

CLOTHE YOURSELF WITH JESUS

“And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh” (Rom. 13:11-14).

When you would wake up as a small child someone would have to change your diaper and put clean clothes on you. Even Jesus, as an infant, could not dress himself and was wrapped in swaddling clothes by his mother (Lk. 2:7). Parents, however, are to train their children (Prov. 22:6). Jesus was therefore trained by his parents to grow up and take care of himself. He was not just the “carpenter’s son” (Matt. 13:55), Jesus was himself a carpenter (Mark 6:3). Because Jesus obeyed his parents he **“Grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Lk. 2:1-52).**

There is something seriously wrong with a child doesn’t grow and is never able to take care of themselves. Please consider the tragic story of Brooke Greenberg. She was born on January 8, 1993 to parents Howard and Melanie Greenberg at the Sinai Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. She was delivered by Caesarean section one month before her due date. She only weighed 4 lbs. Brooke died Oct. 24, 2013 at the age of twenty. She died in the same hospital where she was born. Yet, even though she was twenty years old she had remained an infant throughout her entire life. When she died she only weighed 16 lbs. and had the mental ability of an infant 9 to 12 months old. The experts say that Brook was the victim of a genetic syndrome or chromosomal abnormality. The doctors called her condition *Syndrome X*. There is also something seriously wrong with a Christian that does not grow!

In Christ we are to **“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18)**. Peter told everyone to **“Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Peter 2:1-3)**. The book of Hebrews addresses this problem with these strong words of rebuke: **“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil (Heb. 5:11-14)**. Please note that mature people can distinguish good from evil because of their training!

So Paul wrote to the Romans that it was time for them to grow up and behave like an adult. The night was about over and the day was about to begin. The command to clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ is an imperative. It is something that God expects us to do. When we “wake up” we should try to get dressed all by themselves. While God can help us to put on the “armor of light”, we need to take the initiative and start dressing on their own. We know how to be decent. We know better than to carouse or get drunk. We know better than to get involved in sexual immorality and debauchery.

We know better than to be involved in dissension and jealousy. We know how to behave and should only expect God to help us when they are too weak or sick to help ourselves.

Laziness is not a virtue! A lazy man's garden is covered with weeds and his stone wall is in ruins (Prov. 24:30-32). Some people are too lazy to clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. In the parable of the talents the man with five talents put the money to work and gained five more. The man with two talents put the money to work and gained two more. The man with one talent buried it in the ground and did nothing. The master condemned that man because he was lazy and worthless (Matt. 25:14-30). The point is, you can clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ if you want to!

God expects us to grow up and work! God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the specific purpose of training God's people for works of service **“so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead; speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work”** (Eph. 4:11-16).

WE ARE GOD'S FELLOW WORKERS (1 Cor. 3:9)

The idea of man and God working together began in the Garden of Eden. God placed Adam in the Garden to **“work it and take care of it”** (Gen. 2:15), but God obviously worked with him and taught him how to do it. Taxonomy is a branch of science that names and classifies organisms. Adam became the world's first “taxonomist” as God permitted him to name all of the beasts of the field and fowls of the air (Gen. 2:19-20). Adam could plant the seed, but only God could make it grow. Paul applied this principle to Christian workers and pointed out that **“we are God's fellow workers”** (1 Cor. 3:9). Paul planted the seed. Apollos watered it. But only God could make it grow. The fact that we are to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ does not mean that God is not involved. We work together with God! The fact that Paul and Apollos worked hard did not mean that they didn't need God. Like a loving Father God watched over their labors and used His supernatural powers to make them successful.

Remember! Those who hear the word of God and do not do it are like a foolish man who builds his house on the sand. When the rain comes and the streams arise that house will not stand (Matt. 7:24-27). You cannot call Jesus Lord if you do not do what He commands you to do (Lk. 6:46). Since God commands us to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, of course we can do it!

God has consistently commanded men to work with Him. God, for example, did not build the ark to save his family, Noah did that. The Scriptures are clear: **“By faith, Noah when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family”** (Heb. 11:7). Noah, of course, was not alone in the project for God gave him instructions on how to build the ark. God also instructed Noah to take his sons and their wives on the ark together with animals, birds and food, and **“Noah did everything just as God commanded him”** (Gen. 6:22). We also need to do everything that God commands us!

The first time the word “worship” is found in the Bible is in Genesis 22:5. It refers to what Abraham and Isaac did on one of the mountains of Moriah. Please note that Abraham obeyed God, arose early in the morning, cut wood for a burnt offering, and traveled three days to the mountain God told him about. Abraham did everything God commanded him and was about to sacrifice his son. At the last minute an angel of the Lord intervened and Isaac was spared. James made reference to this and wrote: **“Was not Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?” (James 2:21).**

Elijah also did everything God commanded him to do, but he still depended on God to send down fire from heaven. Elijah was not lazy, here are some of the things he did:

- He repaired the altar of God that was in ruins (1 Ki. 18:30).
- He built an altar to the Lord using 12 stones that represented the 12 tribes of Israel (1 Ki.18:31).
- He dug a trench around the altar (1 Ki. 18:32).
- He arranged the wood, cut the sacrificial bull in pieces and laid it on the wood (1 Ki. 18:33).
- Three different times he ordered that water be poured on the offering and the wood (1 Ki. 18:33-35).
- **“At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench” (1 Ki. 18:36-38).**
- It is important to realize that we are not saved by our works for after we have done everything we are commanded to do we will still have to say: **“We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty” (Lk. 17:10).**
- The distance from Mt. Carmel to Beersheba is almost 200 km. It was a long journey and when Elijah arrived at Beersheba he was so tired and discouraged that he wanted to die. God did not condemn him for being tired and discouraged but sent an angel to help him. The angel fed him supernatural food that gave Elijah the strength to travel 40 days and 40 nights to Horeb, the mountain of God (1 Ki. 19:3-9).
- God knows when we are lazy, and God also knows when we are tired. He understands our weaknesses and will never tempt us beyond what we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13).

GOD WORKS IN US

Christ in you is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Please consider what Paul wrote to the church at Philippi: **“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Phil. 2:12-13).**

When Paul commanded **“clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ”** he was fully aware that Jesus Christ is always with us and will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). In fact, as he wrote to the Philippians, it is God who works in you to “will” and to “act”. First God gives you to desire to do his will, and then he gives you the ability. The fact that you are reading this article is an indication that you want to do better. Please consider that this desire came from God. It may not be

easy for you to overcome the sins that are dragging you down, but with the help of God all things are possible! If you are seeking God with all of your heart He will help you gain the victory.

Paul expressed it like this to the Galatians: **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).**

As a part of “clothing yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ” you need to be involved in a serious study of the Bible. Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). Jesus is in every book of the Bible, but the Four Gospels are especially dedicated to Him. The Four Gospels comprise approximately 44% of the New Testament Scriptures. There is obviously a reason why God spent so much about our Lord Jesus Christ. Studying the Bible, and especially the Gospels, will help you to understand what Jesus would do and the Holy Spirit will help you to follow in His steps.

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (Eph. 3:16-21)

Yes! **“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh”**