

The Significance of Changing Garments

One of the most powerful themes I have observed in Scripture is “changing garments.” This principle is spiritual but manifests itself clearly in the natural. As you move from glory to glory and exchange the “old” for the “new,” there is a period of testing and vulnerability once the old is cast off and then finally the new is brought forth in due time, both sparkling and radiant—a testimony to transformation.

Let’s observe this principle at work in some of our most loved biblical heroes.

Changing Garments: Joseph, Ruth and Lazarus

We can start with the example of Joseph, who initially received a multicolored tunic that was supposed to be a symbol of favor and promise. The problem is that his brothers interpreted that garment as something else. In jealousy, they barely avoided murdering him and instead sold him into foreign slavery.

Then from slavery, he descended further when his Egyptian master unjustly cast him into prison. So, from being given a multicolored tunic to wearing prison garments, Joseph was tested. These circumstances also prepared him for the best change of garments so that when he was lifted from the prison to the palace, he could then wear royal garments in wisdom and humility.

We can continue with the example of Ruth, who, at the beginning of her story in Scripture, was married. I believe she was wonderfully married but her husband died, she became a widow and she dressed accordingly in widow’s garments.

But then the God of another chance came to Ruth when she chose

to follow her mother-in-law back to the nation she'd come from—Israel. She became a foreigner and a widow in Israel but through humility and service, she actually lay at the feet of another.

This man, Boaz, took the corner of his garment and placed it over her. She became accepted! In short order, she also became beautified and was able to exchange the garments of a widow for the garments of a bride.

Then we have the example of Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, who died and was wrapped in grave clothes. His body was placed in a tomb and it lay there for four days.

When Jesus appeared on the scene, He called Lazarus forth. John 11:44 (NASB) describes the scene, "Out came the man who had died, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to [his disciples], 'Unbind him and let him go.'"

Once Lazarus was alive again, it would have been inappropriate for him to stay in the grave clothes of his past. They had to rip those off him and guess what? He would have been vulnerable and naked until someone gave him a new garment to put on.

How about you? What garment do you need to cast off?

Are you prepared to be vulnerable in the in-between time? What garments do you need to put on?

Remember, He gives us beauty for ashes, joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. He always offers us the divine exchange in the process of changing garments.

The Challenge

I give you a challenge today and I receive the same challenge myself: Cast off the old. Become vulnerable. Risk being

present so that faith will come alive in your heart all over again.

Allow God to take your ashes—evidence that the fire has burned within you—and let the pleasing aroma of your sacrifice arise to God. Let it become what He breathes in so that He may breathe out upon you anew.

I want to encourage you in this challenge with Psalm 42:5, “Why are you in despair, O my soul, and why are you restless within me? Wait for God, for I will again praise Him for the help of His presence, My God.”

His presence is with you always. Let the Holy Spirit wash over your soul and allow praise to rise from the depths within you. Speak to your soul. Tell it to hope again in God!

Heroine of Hope: Queen Esther

From humble beginnings, Hadassah leaves all she knows to go into a foreign land. Hadassah is Hebrew for “myrtle,” an indication that her life and actions were as pleasing as the fragrance of myrtle. Esther, on the other hand, is a Persian name related to “morning star.” In Hebrew, it is related to the root word for “hidden,” as God’s intervention was hidden throughout the entire history-making turn of events.

On the surface, all one sees is a dramatic tale of palace intrigue but behind the scenes every step is saturated with faith, hope and sacrificial love. Doubly orphaned as a young girl, Hadassah was raised by her cousin Mordecai, a wise leader of the Jewish people living in exile. After King Ahasuerus dismissed his wife Vashti for insubordination, scouts were sent across the vast Persian Empire to find a replacement. Upon Hadassah’s departure for Susa, Mordecai instructed her not to reveal her Jewish identity.

The harem amassed across the kingdom and the young women were given beauty treatments. Esther’s natural beauty and charm

caused her to find favor in the eyes of all who saw her. And when her turn came to be presented, the king chose Esther to be his reigning queen.

In a turn of events, Ahasuerus elevated Haman, a notorious anti-Semite, to be his prime minister. Enraged that Mordecai refused to bow to him, Haman asked the king to allow him to have all Jews killed on a single day.

Upon learning of the plot, Mordecai asked Esther to intercede on behalf of her people. Esther agreed to speak to the king but only if Mordecai and the Jews would fast and pray for three consecutive days. With prayer as her backing, Esther bravely approached Ahasuerus and stood in the gap. Esther's petition for the salvation of the Jewish people was heard. Thus, in an act of intervention, royal decrees were sent out to all provinces declaring protection over the Jewish people.

There are many lessons to be learned from this dear woman, who displayed such humility, bravery, faith and devotion. But what I want to focus on is the amount of good that came from Queen Esther's reign. She became the reluctant heroine of the biblical Purim story. Taken to the palace of the King of Persia, she was used to expose the plot of evil and prevent the annihilation of all the Jewish people in his extensive empire.

We are each chosen for such a time as this. The transformation of Hadassah into Queen Esther is a dazzling display of how God makes beauty out of ashes. Hadassah— Esther—is a heroine of hope. Esther is yet another brilliant example of one who learned the significance of changing garments in the strategic season of life.

I invite you to step from your own ashes into the radiant garments God has prepared for you! Yes, it will take courage. But the glory that is to come will cause you to forget your season of mourning as His beauty comes forth in you. It's time

for changing garments in your life!

Prayer for the Grace of Changing Garments

“Heavenly Father, we come to You in the mighty name of Jesus and we believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. We confess that what You did in the past, You still do today. Help us to take off the garments of heaviness and put on the garments of praise in the way that only You can turn the ash heap of our lives into a masterpiece of beauty, releasing a colorful display of Your brilliant presence. Do these marvelous things for the glory of God. Amen and Amen.”
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