

Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible

Lesson 4: "The Coat of Different Colors"

The great controversy between Christ and Satan forms the backdrop of Joseph's thrilling drama, and the fate of the plan of salvation is in the balance with that son of Jacob. In Genesis 12-17 God had promised and sworn an oath, placing His very existence and throne in jeopardy, that from Abraham's "seed" the Messiah would come, the Savior of the world. That "seed" was the sons of Jacob and Satan sought to crush Joseph who was an essential link in the Messiah's family tree.

"Joseph listened to his father's instructions, and feared the Lord. He was more obedient to his father's righteous teachings than any of his brethren. ... His hatred of sin was such that he could not endure to see his brethren sinning against God. He laid the matter before his father, hoping that his authority might reform them. This exposure of their wrongs enraged his brethren against him. They had observed their father's strong love for Joseph, and were envious of him. Their envy grew into hatred, and finally to murder" (*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 126).

In Genesis 37:3-11 God has chosen Joseph to be a prophet and has given him two inspired dreams. "The angel of God instructed Joseph in dreams which he innocently related to his brethren. ... And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. ... Jacob appeared to regard the dreams of his son with indifference. But he had been often instructed by the Lord in dreams himself, and he believed that the Lord was teaching Joseph in the same manner. He reproved Joseph, that his true feelings might not be discovered by his envious brothers" (op. cit., p. 127). Joseph's dreams were given to inspire hope to Jacob's family that God would preserve them.

When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife, he did not hesitate one second, but ran out. He chose to suffer rather than to sin. "People sometimes say that they can believe that God forgives their sins, but they find it difficult to believe that He can keep them from sin. Well, if there is a difference, the latter is the easier of the two; for the forgiveness of sins requires the death of Christ, while the saving from sins requires only His continued life" (E. J. Waggoner, *Waggoner on Romans*, p. 5.97).

"Though now for a little while, if need be, you have been distressed by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though

it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6, 7).

After all those years of bitter separation, when he meets his once-hateful brothers, his heart still loves them; he forgives them. Joseph endures the test and as "savior" of the "seed" demonstrates to the universe his link to Christ, the Savior of the world who prays for His crucifiers and is the Vindicator of God's oath to Abraham.

From an early age Joseph had: (1) a hatred of sin, which is an outward indication that he had righteousness by faith; (2) the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy; and (3) his character was formed, fitted, and refined for the work ahead through trial and sorrow.

The bitterest trials and disappointments assailed Joseph, yet he remembered the promise and oath God made to Abraham; how his grandfather Isaac was the child of promise; and the often-repeated story of his father's terror and fear when he thought it the "hand of an enemy" that surprised him, and how he had endured when wrestling with God through the night.

Ellen White, in speaking of the pit, slave traders, and his being sold to Potiphar, makes the observation that, "One day's experience had been the turning point in Joseph's life. Its terrible calamity had transformed him from a petted child to a man, thoughtful, courageous, and self-possessed" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 211-214).

Why does God so often let His children experience such seeming failures, betrayal and the bitterest of disappointments? "All who in this world render true service to God or man receive a preparatory training in the school of sorrow. The weightier the trust and the higher the service, the closer is the test and the more severe the discipline" (*Education*, p. 151).

"Righteousness [justification] by faith is not a myth" (*Waggoner on Romans*, p. 5.92). And righteousness is peace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ... And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Rom. 5:1, 3).

Faith is the heart-melting appreciation of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God (Rom. 10:10), and it motivates to complete obedience to all the commandments of God. Joseph feared God (Rev. 4:6), which is the hating of evil, pride, arrogance, and the evil way (Prov. 8:13). We also learn that it is not we who do the work, but "faith which works by love" (Gal. 5:6).

"By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). "Men are not saved through their own obedience, but through the obedience of Christ." ... It is "by His obedience we are made righteous [today]. Notice that it is present, actual righteousness." Not one of us has ever had, or ever will have, anything within us out of which righteousness can be made. "Therefore it is Christ's present obedience in believers that makes them righteous. They can of themselves do nothing, and so God in His love does it in them. Here is the whole story: 'I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20).'" (Op. cit., pp. 5.101, 5.102.)

Here is a fair question to ask ourselves: "Would Christ become impatient if He had the things to endure that you have? Did He not have as much to endure, and more? You must admit that He did. Was He impatient? 'He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth' (Isa. 53:7). Then if He were in your place, He would be patient. Why, then, do you not let Him be in your place?" (op. cit., p. 5.94).

--Linda & Daniel Peters