

13. Clothed in Christ (2Q 2011—Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible)

Biblical material: Gal. 3:26–29, Rom. 6:1–6, Col. 3:1–10, Eph. 4:22–24, 1 Cor. 15:49–55, 2 Cor. 5:1–4; Romans 13:14.

Quotes

- There is a communion with God that asks for nothing, yet asks for everything. *George MacDonald*
- Father in Heaven! When the thought of thee wakes in our hearts let it not awaken like a frightened bird that flies about in dismay, but like a child waking from its sleep with a heavenly smile. *Soren Kierkegaard*
- The purposes of God point to one simple end—that we should be as he is, think the same thoughts, mean the same things, possess the same blessedness. *George MacDonald*
- Seek to cultivate a buoyant, joyous sense of the crowded kindnesses of God in your daily life. *Alexander MacLaren*
- Man can certainly flee from God... but he cannot escape him. He can certainly hate God and be hateful to God, but he cannot change into its opposite the eternal love of God which triumphs even in his hate. *Karl Barth*

Questions

How are we to be “clothed in Christ”—what does this really mean? What of the final end-time “re-clothing”—how do we understand this? How are we to be daily clothed in our experience with God? How do we take off our old selves and put on our new selves? How do we rightly represent God—how are we to be a “spectacle” to all?

Bible summary

Gal. 3:27 tells us we have clothed ourselves with Christ. Rom. 13:14 commands us to clothe ourselves with Christ. In Col. 3:1-10 we are to “take off” our old selves and “put on” our new selves—clearly “clothing” imagery (similarly Eph. 4:22-24). At the return of Jesus, we are totally “re-clothed: “the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” (1 Cor. 15: 53 NIV). Using the imagery of our current physical form being like a tent, 2 Cor. 5:1-4 says that we are to be “clothed” with our heavenly dwelling—our immortal heavenly bodies. Romans 6:1-6 tells us what this new life will be like as we clothe ourselves with Christ.

Comment

“And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.” (Gal. 3:27 NLT). What about this “putting on” of Christ? How does it work? And what does it mean? We’ve already mentioned that this should not be seen as simply covering up—especially not covering up evil. The transformation is internal, and the outward clothing only reflects the inner change. But in the same way as we change our clothes and even act differently, we are to be “clothed in Christ”—in other words to live and talk and act as he did. Not in our own power, but in the power that God supplies. For it is not enough simply to have a new set of good clothes—we have to be completely different! Nor are we like models on a catwalk, exhibiting our wonderful

clothing. No—we are to be a spectacle to angels and to men in how we live and what we do. Most of all we are not to be showing ourselves, but God. For as John Newton wrote: “Only God is permanently interesting.” Only God gives us a real point of reference, an explanation for our existence and for everything we see around us. Only God can give reality and permanence to a life that is temporary and passing.

For we were not created to be like this. To live our threescore years and ten, and then vanish like a puff of smoke.

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle,” wrote Job. Job 7:6 NIV.

“As for man, his days are like grass...like a flower.... The grass withers and the flowers fall.” Psalm 103:15, Isaiah 40:7.

All we are is “A mist that appears for a while and then vanishes.” James 4:14

“My days vanish like smoke, I fade away like an evening shadow,” says the Psalmist. Psalm 102:3; Psalm 109:23.

This world will also pass away. For God comes to make all things new, to transform this sad existence into his eternity of joy. His answer to our sense of pointlessness and insignificance is the assurance of a God-filled present and an eternity in his presence.

For “we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’” 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 NIV.

God is the only answer, the only meaning, the only value.

Ellen White Comments

The knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ expressed in character is the very highest education. It is the key that opens the portals of the heavenly city. This knowledge it is God’s purpose that all who put on Christ shall possess. {CT 37}

Day by day put on Christ, and in the brief season of your test and trial here below maintain your dignity in the strength of God, as co-workers with the highest agencies of heaven. {CT 103-4}

He who contemplates God’s glory and infinite love, will have humble views of himself, but by beholding the character of God, he will be changed into His divine image. {TMK 175}

But the day is coming in which the battle will have been fought, the victory won. The will of God is to be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Then the nations will own no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving,—the robe of Christ’s righteousness. All nature, in its surpassing loveliness, will offer to God a constant tribute of praise and adoration. The world will be bathed in the light of heaven. The years will move on in gladness. The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold greater than it is now. Over the scene the morning stars will sing together, and the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming, “There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death.” {CET 229}