



Gas Bags

Shrinkable, Stretchable, and Sincere

February 16, 2025

Today we're looking at life to see if Christ is present, prominent, or preeminent.

So: **How well is Jesus fitting into your life?** Trick question. If you're trying to fit Jesus into your life, you're doing it wrong. You've got it backwards. The true question for sincere but imperfect believers like us, is: **How well is your life fitting into Jesus?**



Last Sunday we talked about how to dress to defeat death. And we took a look at John's vision of Jesus' Revelation, wherein the Lord warns the world, "you do not realize that you are ... naked", (Rev 3:17) and establishes a kingdom of priests who clothe themselves in fine linen, "for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints". (Rev 19:8) Which is why the Psalmist says:



May Your priests be clothed with righteousness; [and] may Your saints sing for joy. – Psalm 132:9 NIV



Spiritual clothing, down here and up there, is a common theme in Scripture.



[For instance, David asks] What gain is there ... from my going down to the grave? Does dust give You thanks or declare Your faithfulness? ... [But] You changed my mourning into dancing; [because] You took off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness. – Psalm 30:10-12 NAB



Indeed I shall continue to rejoice, for ... My eager expectation and hope is that I shall not be put to shame in any way, but that with all boldness, now as always, [and forever] Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain. – Philippians 1:18-21 NAB

[And so] My soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness – Isaiah 61:10 NIV

May all who exalt themselves ... be clothed with shame and disgrace. – Psalm 35:26 NIV

[But] I put on righteousness as my clothing; [and] justice was my robe – Job 29:14 NIV

[Whereas] [The wicked] did not remember to show mercy, but ... loved cursing, so ... he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment – Psalm 109:16-18 NKJ

[Which is why] Your enemies will be clothed in shame, and the tents of the wicked will be no more. – Job 8:22 NIV

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have ... an eternal house in heaven ... Meanwhile we groan, [down here] longing to be clothed [up there] ... so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. – 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 NIV

[But] My accusers will be clothed with disgrace and wrapped in shame – Psalm 109:29 NIV



Okay. I'm gonna *tell* you about the *time* I was *literally clothed* with *disgrace*, and *wrapped* in *shame*. **It was a humiliating experience, as well as a triumph of clothing myself in trust that Jesus had me covered.** I was twenty, just *before* one of my *first public messages*, at a *worship event* in a *conference room* at *Dickinson's Family Buffet* in *Bellingham*. When, *partway* through the *dinner*, I suddenly *needed* a *restroom*. And I mean *suddenly!* It *struck* without *warning*. And I'm *speed-walking* and *clenching* down a *long hallway* to the *men's room*.

Long story short: too little too late. Way too late. This was the *early '80s* when *white slacks* were all the *rage*; and I was *wearing 'em*. So I *tossed* my *shorts* in the *trash*, and *washed* my *pants* in the *sink* – *praying as hard* as I've ever *prayed* that *nobody* would *walk in*. They *didn't*. And I *finished*. But there was some *damage* that couldn't be *undone*. **I wanted to run to my car and escape. But instead, I prayed for boldness and returned.** *Back against the wall*, I *inched* my way *halfway around* the room till I was *behind* the *podium*. And there I *stayed*. When it was *time* to *speak*, I *walked straight forward*. And when I was *done*, I *walked backward*, and *waited against the wall*. *Several people* came to me to *tell* me how *touched* they were by my *humility*. If *only* they *knew*. I was *too pooped* for *pride!* *Shar* finally came to me, and *rescued* me with a *coat* to *tie* around my *waist*, so I could *make* my *escape*. And *that's* when I *learned* a *big lesson* about the *Lord*: **God can turn the worst mess into the best message.** If we'll *let* Him. But: **You gotta be willingly flexible, humble, and bold.**



It reminds me of *Joshua* (the *Hebrew name* of *Jesus/Yeshua*), an *OT high priest*, who had a *similar experience* (in *Zechariah's prophetic vision*), standing in the *Temple* covered in *human filth*.



[And] The *Angel [of the Lord]* said to those standing in *front* of him, "Take off those dirty clothes. ... Look, I have taken away your sin ... and I am giving you beautiful, fine clothes. ... Listen, *Joshua, [Yeshua/Jesus]* the *high priest*, and your *friends* who are *sitting* in *front* of you. They are *symbols* of what will happen. – Zechariah 3:4, 8 NCV



Fast-forward to Jesus, at Matthew's sinner dinner; with a *crowd* of *sinners* and *tax collectors* *sitting* in *front* of Him, at the *table*; while a *crowd* of *filthy, pharisaical, religious rulers* and *temple tax collectors* *stand outside*, in the *doorway*, looking *in* and looking *down* on the *Friend of sinners*; because *Jesus* *scheduled* this *dinner party* on their *fasting day*. (Mk 2:18) And so:



When the *teachers of the law* who were *Pharisees* saw Him *eating* with the "*sinners*" and *tax collectors*, they asked His *disciples*: [*from the doorway*] "*Why* does He *eat* with *tax collectors* and '*sinners*'?" [But] On *hearing* this, *Jesus* [*memorably*] said to them, "*It is not* the *healthy* who *need* a *doctor*, but the *sick*. [And in the same way] I have *not* come to *call* the [*self*] *righteous*, but [*self-aware*] *sinners*." – Mark 2:16-17 NIV

The *reason* this is *so good*, and *so worth repeating* so often, is that 1) **Self-righteousness is self-deception.** Because, there are *only two camps*: **the sick who admit it, and the sick who don't.** Which *camp* do you belong to? Because, 2) **If we disregard the Doctor, we're disqualified from the cure.** And, *best of all*, 3) **We're not allowed to make ourselves acceptable to God!** Cuz *that'd* be as *silly* as **trying to make yourself well in order to go to the doctor.** And *then*:

Some people came and asked Jesus, “How is it that *John’s disciples* and the *disciples of the Pharisees* are *fasting*, but Yours are *not*?” [And] Jesus answered, [with this bombshell] “How can the *guests of the Bridegroom* fast while He is *with them*? [The law says] They *cannot*, so long as they have *Him with them*. – Mark 2:18-19 NIV



Bridegroom is OT imagery from *Isaiah* (62:5) and *Hosea* (2:16-19) regarding the *Messiah* and *redemption*. And Jesus just said, “I’m *that Guy!*” And **the Lord required only one annual fast**, (Lev 16:29) **but seven annual feasts!** But the *Pharisees* had to *add 104 more* to *publically display* their *devotion*. (Lk 18:12) And as the “*teachers of the law*” well knew, **if a God-given feast-day fell on a personal fast-day, the fast gave way**. Because, **laws of sadness had to give way to laws of gladness**. And, a *Jewish wedding banquet* was regarded as a *feast-day*. So when they say, “*Why aren’t Your disciples fasting?*” Jesus says, “*Why are you blind to the Bridegroom?!*” *Mic drop*.

[And] It was given to [the bride] [the body of Christ] to *clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean*; for the *fine linen* is the righteous acts of the *saints*. – Revelation 19:8 NAS

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. – Galatians 3:27 NIV

[For] You were taught, with regard to your *former way of life*, to *put off your old self* ... to be *made new* in the *attitude* of your *minds*; and to *put on the new self*, created to be *like God* in *true righteousness* and *holiness*. – Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV

[And] We know that we have *left our old dead way of life*. And we have *entered into new life*. [In Christ; and] We know this because we *love one another*. [Because] *Anyone who doesn’t love still lives in their old condition*. – 1 John 3:14 NIR

Therefore, if *anyone* is *in Christ*, [they are] a *new creation*; *old things have passed away*; [they’re *dead and gone*] behold, all things have become new. – 2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJ



And it’s at *Matthew’s banquet*, that Jesus *offers two brilliant, back to back parables*. **The New Cloth Patch**, that *shrinks and tears old clothes*; and **the New Wine**, that *expands and explodes old wineskins*. And **both stress the need for flexibility and pliability in God’s hands**.

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved. – Matthew 9:16-17 NIV

The *new cloth* shows how **comfy old clothes of “shame and disgrace” from whatever worldly impurity, can’t be spared with a godly patch that sincerely shrinks from sin**. (That *cloth* is *2,000 years old!*) And the *new wine* shows how **a new life of ever-expanding selfless acts of love, is incompatible with non-compliant ol’ gasbags**. (They were *most often made from goatskins* like these.) And these *old goats* and *gasbags* were so *set in their ways*, they couldn’t even *take the pressure* of *mixing with the sinners* the *Messiah* was sent to *save!*

And these *inflexible teachers prevented the prideful complexity of their rules from shrinking, by refusing to let Jesus expand their way of thinking.* Their *religious system, with its myriad of added regulations, was simply too rigid to reduce without the simplicity of godly sincerity* that's not only found in Christ, but the *hallmark of Christ.* Which is why Paul says:

We conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom [of complexity or impurity or hypocrisy] – 2 Corinthians 1:12 NKJ

[Case in point] [A teacher of religious law] asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” [And he not only got an answer, but all Ten Commandments, every OT rule and requirement, and every demand of every prophet! When] Jesus replied ... “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ [Which correspond to the first four of the Ten Commandments, which pertain to God] The second [corresponds to the other six, which pertain to parents, murder, adultery, stealing, lying about your neighbor, and coveting your neighbor’s stuff] ... ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ [For] All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two” – Mt 22:40; Mk 12:28-31 NLT

Then, the *night before the cross, Jesus further shrinks those two into just one.* Saying:

“A new [simplified and streamlined] commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you ... [because] you are My disciples, if you have [Christ-like] love for one another. [And He’s God; so that covers everything, because] ... You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. – John 13:34-35; 15:14 NKJ

So there you go. The *entire Bible in eight words!* Need a dressing room? So you can change! Jesus had this *remarkably brilliant way of shrinking and simplifying complex religious requirements,* simply by **replacing legalistic rules with ever expanding sincerity of heart.** But, Paul also writes:

I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your [new] minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. – 2 Corinthians 11:3 NKJ



*How? Needless complexity, worldly impurity, or plain ol’ gasbag hypocrisy. **A reborn, righteous life can’t stay in the grave.** It’s gotta get out! Just as **hardened hearts can’t grow in Christ.** No matter who they’re hardened against. It’s gotta break out! Can’t let ‘em hold you back from really living!*

Because, **Jesus didn’t go to the cross to patch up a dying double life.** He died and rose to completely replace and transform it! So **don’t fall into the trap of fitting your faith into your life,** the way we do a career, or friends, or sports, or hobbies. Otherwise, **Christ may be present, but you’ll stay in the doorway.** It’s gotta be all or nothing. Work. Relationships. Finances. Otherwise, **Christ may be prominent, but you won’t be transformed.** But we come here to work out our salvation by more and more making the Lord the central hub of our world, wherein, **Christ is preeminent, around which every part of our heart revolves.** Otherwise, you’re gonna be pulled in two directions, till you’re torn apart or your faith blows up. Which is why **salvation is a call to action!** And a call that’s all or nothing. Just remember that dinner with Jesus. He couldn’t eat with those who stood on the sidelines. So, you in or you out? **It’s time to be bold, reject the old, trash the shorts, and enter in, regardless of sin, cuz the Good Doctor has you covered.**