



From Study of the Types, Chap. 12

THE GARMENTS OF THE BELIEVER

by Ada R. Habershon

Many typical incidents which have one feature in common may be linked together into helpful Bible studies. For instance, the Word is full of instructions to believers as to the garments which they are to put off, and those which they are to put on; and these are beautifully illustrated by many Scripture scenes.

They divide themselves into three classes: those that speak to us of man-made garments, God-given garments, and Spiritwrought garments. The first we are to put off; the second we put upon us; and the third the Spirit works through us.

Satan, in the garden of Eden, stripped man of his robe of innocence, and left him naked and unfit for God's presence. We have this in the tenth of Luke, in the parable of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and "fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead." He was on his downward road, with his back on the place of blessing, going towards the place of the curse, and he lay thus by the roadside -- a picture of man's helpless condition, after Satan had done his work, stripped him, wounded him, and left him to die. In the story of the demoniac we have another illustration of this. When the Lord met him he "was naked, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs," the place of death; but when the devils had been cast out, he was found "at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind."

When Adam and Eve found out their condition, they at once tried to remedy it -- "The eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons." They probably thought, as so many of their descendants have since done, that they were doing "their best." The margin reads, "Things to gird about" -- how different from the girdle of truth which God provides! Those fig-leaves were but a picture of themselves; for, plucked from the parent stem, death had set in, and though for a time they might remain glossy and beautiful, they would soon be withered and dead. The fig-leaf aprons were not sufficient to make them fit for God's presence; and when they heard God's voice and hid themselves from Him, they still felt that they were naked. So it is always with the garments that

man makes for himself, though Satan would persuade him that he is well clad. "Ye clothe you," says Haggai, "but there is none warm"; and we read in Isa. lix. 6, "Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works," for "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

Though we have this sad picture of man's condition in Gen. iii., the chapter does not close without the Holy Spirit telling us of God's remedy. "Unto Adam also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." With the first dress, the fig-leaf aprons, God had nothing to do; and with these coats of skins man had nothing to do. They were entirely provided by God, and spoke of Christ Himself, "the Lord our righteousness," who becomes indeed our robe of righteousness as we obey the command, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

These coats of skins remind us of one of the laws of the burnt-offering in Leviticus, which ordained that "the priest that offereth any man's burnt-offering, even the priest shall have to himself the skin of the burnt-offering which he hath offered." The burnt-offering represented, as we have seen, the Godward aspect of Christ's work in all its perfect acceptance; an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. The priests might not partake -- it was all for God, all consumed on the altar; but Aaron's sons presented it, and to them belonged the skin, in which they might clothe themselves -- a beautiful figure of the standing of the believer as "accepted in the Beloved."

The change of raiment that is needed by each of us is illustrated by several Bible incidents. We do not read that Adam and Eve put the coats of skins over their fig-leaf aprons. They had surely done with the latter for ever. When the prodigal returned to his father's home and the father said to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet," the best robe was not put over the rags in which he returned; they were no longer needed.

We read in the story of Bartimaeus that when he had heard the glad message, "Be of good comfort, rise, He calleth thee, he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus." His beggar's cloak would have hindered him from quickly answering that call -- just as man's fancied righteousness often keeps him from Christ. Elisha, when Elijah had been carried up to heaven, "took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces," and then "took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him" -- the token of the prophetic office, and the symbol of its power. Casting away his own garment, the last relic of the old life, he took up Elijah's mantle, and went forth in his power.

Man is often inclined to try and patch up the old rags, and put on "some of self and some of Thee"; but Christ's parable tells us how useless this is. "No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old." The garment which God gives "agreeth" not with the "filthy rags."

Man-made garments, as one has said, are thus described in Scripture: "original, but not sufficient (Gen. iii. 7); natural, but not clean (Zech. iii.); smart, but useless (Isa. Ixiv. 6); and mended, but made worse (Mark ii. 2I)."

Joshua, the high priest, when he stood before the angel of the Lord, needed a change of raiment. "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and stood before the angel. And He answered and spake unto those that stood before Him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments."

Released captives do not continue to wear their prison garments. Joseph, when called to stand before Pharaoh and brought hastily out of the dungeon, changed his raiment; and when the king of Babylon released Jehoiachin from prison, he "changed his prison garments, and he did eat bread continually before him -- all the days of his life." The Lord Jesus Christ proclaims "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isa. Ixi.); and He too gives a change of raiment. The same passage tells us that He gives the "garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." The spirit of heaviness was the old dress which we wore when we were the captives of Satan; and "the garment of praise" is the change of raiment which He gives when He sets us free.

We need to be suitably dressed to appear before the King; for His household cannot be clothed in rags, or even in a dress of their own providing. In Matt. xi. 8 we are told that "They that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses"; or in Luke vii. 25, "They which are gorgeously apparelled . . . are in kings' courts"; and if we can say with the bride, "the King hath brought me into His chambers," we know that it is only after He has made us fit for His presence.

At the marriage feast of the king's son, the man who had not on a wedding garment was cast out because he trusted in his own dress, and not in that provided by the king. The apparel of the guests and servants reflects honour or dishonour on the king himself. We see in the story of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to

Solomon's court, that "the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, his cup-bearers also and their apparel," were amongst the things that moved her to say, "It was a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts and of thy wisdom." Their appearance brought honour to Solomon; and the dress which God gives to us will bring honour to Himself, and not to us, when the Lord Jesus Christ appears in His glory and is "admired in all them that believe."

In the book of Esther we read of one whom the king delighted to honour, being arrayed in the royal apparel which the king himself used to wear. This was a very unusual and special mark of favour, shown on one occasion; but it is just what the Lord has done for us. In clothing us in His own robe, He has treated us as He did Israel of old, when He found her with none to pity, and arrayed her in beautiful garments (Ezek. xvi.); so that it could be said, "Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God." He has shown His love to us in providing us with Christ Himself, the Lord our righteousness, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness." It is still one of His attributes, as of old, that He "loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment" (Deut. x. 18).

We may learn many lessons from the garments of the priests and Levites. Before they could draw near to do the service of the Tabernacle they were to wash their clothes; even as we too must wash our robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Preacher says, "Let thy garments be always white" (Eccles. ix. 8); and the Apostle James tells us to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world."

The priests and Levites were robed in white linen, like the bride in Rev. xix.; and each of their different garments has special typical meaning for us.

Another aspect of God's provision is pictured in the garments of the pilgrim. All through Israel's wilderness journey, God sustained them, that "they lacked nothing, their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not." On that night in Egypt when they first ate of the paschal lamb, they were directed to do so with their loins girded and their shoes on their feet ready for the journey; and those shoes lasted all through their wanderings. A long journey generally causes the traveller's garments to wear out. When the Gibeonites wanted to make it appear that they had come from a far country, they put on "old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them," and said, "These, our garments and our shoes, are become old by reason of the very long journey"; but the

garments of the children of Israel had lasted for forty years. Our pilgrim dress will also last throughout the pilgrimage. Besides this, it will stand the fire, like the garments of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When they were cast into the fiery furnace the fire had no power upon them, "neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them." We may be called to go through the fire; but the garments He provides will not be singed.

The warrior's dress is well described in Eph. vi.; and the overcomer's in Rev. iii. 4, 5, where it is said, "They shall walk with Me in white"; and, "He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment." The victor in his triumph is expected to appear in appropriate dress. Sisera's mother looked for her son to return from his victory with "a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil" (Judges v. 30). The soldier's armour is ours now; and if we make use of it we shall be clothed as overcomers by-and-by.

There is a beautiful little parable in Rom. xiii. when the apostle, picturing the close of the night season and the near approach of the daybreak, urges all to awake out of sleep, to cast off the works of darkness, the apparel belonging to the night, and to clothe themselves for the day in the armour of light -- which he explains in a later verse is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are expecting the coming of the Lord, we shall not want to be found sleeping and unprepared for His presence; like the bride in the Song who heard the voice of the Beloved at her door, but was not ready, for she had put off her coat (Song of Solomon v. 3); but shall want to be like the Bride in Rev. xix., where we read, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

There is evidently a difference between the garments of fine linen and the garments that typify the Lord Himself. We are told that the fine linen represents the righteousness of saints; and by the Revised Version we see it is in the plural, and means righteous acts -- the works which as believers, through the power of the Holy Ghost, we are enabled to do to His glory, not to our own; for we are told to "give honour to Him," because "His wife hath made herself ready."

These garments may be called "Spirit-wrought garments"; but they must as much come from God as those which we have called the God-given garments. The acts spoken of must be done in the power of the Holy Spirit, and must not be merely the result of

carnal energy. Having been saved and fitted for God's presence, our life is to be one which will bring glory to God. "Righteousnesses" wrought in our own strength, both before and after believing, are but as filthy rags; but righteousnesses worked out in dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit are as fine linen.

The God-given and Spirit-wrought garments strikingly illustrate the two-fold sanctification of the believer.

In Heb. x. 10 we read that "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The words "are sanctified" might, it is said, here be translated "have been sanctified"; and they refer to our standing in Christ, the perfected sanctification, which is ours directly we are united to Him, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." We can add nothing to it -- it is finished, perfect; but in verse 14 we are told that "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" -- or, are being sanctified, referring to a progressive sanctification. Our experience is to be in keeping with our standing, and we are daily to become more like Christ. We are sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost; and this is a growing sanctification. The God-given garments seem to represent present sanctification, perfect in Christ; the Spirit-wrought garments progressive sanctification.

The bride in Psa. xlv. 14 is to be brought to the King in raiment of needlework; not a machine-made garment, but one which is wrought stitch by stitch in the life. For this, industry and God-given skill are needed. "Drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags" (Prov. xxiii. 21); but the wise woman of Prov. xxxi. 22 is represented as making herself "coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple." We are therefore to be diligent in the service of the Lord, that we may be like the people mentioned in I Chron. iv. 21, the families of them that wrought fine linen, of the house of Ashbea. Ashbea means "earnest entreaty"; and thus they represented a little group that belonged to the house of prayer, whose life was spent in weaving fine linen.

The Spirit-wrought garments cannot be commenced till the filthy rags -- the man-made garments -- have been put aside, and we have accepted the God-given dress, the Lord our righteousness.

[RETURN
TO HOME PAGE](#)