

## Introduction

There is some confusion as to what Joseph had on underneath the garment that Potiphar's wife removed from him. I've heard it said that he fled from her naked; it has also been suggested that he had on some type of Egyptian under garments.

Does it really matter one way or the other? The text seems to emphasize his outer garment a great deal. It is mentioned five times in Chapter Thirty-Nine.

While his outer garment seems prominent, it is only for a contrast. I think you *can* and *must* see what Joseph had on underneath his outer garment. Regardless his Egyptian clothing, underneath all he had put on a *spiritual* garment. Whether naked or only partially naked to the Egyptians, towards heaven he was *spiritually* dressed in a garment of holiness.

The Bible frequently uses the metaphor of putting on clothing to illustrate your personal decision to wear and to walk in holiness. In Ephesians 4:24, for example, you are told to "put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

As a born-again believer you are a new creation in Jesus Christ. Your old carnal nature need no longer control you. You are to "put off" the old nature, the way you would put off your clothing, and "put on" the new nature God has given you.

God has provided you with a spiritual wardrobe, but you must choose to wear it and to walk in it by faith. What you "put on" is *your* decision! You can still choose to put on the old nature. That's why the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4:22,

Ephesians 4:22 ...put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

You can still choose to wear the things that come from the old sin nature. Once you make your decision to instead wear holiness, it will require diligent effort to walk in holiness. The writer to the Hebrews says "**Pursue ... holiness, without which no one will see the Lord**" (Hebrews 12:14). Holiness is yours to put on and yours to pursue - yours to wear and yours to walk in.

Just what do we mean by holiness? There are some things we don't mean!  
Author Jerry Bridges writes,

"The idea of exactly how to be holy has suffered from many false concepts. In some circles, holiness is equated with a series of specific prohibitions - usually in such areas as smoking, drinking, and dancing. The list of prohibitions varies depending on the group. When we follow this approach to holiness, we are in danger of becoming like the Pharisees with their endless lists of trivial do's and don'ts, and their self-righteous attitude. For others, holiness means a particular style of dress and mannerisms.

And for still others, it means unattainable perfection, an idea that fosters either delusion or discouragement about one's sin."<sup>1</sup>

If these are things we *don't* mean by holiness, just what *do* we mean? According to the New Testament, holiness is simply living in conformity to the moral precepts and principles of the Bible and in contrast to the sinful ways of the world.<sup>2</sup>

This is what Joseph did. Even though in Egypt, he did not *conform* to the ways of the Egyptians. His life was a *contrast* to their evil ways. His decisions were based on the moral precepts and principles he knew would honor his God. From a spiritual point of view, he put off the things of the world and he put on the things of God. He put on holiness. He wore it, and he walked in it.

Wearing the garment of holiness underneath, Joseph was dressed for every occasion. He was dressed for *blessing*, for *battle*, and for *buffeting*.

Wearing the garment of holiness underneath, *you* will be dressed for these same occasions in your life!

#1 When You Put On The Garment Of Holiness  
You Are Dressed For Blessing  
(v1-6)

"Blessing" is the theme of these opening verses. In verse five you read "the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field."

I am glad that our talk about personal holiness begins with blessing. So often we react to holiness as if it will bring us into depression and despair! We sometimes have the attitude that a person who purposes in his or her heart to honor God in all of their life can never have any fun. The Bible consistently maintains the contrary: That holiness promotes true happiness, rather than preventing it. Listen to these words of your Lord, Jesus Christ:

John 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that your joy may be full.*

Holiness eventually brings battles and buffetings, but even then God's blessing upon your life continues.

Genesis 39:1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.

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<sup>1</sup>Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit Of Holiness*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

Potiphar is called "an officer of Pharaoh." The word for officer is the Hebrew word *cariyc*, pronounced *saw-reece'*. The word means *to castrate*, and is the word often translated "eunuch." Potiphar was a eunuch, a castrated man. It was not uncommon for officials of high rank to be castrated. They would be unable to challenge Pharaoh for power, seeing as they could produce no offspring as heirs to the throne.

Potiphar was "captain of the guard." As such, he was Pharaoh's executioner. Potiphar was a powerful, but impotent, man.

Eunuch's are powerful and yet impotent... That is somewhat of a paradox. There is an interesting spiritual insight intended by the paradox of powerful, impotent men. Potiphar's power was all *outward*; *inwardly* he was empty. He had power over the lives of others, but he had no power for life within himself.

The Bible is comparing and contrasting God's man, Joseph, with the world's man, Potiphar. Who do *you* identify with this morning?

Genesis 39:2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

Genesis 39:3 And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand.

Genesis 39:4 So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all *that* he had he put under his authority.

Genesis 39:5 So it was, from the time *that* he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field.

Genesis 39:6 Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

Joseph was industrious; he was intelligent; he was even handsome. These qualities were not the key to his success, however - and most of us can be thankful they were not!

The key to Joseph's success was the phrase "the Lord was with him." Notice in verse three, where you find that phrase, you are told "the Lord was with him" and *then* you are told "the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand." The Lord was preeminent in Joseph's heart, and *then* He prospered Joseph's hand!

Outward prosperity is fine, but it is fleeting. Joseph was eleven years as steward of Potiphar's house, but then was sent to prison. It was the presence of the Lord in his heart that sustained him - whether in outward prosperity or poverty.

Joseph's walk with the Lord "blessed" Potiphar. He put on holiness and it dressed him for blessing.

Your walk with the Lord can only be a blessing to others when you put on holiness!

How do you do it? Live as if you were in the presence of God - in private first, then in public.

#2 When You Put On The Garment Of Holiness  
You Are Dressed For Battle  
(v7-18)

Joseph's holiness would not go unchallenged by his spiritual enemies. When he decided to put on the garment of holiness, he was dressing for battle with the world and with the devil. They would seek to entice his old carnal nature to sin. A spiritual warfare ensued.

Genesis 39:7 And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

It seems odd that Potiphar, a eunuch, would be married. Here are two things to consider:

ˆHe may have been married before being promoted to the post of captain of the guard. In this case he would have sacrificed his marriage for his career...

%o He may have gotten married after his promotion for the sake of pride and dominance...

Mrs. Potiphar was an adulterous. Her look and her lips were given over to sin, and to stumbling others. Ladies - watch your *looks* and your *lips*...

Genesis 39:8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what *is* with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand.

Genesis 39:9 "*There is* no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you *are* his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Potiphar would not know if Joseph were to take off his outward clothes, but God would know if he were to put off his inward holiness. As it says in Jude, the believer is to hate "even the garment defiled by the flesh."

There may not have been anyone greater in the house than himself, but he knew that there was a greater house! Joseph knew he belonged to the household of faith.

Genesis 39:10 So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her *or* to be with her.

Young Christian men, and young Christian women for that matter, *can* resist sexual temptation! There is good advice in the text as to how this can be put into practice. On either side of the sin "to lie with her" is God's counsel for how to resist it:

^"He did not heed her..."

Joseph brought his thoughts captive to holiness. He refused to consider sin in his heart.

"...Or to be with her..."

Joseph took definite steps to avoid being in situations in which he might be tempted.

Genesis 39:11 But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house *was* inside,

Genesis 39:12 that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.

Here is another good strategy against sin: *Run away from it!* Flee from its clutches! In order to do so you must have a true hatred for sin.

Genesis 39:13 And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside,

Genesis 39:14 that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.

Genesis 39:15 "And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside."

Genesis 39:16 So she kept his garment with her until his master came home.

Genesis 39:17 Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me;

Genesis 39:18 "so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside."

Mrs. Potiphar had Joseph's garment. She had his career, his future, his reputation, all in her power. But she could never have him without his consent.

The world and your spiritual enemies can, within God's sovereign permission, take hold of *your* career, of *your* future, and of *your* reputation. It's a wonder that they

don't do so more often! But, as with Joseph, the world and your spiritual enemies can never have *you* without your consent!

Joseph became a prisoner. I would like to suggest that he was a prisoner of war - of spiritual warfare. Putting on the garment of personal holiness dressed him for a battle against the world and against the devil. He became and was treated as a prisoner of spiritual warfare.

If you purpose in your heart to be holy, you are headed into battle with fierce and powerful foes. It is a battle you cannot lose, except by choice, since it is already won by Jesus Christ!

### #3 When You Put On The Garment Of Holiness You Are Dressed For Buffetings (v19-20)

Buffetings are the sufferings, the adversities, and the troubles that you experience on account of your decision to put on the garment of holiness. They are inevitable.

Genesis 39:19 So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, "Your servant did to me after this manner," that his anger was aroused.

Genesis 39:20 Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners *were* confined. And he was there in the prison.

Potiphar's "anger was aroused..." You are not told *who* his anger was aroused against! It could have been aroused against either his wife, or against Joseph, or against both of them!

^ He was almost certainly angry with his wife. You'll note that he put Joseph "where the king's prisoners were confined" - in a political prison - rather than executing him. This would indicate that he knew his wife was lying and sought to spare Joseph. He was undoubtedly angry with his wife for overthrowing eleven years of prosperity and blessing for the sake of her wounded pride.

% He may have been angry with Joseph. Why couldn't Joseph compromise himself just a little? Potiphar may have been willing to turn the other way and ignore the adultery, if it kept his wife happy and Joseph as his steward. It often arouses the anger of unbelievers when you stand on your convictions in a situation that may cost them something.

"And he was there in the prison." Joseph had gone from rags to riches to rags. His personal holiness had landed him in the king's prison.

If you put on holiness you can expect buffetings. After all, you are refusing to conform, refusing to compromise - and the world hates it! But you can receive blessings even out of buffetings, as you will see as the story of Joseph's life continues to unfold.

## Conclusion

Again quoting Jerry Bridges, he makes this strong statement:

"If we sin it is because we choose to sin - not because we lack the ability to say no to temptation. We are not defeated; we are simply disobedient."

Joseph had no fellowship with any other believers. He had no place to go and worship God openly. The only Word of God he had were dreams he believed God had given him - but they were dreams whose fulfillment seemed impossible. Yet Joseph chose not to sin! He wore and walked in holiness; he put on and pursued holiness.

God has provided us with wardrobe choices. Let's put on and wear the spiritual garments that are pleasing to Him.