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Galatians 3:24-29 – Let's Talk About Your Easter Outfit

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[sermons/InChristAlone2017 sub]

- Many years ago, there was an Emperor, who was so excessively fond of new clothes, that he spent all his money in dress. He did not trouble himself in the least about his soldiers; nor did he care to go either to the theatre or the chase, except for the opportunities then afforded him for displaying his new clothes. He had a different suit for each hour of the day; and as of any other king or emperor, one is accustomed to say, "he is sitting in council," it was always said of him, "The Emperor is sitting in his wardrobe."

Time passed merrily in the large town which was his capital; strangers arrived every day at the court. One day, two rogues, calling themselves weavers, made their appearance. They gave out that they knew how to weave stuffs of the most beautiful colors and elaborate patterns, the clothes manufactured from which should have the wonderful property of remaining invisible to everyone who was unfit for the office he held, or who was extraordinarily simple in character.

"These must, indeed, be splendid clothes!" thought the Emperor. "Had I such a suit, I might at once find out what men in my realms are unfit for their office, and also be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish! This stuff must be woven for me immediately." And he caused large sums of money to be given to both the weavers in order that they might begin their work directly.

So the two pretended weavers set up two looms, and affected to work very busily, though in reality they did nothing at all. They asked for the most delicate silk and the purest gold thread; put both into their own knapsacks; and then continued their pretended work at the empty looms until late at night.

"I should like to know how the weavers are getting on with my cloth," said the Emperor to himself, after some little time had elapsed; he was, however, rather embarrassed, when he remembered that a simpleton, or one unfit for his office, would be unable to see the manufacture. To be sure, he thought he had nothing to risk in his own person; but yet, he would prefer sending somebody else, to bring him intelligence about the weavers, and their work, before he troubled himself in the affair. All the people throughout the city had heard of the wonderful property the cloth was to possess; and all were anxious to learn how wise, or how ignorant, their neighbors might prove to be.

"I will send my faithful old minister to the weavers," said the Emperor at last, after some deliberation, "he will be best able to see how the cloth looks; for he is a man of sense, and no one can be more suitable for his office than he is."

So the faithful old minister went into the hall, where the knaves were working with all their might, at their empty looms. "What can be the meaning of this?" thought the old man, opening his eyes very wide. "I cannot discover the least bit of thread on the looms." However, he did not express his thoughts aloud.

...well, you know the rest of the story of the Emperor's New Clothes, written originally by Hans Christian Anderson and published in 1837...now translated into over 100 different languages...

- the old faithful minister went back and pretended that the cloth was magnificent because he certainly didn't want to be thought of being foolish and unfit for his office...

- so the minister came back and reported how beautiful the cloth was...
- then another messenger was sent who repeated the same charade...because who would want to admit he was simple or unfit...
- then the Emperor himself went...and of course could see nothing because nothing was there..."
- **How is this?" said the Emperor to himself. "I can see nothing! This is indeed a terrible affair! Am I a simpleton, or am I unfit to be an Emperor? That would be the worst thing that could happen--Oh! the cloth is charming," said he, aloud. "It has my complete approbation."**
- so the story ends with a procession throughout the entire town so everyone could learn how wise, or how ignorant, their neighbors might prove to be...and everyone affirmed their beauty...until...
- **"But the Emperor has nothing at all on!" said a little child. "Listen to the voice of innocence!" exclaimed his father; and what the child had said was whispered from one to another.**
- **"But he has nothing at all on!" at last cried out all the people. The Emperor was vexed, for he knew that the people were right; but he thought the procession must go on now! And the lords of the bedchamber took greater pains than ever, to appear holding up a train, although, in reality, there was no train to hold.**

- hmmm...I wonder what we would have done had we been in a similar situation?...
- now here's a really hard question – Friend, what if you were the emperor?...and there's actually a harder one...what if you are the emperor?...
- this morning – **Let's Talk about Your Easter Outfit**

- with that in mind, please open your Bible to Galatians chapter 3 – page 148 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- our church's theme this year is **In Christ Alone**...and why is that?...because this is the 500th anniversary of the protestant reformation...
 - which is a topic that is so ripe with rich, and important, and practical biblical themes...organized what we call the five great solas of the Protestant Reformation were that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scriptures alone, to the glory of God alone...

- we just finished a verse by verse study of the book of Colossians we've been doing the first quarter of the year because we like to study the Bible systematically and theme of Colossians is the preeminence of Christ – so it was a natural book to study...
- next Sunday we're beginning a brand new series on the Christological Psalms...that's something that surprises many people who are new to studying God's Word – how it all fits together – and how often very specific details about the person and work of Christ are predicted hundreds and sometimes thousands of years before they occurred...
- as a transition to that – we'd like to work through this important section of Scripture – about being clothed in Christ – please listen in – read **Galatians 3:24-29**
- so, **Let's Talk about Your Easter Outfit**...
 - everyone who walked into the room this morning is clothed in something, spiritually speaking...let me try to prove that...
 - if you interviewed the average person on the street, or at your workplace, or in your neighborhood...and asked – Do you believe you'll go to heaven when you die – this is almost always the universal answer – Well, I hope so...generally people don't say know – but rarely would they say they know for sure...

- then the follow up question is really where we get to the spiritual wardrobe issue...if you asked...
- what determines whether a person goes to heaven?...what is the reason you hope you'll go there some day?...
- almost always – the answer will have something to do with the person's works...
 - well, I'm a pretty good person...I try to do the right thing...I help others...I'm certainly not as bad as _____ (my neighbor, my brother in law, Adolf Hitler...)
- see, what is that person just said – I'm dressed in my own goodness...my own righteousness...that outfit is looking pretty good and it's certainly all I need...
- the emperor needs some different clothes...
- with the time we have remaining, let's work our way through this passage, and organize the argument of the verses like this:

I. The Possibility of Being Clothed with Christ – vv. 24 - 27

II. The Power of Being Clothed with Christ – v. 28

III. The Promise of Being Clothed with Christ – v. 29

I. The Possibility of Being Clothed with Christ – vv. 24 - 27

- the book of Galatians is important for a lot of reasons...
 - many students of Scripture believe this was one of the first books of the NT to be written...in the early 50's AD...
 - so the church is less than 20 years old...and yet Paul is very upset and stern in this letter...
 - here's a couple of examples...
 - **Galatians 1:6 - I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;**
 - **Galatians 3:1 - You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?**
 - can you imagine that one being read aloud in the churchhouse...gather around everyone, we have a letter to read from the apostle Paul this am...
 - apparently a group of false teachers had come into this young church and were teaching that salvation and/or Christian growth was accomplished by human works, or effort, or deeds...rule keeping, rituals, law...
 - Paul even gives a specific example of what he's talking about by calling out the apostle Peter...[which is pretty amazing when you think about it...]
 - **Galatians 2:11–13 - But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.**
 - that's one of the many effects of legalism...ethnic tension because of judging people by the color of their skin...or the sound of their voice...I'm better than you because of my superior clothes...
 - there's a person wearing (clothed in) self-righteousness...parading around as if its superior to others when in fact it's the height of foolishness...
 - that emperor needs new clothes and Paul says it's possible to...
 - **3:27 – have clothed yourself with Christ.**
 - now, why and how is that?...

A. Because of what our tutor taught us.

- the law was never intended to be a standard that a human being could keep on his own and therefore earn merit before God...it's not an end in itself...
- that's what's wrong with the person we mentioned a few minutes ago – who hopes he/she is going to go to heaven on the basis of the good done in this life...
 - it actually makes a fair amount of sense (God grades on a curve, He's a God of love, and I'm a pretty good person, especially when compared to _____)...until we open the Word of God...
 - because the tutor has something entirely different to say...
 - **Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**
 - God's standard is perfect holiness...
 - **Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death...**
 - whatever outfit you wear to the party of God's judgment...it will be a wardrobe malfunction...
 - and the tutor is trying to tell us that...my sin isn't just a little problem offset by human effort...it's a big one, requiring a supernatural tailor...
- **[pic of Steve/Kris at our wedding]...**
- Kris and I were married 35 years ago this summer...
 - I had just graduated from Bible college...I was going to work that summer building pools to earn enough money to pay for the wedding, but a trailer we could live in while going to seminary, and make enough money for that first year's seminary tuition...
 - so we were working like gangbusters right up the wedding – Kris moved there early and started working at the seminary – we were a couple of hours apart trying to coordinate all the details...before – listen to this – the invention of personal computers or cell phones...
 - and then to make it worse – I hyper-organized the details of the wedding weekend...surprise, surprise, surprise...
 - so 13 of my college buddies were coming in from out of town...I still lived with my parents in Merrillville – we were getting married in Elkhart on Saturday night...then we were flying out from Chicago for our honeymoon at 7 am Sunday morning
 - so we met Friday afternoon in Elkhart for the rehearsal...picked up our tuxes...and I threw mine in the truck of my car...
 - we did the wedding rehearsal – then all the guys drove back to Merrillville Friday night to stay at my parents house...
 - **[show pic]...**
 - the plan was the next morning all the guys were going to wake up and going golfing – playing some of the holes, not in foursomes, but as one big group of 13 guys playing at once...
 - then we were going to drive to Chicago to have pizza at Ginos East...
 - I really don't know what the girls were doing – decorating or some girl-stuff...
 - then we were going to drive back to Elkhart for the wedding...then drive back to Chicago for the second time that day [me and Kris – not everyone else]...then leave for the honeymoon the next morning...
 - so the schedule was rather tight...and it was all working fine until Friday night when we got back to Merrillville I pulled out my white tux and there was a big glob of black grease on the back...I don't mean a smudge...I mean a glob...
 - and I had to go play golf with my buddies...
 - **[pic of Steve and dad]...**so my dad, who was my best man, said – I'll take care of it...
 - and he went out and found another tux place that had a solution that took that stain out like it had never been there...

- now you might say – that’s kind of what salvation is like – God wipes off your stain...
- no – your tux doesn’t have a little grease stain...in fact, it’s not even a tux...
- if we’re going to let the Bible be our tutor – it tells us that all our righteousness is like wearing filthy rags...
 - and you and I can march down the street pretending it’s something else...
 - but friend – such a person is not wearing any clothes...at least not any clothes that would be considered righteous before our holy God...
 - wise is the person who allows the tutor to teach that hard but important lesson...
- that’s what Paul means at the beginning of verse 22 -- **Galatians 3:22 - But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.**
- the key here is understanding...

B. Because of what faith secures

- please follow the argument of verse 24 carefully...
- the law is not our tutor to lead us to ourselves...to lead us to more lawkeeping or self-righteousness...
- no, it leads us to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ...the events we’re celebrating this weekend...
- and the key question is – have you believed?...have you come to Him by faith alone?...
- **John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**
- friend -- has there even been a time where you admitted your admitted...and admitted that you possessed no righteousness of your own...or no ability to earn any...then you came to Christ...with empty, open hands, and requested the gift of His salvation by faith alone?...and here’s what happens if you do...

1. A righteous stand

- **Galatians 3:24 - Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.**
- it means not only that your sin is forgiven, but that the righteousness of Christ is placed on your account...
- there’s a beautiful picture of this in the OT...
- **Zechariah 3:1–5 - Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him...Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.” Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by.**
- that’s what happens when a person exercises faith in Christ...your sin is forgiven, and you are clothed in the righteousness of Christ...

2. An amazing relationship

- **Galatians 3:26 - For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.**
- how could you be a son of God?...you weren’t born that way...we’re not all God’s children...but you can be...”through faith in Christ Jesus”...because now you’re wearing the right clothes...

3. A powerful union

- **Galatians 3:27 - For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**
- Paul explained it this way to the Corinthians... **2 Corinthians 5:21 - He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**
- the shed blood of Jesus Christ makes all of that possible...
- it's the beauty and the centrality of the substitutionary death of Christ...
- **Isaiah 53:6 - All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.**

- friend, can I ask you this morning – do you know that you know that you know that you're on your way to heaven?...
- you're not like the emperor, are you?...and I realize you might say – I think I might be, and I'm feeling a bit naked...because my own righteousness is far skimpier than I thought – I'm having a major wardrobe malfunction right here on Easter Sunday...
- the good news is – God has an incredible outfit for you...
 - it will fit perfectly...it would look absolutely stunning...and it won't cost you a thing...
 - why not place your faith and trust in Christ today?...
- Christian friend – how can this outfit impact us?...the answer in a nutshell is – in several incredible ways...and perfectly suited for the day and age in which we live...
 - think about some of the biggest challenges we are seeing in culture right now...
 - gospel centered Christians living out the impact of Christ's imputed righteousness can have an unbelievably practical and unbelievably powerful impact in our communities and in our world...

II. The Power of Being Clothed with Christ

- please follow the argument of verse 28...
- **Galatians 3:28 - There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**
- what does that mean is impacted by Christians living out the implications of their new outfit...

A. Ethnic unity

- please think about the power of that statement...
- instead of the incredible racial tension gripping our country...and even having a festering impact here in our community...
 - when Hispanic persons trust Christ – they are immediately clothed in the righteousness of Christ
 - when Asian persons trust Christ...
 - when black persons trust Christ...white persons...
 - so is there any place for racial prejudice in the body of Christ?...
 - of course not – that's like wearing a white tuxedo or formal gown and then going and playing in the mud...
- and if time allowed – we could trace that theme throughout Scripture...of how God loves the nations...and how the church of Jesus Christ is purposely multi-ethnic...
- **[Heather – please work with Jeremy to select 4-5 of the best Hartford Hub pics that illustrate this point]...**
- [develop – one of the reasons we are excited about the HH and the NCC...and we admit, we have a lot to learn about multi-ethnic ministry – but we have hope, because of the power of the Person we're clothed with – the RISEN Savior]...

B. Economic unity

- Scripture is clear that there is also no place in the church of Jesus Christ for economic prejudice...
- a book we believe was written even earlier than Galatians was the book of James...
James 2:1–6 - My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man.
- the beauty of this is – the ground is level at the cross...
 - regardless of what your last W-2 says – if you know Christ...you are clothed in His righteousness...
- [if time – develop how both issues were sovereignly address by God right after the church was born because of the famine affecting Jewish believers – and the Gentile churches took up a love offering....]

C. Gender unity

- this statement doesn't cancel out the fact that God created us male and female and there are clearly established roles in the family and they church...we always interpret Scripture in light of Scripture...
- but women are clothed in the exact same righteousness as Christ...
 - and that is why Jesus treated women with such dignity...
 - and why the early church was filled with stories of the important contributions women were making to the accomplishment of the plan and program of God...
- this verse leads us to a series of questions, doesn't it?...
 - are you allowing your new outfit to impact the way you relate to people of different ethnicities, and economic conditions, and genders...
 - or is there nagging examples of prejudice that really stains the outfit Christ has provided?
- so the possibility, and the power, and lastly...

III. The Promise of Being Clothed with Christ

- is this new outfit an end in itself?...
- **Galatians 3:29 - And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.**
- that new outfit of yours is a ticket and a guarantee of all sorts of future blessings...
- **2 Corinthians 1:20 - For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.**
- [cf. visiting with Mrs. Smith in the hospital – the beauty and the hope of a person clothed in the righteousness of Christ...]

1. **My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.**
2. **When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.**
3. **His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.**
4. **When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.**
 - **Refrain:
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.**