

Proper Attire Required Genesis 3:21-24

It wasn't apparent on the day when a certain dignitary hired two men to tailor a new set of clothes for a parade that was to be held in his honor. Truth be known they really weren't tailors at all but crafty con-men who had convinced this nobleman that their designs and fashions were of the highest quality and latest fashion. They had somehow convinced the emperor that they had special material that was invisible to anyone who was unfit for their position, stupid or incompetent. In reality they weren't making clothes. Instead they were making everyone believe these special clothes were invisible to them. No one on his court was willing to say anything about the lack of clothing for fear that they would be deemed unfit for their position. They pretended to clothe the emperor who in his vanity began to parade through the town sporting his new apparel. It was an embarrassing and awkward situation for the townsfolk as they watched their emperor proudly strut through the town with nothing on except his Fruit of the Loom's. The only person unaware of his humiliating situation was the emperor. But no one in the crowd was willing to say anything about the obvious because they didn't want to appear stupid, that is, until a child cried out that the emperor was in fact wearing nothing at all. Others then took up the chant, but too vain to stop the emperor continued the procession. And so ends the short story [The Emperor's New Clothes](#) written by Danish author Hans Christian Anderson.

Ashamed of their nakedness, Adam and Eve attired themselves in a garment of fig leaves and attempted to hide from God. But in His omniscience He knew where they were and what they had done. He came calling to pronounce on them the verdict of guilty and mete out their punishment for disobedience. But in the middle of His sentencing He issued a promise, a promise born out of grace. It was something for them to cling to by faith, something

that expressed and exhibited His grace and forgiveness. The words spoken to Adam and Eve were taken to heart. Adam understood the implications of what God said and so gave his wife the name of **"Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living."**

As we discovered when we read the passage about Adam naming the animals, it's easy to overlook important truths. Naming the animals wasn't just to give them something to distinguish them from each other, but implies Adam had intelligence and reasoning skills. The name given to Eve was more than just something to call her. It was an affirmation that she would live to bear children and that through her seed would eventually come the Redeemer promised in **verse 15**. But the name wasn't enough. God had to show them what was to come through this redeemer in an act that would demonstrate what was required for them to be accepted in His presence. Proper spiritual attire is required. It was in a covering that He would give them, not something they could fashion themselves. We see first that the covering from God was unique.

I. THE COVERING FROM GOD WAS UNIQUE – v. 21

Fortunately, that I can remember, Robyn and I have never had to tell David that he had to change his clothes before going outside because what he was wearing was not appropriate. That seems to be less of an issue for guys than it is for girls. Robyn's sister was told on more than a few occasions to change her clothes. Back in the 70's I knew another girl who told me that it was the thing in their school for girls to wear skirts with elastic waist bands. The skirts went down to the knees but when they got to school they would go into the bathroom and roll them up to make a mini-skirt. Parents approved of their skirts before school and had no idea they were making this modification once they go to school.

God saw His children and knew they were not appropriately dressed. It wasn't just because their

covering was made of leaves, but because it was a human attempt to cover their sin. It is clear from this verse what God would accept – only what He provided.

On occasion we sing about a covering for sin. It's asked in the form of a question. What can wash away my sin? What can make me whole again? The lyrics say nothing about man's efforts. It isn't in being good or doing good. It isn't in making charitable donations to the needy. It isn't in following any religious whim. It isn't in keeping the law. It isn't in going to church. It isn't in praying or reading your Bible as good and noble as they may be. The only thing that can wash away sin is the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know; nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Isaiah reminds us that any goodness we think we have is like filthy rags (**Isaiah 64:6**).

Paul underscores that by saying there is no one who is righteous not even one (**Romans 3:10**).

A few verses later in the same chapter he declared that everyone was a sinner because we all fall short of God's holy standard (**Romans 3:23**).

Throughout the Bible we are reminded that man's efforts for eternal life are useless.

Paul tells the Ephesian church that good works can't save us because it is only by grace through faith (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).

To Titus he stated that it isn't by our own works but only according to God's mercy that we are saved. That comes through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit at the moment of faith (**Titus 3:5-6**).

Notice first that the covering from God was special.

A. The Covering From God Was Special

I don't buy many suits but when I do I just go pull it

off the rack, try it on and if it fits, I'm good. A sales person may approach me and ask what I'm looking for. He may offer some suggestions and styles or have me consider something that he thinks I may look good in. I know the color and style and I look till I find it. I don't need to be measured or fitted or altered. If it's close it's good. But the very first suit I bought, a nice dark gray pin-striped suit was tailored. Okay, I went to the store, picked it out and put it on, but then the tailor went to work. He took his chalk and began to mark here and there. This needed to be shortened and that needed to be taken in. After a few weeks I went to pick up my new suit.

The clothes God made for them were as unique. They were tailored just for them with a specific purpose. It wasn't just to cover up their nakedness. They needed clothing that only He could provide to cover up their sin. The clothing He made would be something that He would accept, something that met His standard. What they had chosen didn't. Nothing we do will ever be a sufficient covering for our sin. God had to make them a special suit, tailored to meet their specific need. Their clothes weren't only special, they were sacrificial.

B. The Covering From God Was Sacrificial

"The Lord God made garments of skin."

So just where did those garments come from? They came from animals that He had just created perhaps only days earlier. Remember that at the end of **chapter 1** God had said that all His creation was very good. These animals were God's handiwork and it would now be necessary for Him to sacrifice them on behalf of these two sinners to be a covering for their sin. Adam and Eve were responsible for the death of these innocent animals.

Now there are a few things we don't know. For example, we don't know if Adam and Eve had interacted with these animals chosen to be slain for the purpose of covering their sin. But they were known to God, they were His creation.

Neither do we know what kind of animals they were. Scripture doesn't tell us. They could have been sheep because that is how Jesus is depicted. Isaiah refers to the coming Messiah as a lamb led to the slaughter (**Isaiah 53:7**).

Jesus is hailed as **"the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world"** by John the Baptist (**John 1:29**).

Peter describes Christ as a **"lamb without blemish"** (**I Peter 1:19**).

Those gathered around the throne in **Revelation 5:12** cry out **"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain."**

These animal skins were not merely to clothe them with something more publicly acceptable, this was a foreshadowing or picture of the promised Redeemer in **3:15** implying that the Redeemer would have to be sacrificed to be an adequate covering for sin.

There are some scholars who look at this passage and don't see this as a prophecy of the coming Christ, but only as a covering. They choose not to see the connection between this and the sacrificial system established by the law in Leviticus, nor do they see it as depicting Christ's sacrifice on the cross for sin. They don't see the symbolism and so don't see it as a covering for their sin.

I don't know how much clearer it could be. In the garden God willingly sacrificed two of His created creatures that were innocent in order to cover two of His other creatures who were sinners. This is a picture of something that would take place some 4,000 years later when **"in the fullness of time God sent His Son, born of a virgin to redeem those under the law that we might receive the full rights of sons"** (**Galatians 4:4**). The One who was without sin, was sacrificed in order to be sin for us. The just and sinless one would die for the judged and sinner by willingly becoming a sacrifice to cover our sin.

I Peter 3:18 "For Christ died for sins once for

all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body, but made alive through the Spirit."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."

I John 2:1b-2 "If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

What is done in a **Genesis 3:21** is only a picture. We know that because we read in Hebrews that no blood from an animal can cleanse from sin. It is only through the blood of Christ.

Hebrews 10:1-4, 10-12

The covering from God was sacrificial.
The covering from God was also significant.

C. The Covering From God Was Significant

I don't know about you, but I've never had to sacrifice anything of real value that belonged to me. I wonder what God was thinking or what He felt when, in that moment, He took the lives of those two animals in order to cover Adam and Eve.

For that matter, what was it like for Adam and Eve to stand there and witness the killing of these two animals on their behalf? What was it like for the very first time to see what death was? Did they feel more guilt or greater remorse knowing that they were responsible for the death of these animals to cover them? Were they horrified? I think the weight of their disobedience became crystal clear. What had just taken place on behalf of them was significant. For the rest of their lives what they wore would be a reminder of their sin, its consequences, and the price that had to be paid to cover their sin.

Folks, let's not lose sight of its significance for us. It is a reminder of sin, our sin, sin that should make us horrified at the consequences. But let us not lose

sight of the grace of God in providing a sacrifice for our sin so that by faith we can be covered.

I hope whenever you look at a cross it is a reminder of your guilt and God's grace, your sin and God's forgiveness, His pain and our healing.

Let the words of Isaac Watts deeply impress on your heart the significance of Christ's sacrifice.

Alas! and did my Savior bleed
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For sinners such as I?

Refrain

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!

Thy body slain, sweet Jesus, Thine –
And bathed in its own blood –
While the firm mark of wrath divine,
His Soul in anguish stood.

Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!

Well might the sun in darkness hide
And shut His glories in,
When Christ, the mighty Maker died,
For man the creature's sin.

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God didn't just shear the animals and let them live.
Theirs was a once for all sacrifice depicting the
once for all sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

This covering of God was special.
It was sacrificial.
It was significant.
It was a unique covering.

In **verses 22-23** we see that the conversation of God was understandable.

II. THE CONVERSATION OF GOD WAS UNDERSTANDABLE – vs. 22-23

Here is the Godhead – Father, Son and Spirit – in conference having a discussion. What we see first of all is that God's reasoning is sound.

A. God's Reasoning Is Sound – v. 22

This is one of those passages that some cults use to suggest that we will become gods someday. Both the Mormons and New Agers believe that's what this verse means. Sean McDowell writes in his apologetics Bible that in II Nephi 2:25 in the book of Mormon it says that Adam needed to commit the first sin in order for humans to become gods in the next life. Such logic assumes that Satan was telling the truth in the garden, but we know that isn't true because what is true is that we read in **John 4:4** that Satan is a liar.

What **verse 22** is saying is that they became like God because now they knew the difference between good and evil. Earlier God had told Adam not to eat from the tree of good and evil and He told him the consequences for doing so. Adam knew it was wrong so when they both ate the forbidden fruit they were no longer just simply aware of evil, they had willingly experienced evil, to the extent, as one author noted, they became evil. Now they were sinners by nature.

They knew what was good and were surrounded by what was good. God had given them everything needed to live a fulfilling life. They didn't need to know evil but Satan had convinced them that it was something they needed to know. The only way they could experience evil was to do it and we know the rest of the story. At their creation they only knew evil intellectually now they came to know it experientially. As a result we all know evil by experience. One day that curse will be lifted. When God creates the new heaven and new earth the curse will be broken. **Revelation 22:3** says there will no longer be any curse.

Romans 7:24-25 “Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

The concern God expressed is that if they were to remain in the garden they might take and eat from the tree of life and remain in that sinful state for the remainder of their lives with no hope of redemption. God had to take action and their removal was swift. What He had to do was understandable and once again, while at a quick glance it may seem harsh to throw them out but bear in mind that this too was a measure of His grace toward them.

B. The Removal Is Swift – v. 23

The NIV puts this verse in a way that clearly reveals the gravity of the situation. They were banished. They were exiled. It's a word that means forcing a person to leave his country. They could never return. In the garden life was easy. There was still work to do, but they could eat from things that were already provided. In their banishment Adam was forced to fulfill God's punishment by having to work the ground to produce what would sustain them. Work would now be hard.

Sin always has consequences and results in separation from God. Fellowship with Him was broken. Their removal is swift. What God did because of their sin is understandable.

In the concluding verse we notice that God placed some caretakers in the garden and they are unwavering in their responsibilities.

III. THE CARETAKERS OF GOD WERE UNWAVERING – v. 24

Go to any major sporting event or theme park and you have to go through metal detectors. Airports and many schools have security systems, guards and lockdown procedures. We have a measure of security here at church.

If you visit the US Capital or the Pentagon in Washington D.C. there are armed guards.

It's unfortunate that we require such measures even in a civilized nation, but that is the times and reality in which we live and it's because of sin.

To ensure they would not return God placed cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the tree so that they didn't wander back in and eat from the tree of life. We make some assumptions that there were only two cherubim and each was holding a flaming sword. The text only says there were cherubim which could mean more than two. It also says cherubim AND a flaming sword. Artists depict the cherubim holding a flaming sword, but I don't think that was the case. I see them as separate guardians.

Reading the Bible we learn some things about cherubim. For example cherubim are the highest ranking angels. They symbolize the presence of God. In passages like **Ezekiel 1 and 10** they are around the throne in heaven giving praise to God. Before the fall, according to **Ezekiel 28:14**, Satan was once an anointed cherub. In the instructions given to Moses for the construction of the Ark of the Covenant two cherubim were to sit on top of the cover, one on each end with wings stretching forward touching each other. Their gaze was looking down to the top of the Ark which is called the mercy seat.

Hebrews 9:3-5 “Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered Ark of the Covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover.”

In the construction of the Temple, Solomon had cherubim fashioned on the wall in the Holy of holies (**I Kings 6:23-28**).

While the cherubim symbolize the presence of God, the flaming sword symbolizes God's judgment and

wrath on sin. Both were guardians of the garden. Their purpose was to keep them out.

When Robyn visited her Mom in Arizona they took a trip to the border and she got to see the border wall. It seems to be quite secure, yet just a ways down the road and anyone could cross. There were also towers and drones that provide surveillance of the area with border patrols roaming the perimeter.

Any manmade security system is inadequate, but God's measures ensured no one got into the garden.

The symbolism is clear. Jesus is the only means of access to the tree of life. Man can never enter into God's presence apart from Him and only God could make that way possible. Man needs what only God could provide and so had to accept His provision for their covering and reject their own. There is only one acceptable way eternal life.

If you notice from the verse God had to drive them from the garden. They didn't want to leave, it was their home, but in their sin they could not stay.

Once man was driven out from God's presence, but one day man will be welcomed back into His presence again. That way is only possible through Jesus Christ and **Revelation 22:1-2** tells us that the tree of life will once again be made available.

What does our passage have to do with us? Sin has consequences. We are separated from God. To come to God we must be properly covered. Anything we try to make ourselves is insufficient. Only God can provide that covering but it has to be willingly received by us. He won't force anyone to accept it. That covering is only made possible by Jesus Christ.

It is sad to think that today so many people are just like the emperor vainly walking around in clothes that don't exist thinking that what they are wearing is enough to get them into heaven. Jesus clearly stated that He is the Only Way, the Only Truth and

the Only Life and no one can come to the Father except through Him.

I find it interesting that it took Jesus hanging on a tree of death as a sacrifice in order for us to have access to the tree of life. We have a great picture of our covering in the events of the Garden. Don't walk around thinking you are adequately clothed in a righteousness that is your own and find out one day when you stand before God and He says to you that you aren't wearing any clothes at all, especially when the appropriate apparel is available.

Our communion time this morning is a wonderful reminder of the righteousness with which we have been clothed through the sacrifice of Christ symbolized by the animals God slew to cover Adam and Eve. Today as you take communion give God thanks for clothing you in His righteousness.

Let's sing together the last stanza and refrain of the song At the Cross.

Thus might I hide my blushing face
While His dear cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness
And melt my eyes to tears.
Refrain

But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe:
Here, Lord, I give myself away
"Tis all that I can do.
Refrain

(Communion)