Lord,

You are everything to us. You are everything. You are Alpha and Omega. You are the Beginning and the End. We live and move and have our being in You. You are the Author and the Finisher of our faith. You are our Strong Tower. We are so thankful, Lord, to be in Your presence, so thankful to be able to lift up the name of Jesus, and so eager for the whole world to know what You have done in Jesus Christ.

Lord, we pray that You would now prepare our hearts to receive Your word, cause our spirits to stand at attention to the imperishable seed and cause the seed to spring forth into life. We thank You, Lord, that these are not merely words on a page, but rather eternal life-giving power. And so, Lord, we pray today that You would clothe us with the presence of Jesus. We are so thankful, Lord, for all You have done for us, and we ask, Lord, that You would open up our eyes and show us wondrous things from Your Word.

We pray this in the wonderful and marvelous name of Jesus Himself. Amen

1 Revelation 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13
2 Acts 17:28
3 Hebrews 12:2
4 Psalm 31:3; 61:3; 59:9; 71:7; Proverbs 18:10
5 1 Peter 1:23
6 John 6:63; Heb. 4:12; 1 Cor. 2:4; 2 Cor. 3:6; Phil. 2:16
7 Romans 13:14
Have you heard of the preacher who finally found the time to call on a parishioner who for a long time had been asking him to please come visit her? He arrived and knocked on the door, but nobody came to answer. The lights were on, and he saw other signs that someone was home, so he kept knocking, but nobody came to the door. He decided to leave a note which read:

 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone shall open it, I will come in!

He had a chuckle later that weekend when he stepped into the pulpit and saw a little note that had been left there by the woman. It said:

 I heard the sound of thee in the garden, but I was naked and therefore afraid, so I could not come to the door.

Are you ready for some good news today?

When you feel naked and ashamed, instead of leaving you in that condition, God clothes you appropriately.

**Genesis Chapter Three (NIV)**

We have seen in Genesis chapters one, two and three that in the beginning God’s grace was already there, that the Gospel was being announced from the opening lines of the Bible. And today we will see that Gospel reach a crescendo of mercy in Genesis chapter three when we read about the very first action of God.

We pick up the story at verse seven, after Eve has been deceived and has eaten of the forbidden fruit.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’

10 He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’

11 And he said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’

12 The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’

The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’

And at verse twenty-one:

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Before sin entered Paradise, we are told in Genesis 2:25, *The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame*. This is a very important text, because it is the only place in the Bible that describes what a marriage or any human relationship in Paradise looked like when there was no sin.

Once sin entered the world, the man and the woman realized they were naked, and they felt ashamed. So after God spoke to the man, the woman and the serpent, His very first action in this fallen world was to kill innocent animals and to use their skins to make long tunics so that He could clothe Adam and Eve.

Today we will talk about what it means to ultimately be clothed with power from on high, for beloved, throughout Scripture we in Jesus Christ are pictured as being clothed with Christ Himself. So rich is the mercy of God that when Adam and Eve were naked, ashamed, and unable to adequately clothe themselves, God came into the Garden and clothed them.
THE FRUIT
OF A BROKEN COVENANT

What was it that Adam and Eve were experiencing after they had sinned?

Absorption with Self

Notice that all of Adam and Eve’s language turned away from being about God and towards being about themselves. Verse ten: He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’

When sin entered the world, self-consciousness and self-absorption entered with it, because the covenant was broken with God.

Shame

The covenantal love of God was displayed towards the man and the woman, and yet, because they broke their relationship with God, they experienced immediate shame. That is surprising, isn’t it? Adam and Eve were the only two people on earth! This wasn’t a matter of Eve looking around at billboards and magazine covers and saying, I don’t know if I look as good as those other women. She was beyond compare. Neither was this a matter of Adam feeling bad about himself because he might not be as athletic as other men, or he might not make as much money as other men.

There were only two people on the earth, and yet they were ashamed of themselves and afraid of one another.

Fear

Am I still loved?

Their covenant with God was broken, and therefore love was called into question, and fear entered. Fear and love are opposing forces, and where there is perfect love, there is no fear; where there is perfect fear, there is no love.

Am I able to trust another?

As a result of his fear, Adam became aware that since Eve had chosen the fruit that was forbidden, she might in turn choose something more appealing over him. She seemed no longer trustworthy. And that meant he could not count on knowing that Eve accepted him. So, the damage to the covenant also caused a lack of trust, which introduced a potentially unlimited measure of fear.

Love must be pure if it is really love. You can’t love somebody with 99% of your being and then with one percent, even one day a year, say, But I might leave you. In that one percent you introduce an unlimited capacity for fear and erosion of the covenantal love.

This is what happened because the covenant was compromised. Even Eve didn’t seem trustworthy to Adam, and so he felt a need to hide from her.

Am I able to trust myself?

At the same time, Adam realized that he, too, had eaten of the fruit, and so he was essentially absorbed with an awareness of his own guilt and, because he felt dirty and unworthy, he wanted to be covered.

The two humans had been in an undefiled world where trust was perfect, and therefore love was perfect. But the covenant was compromised, so fear and shame entered. It is therefore the human nature to want to be assured of acceptance.

The two humans had been in an undefiled world where trust was perfect, and therefore love was perfect. But the covenant was compromised, so fear and shame entered. It is therefore the human nature to want to be assured of acceptance.

I AM REMINDED of Dudley Hall’s story. He and his wife, Betsy, were once dressing for an outing and Betsy asked Dudley, How do I look? Dudley meant to say, You couldn’t look better! but instead he said, You look as good as you can!

Just a little twist of a word here or there can make all the difference...

8 1 John 4:18
Anxiety

Two sources of anxiety merged simultaneously for Adam and Eve. First, *Your love may not be trustworthy, so I am afraid of being rejected by you, which makes me anxious.* Secondly, *I am untrustworthy. The gap between what I ought to be and what I know myself to be causes angst. I don’t measure up; I am not what I am supposed to be; I should be better.*

And in that gap, hell operates. For in that gap of shame there is an unlimited striving to measure up, so the angst joins together the fear of rejection and the fear of never being able to be enough. And thus they were hiding.

Cover-up

The fig leaves were an attempt by the man and the woman to cover the gap between what they were and what they ought to be. They gave the illusion that the gap was not that big, that they were okay, that they would look okay to each other, that they would appear to be unashamed.

This goes far to explain why someone could have all the appearances of every worldly standard of beauty or success and yet suffer deep, inward shame and angst.

There is no way to guarantee that Eve will not reject you, Adam; there is no way that you will ever be certain that you have done enough to make yourself acceptable. So you might as well give up trying to clothe yourself, and let God clothe you.

Covenantal Love

Yesterday I had again the privilege to officiate a wedding, standing here in this Chancel. It is still after all these years an emotional moment for me to lead two people in their vows, their promises, because in our culture there is no greater picture of covenantal love than marriage.

The world’s idea of love is to say, *I’m going to see if I love you enough, and the more that I feel like I’m in love with you, the more commitment I’ll make to you.* But God’s love is absolutely different. A real marriage in God’s economy is where two people are called down the same path of life. They may very much love and enjoy each other, but of greatest importance is that they are called down the same path of life together, and they make a commitment to forsake all others. They have a covenant together, and in the context of that covenantal commitment, love grows.

This goes far to explain why co-habiting does not work. People co-habit because they are not ready to make a commitment. They want to see first if they love each other enough to commit to each other.

Yet that is precisely what love is not. You love somebody because you are committed to them. It is the reason why you love your kids; you are in a covenant with them; they are yours. You love what is yours. Your kids may not be the best kids in the world, but you don’t love your kids because they are the smartest, the most beautiful, or the most obedient. You love them because they are yours.

The man loved the woman because God gave her to him as a gift. And the man was a gift to the woman. But when sin and shame entered the world, the gift was called into question, and the relationship would have to be restored through a new sort of covenantal love.

A Perfected Covenant

The only way to know perfect love is through a perfected covenant, the love of God.

Portraits in the Word

God painted portraits of His covenant all through the Word.

Adam and Eve

*Genesis 1:28; 3:1-24*

It began with Adam and Eve. The reason that God continued a redemptive plan after sin was that He was in covenant with Adam and Eve. He had...
covenanted to bless their lives and give them dominion on the earth, but when they sinned, God didn’t leave them alone. He walked in the Garden in the cool of the day, calling for them.

Israel

It is the same reason that God would not forsake Israel, though Israel rebelled over and over.

David

1 Samuel 18:3-4; 20:14-16; 23:18; 2 Sam 9:1-13

It is the reason that David sent for Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth, to be brought to the banquet table, because of a covenant between David and Jonathan.

Hosea

Hosea 3:1-2

It is the reason that Hosea took back Gomer.

The Prodigal

Luke 15:11-31

It is the reason that the father took back the prodigal son.

Ours through Jesus Christ

It is the reason that you can believe the Word of God and that all His blessings are for you. It’s that the covenant was made between the Father and the Son.

The Son kept the covenant that we couldn’t keep, and He did so because one day He would clothe us with the clothing that we couldn’t make. The covenant between the Father and the Son was fulfilled through the cross and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God is a covenantal love. The Bible says anybody who is in Christ is therefore a recipient of that covenantal love.

Paul said, I am convinced that there is nothing that could ever separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.9

If you want to know a perfect love, you will only know it in Christ, Who made and kept a covenant on your behalf and proved it through His blood.

Adam and Eve lost their peace, their freedom and their confidence because the covenant was broken. The only way to heal it would be to perfect the keeping of the covenant — somehow.

You can believe the Word of God and that all His blessings are for you because Jesus Christ made and kept a covenant on your behalf and He proved it through His blood.

THE ONE WHO PROVIDES

Pro Video

The covenant had been compromised, but God loved Adam and Eve. He didn’t say, Look at you; you are naked; you’re ugly and unworthy. Go live in your shame. He also didn’t say, You’re naked; don’t worry about it. Sin doesn’t matter. Don’t worry about the shame. The way to solve your shame is to be aware that there’s no real right and wrong; none of it bothers Me. No, He didn’t say that either.

Instead of leaving them in their shame, or telling them that everything was relative and okay, God made clothes. And in so doing, He acknowledged that the sin and the shame were real, that they couldn’t pretend that everything was okay when it wasn’t. And God was also acknowledging that He had a way of providing.

God is the One Who provides: pro, meaning before; video, meaning to see. He sees before, and so He can pro vide. He can see ahead of time that you are going to need some clothes.

When there was a great storm, the Lord provided directions for Noah to build an ark.10

When Abraham was told to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, the Lord instead provided a ram in the thicket for the sacrifice.11

When the Destroyer went through Egypt killing the firstborns, the Lord provided instructions for the Israelites to place blood over the doors for their protection.12

9 Romans 8:38-39
10 Genesis 6:11-16
12 Exodus 12:1-27
God covered the man and the woman with skins, but one day, God would clothe His children with Himself.

When the Israelites were hungry in the desert, the Lord provided manna for them to eat.\textsuperscript{13}

When Joseph’s brothers were about to starve in Canaan, the Lord provided Joseph, the one they thought was dead.\textsuperscript{14}

When Jonah sank in the waters of the deep, the Lord provided a great fish.\textsuperscript{15}

When Nehemiah was burdened to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, the Lord provided lumber.\textsuperscript{16}

The Lord sees beforehand what is going to be necessary. You don’t know what you will encounter next week, but God does. He is already there. He sees ahead and He provides.

By a Beautiful Act of Grace

GOD’S Work

Please notice that God did not show any sign of wanting Adam and Eve to suffer in continued fear. There is not one inkling that He wanted to punish them by leaving them in shame and fear. Instead, the love of God was such that He blessed the very people who had just sinned against Him. Neither Adam nor Eve made an apology, though they should have. Their answers were evasive, and even somewhat deceptive. They didn’t crawl upon their faces, weep at some altar for hours, or make a sacrifice. They didn’t know how to clothe themselves. They didn’t know what to do for themselves. They didn’t even know what they needed. They were grabbing for fig leaves, and God clothed them in His mercy.

In order to have fellowship with God, you do not have to pay penance. There was no action designated for Adam and Eve. It was God’s action. God shed the blood of innocent animals, made clothing from the skins for the man and the woman, and clothed them Himself.

God’s forgiveness and mercy are extended to you, not based on your level of penance or remorse, but on God’s deep heart of love. Human sin cannot be solved by human apologies, penance or amends. The human sin problem can only be solved by the Father God. The shame cannot be covered by human constructions. It can only be lifted by God Himself.

Exactly the Right Clothing

Why did God give them clothing? Why did God clothe them in the garments of skins? It was because God had the right clothing for them. He was essentially saying,

Beloved, you do need to be covered, because now you are naked, and only I have the right clothing for you. I have what is appropriate for you. So you can quit being afraid of one another and afraid of me, here is clothing that you may wear.

He clothed them to at least in part lift their shame. So instead of them saying: I feel naked; I wonder if I look okay; I wonder if I am doing well enough; I wonder if He loves me, they could in part take the focus off of themselves and enter into a relationship with one another and with God. God was covering them with skins, but one day, God would clothe His children with Himself.

God was saying, Instead of feeling dirty in front of Me, I want you to feel covered, because I want to be with you.

---

\textsuperscript{13} Exodus 16:1-11
\textsuperscript{14} Genesis 41:53-45:7
\textsuperscript{15} Jonah 1:11-17
\textsuperscript{16} Nehemiah 8:6-8
PROPHETIC PORTRAITS

The garments that are described here in the Hebrew language are tunics that go from the shoulders down to the ankles. And the language that is used, garments of skin and God clothed, does not appear again until the story of Jacob and Esau. This is not coincidental.

Jacob

Genesis 27:1-35

Jacob was the younger of two twin brothers and he was an object, a picture, of shame. He felt that he did not measure up because he was the second born, and he was continually trying to outwit his brother and steal his blessing. In fact, he wanted to be his brother. The time came for the boys’ father, Isaac, aged and blinded in his old age, to speak the traditional blessing and release the inheritance to his firstborn son, Esau. But Isaac’s wife Rebecca, who favored Jacob, clothed Jacob in the garments of Esau, and clothed him with garments of skin – the same expression from Genesis – so that his skin would feel like the hairy skin of his brother, Esau.

When Jacob went in to deceive Isaac, at first Isaac said, This doesn’t sound like my son Esau, and Jacob lied to his father, saying, I am Esau. Isaac said, Come and kiss me, and when they brought their faces together to kiss, Isaac caught the aroma of the garments of Esau and felt the hairy garments of skin, so he concluded it must be Esau.

Ah, he said, The smell of my son, like the smell of the fields! And then he blessed Jacob. He blessed the son that didn’t deserve the blessing just because he had on the clothes of the firstborn son, who did deserve the blessing.

When Esau discovered what had been done, he said, Can you not bless me also my father?

Isaac trembled violently and he said, I have blessed him, and indeed he will be blessed. Just because he had your clothes on, he received your blessing.

AND GOD BEGAN PAINTING IN HIS WORD a hundred portraits of what it would be like for His people to wear the clothing of His beloved Son. The language comes over and over.

God painted in His Word

a hundred portraits

of what it would be like

for His people to wear the clothing

of His beloved Son.

Joseph

Genesis 37:2-4, 12-36: 39:1, 20; 41:42

Joseph was the eleventh of Jacob’s twelve sons, and Jacob favored Joseph because he was born to Rachael, the love of Jacob’s life. Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful tunic that ran from his shoulders to his ankles, and the brothers despised Joseph for that tunic. They stripped it from him and bloodied it with an animal’s blood.

Joseph wore a slave’s clothes, and then he wore an inmate’s clothes, until Pharaoh exalted him and put on him the royal robe.

In a thousand different ways God was saying, I’m going to put on you the clothing that you need.

The Priests

Leviticus 7:8; 8:7-13 (NIV)

The language to put on is used of the priests, who were required to wear a special tunic in order to enter into the presence of the Lord. Aaron was to be clothed with the tunic, and Aaron was to clothe his sons with the tunic.

In Leviticus 7:8 there is an interesting text which says that after the burnt offering had been made, the priest, not the high priest, but the priest who had made the burnt offering, was entitled to take the skin of the animal and wear it.

Books of the Prophets

The prophetic literature appeals to this image.

Isaiah 61:1-3, 10

Isaiah prophesied that God will provide for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
In that same chapter of Isaiah, the prophet declares, *I delight greatly in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God, for He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness.*

This was written by the prophet eight centuries before Christ.

**Zechariah 3:1-7**

Zechariah had a vision of a high priest named Joshua:

1. *Then he showed me Joshua the high priest [not the conqueror] standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.*
2. *The LORD said to Satan, ‘The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?’*

While Satan in this vision was accusing the priest, Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes.

3. *Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel.*
4. *The angel said to those who were standing before him, ‘Take off his filthy clothes.’*

Then he said to Joshua, *‘See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.’*

**Psalms**

**Psalm 30:11** *(ESV)*

*You have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness.*

**Clothed by God**

**Appropriate Attire**

When Jesus came, He was teaching his first sermon by the fields of Galilee, and He was trying to encourage the people as He saw how anxious they were, how their lives were still filled with the angst that Adam and Eve felt, and He said: *If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, if He clothes the lilies like that, will He not much more clothe you?*

Jesus knew his purpose. He knew that the purpose for which He had come was to clothe you appropriately.

There is a very important parable about the Kingdom of God in which Jesus describes a king who had prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He invited guests from all over, but they made excuses and they didn’t come. They were too busy with their businesses, and didn’t want to come. And so the wealthy man sent his servants to the streets, the byways, the back alleys, and said to them: *Go, bring in everyone you find.*

So the wealthy man brought to the banqueting hall of his house the people who did not deserve to come to the party. But when they arrived, they realized they could not go in unless they had on the proper wedding clothes, and the king provided them.*

It was the custom of ancient kings, when they had a big party, to provide for the guests the appropriate attire. And we, in Christ, are all Cinderellas dressed by Someone else in suitable attire for the ball.

---

\(^{17}\) Psalm 30:11

\(^{18}\) Matthew 22:1-14
The promise of the Father was a redemption so full, so free and so powerful that you would be clothed with the righteousness that should have belonged only to Jesus; so full, so free and so powerful that you would be clothed with the favor that should have been shown only to Jesus; so full, so free and so powerful that you and I have the privilege of wearing the clothing of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Putting on Jesus

Jesus knew His mission. He knew there must be a way for the people to put on Jesus Christ Himself. This is what Paul said over and over.

**Romans 13:14:** Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Galatians 3:26-27:** ... for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

**Colossians 3:12, 17:** Put on then as God’s chosen ones holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, ... and whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name – in the clothing – of Jesus, giving thanks to God through Him.

The time came in which Jesus had to make a decision in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knew what was going to happen, for when a man was crucified, he would be stripped. He said, I wish this cup could be taken from me, but not my will, Yours be done, Father.¹⁹

The Tunic Everyone Needs

In John chapter nineteen, in fulfillment of Psalm twenty-two, the soldiers divided up the garments of Jesus, but when they came to His inward garment, the tunic that went from His shoulders to His ankles, the Bible says they did not have a way to divide it. It was seamless, and so they cast lots for the covering of Jesus, not knowing that it is the covering of Jesus that every man and woman needs.

Power from on High

While Jesus hung on the cross, naked, bleeding and suffocating, every demon of hell had opportunity to mock and to shame the Son of God. He was stripped so that in Luke 24:49, after His resurrection, He could tell His disciples to say to the ones that had betrayed Him, the ones who were nowhere to be found at the cross, the ones of little faith, to say to them just as God had said in Genesis three to Adam and Eve, I want to give you your clothes. Wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father; wait until you are clothed with power from on high.

¹⁹Matthew 26:36-44; Mark 14:32-40; Luke 22:41-44
In the Beginning, God’s Grace Was There

Part 10: Clothed by God

THE SPIRIT OF JESUS

At Pentecost they understood. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and beloved, no matter how naked and ashamed you may feel, we in Christ are to be clothed with the Spirit of Jesus Himself. For all the times the priests had been clothed with the symbols of purity, were just practice for the day that we would be clothed with the Holy Spirit; all the times the kings had been clothed with royal robes, they were practice for the day we would know our authority from the Spirit; and all the times that favor was demonstrated in the robe, they were practice for the Father’s favor poured out upon us.

The promise of the Father was not just to temporarily alleviate the angst of Adam and Eve in feeling naked and vulnerable from the shame of their sin. The promise of the Father was a redemption so full, so free and so powerful that you would be clothed with the righteousness that should have belonged only to Jesus; so full, so free and so powerful that you would be clothed with the favor that should have been shown only to Jesus; and so full, so free and so powerful that you and I have the privilege of wearing the clothing of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

And THAT is the Gospel!

Father, we are ready to be clothed from on high. Send Your Holy Spirit, we pray, in Jesus name. Amen.

An Invitation

The invitation to you today is to let God do what no one can do for himself or herself, and that is to let God clothe you. We have seen that it is not about what we can sew together on our own or attain by our own resources; it is fully the work of God. It is only ours to yield, to want what God has sent to us in the Holy Spirit.

Maybe you have never asked God to clothe you with power from on high, to clothe you with the Spirit of Jesus. It is what Paul meant by saying in Romans 13:14, Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is God’s gift to all who are in Jesus Christ.

There are those who at times in your life have needed somebody to cover you, but that person left you vulnerable and in your fear, so it is really hard to trust because of that. You might have been a little child and you were left to bear your own shame, but God promises to clothe you, to cover you.

God does not want anyone to feel naked and ashamed. He Himself covers you. It started with an innocent animal’s blood which was shed in the Garden, and it was finished on the cross of Calvary, where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, shed His own blood, so that you may be clothed with Jesus Himself. Just ask Him.

And THAT is the Gospel!

Father, we are ready to be clothed from on high. Send Your Holy Spirit, we pray, in Jesus name. Amen.

Acts 16:6-7; Romans 8:9; Philippians 1:19

20 2 Corinthians 5:21
21 Acts 16:6-7; Romans 8:9; Philippians 1:19
May the Lord God bless you and keep you
and be kind and gracious to you
and make His face to shine upon you
and give you His peace
today and every day, forevermore.
Amen.
Sharing the Light Ministries

is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that offers healing and hope by sharing the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Visit www.sharingthelight.org to learn more about pastor and author Alan Wright, his books, audio products, podcasts, national radio broadcasts and conferences. Also discover how you can become a partner in sharing the light of Jesus Christ.