

The Garment of Humility (Written from jail)
Joseph Herrin- 6/19/2011 (Father's Day)

There are certain experiences that are common to the disciples of Christ that are unknown to the majority of professing Christians today. I would share with you regarding one mark of discipleship that Yahweh has made abundantly clear at this season both through His word and through personal experience. Let me begin by looking at the very first book of the bible where we read of the story of Joseph who was a clear type of Christ.

Joseph was born as the eleventh son of Jacob, being the first son of Jacob's favorite wife Rachel. Joseph was the son of Jacob's old age. Doing the math we read that Jacob was 130 years old when he came to Joseph in Egypt. (Gen. 47:9) This was the second year of famine, the ninth year since Joseph was brought out of prison to serve as Pharaoh's second ruler in the land. Joseph was 39 years old. By this we understand Jacob was 91 years old when Joseph was born. Joseph was the son of Jacob's old age, and greatly beloved by his father. (Gen. 37:3)

It is in Genesis chapter 37 that we see a remarkable theme begin to weave its way through the pages of Scripture. Jacob gave to Joseph a special garment to denote that he stood in his father's favor. Many Bibles describe this garment as a "coat of many colors." I read a teaching on this many years ago that suggested that "a long sleeved tunic" is a more accurate translation. The teaching reported that it was common for a man of wealth to adorn the son who was to receive the birthright with a long sleeved tunic. Whether it was a coat of many colors, or a long sleeved tunic, it is clearly evident that Joseph's brothers recognized the special garment he wore as a mark of their father's special love and favor upon Joseph.

Genesis 37:4

"When his brothers SAW that their father loved [Joseph] more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him."

The response of Joseph's brothers to the favor of their father was identical to that of Cain when Yahweh had regard to his brother Abel's offering, but not to his own. Cain was filled with hatred and murdered Abel. Similarly, Joseph's brothers were filled with hatred and they spoke of murdering Joseph. (Gen. 37:18-20)

Though Joseph's brothers were persuaded not to murder him, what they did stands as a great parable.

Genesis 37:23

"And it came to pass, when Joseph came unto his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him."

To understand this parable one must know the significance of a person's garment. The garment represents a person's identity, their reputation before God and man. Without a garment all men are naked and covered in shame. Yahweh, in His mercy, covers the shame of man. Christ Yahshua becomes our propitiation (literally- merciful covering). Paul exhorts

Christians to “put on Christ” and to “clothe yourselves with Christ.”

God is no respecter of persons. “He has mercy on whom He chooses, and He hardens whom He chooses.” (Romans 9:18) Yahweh does not favor the rich man above the poor, nor the mighty man above the weak. God does not choose the wise man more than the foolish. He favors whom He chooses, and He hardens whom He will. From the same lump of clay He fashions one man to receive His honor, and another for dishonor. (Romans 9:21)

That God would choose to have mercy on one man over another strikes the heart of fallen man as capriciousness. Rebellion is stirred up in the natural mind, and it is exhibited as hatred and a spirit of murder toward those who receive the Father’s favor. Christ described the logic of fallen man in the following parable.

Luke 20:13-14

“Then said the Lord of the vineyard, “What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. It may be that they will reverence him when they see him.” But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.”

In these words, the heart of fallen man is revealed. If men truly loved God, they would honor those whom He honors, they would love those whom God loves. When the sons of Jacob spoke of murdering Joseph, they knew such an act would grieve their father deeply. They proved that they cared little for their father when they sold Joseph into slavery and made it appear as if a wild beast had slain him. When Jacob received this evil report of his sons he entered into deep mourning for Joseph and would not be comforted. (Gen. 37:34-35)

In a similar manner, the Jewish people revealed that they did not have God the Father’s desires in mind, for they slew His beloved Son.

Let me point out, however, an important part of this parable. Joseph had his garment stripped off twice, perfectly paralleling a work in the life of Christ. The first time Joseph was stripped of his garment of honor was when his father sent him to his brothers. (Gen. 37:13) Similarly, Yahshua emptied Himself and took on the form (garment) of a bondservant when His Father sent Him to His brethren. (Phil. 2:7) Even as Joseph had the robe of favor removed from him, Christ did not consider equality with God something to be held onto, but laid aside the glory He shared as He dwelt with the Father, and took the form of a slave.

This first stripping of Joseph and Yahshua is something all disciples must experience. Christ said that a disciple is not above his master, but must become like his master. “Before honor, comes humility.”

All who come to Christ must lay aside the honor, the glory, the reputation and esteem they had in this world. This is far more difficult for the rich than the poor, for the mighty than the weak, for those esteemed as wise than those without esteem. To be a disciple of Christ is to be reproached, scorned, mocked, and ridiculed. The ways of Christ are not the ways of the world. What man esteems is despised in the eyes of God. To surrender to be led of the

Spirit of Christ is to embrace a life of humility.

In 1999 the Spirit of Christ challenged me to follow wherever He would lead. I had a good job as a computer professional. I had honor among my co-workers. I had honor in my church, serving as a minister. When I surrendered to follow the Spirit I was led to leave my place of employment to begin a ministry of writing. My circumstances became much more humble. Many in the church could not accept such a walk as the will of God. I was soon cast out of the church. Outwardly my standard of living declined greatly. In a similar way Joseph left the abundance of dwelling with his father and became a slave in Egypt; Christ emptied Himself of the glory He shared with the Father and took on the form of a bondservant. Even in human terms, His life was a humble one. He was born in a manger. His years of ministry were spent as a homeless man. He was buried in another man's tomb. Those who would follow Christ must lay aside the garments of honor that they have in this world and accept the garb of a bondservant. A bondservant wears whatever his master gives to him to wear. Should our Master give us a very humble garment to wear, we must wear it with grace. The apostle Paul wrote:

Philippians 4:11-12

"I have learned, in whatever state I am in, to be content. I know both how to be abased, and how to abound... both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound and to experience lack."

How do we wear the garments of humility with grace? We do so as we lay aside all bitterness, forgiving those who have treated us shamefully. We refuse to be ruled by a spirit of self-pity, seeking instead to be faithful wherever our circumstances have led us to.

Joseph was stripped of his garment of honor and sold as a slave in Egypt. He was bought by Potiphar, a key servant of Pharaoh, the captain of his bodyguard. Joseph did not sulk in Potiphar's house. He bloomed where he was planted. Yahweh showed favor to Joseph, giving him wisdom and causing everything he did to prosper. In all of Potiphar's household there was no one as faithful as Joseph. In all of God's house there has been none more faithful than Yahshua. Both rose to positions of honor as they devoted themselves to labor humbly as servants. Potiphar entrusted everything in his possession to Joseph, and Yahweh entrusted all judgement to His Son, considering Him faithful. Both ever lived to do the will of the one they served.

When we embrace discipleship, following Christ wherever He leads, He will most certainly lead us to many humble experiences we would not have chosen for ourselves. We glorify God by being found faithful wherever He places us. A spirit of complaint, of discontentment, must be resisted. God will honor His faithful sons in due time. Our times are in God's hands.

Those who are faithful as servants will begin to rise to positions of honor in the house they labor in. Joseph was made overseer of Potiphar's house. Accordingly, he was given a new garment as a symbol of honor. The garment was not as glorious as that which his father Jacob had given to him, but it denoted honor nonetheless. The day came, however, when this garment was wickedly stripped off of Joseph and he was cast down to an even lower position.

Potiphar's wife lusted after Joseph, entreating him daily to lie with her. One day she found Joseph alone in the house and grabbed hold of his outer garment, entreating him to commit adultery with her. Joseph refused, leaving his garment in the woman's hands as he fled.

Potiphar's wife stripped Joseph not just of his garment, but of his reputation. She took away Joseph's reputation as a faithful servant to his master and clothed him in the garment of a transgressor as she falsely accused him of trying to rape her.

The parallel in the life of Christ is obvious. The Jewish leaders envied Christ. They brought false charges against the Son of God. His garment was also stripped away and Yahshua was clothed in a garment of shame. Yahshua "was numbered among the transgressors." Even as He was being crucified, the Roman soldiers parted His raiment and cast lots for His cloak.

Those who are to "Clothe themselves with Christ" must wear this garment of abasement as well. Consider how many of Christ's disciples named in Scripture were accused of transgression and subjected to imprisonment, beatings, or worse. Among those names are Peter, James, John, Paul and Timothy. Some of these repeatedly were numbered among the transgressors. This is the lot and privilege of those who would follow in the footsteps of Christ. To yield to be led of the Spirit as Christ was, is to embrace a life of humility, of shame and reproach.

I write these words from jail. It is now the second time I have been placed in here as I have sought to remain faithful to the call of God on my life.

One of the first things that occurs as a man is put in jail is that his clothes are taken from him and a prison jumpsuit is given to him. I am wearing a bright orange jumpsuit. On the back in bold letters are emblazoned the words, "Houston County Jail." I am marked as a transgressor and share a domicile with thieves, murderers, and men accused of violent offenses and drug trafficking. Joseph shared a place with similar offenders. Christ was hung between two thieves.

What do these experiences signify? What is their purpose? I believe the answer is found in the garments. Yahweh wants to clothe His sons in garments of humility. Those destined to receive ruling authority and power must be exceedingly humble. Joseph was chosen by God to be elevated to the second position in the greatest nation on earth. Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God where all power and authority has been given to Him. Those who can endure patiently being abased, being content in the knowledge that such is the will of God, prove by their submissive spirit that it is God's will and pleasure that is uppermost in their mind.

Experiences of abasement and suffering and reproach, when endured in the Spirit of Christ, produce a meekness in a man that is not present in the Adamic nature. Being willing to sink lower than one's normal situation in life, lower even than one's companions, produces a humility in a man that is highly esteemed in the eyes of God. It is He who inspired the words to be written, "God gives grace to the humble, but resists the proud."

In being willing to sink lower, to be as David when he danced with abandon before Yahweh, testifying "I will be more vile than this, and will be humble even in my own sight..." (2 Samuel 6:22) Such an attitude is a great contrast to Satan when he declared, "I will ascend..., I will exalt my throne above the stars of God..., I will be like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:13-14) On the one hand there is a willingness to sink lower to satisfy the will of God. On the other hand is manifested a pride that is discontented with one's appointed station, demanding ever to rise above others.

Sinking lower, becoming humble and vile in one's own sight, is a great trial to the soul of man. The soul must be crushed as an olive in the olive press. There are times when this crushing causes even godly men to cry out in their distress. As Christ viewed the cup of suffering His Father presented to Him at Gethsemane (interpreted- "olive press"), He cried out, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death..." (Mark 14:34) Yet, sinking lower yet, Christ uttered the words that always glorify the Father, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thy will be done." (Mark 14:36).

In a sense, the first time the disciples of Christ are stripped of their garments they embrace becoming "of no reputation." They willingly lay aside all that they previously gloried in. The apostle Paul recounted his former reputation. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, born of the tribe of Benjamin. He was zealous, joining the strictest sect of the Pharisees. He was educated in the school of Gamaliel. As to the righteousness found in the law, he was accounted as a perfect man. This same Paul testified, "Those things that were gain to me, I considered loss." He compared them to dung that he might gain Christ.

All disciples must for a time lay aside the garments of honor as a favored son and array themselves in the clothing of a servant. A great many Christians and ministers refuse to do so. They hold on jealously to raiments of honor. They constantly assert their position as sons of the Most High. They refuse to accept anything but honor, accolades and prosperity. In doing so they follow the pattern of Satan, despising the humility of Christ.

There is a second stripping that causes the disciples of Christ to descend even lower, following the path of Joseph who was placed in Pharaoh's dungeon. We must be willing even to be stripped of the garments of a servant, to be arrayed with the shame of a transgressor.

As I pondered this matter sitting in jail, the Spirit opened my eyes to understand an event that occurred at the crucifixion of Christ. In the time of His suffering we read that some standing near, hearing Christ say, "I thirst," dipped a sponge into some sour wine and offered it to Christ to drink.

King David, speaking prophetically in the Psalms, wrote of this event, "They gave me gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." The words "gall" and "vinegar" both described the sour wine those nearby offered to Christ. (Psalm 69:21) About a week after I was put in jail a letter arrived from a close family member. They spoke words of condemnation, urging me to abandon the path of obedience God had laid on me that I might come down off the cross.

Soon after, an inmate in an adjoining cell called out to my cell-mate. He said, "Ask the minister what "gall" is." I asked him to tell me how the word was being used, for it has more than one meaning. He quoted the above verse from the Psalms. How precious is our Father in ordering our steps.

The Spirit showed me that the gall offered to Christ to drink is a symbol of the bitter things those close to the disciples of Christ will offer to them even as they are enduring the cross. How bitter it is to have those close to us to add to our reproaches in an hour when our soul is being crushed.

We often hear someone speak of a "galling experience." They are referring to something very bitter. Someone is said to have a lot of "gall" when they speak or act in a very presumptuous and unkind manner. Even as Christ hung on the cross, remaining there out of love for others and obedience to the Father, those nearby hurled abuse and scorn at Him. He was mocked and condemned. Those nearby said, "If you are the Son of God, come down off the cross," and "He saved others, He cannot save Himself."

Those who would clothe themselves with Christ must accept such experiences with grace and forgiveness. Joseph found it an exceedingly bitter experience to be branded as a transgressor. For a while this garment chafed at him as if he were arrayed in sackcloth. He yearned to remove this ill fitting reputation, and declared his innocence. (Gen. 40:14-15) Yet it was Yahweh's will that he wear it two more years.

There have been times in my present incarceration when I have found my circumstances galling. My soul has been weighed down under a burden on some days. I am encouraged when the Spirit reveals to me that such experiences are the portion of all who would be perfect in Christ. To put on Christ, we must put on His humility.

There have been many trials and attacks from the enemy at this time, but the grace of God has been more abundant. Even as Christ was comforted to spy John and some of the faithful women standing nearby, partaking of His hour of tribulation, so have I been much encouraged by those faithful saints who have written to me and offered up prayers on behalf of my family.

The Father has encouraged me in other ways. I have been put in cell #40. The Spirit led me to the Psalm of this same #. It begins,

"I waited patiently for Yahweh; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in Yahweh."

It is truly my hope and earnest desire that a remnant will observe the Father's grace and keeping power in my life and be encouraged to abandon their lives fully into His hands. He has declared that there is "an afflicted path that leads to life, and few there be that find it." Yet His grace is able to keep the weakest, and most timid of those who will commit their lives unto Him. Though the way of Christ's disciples leads through fire and flood, through

lion's dens and the valley of the shadow of death, we have an omnipotent Shepherd who watches over us. We will never walk alone.

If we will accept the garments of humility that Christ wore, we will wear the garments of honor. The hour came when Joseph was brought out of the prison of Pharaoh. His garments was changed once again. Pharaoh arrayed Joseph in linen garments. He places the necklace about Joseph's neck, and a signet ring on his finger. Pharaoh declared that in Joseph was the Spirit of the holy God. Joseph received glory for abasement, and honor for shame. This is the heritage of all Christ's saints.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.