

Grave Clothes

by Derek Melton

The Christian faith is marked by a deep and inner transformation of heart and character, where Christ lives in and through redeemed humanity.

Scripture: John 11:43, Romans 6:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:27

Topics: "New Birth", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

Derek Melton preaches on the profound transformation that occurs in the life of a believer through the new birth experience, likening it to the miraculous raising of Lazarus from the dead. Just as Lazarus was called forth from the grave by Jesus, believers are called to leave behind their old ways and embrace a new life in Christ, shedding the grave clothes of sin and experiencing a deep inner metamorphosis of nature and character.

Transcript

John 11:43-44

"And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

The hallmark of the Christian faith is the evidence of a changed life. The crowning moment of the true convert is not in the heavenly inheritance alone, but in the transformation of heart and character. It is this fundamental truth that gives credence to Christian terms such as: born-again, new-birth, and regeneration. Famed evangelist and author Leonard Ravenhill once asked the question: what are we saved from? I think his question has merit.

The very nature of terms such as these suggests a radical transformation, not only of conduct, but also of deep core values. Biblical salvation is accurately defined as a deep and inner metamorphosis of nature and character that eludes mans ability to self-attain; but nonetheless it apprehends ransomed men.

Here in this passage we find Lazarus, whom Jesus loved, in the grave, wrapped in grave clothes. He had been sorely ill and Jesus had been summoned to come to him to raise him from the bed of sickness but he had passed in the wait. This cold, lifeless corpse wrapped in grave clothes was soon to experience a transformation. As the Author of Life approached the tomb, the breath of life was exhaled through the

words: Lazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth.

This is a wonderful parallel to the miraculous transformation wrought by the new-birth. Humanity has been stricken with a sickness that is unto death and that sickness is called sin. But because of the extravagant love of God towards humanity, a Breath of Life is available for those bound by their own personal grave clothes to resurrect them from the eternal chambers of death. He stands at the entrance of our tombs crying out: "come forth".

Those responding to this redemptive cry experience a personal transformation through a sovereign regenerative work. The dregs of grave clothes are rent and cast away, and the bindings are loosed, allowing the captive to become swallowed up in victorious and absolute newness of life.

This new-birth is not only wrought by but it is also sustained by this mysterious New-Breath that has been inhaled. The Apostle Paul identified with this quickening by saying: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me." The born-again life is purchased by Jesus Christ but just as importantly it is perpetuated by Him. Paul continued by saying: "and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God..."

The totality of the Christian experience is wrapped up in the fact that Christ is living in and through redeemed humanity. And if this is the case, and it is, those emerging from the tomb of sin and death through the redemptive and regenerative work of Christ are truly transformed inwardly. This deep inner transformation is not theoretical but experiential.

For us to assume anything less is to grossly misrepresent the atonement. Beloved, there is a loud cry being exhaled in this very hour, calling those who are dead to life, and those who are bound to be set free. There is a deep inner work of the Cross available to everyone desiring to experience the resurrected life where Christ is in you being your Hope of Glory.

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