

The Young Man and His Linen Garment

Mark 14:51 *And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:*

Mark 14:52 *And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.*

One reason many believe the young man in this vignette is Mark himself is the fact that only he included this story in his Gospel. This was his own, unique experience with the Lord, as we all have our unique experiences with the Lord Jesus. He wanted the world to know about his experience with the Lord. “And there followed him a certain young man” demonstrates this young man’s deep love for Jesus. At this stage of the Lord’s ministry, Judas had sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, and all the other apostles had forsaken him. That he was naked can only mean that he did not have sufficient time to clothe himself properly when he heard the news about the Lord’s arrest and torture. This further demonstrates his love for the Lord. His attention was on what would happen to the Lord whom he loved so much; not on his own appearance. Similarly, King David was concerned for the glory of God alone, and not his own dignity. The young man is described as having “a linen cloth cast about his naked body”. Linen is considered a holy garment in the Bible and actually represents the heavenly body of Jesus Christ himself which we put on in baptism in Jesus name.

Leviticus 16:32 *And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments:*

Revelation 19:14 *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*

What the above tells us is the following: the young man was not an apostle, but he nevertheless loved the Lord Jesus Christ dearly. When all the other apostles fled, this young man never left the Lord but kept following him. Did not Jesus say, “... Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”? (Matthew 4:19). Unlike many young people today, who are concerned with their outward appearance, this young man just cast a linen garment about his naked body and followed Jesus. I pray for the young who hear me right now; I pray your love for the Lord Jesus will be greater than the love for the fashions of this world. I pray you will be more concerned to clothe your soul with the body of Jesus Christ in baptism in his name and that you follow him to the Cross of Golgotha.

Now the story suddenly takes a turn for the worse. “And the young men laid hold on him” (Mark 14:52). Isn’t it often your own young friends, young person, who influence you the most? Is it not your equals, your peers who seek to steal your salvation if you allow them? You must not allow the desire to fit in with your friends lead to the loss your holy garments, your salvation. Learn a lesson from the young King Solomon who lost the Kingdom of Israel because he chose to listen to his young friends who gave bad advice.

1Kings 12:10 *And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.*

The young man in our story fled because he feared the violence of the soldiers. Some years later, this same John Mark abandoned Paul and Barnabas during a missionary journey.

Act 15:37 *And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.*

Act 15:38 *But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.*

Act 15:39 *And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;*

This was not beginning to look good for Mark. This is the second time he fled. Once while following the Lord himself and now while following Paul and Barnabas. This no doubt must have been a source of great pain for Mark. What do you do when you love the Lord deeply but have forsaken him twice? Just put on your linen garment young person and keep following Jesus! One day everyone will see your love for the Lord! I am speaking to someone who may backslidden; don’t you still love Jesus? I believe you do! Why else did Mark just cover himself with a linen garment and follow the Lord? Simply because his love for the Lord would not permit him to stay at home. I am confident, backslider, that your love for Jesus will not allow you to stay at home for long – throw the linen garment around you, come out of your dwelling and join the church of Jesus that follows him. Hear what the Lord says:

Isaiah 44:22 *I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.*

Isaiah 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

God compares our sins to a thick cloud in Isaiah. Consider that an average cumulus cloud can be a kilometer long and have a volume that is one billion cubic meters. That is a lot of sin! The Lord Jesus told Peter to forgive his brother, not seven times a day, but seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22). Therefore, backslider, what is your excuse for not returning to Jesus? Put on the linen garment which symbolizes Jesus' love and salvation and return to him.

Let us return to the young man of our story. Now let us explore how wonderfully the good Lord justified his love for him. Note first and foremost the name of this Gospel: it is called the "Gospel of Mark". Jesus permitted only four individuals to write these Gospels, and, amazingly, one of them was Mark, the young man who fled. This is vindication of his love for Jesus. Many people may have dismissed him as a backslider, a young man with no conviction and courage, but now, no one was mocking or laughing at him. Luke records that many have written an account of the life of the Lord Jesus, but the Lord permitted only four to be known and acknowledged worldwide – and one of them was written by the young, naked man who fled, Mark.

Luke 1:1 *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us.*

God wants to acknowledge and vindicate your love for him. Who knows what the Lord Jesus will commission you to do for him? Even Peter, the head of the church, was not allowed to write a Gospel, but the weak and fearful Mark was commissioned. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). Furthermore, the great apostle Paul, who was disappointed with Mark, and because of whom he parted ways with Barnabas, himself wrote to Timothy, "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). The young man had finally put his linen garment back on – he was no longer naked, but clothed in holiness and righteousness. Now he became the priest of Leviticus 16:32. Consider the weakness of Aaron, the first high priest. Did he not mold the golden calf while his brother fasted and waited on the Lord on Mount Sinai? And yet, after God had rebuked and chastised him, he was given clothes for beauty and holiness to serve in the tabernacle.

Exodus 28:2 *And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty.*

Young person, and the not-so-young, I challenge you on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ. Put on your linen garment and follow the Lord Jesus Christ! Doesn't matter whether your sins weigh a billion cubic meters – there is enough cleansing and redeeming power in the blood of Jesus Christ to remove this cloud of sin. There is a great work with just your name written on it waiting for you; there are individuals and churches waiting for your ministry. Put on your linen garment and follow Jesus right now!