

## ***DRESSING TO PLEASE***

Joseph wore the multi-colored coat out of love. Make no mistake about that! It was not fashionable. It made him stand out like a sore thumb among his peers. Wearing it fueled his brothers' anger at him, constantly reminding them that he was special in the eyes of his father. It was a coat more appropriate for royalty than for a nomadic herdsman. No doubt, when being harassed by his friends, his only defense would be, "You will never understand why I wear this coat until you have a relationship with your father like I do with mine." That relationship meant more to him than his choice of garments to wear.

He was special to his father. Before he was born, his mother, Rachael could have no children, causing her shame too great to bear. She pleaded with God, and with Jacob, until God intervened. Joseph finally being drawn out of Rachael, was the result of God's supernatural intervention in response to a need. He was Jacob's pride and joy. A dreamer, knowing what he had the potential to become, he wanted to move beyond the routine of daily life to a place where his actions and desires could impact his world. The dreams told him he was born to rule. Though it made him uneasy, deep inside, his father knew it also. This was why he clothed him in the garment of kings.

We are also special to our Father. Without the help of God, His bride can bear no children. When a church travailed, we were drawn out of the world in a supernatural birth. We are our Father's pride and joy. He knows exactly what we were born to become. We have the power to move beyond everyday living and change our world. When He returns, we will rule and reign with Him. As in the vision of John, when He comes back, His garment will be a vesture dipped in blood, a covering of righteousness. To let the world know of our destiny and of His love for us, He has also covered us with His blood. It is the ultimate vesture of kings.

Joseph's brothers decided to stage a coup before the coronation, but changed their mind in mid-stream about actually killing him. Instead, they threw him in a pit and brought his coat, dipped in the blood of a wild animal, to his father. Jacob looked at the coat in Gen 37:33 and cried out, "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him," and wept. The problem was not as it seemed. Joseph was not dead just because he was not wearing the coat. The fact that he was not wearing it meant to Jacob that the relationship between them had been severed. All that would have been necessary to restore it would have been for someone to help their brother up out of the pit and bring him back into the presence of the father. The coat was not the sum total of Joseph's identity, but wearing it was a symbol of the depth of his relationship to his Dad. His not wearing it was a sign that he was in need of help.

Separation is an outward symbol of our relationship with our Father. In 2 Cor 6:17, we are told to come out from among them and be ye separate. We are to remove ourselves from where we are and separate from unclean things. If God tells us or convicts us of something being unclean, we are to draw a line over which we then refuse to cross. In 2 Samuel, we are told that God desires a relationship (obedience based upon love) more than he desires sacrifice. Without that relationship, the act of sacrifice is meaningless and offensive. One sacrifice that we make, one line that we draw, is in how we dress. We put on a deliberate choice of clothing to testify to those around us of our obedience to and love for our Father.

We understand that nowhere in the scriptures are we given specific instruction as to what that clothing should be. In the first chapter of Genesis, Adam and Eve were clothed only with the image of God. In the third chapter of Colossians, the new man is to be renewed in knowledge after the image of God. Through knowledge gained, we are to pursue after the image, or the Spirit, of God. All knowledge should move us to action. Knowledge of God's desire for a

relationship with us should move us to change. Even in the apparel we choose. If we can ascertain what would please God in this area of life, then obedience is better than sacrifice. Out of love, we will choose to wear the coat that pleases our Father.

In Deuteronomy, it is made clear that God considers a woman wearing a man's apparel or a man wearing a woman's apparel to be an abomination. Like other abominations mentioned in the scriptures, this represents a perversion of something created by God for a specific purpose. It actually disgusts God! What is not spelled out is what constitutes the dress of a man or a woman. That is defined by every culture and time period in which men have lived. There have been societies, especially in primitive tropical areas where the women wore nothing from the waist up. Kilts are acceptable, even today, as dress for men in parts of Scotland. In each country and era, there have been traditional costumes and clothing for men and for women that have varied wildly throughout time. The point is, regardless of the specific locale and its customs, there has been, and should always be, a line of distinction that defines feminine and masculine dress for that culture. A line of distinction, if you will, between the sexes.

That line of separation is now being blurred by generations suffering a crisis of identity. In the name of "equality", some have sought to eradicate the differences established between the sexes during their creation. As though different somehow implies inferior. Beginning with the women's liberation movement and progressing to the point of cross dressing, unisex haircuts, and even sex change operations, men and women have lost touch with what God intended them to be. No matter how many laws are passed, no matter what they wear, or even what radical plastic surgery is performed, men will never truly become women or vice versa. They were designed to be opposites, that when united in marriage, complete one another.

Knowing God's will regarding a distinction between the sexes, the church raises a banner, or a standard. As in any battle, the raised standard is a rallying point under which those loyal to the King come together. As society seeks to eradicate the differences in the sexes, it becomes necessary for the church to further define them. For this reason, among others, the church establishes guidelines of dress for men and women. It is not established as Law. Neither should anyone say that it is a sin for a specific dress code to not be adhered to, unless biblical commands regarding nakedness are broken. How could it be, when these dress standards must change to meet new needs for distinction created by changes in the society in which the church exists? The important thing is that a line be drawn that gives us a way in which to demonstrate our love and our appreciation to God for creating us uniquely male or female.

Unwillingly adhering to a manner of dress we resent, merely because we are directed to, is meaningless. That is sacrifice without obedience at the level of the heart. Far better to slip willingly into a coat of many colors because of what it represents. It stands for the blood with which we were covered, the clothing of the King. It is a sign of our submission to God's desire for a distinction between the sexes. It is a symbol of our hopes and our dreams for our future. It is a way to come out from among them and be separate. Best of all, we can say in response to questions, "You will never understand why I dress this way until you have a relationship with your father like I do with mine."

"It is a symbol of my love for Him!"

## ***STUDY QUESTIONS***

1. If the scriptures assure us that the Lord knows them that are His, what are the characteristics that He looks for that distinguish us? How does He know? Does He only look at the heart?
2. What are some of the areas of separation in which lines have historically been drawn between the church and the world? Do you feel any of these have lost their validity today? Do they still serve to protect you? How?
3. How many ways do you think our society has tried to blur the line of distinction between male and female as created by God? What does Satan have to gain in blurring or erasing that line?
4. If you were given a garment as a gift by someone you love and who truly loved you, would you wear it? What if your peers ridiculed you for the style, color, appropriateness, etc. of the garment?
5. If you were absolutely sure God wanted you to wear garments dipped in blood, would you? If the answer is yes, if He wanted you to wear garments that pretty much in fashion, other than being modest and holy, would you?
6. Have you ever seen someone walk away from their holy consecration to God and the next time you saw them, you could not tell from their clothing that they had ever known the Savior? In fact, they almost seemed as though they were trying to offend anyone from the church? How did you react? Did you count them as dead and walk away in sorrow? Did you consider what you might be able to do to help restore their relationship with their Father?
7. Are there lines over which you feel you could never be made to cross? Could you share some of those lines?
8. Why does one gender striving to be like the other disgust God?
9. Can you think of any article of clothing worn even today, for which there is not a line that is distinctly for women and one for men? How close are we as a society to being unisex in clothing? Appearance? Jobs? Military? Family function? Where will the trend end?
10. Do you feel that any of the functional differences between men and women make either one truly inferior to the other?
11. If you are to the age where you are allowed to make such decisions for yourself, and you are not dressing the same way others of your sex in society dress, why not? What are all of the reasons?
12. If we are to be sheep under the guidance of a shepherd, do sheep dress as wolves in order to blend in with wolves or do wolves dress as sheep to get close to the sheep?
13. If we are to be the light of the world, why would we want to dress like the wolves?