

Worn Out Clothes & Filthy Rags (A Lesson In Cleanliness)
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It's a tough position to be in when you know that God has called you to minister to others, but you're also so familiar with your own shortcomings to the point that you feel so inadequate and so filthy, so undeserving of the "call" on your life, so much so that you can literally make yourself of "no effect" to that ministry. Especially when you keep falling into the same "traps" and "devices" of the enemy. You know the ones, those habits that keep haunting you and those thoughts that you keep entertaining, even though you know, in your heart, your mind and in your soul that they are not right. In fact, that's where the deep conviction, and often times "condemnation" comes in to play.

You know that it is "sin", plain and simple. It is the opposite of that which you know is pleasing to God, and which you are well aware is very displeasing and hurtful to our Lord Jesus Christ, to the point of grieving the precious Holy Spirit within you. Well, that's how I feel because of the things which I've been doing. Old, dirty, filthy habits which I long to be delivered from, but, keep on "holding fast" to them, not willing to let them go. It's like an acquaintance that you really couldn't consider an "old friend", but, yet is someone that you can't quite release yourself from relationship with. I guess it's almost like having an old, beat up, virtually useless article of clothing that you hang on to merely for its' aesthetic value. Not because it's of any real value, but simply because you've had it so long, you've developed an unhealthy affinity for it. You don't need it, it serves no purpose, it's ugly, perhaps filthy, totally useless and not good for you, yet, you keep it and wear it "just because".

"Just because" takes on a myriad of meanings when it comes to these worthless, and often time harmful garments that we hang on to and wear. For example, we could say any one or more of the following after "Just because":

- it's me, (this is how I see myself)
- it's who "I am", (it reflects my attitudes and views of myself, my life, others, and things)
- it's been a part of me for so long, (it's been a part of my life for so long, through good times and bad)
- I don't know what I'd do without it, (it's a comfort to me, I can get dirty with it and not feel guilty)
- it fits, (it's just my size), or a real favorite, "..just because..",
- it's broken in, (it's broken in, I don't have to stretch it out)

- it's comfortable, (it fits me well),
- I can get it dirty and not worry about it (the holes, tears and stains don't matter to me), and
- I like it (I don't care what others think or how they see it, I like it and that's all there is to it)

Two little words, yet words that show so much insight into who we are, how we view things, and how others can be affected by our attitudes regarding those things that we defend “just because”. They stir up strife, anger, resentment and can cause divisions as vast as the parting of the Red Sea. We need to see those words in the “light” as our heavenly Father sees them. We need to analyze and dissect them as the Holy Spirit would. And, finally, we need to “conquer” them and do away with them as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did, in teaching us how to pray and walk in the “light” as He walked, and do the things that He did in overcoming those things.

“Just because”, is not an answer, but a rebellious, sinful way of responding to a thing or things that may not be the right way of accomplishing a goal or task. “Just because”, is not a lesson that we can or should be asked to carry on through life. “Just because” is not something God asks us to believe. Nor is it something that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us. “Just because” is the very thing that Jesus went about preaching and teaching against. “Just because” is what the Pharisees, Sadducees, and other “religious folk” went about teaching, not what the “High Priest” sent from God taught.

God never does anything “just because”! God always does a thing “because” He has a divine purpose for all of us! He did not create us to be without Him, but created us to be in a love relationship with Him! God does things “Because” :

- He Is, (the names of God are numerous; Jehovah, YWHY, JWHY Shalom, King of Kings, Father, etc.)
- He loves us, (“We love Him because He first loved us....”, **I Jn. 4:19**)
- He desires a relationship with us, (“..We will come to him and make Our home with him..” **Jn 14:23**)
- He wants the best for us, (**Lk 11:13**, “..if you being evil, know how to give good gifts, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him..”)
- He desires to give us His best, (“For God so loved the world that He gave....”, **Jn. 3:16**)
- He desires our best for Him (“..If you love me, keep My commandments..”, **Jn. 14:15**)

- He wants us to dwell with Him in everlasting life, (**Jn. 14:2, 3**“..In My Father’s house are many mansions.., I go to prepare a place for you..”, “..that where I am, you may be also..”)
- Etc., etc., etc., the list goes on and on.....

In plain, simple language, this sort of behavior, *the wearing of these filthy rags*, is harmful to us and our relationships with those whom we love, beginning with our heavenly Father. The very thought of these things living in our very souls should raise a “red flag” in our spirit and cause us to fall on our knees in repentance and remorse before the Lamb of God who “took our sins away” and paid the greatest price for those sins with His body, His precious blood, and His life. And you know what? They do stir feelings of remorse and a sickening, sorrowful condition of anguish that causes us to cry out for help and seek to repent. But, the truth is that if God does not help us, we cannot remove those dung-soaked garments from ourselves, and eventually they become “worn out clothes” that we’ve become accustomed to wearing, not with pride, but with a sense that that is all we are worth wearing.

The picture of the prodigal son who ended up in his own set of filthy rags, found in **Lk 15:11-32**, returning to his father, is one similar to that worn by those of us who have our own useless garments and are having difficulty ridding ourselves of them. His thoughts carry him home with the thought that at least, even though he was unsure as to whether his father would receive him or not as his son, he could at least, perhaps, serve his father as one of his servants. What an awesome portrait it is when we see the father running out to meet his repentant son before he even got to the place where the father was. His father was happy to see his son return, still in his filthy, worn out rags, yet he’d returned home and was trying his best to make amends for the wrong he had done to their relationship as father and son, not too mention the dishonor that he brought to his father’s good name and reputation.

You see, the son was totally wrong, and he realized it, acknowledged it, and took steps to change his actions to make correct those wrongs. And the father, well, he’s a picture of our heavenly Father. He’s firm in His love. He’s just in His correction. Yet, He is also so very compassionate and forgiving in His relationship with His children. We are often reminded throughout scripture in both the Old and New Testaments how the God of heaven and earth, our Creator, our Father in heaven, “..searches the heart and tests the mind..” of all men (**Jer 17:10**). He does not look at the “outward appearance..but..looks at the heart”(**I Sam 16:7**).

I praise and thank the God of Creation, our heavenly Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, that He loves us enough to look beyond the outward, obvious faults of our flesh, and can see through the turmoil of our troubled souls, right into the very heart of our spirits, and touch us with His precious

Holy Spirit to begin a process of cleansing and healing that no one else in heaven or on earth can possibly do.

It is in knowing that we've sinned against the Holy Deity and Trinity of the God head that we feel the deepest sense of hurt and a true fear of the God who is just in doling out punishments as needed. But, this anguish is further fueled by our also knowing that we've hurt that person or those persons who we love and cherish here on earth. It is the latter relationship that is often the most hurt by our sinful ways, and the most difficult to heal. This is the thing that can cause the most damage in the spirit as well, if not dealt with swiftly and appropriately as sanctioned by the Holy Word of God. It is the overwhelming combination of both of these bruised relationships that can make or definitely break us down to the "dust" we are.

Confession, from the heart, with a true spirit of repentance, is the first order of business. It is not a matter of blame or anger, but rather is a truth of the living Word. We are reminded by Christ Jesus that we are to forgive each other not merely "seven times", but rather, "seven times seventy" (**Mt. 18:21-22**). We are not to take this as a statement of "free reign" in our sinful thoughts and ways, but we are to see it as an opportunity to live our lives as God expects and desires us to. His way, not our way. His will, not our will be done.

The most difficult thing for us to do is forgive one another for things that "***we don't do***" and "***can't understand why others do them***". Especially when they keep doing them. Well, you'd be right to expect people to stop and turn from their wicked ways because that's what God expects and commands us to do, if we love Him. Jesus said it this way, "***If you love Me, keep My commandments..***". (**Jn. 14:21**)

If you can identify with anything I've shared and wish to shed any "filthy rags" or "worn out clothes" that you may be wearing, I to invite you to pray and repeat after me:

I ask you Heavenly Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to forgive me of those sins that I have allowed to remain "on me" and ask you, Holy Spirit to help remove those "worn out clothes" and "filthy rags" from my life, from my body, from my heart and from my spirit, and cleanse me and make me whole from the core of my spirit to the outward parts of my flesh.

Lord, I pray that in its' place, you would lay your robes of righteousness upon me and fill me with your glorious Light, your Word of Life, and overflow me with You, most precious Holy Spirit, my friend who is closer to me than the air I breathe.

I pray that you would heal the hurts caused by me and my bad habits whether they be in things I've done, things I've said, or even the mere thoughts of those things that are not of you, Father.

I ask you, Lord Jesus, to forgive me for not reflecting on your sacrifice and forgetting the love you showed me in the shedding of your blood for me and my sins. I pray you forgive me Lord and ask, in your name, the Father cleanse me and make me whole.

And I ask you, Holy Spirit, the One sent from Jesus Christ, to forgive me as well. I have offended you and caused you hurt, precious Spirit, and ask that you fill me and flood me with your presence as never before. I don't ever want to lose your love, your friendship or your presence, dear Holy Spirit of the Living God. I love you, Holy Spirit, I love you.

All these things I pray Father, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, your only begotten Son, my Savior and my Lord, believing that your Word is true when you say, “..If we confess our sins, (*you*)He (*are*)is **faithful and just to forgive** us our sins **and cleanse us from all unrighteousness..**” (**I Jn 1:9**) Amen!!