

## Dressing for the Occasion

Dreams are fascinating. Sometimes I dream of flying like Peter Pan. On other occasions I feel uncomfortable even in sleep. Have you ever dreamt, for example, of being barefoot or improperly dressed for some formal occasion?

In one of his parables (Matthew 22:1-14) our Lord tells the story of a king who organized the wedding feast for his son. As the king was greeting and meeting the guests, he noticed a man who was not dressed up for the occasion. 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' the king asked him. The poor guy was speechless and he was thrown out.

What about us? We must be properly dressed when we come in the presence of God. He is holy and righteous and we must be dressed in righteousness to come before him.

There are two dresses hanging in the spiritual wardrobe to choose from. The Bible calls them 'our righteousness' and 'the righteousness of God.'

About our righteousness the Bible is not very flattering:

'We have all become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.  
We all fade like a leaf,  
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away' (Isaiah 64:6).

This righteousness is 'ours' because we have worked for it by our obedience to God's law. However, we have not obeyed God as we ought and so we are polluted with much sin. Even our righteousness is unclean in God's eyes. Our best efforts are like filthy rags.

On the other hand, God's righteousness is most beautiful. Christ worked this righteousness by his perfect obedience to the law of God. Jesus obeyed the Father's will perfectly even to the point of death on a cross. Jesus' righteousness is what we really need to be made acceptable before God. 'By the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous' (Romans 5:19).

The apostle Paul was a very devout and religious person. He could have bragged about his faultlessness in keeping the law (Philippians 3:6). As a child of God, he didn't. He willingly forsook all his personal righteousness so that he would be clothed with the righteousness provided by God in Christ. Paul yearned to 'be found in [Christ], not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith' (Philippians 3:9).

The righteousness of God is given to us by faith when we entrust our salvation in the hands of the Lord Jesus.

Can we imagine the shame and despair we would experience if we appear before God dressed in the polluted garments of our own righteousness? Like the man in the parable, we will be thrown out to the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We must take off and throw away the clothes of our righteousness. Instead we should put on the righteousness of Christ so that we may be dressed properly in the presence of God. Then we may gladly rejoice and sing of God's amazing grace to us:

'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;  
my soul shall exult in my God,  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness' (Isaiah 61:1).