and we do it together as well as individually. That, of course, still begs the question, "How do we put on Christ?"

- Application: The Greeks put on Plato
Barne's Commentary tells us that the word rendered "'put ye on' is the same used in, and is commonly employed in reference to 'clothing' or 'apparel.'" The phrase to "put on" a person, which seems a harsh expression in our language, was one not infrequently used by Greek writers, and means to imbibe his principles, to imitate his example, to copy his spirit, to become like a leader or teacher. So the Greek writers speak of putting on Plato, Socrates, etc. meaning to take

them as instructors, to follow them as disciples. To be clothed with a person is a Greek phrase, signifying to assume the interests of another - to enter into his views, to imitate him, and be wholly on his side."

Have an Accountability Partner

Putting on Christ is both a singular event and a process of growth and learning. In addition to the obvious spiritual practices of prayer and meditation/study of Scripture, service and fellowship, there is the oft neglected practice of mutual spiritual care. What I mean by that is having a friend, someone you really trust, meet with you for prayer and to share your life together. You share your hopes, frustrations, successes and failure. You are accountable to that person and he is to you. Like some articles of clothing, sometimes you need to help each other put on Christ.

- Conclusion

I suppose that any good police officer puts on his uniform conscious not only that the uniform identifies him as police, but he is also conscious of that for which the uniform stands. By putting on Christ, we commit to His teachings, His worldview, and most importantly, to Him as a person. We do this when we are baptized, but grow into the role of a disciple through effort and accountability to each other. We will always be putting on Christ until we see Him face to face. But for today remember, you've got the uniform, now act the part.