There Are No Spare Garments at the Wedding

The Lord Jesus once told a parable that begins like this: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,” (Matthew 22:2) Those who were invited first would not come. Then the king sent his servants out into the highways. They gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good, until the wedding hall was filled.

Then came the moment that no one can avoid:

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.” (Matthew 22:11-12)

That man had also come in to the wedding. He stood among the guests and believed that he was welcome there. But he was not clothed with the garment he ought to have had. The king commanded that he be bound and cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The parable shows where the Kingdom of God leads: to a wedding, to the King's feast. It also shows that being in the hall is not enough. Without the wedding garment, a man cannot remain at the feast. And this garment is not handed out ready-made at the end. Each person prepares it beforehand.

Many imagine the event differently. They say that the garment was already there, hanging on a peg in the entrance hall, and that the man walked past it without realising that he had to put it on. According to them, the garment is given to us only to cover our sinful state: on the outside we are white, even though underneath we remain dirty, clothed in the old garment. God does no such thing. First He asks us to put off the old garment, so that we can be clothed. If the Lord finds us clothed in the old man, do we still have any chance?

At the end of the Bible another wedding appears. There, someone has made herself ready:

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” (Revelation 19:7-8)

In these words two things stand together. To the wife it "was granted" to be arrayed, so the garment is a gift. Yet it is she who "hath made herself ready". We too must work with God's gift. And the garment itself is made of the righteousness of the saints, of their righteous deeds. When the wedding comes, the wife must have made herself ready and must be found clothed, not naked.

God does His part, and He does it with love. To Jerusalem He says: “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.” (Ezekiel 16:8)

Some stop here and leave everything to God. His part, they say, is to clothe us, and ours is merely to ask for His mercy. His call, however, goes further:

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Ephesians 4:24)

The man in the parable had a place among the guests, but he did not have the garment. So it was with the church in Sardis. The Lord says to it:

“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.” (Revelation 3:1-2)

"Thou hast a name that thou livest" means that you bear the name of someone who has a wedding garment, but in fact you are clothed in the old garment and you are dead. It is as though the Lord were saying to you: "I have nothing to clothe you with."

It is easy to be deceived here. Some say that we will be changed only after we die. Then, they say, we will be given the glorious body, then we will be made perfect, and that will be the garment in which we stand at the wedding. But if you do not have the garment on you, there is nowhere to get it from. There are no spare garments at the wedding. Each person has his own garment, and you prepare your garment beforehand, just as the Lamb's wife made herself ready. When the king came into the hall, the man in the parable no longer had anywhere to get his garment from. That is why he was speechless.

The same condition appears when the house in heaven is spoken of:

“For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.” (2 Corinthians 5:2-3)

We will receive the heavenly dwelling if we are found clothed. This garment is no ordinary one. The Lord Jesus is the Husband, and those who are His are the bride. Whoever puts off the old man and puts on the new man comes to wear the very clothing that the Lord Jesus Himself has.

The wedding garment is prepared now, from righteous deeds, not at the moment the King comes in. Let us lay aside the old garment and put on the new, so that we may wear the clothing of the One who has called us to His wedding. Then we will not be speechless like the man in the parable, but we will rejoice together with the bride who has made herself ready. May the Lord help us.

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