

Finding our Identity in Christ
Part Two
Joseph's Three Coats
Giving Up Our Right for Acceptance

2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

- *Apostle Paul clearly stated that anyone who is “in Christ,” which means he or she has repented and put their faith in Christ, is a new creation. In other words, they are born again and their reborn spirit is joined with Christ’s spirit.*

Romans 13:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

- *When a person is born again, although Christ is within them they now need to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”*
- *The Greek word for “put on” means “to dress, clothe.”*
- *To “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” means that our thoughts, words, and actions should reflect the reality of what has happened within our reborn spirit.*
- *This refers to the sanctification process, where we are to live out what is already in us through our new birth.*

Ephesians 4:21–24 (NKJV)

²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

²²that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

²³and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

- *We can see a very important principle in Ephesians 4:21-24.*
- *If we want to be clothed with the new man, our new identity in Christ, we must first take off the old man, our former identity with its lusts and corruption.*
- *We can’t put on new clothes until we’ve removed our old clothes. In a similar way we can’t live out our new life in Christ while continuing to think and live in ways that reflect our former life.*

- *Many Christians become very frustrated because they are not able to walk victoriously in Christ. One of the reasons for their lack of victory is that they haven't first removed the old man. They are trying to serve God while continuing to engage in ways of thinking and living that are contrary to Christ.*
- *The Bible uses the analogy of clothing or outer garments to speak about our interaction with the world around us, how we perceive the world, and how we perceive ourselves.*
- *In the story of Joseph found in Genesis, three different garments had to be removed from Joseph before he could be clothed with the glorious garments God had prepared for him.*
- *Each of these three garments reflect a mindset or attitude he had to be freed from before he could be effectively used by God and fully enter into God's purposes for his life.*
- *Similarly, there are three "garments" believers need to be willing to have removed, which reflect our old ways of thinking, so we can fully experience the freedom Christ has for us and so we can enter into the purposes and ministry He has for each one of us.*
- *As He willingly went to Calvary to suffer for the sins of mankind, Jesus Christ also had three different garments removed. Each of these three garments reflect the same "garments" Joseph had removed and in the same order.*
- *In Jesus' suffering for us He took upon Himself all our sins, sicknesses, sufferings, and injustices so we could be forgiven, healed, and freed.*
- *Joseph had to have three coats removed to be clothed in such a way as to fulfill God's will for his life.*
- *Jesus Christ also had to have three coats removed so He could fulfill His Father's will and be the Saviour of all of mankind.*
- *Each garment that is removed makes room for a new garment to be worn.*

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV)

¹³And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

- *The three eternal garments that must be put on to replace the old corruptible garments are faith, hope, and love.*
- *One could say that our Father wants to dress His children in three piece suits made of faith, hope, and love.*

Hebrews 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

- *Suffering is not always the result of sin. Sometimes we face suffering or painful circumstances because we live in a fallen world. Through painful circumstances we can learn and grow as we respond in faith and obedience, and surrender to our Father's will.*
- *Today, as we begin to study the life of Joseph, we are going to focus on the first coat that had to be removed from Joseph, what it represents, and how to apply this principle to our lives.*

Genesis 37:3 NKJV

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors.

- *The first coat Joseph wore was the coat of a son. This coat represented his identity as his father's favourite son. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other children and he made him a special tunic of many colours.*
- *Joseph's coat was a full length coat that extended to his feet with long sleeves that extended to the palms of his hands. It was an extraordinary coat that stood out from any coat worn by others. It declared his special position as his father's favorite son.*

Genesis 37:4 NKJV

⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.

- *Joseph's brothers were so jealous that their envy developed into a deep hatred of him. Although the text does not implicitly state this, it is very probable that Joseph strutted around as he wore his special coat. He was very conscious of his favoured position with his father.*
- *This brewing conflict between Joseph and his brothers reflected a lack of wisdom on Jacob's part in dealing with his sons, a root of bitterness and envy on the part of Joseph's brothers, and a naivety and immaturity on Joseph's part as he enjoyed his special status.*
- *God was preparing to work in the hearts of Joseph, his brothers, and his father. In His omniscience, God deals with multiple people on multiple levels at the same time and through the same circumstances.*
- *As believers, every circumstance that we experience, whether joyful or sad, easy or difficult, pleasant or painful we need to ask, "Lord, why are you allowing this? What can I learn from this? How can I grow and mature through this?"*

How do You want to use me to bless and benefit others?"

- *When we are confronted by inconvenient or painful circumstances we are not to ask with frustration, "Why is this happening?" Instead, we should ask the Lord with an open heart, "What is Your purpose for allowing this in my life?"*

Genesis 37:5-7 NKJV

⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more.

⁶ So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:

⁷ There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."

- *God gave Joseph a prophetic dream that revealed the glorious purpose and plan that He wanted to fulfill in Joseph's life. God was going to elevate Joseph to a position of great authority and responsibility, even over his brothers.*
- *"behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."*
- *However, Joseph responded to this revelatory dream that he received from God in a rather unwise way. He told his brothers about this marvelous dream and that he would be exalted over them.*
- *"Please hear this dream which I have dreamed."*
- *Sometimes when God reveals His plan to us, it is wise not to announce it, but keep it secret. We can ponder it in our hearts as a source of encouragement and strength as we go through trials and the preparation process before His plan comes to fruition.*

Genesis 37:8 NKJV

⁸ And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

- *Even though the dream was truly from God, Joseph's brothers' response was not. "So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words."*
- *When God begins to move in our lives He shows us what really is in us—our character flaws—so we can turn to Him in repentance and be forgiven and freed. Through this process God brings forth His glory in and through us.*
- *As His children, God our Father loves us just the way we are, but He loves us so much that He will not leave us that way. He wants us to grow up into the image*

of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Genesis 37:9-10 NKJV

⁹ Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."

¹⁰ So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"

- *The Lord gave Joseph a second dream confirming God's plan for his life.*

"Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."

- *The two dreams Joseph received from God were very important for Joseph so he could persevere through the many trials and hardships he would experience in preparation for the fulfillment of God's plan for his life.*
- *I believe Joseph held on to and meditated on these dreams when he found himself in situations that appeared to be hopeless. God's Word gave him hope, strength, and purpose.*

Genesis 37:11 NKJV

¹¹ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

- *We see two different responses to Joseph's dreams.*
- *His brothers envied and hated Joseph even more. — "And his brothers envied him."*
- *However, Jacob, Joseph's father, pondered the dreams recognizing that they had a meaning that was not yet apparent. — "but his father kept the matter in mind."*
- *Although Jacob didn't dismiss the dreams as a product of Joseph's overactive imagination, he did mildly rebuke Joseph. "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"*
- *Jacob's rebuke hints at the fact that Joseph's attitude as he shared the dreams was less than humble, and he possibly displayed an attitude of self-importance.*
- *Joseph interpreted the dreams correctly, but he failed to understand why God had chosen him and why God was going to elevate him to a position of authority and power.*

- *God chose Joseph because He saw a willingness in Joseph's heart to yield to the personal dealings of the Holy Spirit.*
- *When we are willing to yield to the Lord as He deals with those areas in our hearts and lives where we lack godly character and behaviour, then He will choose us for His special work.*
- *David was also chosen over all his brothers. God said of David, "I have found David...a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." (Acts 13:22).*
- *"For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7). God knew that He could mold Joseph's character and behaviour to see His will fulfilled, so all of Israel would be saved.*
- *Joseph was exalted to a position of authority not only for his own benefit, but for the benefit of Joseph's entire family. God wanted to preserve his father, all of Joseph's brothers, and their families.*
- *God's favour on Joseph was not because He loved Joseph more than Jacob's other sons, but because God loved them all. However, in Joseph He found a willing vessel that could be molded to be the saviour of Israel.*

Genesis 45:7-8 NKJV

⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

⁸ So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

- *Later on in the story, Joseph became the ruler over all of Egypt. In the midst of a seven year famine, Jacob's family and all of Israel were in danger of perishing. Only then did it become apparent that God had chosen Joseph to preserve and save them.*
- *Finally, the true purpose of God's plan was revealed.*
- *God didn't elevate Joseph to the second most powerful position in all of Egypt so he could revel in luxury and power. Joseph was chosen so the entire family of Israel could be preserved.*

"And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

- *Joseph recognized that God wanted to use him to be a conduit of blessings for many people. Perhaps more importantly, he also recognized that his response to*

all the apparent calamities, hardships, and evil that men had done to him during his life had developed in him the character to be entrusted with a position of power and glory. God's hand was at work behind the scenes all along to bring His blessings upon Joseph, and by extension, to Israel.

“So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”

Genesis 50:19-21 NKJV

¹⁹ Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?

²⁰ But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

²¹ Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

- *Joseph harbored no ill will toward his brothers who envied and hated him and sold him as a slave.*
- *Joseph was able to look past their sins to see the goodness of God as He providentially directed the course of Joseph's life.*

“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”

- *Amazingly, Joseph not only completely forgave his brothers for the evil they had done to him, but he wanted to comfort them, bless them, and provide for all their needs.*

“Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”

- *How did Joseph reach such a place of love and self-sacrifice?*
- *Joseph had to have three coats removed before he could “put on Christ.”*
- *The first coat that had to be removed was his coat of a son.*

Genesis 37:12-14a NKJV

¹² Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." So he said to him, "Here I am."

¹⁴ Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me."

- *After Joseph received the two dreams, his brothers' envy and hatred of him continued to grow. Then one day, Jacob sent Joseph to see how his brothers*

were doing.

Genesis 37:18-20 NKJV

18 Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him.

19 Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming!

20 Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

- *Joseph's brothers' reaction to seeing Joseph was less than warm and they even spoke of killing him.*

"Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him."

- *They were so jealous of Joseph's dreams that they thought of killing him simply to prove that his dreams were meaningless and to make sure they never came true.*
- *Jealousy is more than wanting what the other person has; it's wanting the other person not to have it.*

"Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and... We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

- *However, Joseph's dreams were not a product of his imagination, but were divinely inspired. Neither the plans of wicked men nor the schemes of the devil were able to thwart God's plan!*
- *In a like manner, if we choose to put our trust in Christ and submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit in spite of our weaknesses and frailties, no person or circumstance can hinder God's purposes and plans from being manifest in our lives.*
- *In fact, if we turn and fix our eyes on Jesus during times of trials and painful and difficult circumstances, the very things the devil has devised to demoralize and destroy us, God will use to mature us and prepare us for the destiny He has for us.*

Genesis 37:21-22 NKJV

21 But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him."

22 And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"-that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

- *In the midst of Joseph's brother's treacherous plot to kill him, his oldest brother came to his senses and sought to spare him by redirecting their brothers' plans from murder to simply abandonment, hoping at a later time to rescue Joseph.*

Genesis 37:23 NKJV

²³ So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him.

- *The first thing his brothers did when Joseph arrived was to remove his coat, his coat of many colors, the coat that distinguished him as Jacob's favourite son.*
- *The Bible doesn't say that they simply removed Joseph's coat. They violently stripped it from him to emphasize the disdain, hostility, and hatred they felt toward Joseph.*
- *Joseph's coat represented who he was—Jacob's favourite son. The coat represented his sense of belonging to the family of Israel. The coat represented his identity.*
- *When Joseph's brothers stripped him of his coat it was not a simple gesture of hostility, it was a statement that they rejected Joseph as their brother and wanted to strip away his identity as part of their family.*
- *The first coat Joseph had removed was his coat of a son and it represented his identity and that he belonged to a family.*
- *Joseph did not remove his coat nor did he want his coat removed from him. It was forcibly removed by his brothers who rejected him.*

Genesis 37:24-25a NKJV

²⁴ Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵ And they sat down to eat a meal.

- *The actions that followed emphasize the degree of rejection and the depth of emotional pain and isolation Joseph would have experienced.*

“Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty”

- *Joseph was thrown into an empty pit, alone and totally abandoned.*

“there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat a meal.”

- *To multiply Joseph's feelings of rejection, abandonment, and loneliness as he*

was thrown into the bottom of a waterless pit with not even a cup of water to drink, his brothers sat around eating and drinking. They enjoyed the fact that Joseph found himself at the bottom of a pit, without food or water. They were not affected by his pain, in fact they enjoyed it.

- *We find additional insights into the pain Joseph experienced while he lay in the bottom of this pit further in the story. Years later, his brothers recalled with guilty consciences how they had closed their hearts and ears to Joseph’s cries and pleas, oblivious to his anguish and distress.*

Genesis 42:21 NKJV

²¹ Then they said to one another, “We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.”

- *This young boy of seventeen, however naïve he may have been, was never malicious or spiteful. Nevertheless, he found himself betrayed by his brothers. As he cried out and pleaded with his brothers—his own family—to help him, they not only ignored his cries of fear and anguish, they mockingly continued to enjoy their meal without him.*
- *Soon after, some Midianite traders passed through and his brothers sold Joseph as a slave as if he had no meaning, value, or relationship to them.*
- *The depth of rejection Joseph experienced at the hands of his brothers is difficult to fully grasp. In a single incident, Joseph went from being Jacob’s favourite son to being rejected and betrayed by his brothers and separated from his father, his country, and his native language as he was taken into Egypt.*
- *Joseph could have spent the rest of his life paralyzed by bitterness and hatred toward his brothers, and drowning in the depths of despair, and feeling he had no value and no future.*
- *Even though Joseph had not sought to be rejected, he found himself in a very painful situation and he had to make a decision—how would he respond?*
- *He could spend the rest of his life preoccupied by this act of rejection, betrayal, and abandonment or he could turn to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the One who had spoken to him in dreams. His brothers had rejected him, but his God had not!*
- *Here is God’s promise to Israel: “I have chosen you and not rejected you.” (Isaiah 41:9 NIV). Man may reject us. But God will never reject us.*
- *Joseph did not allow his brothers’ rejection and betrayal to shape or define him. He chose to look to God and His promises to give him his true identity and*

value.

- *Joseph had to be willing to give up his right to be accepted; otherwise he would have spent the rest of his life fixated on the rejection and betrayal he experienced at the hands of his brothers.*
- *As the story of Joseph progresses, we see that instead becoming bitter he grew closer to God. He looked to God as his source of identity and acceptance.*
- *We need to give up our right to be accepted and not demand or think that the people around us must accept us. Unless we give up our right to be accepted, we will respond actively with hostility and bitterness, or respond passively by isolating ourselves from everyone around us.*
- *God promises, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.” (Hebrews 13:5 NLT)*
- *If we blame others, we punish them with hostility and bitterness.*
- *If we blame ourselves, we punish ourselves by withdrawing into isolation.*
- *Sometimes we respond with a mixture of both reactions.*
- *We shouldn’t look to be rejected.*
- *We shouldn’t expect to be rejected.*
- *But we must recognize that sometimes we will be rejected by people and when we are, we need to give up our right and not demand to be accepted.*
- *When a person is fearful of being rejected sometimes their own actions and words precipitate rejection because they demand to be accepted which causes people to back away. If they act as if they are already rejected, even if they are not, they may become hostile or withdrawn.*
- *Thankfully, there is a third option available to us. We can learn to accept and forgive those who have rejected us.*
- *To accept them does not necessarily mean we have to have close fellowship with them. However, we are not to harbour bitterness or resentment toward them, but see their intrinsic value because they too have been created in the image of God.*
- *Jesus is our perfect example that we need to follow and in His sufferings we can see these same three coats that Joseph had to have removed being removed from Jesus in the same order.*

John 19:1–5 (NKJV)

¹So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.

²And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe.

³Then they said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they struck Him with their hands.

⁴Pilate then went out again, and said to them, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.”

⁵Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, “Behold the Man!”

- *The first coat Jesus was stripped of was the purple robe of royalty that the soldiers had mockingly placed on Him.*
- *They placed the purple robe on Jesus to ridicule Him because He had declared He was the King of the Jews. After mockingly paying homage to His royalty, they slapped Him and stripped Him of the purple robe.*
- *This represented the people’s rejection of Him as their Messiah, their King, and the Son of God. The people cried out, “Crucify Him!” They shouted, “We have no king but Caesar.” In essence the Jewish people totally rejected Jesus, saying, “He is no king, He is no Messiah, He is nothing to us.”*
- *Jesus did not cause the people to reject Him, but He allowed them to reject Him. He did not demand that they accept Him as their Saviour and King.*

John 1:11 (NKJV)

¹¹He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

Isaiah 53:3 (NKJV)

³He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

- *Jesus understood the full depth of rejection, but He never demanded to be accepted. Instead, He responded in love toward those who rejected Him. Even in the midst of His sufferings, His only motivation was to draw people to Himself so they could be saved.*
- *When we give up our right to be accepted we are then able to be clothed with faith.*
- *By faith we are able to receive and experience the Father’s unconditional acceptance of us.*

“He made us accepted in the Beloved.” (*Ephesians 1:6b*).

- *Because God loved us, and Jesus died for our sins, we are “accepted in the Beloved.” Notice it says we “are” accepted. There is not one thing we can do that would cause God to love us more. God’s acceptance of us is not based on our behaviour, but on God’s love and faithfulness.*
- *As long as we fight to be accepted by others we will never be able to take hold by faith of the truth that God accepts us because we are in Christ. When God sees us, He sees Jesus in us.*
- *Just as the Father loves and accepts His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, He loves and accepts all those who have received Jesus Christ by faith.*
- *We need to allow our old identity to be taken off so we can embrace our new identity that we have in Christ through faith.*

“When my father and my mother forsake me, Then the LORD will take care of me.” (Psalms 27:10).

- *When Christians struggle with a sense of worth it reflects their inability to believe that their Heavenly Father unconditional loves and accepts them.*
- *We are not saved by good works, we are saved for good works. (Ephesians 2:10).*
- *Our motivation to bring forth eternal fruit for the glory of God is not in an effort to receive God’s love or acceptance; it is our response to His love and acceptance.*
- *Legalism tries to earn God’s love and acceptance; faith recognizes that we already have it.*
- *Craving the acceptance of others hinders us from being correctable. Every word of correction will sound like criticism and rejection.*
- *We will resist correction because our motivation is not to grow closer to God, but to be accepted by those around us. The last thing we want is to appear to have failed.*
- *What caused King Saul in the Old Testament to fail? It was not his sins, but his refusal to receive correction which was rooted in his desire to be accepted and honoured in the eyes of the people of Israel.*

1 Samuel 15:30 NKJV

³⁰ Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God."

- *When the prophet Samuel confronted King Saul regarding his act of disobedience and sin, Saul was not concerned about how his sins had affected his relationship with God, but only how he would be perceived by the people. He feared and valued the people more than he feared and valued God.*
- *If we refuse to give up our right to be accepted by others, we will live our lives as emotional cripples, unable to truly love and accept others and unable to receive God's unconditional love and acceptance for us.*
- *When we give up our right to be accepted and loved by others we are able to receive God's unconditional love and acceptance for us. This allows the Holy Spirit to begin the process of bringing healing and wholeness to our emotions which enables us to truly love and accept those around us no matter what they have done to us.*