

“Rebekah’s Change Of Raiments”

Br. Robert Alexander

In our yearnings. toward the Lord, the Heavenly Father has given us some beautiful pictures as encouragements. The variety and completeness of the pictures are constant reassurances of our Father’s love for us, from His rich storehouse of lovingkindness. In all this we have very pointed testimony of God's omniscience. The great variety is given to satisfy the needs of all the members of the church, no matter what their special qualities. One picture that seems to be universally understood to teach the loving provision of our Father, and of our own need to apply the blessings we have for the development of the church, is the picture of Rebekah. We would like to consider today one of the aspects of Rebekah's selection as the bride of Isaac.

Abraham, a type of our Heavenly Father, sent Eliezer (referred to as the servant) to find a wife for Isaac. We know the story of her beautiful response, her willingness and prompt readiness to go with the servant. We come in on the story in Gen. 24:51-53--with the girl's father and brother giving their consent to confirm the choice of the Lord. The reading of the King James translation hides the force of the Scripture revealed to better advantage in the Rotherham translation. From the King James, verse we read, "And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things." Rotherham translates it to read, "Then the servant brought forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment (footnote--"garments", "change of raiment") and gave unto Rebekah--and precious things gave he to her brother, and to her mother." Two important points occur in the text that are lost in the Authorized Version. The jewels of the first translation are vessels, according to the concordances. It is a reference that includes the beautiful jewels that Rebekah received as wedding presents, for ornamentation, as well as other instruments that she would need. The second point to recognize in the translation is the term "raiments." Actually, the original means a change of raiments. The thought is that Rebekah received the necessary clothing for the trip, that she did not need to take anything of her own, that Abraham had supplied everything that she would need. In considering the preparations that our Lord has made for us we might consider the provision Abraham had made for Rebekah. There were probably several dresses. In addition there was probably a special dress. Perhaps the travelling dresses were all alike--white. But the special dress was undoubtedly a beautiful blue. It must have been a dress that was especially beautiful in its design, appropriate for a wedding dress. And with it there were probably threads for its embroidery. It would be up to Rebekah to fashion the designs of the embroidery to reflect the things important to her as Isaac's wife and Abraham's daughter-in-law. The threads must have been of blue, scarlet, white, purple. And don't

you suppose that among the jewels of gold and silver there were needles and thimbles and shears?

The Scriptures then talk about Rebekah's promptness in leaving with the servant. Gen. 24:61 tells us more about Rebekah's attitude than anything else about the trip, "And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way." The trip was several hundred miles but the record does not tell us just what occurred on that memorable trip. What do you suppose Rebekah did for those several weeks riding on those camels? Don't you suppose that Rebekah was on the lead camel, and using the antitype as a guide, we could probably correctly conclude that Rebekah was a very busy young woman. Don't you suppose that she wanted to learn all she could about Abraham and about Isaac, to learn all about their characters and their dominions, their hopes, their ambition and their values? Don't you suppose that she wanted to inquire into the responsibilities that would be hers as Isaac's wife and Abraham's daughter-in-law, especially since Sarah was dead? The responsibility would be hers immediately upon arriving and marrying Isaac. There would be no more time to train under a mother-in-law tutelage. What would be expected of her? What would she be expected to know and to do? And then don't you suppose that she was busy with her hands, embroidering that wedding dress? She knew that it must be finished in time for the wedding. She knew that there would not be time to learn all that she had to know after meeting Abraham and Isaac. The embroidery had to be carefully considered, the pattern decided upon, and patiently and exquisitely executed.

We then learn of the final day of the trip. Eleazar must have sent a courier to Abraham when he realized that they were near the journey's end. Isaac was then prepared also for the arrival. The servant surely had told Rebekah that they were almost there. And Rebekah had probably made arrangements with Eleazar to stop, just before arriving so that she could freshen herself for the meeting. By this time she had learned about her lords, she had come to trust the servant as faithful, she had well organized in her mind what her own responsibilities were and how she would go about discharging them, and she had completed the embroidering of the wedding dress. As she was bathing herself and perfuming herself for the wonderful meeting she must have been singing a beautiful song. And as she looked at the dress, the final time before donning it for the wedding meeting, and feast, she probably noticed how she had traced the grand principles of love so true of her lords. And there was wisdom, power and justice. And don't you suppose that she had embroidered the golden pomegranates and bells around the skirt to be used generations later by her and Isaac's descendents? Yes, truly it must have been a glorious and beautiful dress. Not a smudge of dirt, not a wrinkle, not a spot of blood from a pricked finger (though working on it while riding a came 1), not a misplaced stitch.

Quickly she put it on, so as not to delay Eleazar. It was at even tide when they drew near their destination. Gen. 24:63-65 tells us that Isaac was in the field, meditating, when he saw the camels coming. When Rebekah saw him she hurriedly alighted from the camel. (Verse 64 says lighted, but the thought is alighted hastily.) Then Rebekah asked Eleazar who the man was in the field. The word man there means more than just a man. Rebekah could see even from a distance that this was no ordinary man. He must have carried himself with dignity and poise--like a man who knew and believed God and who knew and believed God and had been favored by the Lord. And her question reflects the fact that she could recognize his dignity even before meeting him. Man in verse 64 comes from the word *ish*. It means a man of high position, or of honor, such as a husband has in the eyes of his wife. This same word is used in Hosea 2:16, which shows the relationship that Israel will have for the Lord in the kingdom, when they shall call Him *Ishi* (margin--husband) rather than *Baali* (margin--lord). The servant answered Rebekah that the one she saw was his master. She quickly covered her face with her veil. Eleazar was then ready to present her to Isaac and Abraham.

Let us reflect for a moment and consider the scene. The Scriptures do not give much detail, but Isaac's view must have been a glorious one. Here he was, waiting for his bride and his wedding day. And what did he see? Rebekah had her face covered with a veil, her hands were holding the veil and her skirt as she moved nimbly and surely toward him. Her feet were covered by the skirt of the dress. So what Isaac saw was the wedding jewelry and the dress of blue (with its intricate embroidery) turned to a royal purple by the setting sun. A beautiful scene of the meeting of the Lord and his bride, adorned with outworkings of God's promises to the Church and her faithful outworking of His character in her own character. Isaac's vision is beautifully captured by the Psalmist, chapter 45, verses 13 and 14, "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: . . ." Such needlework is the determined and faithful work of obedience to the principles of righteousness. The Apostle John portrays the condition of another one who had claimed to be the Lord's bride--Rev. 3:16, 17, "So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Yes, Rebekah changed her raiment from the white robe of the trip to her glorious and beautiful wedding dress.

And our trip, dear brethren, has lasted nearly 2,000 years, though only a lifetime for each one of us. One of the points that each has learned is that the embroidery of character for the Rebekah class is not the nobility of the flesh, but the nobility of the spirit. As our Eleazar tells us about Jesus, the Holy Spirit emphasizes to us the importance of

remembering this, that all the fleshly nobility of character would be useless. It is the nobility of obedience to the instruction of the spirit that is going to make the blue robe into the beautiful and glorious wedding dress. Hebrews tells us that Jesus was perfected, as a spirit character, worthy of the resurrection that God gave him, by the things which he suffered. His perfection as a human character was already established. His spiritual perfection was the thing that had to be developed for his own resurrection. And so we, in considering the work of our embroidery are thinking about the development of character worthy of a spiritual resurrection.

In Rebekah's embroidery, to reflect her appreciation of Abraham's and Isaac's characters, her dominant theme must have been love--not carnal love, but love based on principles and righteousness. Our love for the Lord is based on our constant recognition of Him through the truth. Rebekah's constant searching meant that Eleazar had to answer a lot of questions about his two masters. "Yes, my lady," he might say, "He is a master you can love beyond all others because He is the founder of truth. And by knowing His truth you can know Him. Moses will say in Deut. 32: 4, 'All his ways are judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.' The Psalms will sing, 108:4, 'For thy mercy is great above the heavens; and thy truth reacheth above the clouds.' Then Jesus will say to the Jews that believed on him, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' (John 8:31, 32) An important point about learning the Truth, my lady Rebekah, is one my lord Isaac mentions frequently, (John 16:13) 'Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth is come, it will guide you into all truth.'"

It is not enough to have the truth--millions of people have had the truth without it showing them the Lord. They lacked the spirit of truth. Knowledge, talents, experience, intelligence, and many other natural possessions of man are not able to lead the bride to the Lord. She needs the spirit of the truth. This is such a small point but, oh how important. Without that directive force, from God alone, that grows as we use it, and diminishes as we neglect to use it (in favor of natural desires,) we can never get any but a passing comfort from the truth. We would be as unable to know and eventually reach the Lord as Rebekah would have been lost in the desert if she had tried to find Isaac without the direction of Eleazar, and the whole-hearted reliance on him.

We, as the Rebekah class, must also learn that it is not enough to recognize our Father by His truth. It is also important that we have love for the truth at the very core of our being:-
-"Behold Thou, desirest truth in the inward parts." (Psa. 51:6) "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth and not I only but also all they that have known the truth, for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us forever." (2 John 1 and 2)

When the love of the truth is so engrained in our being then every action is stimulated by love for God above all else. We continue to have and to exercise God's love as the sole motivation in our lives. It is an automatic response. At first we must think about its application to our actions. Ultimately it is a natural response to the point of being automatic. "Forget also thine own people and thy Father's house: So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for He is thy Lord; worship thou him." (Psa. 45:10, 11) "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants. (Isa. 56:6) "I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." (Phil. 1:9)

The practical expression of our love for God is realized in our love for his principles in the things we do, think and say. It is not enough to think and even perhaps say things supporting the truth--we must also obey the principles in each of our actions. It is not enough to feel ashamed of error or wrong--we must be counted among those who sacrifice everything for the right, in every step of our daily walk. Ignoring or overlooking sin or error is the beginning of blindness as to the difference between truth and sin. It is like dropping oil on the steep rocky pathway to the Lord. It increases the danger and tendency toward the base things. Loyalty to the truth means we will join and support whatever we consider Scripturally wise (not the wisdom from our own minds). And when we are involved in compromise and error we will do our admonishing with consideration of others and their weaknesses, because we recognize that we are in a dangerous position, since our stand for the truth forces us to come to grips with ourselves lest we also are caught in a fault, or we are guilty of hypocrisy. But such a danger of our own position should make us more careful about our own lives, rather than make us reluctant to stand for the truth. 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, "Behold the goodness and severity of God." Psa. 85:10, "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

What beautiful harmony is expressed in Psa. 85:10--the careful, studious union of righteousness and mercy. Only determined application of effort will achieve the Lord's balance of mercy and truth in our actions. Rebekah's embroidery was perfectly balanced. It was not lopsided; nor was one color so pronounced that it overshadowed the other colors of the pattern. Our beloved Apostle John shows us the extreme difficulty as well as the extreme importance of the proper balance of truth and mercy in his first epistle--1 John 3:14. Love of the brethren is a mark of life in us. It is a mark of life in us, because it is a difficult test to meet. It is difficult because of our own weaknesses.

We see this principle in the life of Jesus – he loved righteousness while at the same time he loved those of much less quality than himself. Jesus exercised constructive assistance to the needy and rebuked the hypocrites. It is easy to love those equal to or better than

ourselves. But if it is difficult to love those not as well developed as ourselves, then we are deficient in measuring up to the Lord. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (John 13:34)
 Rebekah's embroidered patterns to reflect her love of Abraham and Isaac. And we are to strive to produce characters perfectly reflecting God's character, with Jesus as our example.

In addition to learning all she could about her new lords, Rebekah needed to consider herself and the responsibilities of her position in the family group. Learning about Abraham and Isaac gave her the proper perspective for the responsibility she was to acquire soon. She was to be Abraham's daughter. His wealth, dignity and position and his objectives and purposes were to be her guides in her own conduct. She was to preserve them and enhance them to the very best of her ability. Therefore her needlework reflected her appreciation of her new father's position and honor as well as his character. Had not he, the father of the faithful, sent her the blue robe of faithfulness as the material of her wedding dress? She was no longer Bethuel's daughter. She had left her natural father's house to become a royal bride. To the extent she accounted herself as Bethuel's daughter, she would be bringing the flesh into Abraham's house. The inability of flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of heaven is both in a physical sense as well as a character sense. Our fleshly nobility, as good as it may be, is still the trace of Bethuel's house Rebekah left behind. She was glad to have been of Bethuel's house (for it was from there that Eleazar was to find Isaac's bride) but she put all that behind her when accepting Abraham's invitation. The second perspective she needed was that she was to be Isaac's wife, not Laban's sister any longer. As Laban's sister she could not be more than Isaac's cousin. But as Isaac's wife, she would be both the helpmate and co-recipient of Abraham's promises to Isaac and the mother of the children of the seed of promise. Undoubtedly she was quick to realize that her viewpoint of everything must be in terms of what Abraham's directions and preferences would be. Isaac's mind being so consistent with his father's mind meant that her mind must be just as consistent with Abraham's mind.

This harmony, achieved in Rebekah by her keeping Abraham's perspective as her direction, means that we must have spiritual discernment. We must have the spiritual perspective of everything that we do or think or say. All our evaluation of life's experiences and motivations must be measured and controlled by the spirit's values. Quite simply it means subjection of the flesh to the spirit, especially in our self examination. A very difficult thing to do. The Lord reminds us of its importance and the ways to keep His perspective in mind. First of all, He gives us His spirit and the example of our Lord. He gives us the treasures of the truth with his spirit to understand them. And then He gives us the experiences we need to apply them to our lives. Jesus made the

distinction between the natural and spiritual requirements clear in his discussion with Peter, when Peter tried to get Jesus to avoid his crucifixion. (Matt. 16:23) The Apostle Paul emphasizes the spiritual discernment in Rom. 12:2, 3--"And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Again in Eph. 4:22- 24 and Col. 3:9, 10, we are reminded to put off the old man and put on the new. David's perspective in his battle with Goliath, his separation from King Saul, and Ishbosheth's rebellion were always in term. of what the Lord's position was.

Our judgment. can be guided by the Lord exclusively. They don't come to us like a bolt of lightening out of the blue. Neither do things just happen the way we would like them to happen. Usually the situations in which a mature Christian finds himself require our sanctified judgment in order to make a decision. If we use our natural judgment then our decision will be carnal. But if we, through exercising the mind of the spirit, render a judgment, then our decision will be in favor of the growth of the New Creature. Experience tells us that we must study each situation, appraising it in the light of what we know to be the guides for advancement of the spirit and subservience of the spirit. A touchstone we all find of utmost importance is our own immediate response to confusion or pressures--do we turn to the Scriptures to determine the mind of the Lord and the action Jesus would have taken in a like situation? Or do we try to resolve the issue by our own wisdom and the advancement of fleshly interests?

The tests of our spiritual discernment are upon each of us. They always have been in the lives of each member of the Church. But they seem especially prevalent at the very close of the age. The severest trials for the Master came at the very end of his Narrow Way experiences. He had warned his closest disciples that they needed to watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation. (Mark 14:38) And yet, at the very end of our Master's life, when his most severe trials were upon him, his closest and dearest friends slept, leaving him alone with his Father. That peaceful garden of Gethsemane seemed a most unlikely place to a test of zeal for righteousness and of the earnestness of the spirit. And the disciples failed it. Today is the Church's Gethsemane and the tests of zeal for righteousness and earnestness for the spirit are just as subtle. And the character of the temptation is not known ahead of time. If it were, it would be much less of a test, if at all, since then we could have the issues clearly before us, and having studied them we could make the right decisions. But when a test comes on us as a crisis, we must then respond by our most frequently used reaction. Habits and discipline toward spiritual decisions are

the only safeguard we have to be sure that we make the decision the Lord's perspective gives us.

The Psalmist emphasizes our need of trained obedience to the things of the spirit. In Psalm 91:3, 6 he refers to the pestilence. Our protection from the pestilence is only in the Lord. The word here means a contagious disease over which a person has little control to resist except by immunity. Immunity comes from a previous exposure and the development of resistance. Our Lord was exposed to all the diseases that are inclined to infect the New Creature. He received his immunity from the Heavenly Father. And so must we. It comes to us in larger measure as we receive more of His spirit. There isn't any other way. We recognize the disease in several symptoms--loss of spiritual vision to see the issues of the truth as clearly as we once saw them; a dimming of the doctrines once so beautiful; a loss of faith; a feeling of confusion when confronted with differing views on matters of the truth--all these are symptoms of the disease of pestilence. We all see them to one degree or another in our lives and as we mature in the faith they become less and less frequent and much, much weaker. Continued symptoms in our own selves comes from a failure in our own hearts, from a love for self more than a love for the Lord.

The apostle warns us that we must take heed to ourselves. It is easy enough to consider this last thought today and list a few brethren about whom we can say that we recognize the symptoms in their Christian lives. But that isn't what the Lord wants us to do. We must take heed to ourselves, not to others, as we look for these symptoms, so that we may not be overcome with surfeiting and drunkenness. Lot's wife is an example to the church. She was not accused of any of Sodom's evils. She had left Sodom with her family; but she looked back. She probably thought of some of the nice qualities of some of her friends and pitied them their destruction, which is a perfectly natural inclination, until we recognize that it is our judgment that sees things this way, when the Lord has said that they are not worthy to be saved. The things that appealed to her natural inclinations, distracted her attention from the Lord's perspective. Those who leave the Truth after once having it are not only confused mentally, but also, and more significantly, their hearts have been slowly separating from the Lord. The Father is fully able and willing to protect those whose hearts are fully His (with no looking back). The Father protects from any and every snare of the adversary--His immunization from the pestilence is complete; and because we are leaky vessels we need booster shots continually.

Much of the beauty of an embroidery, or any piece of art, for that matter, is the careful discipline obvious in the hands of the artist. Rebekah's embroidery was no exception. The care of her stitches was all the more beautiful when considering the conditions under which it was stitched. The uneven ride of the camel, bouncing her and her work with

uneven regularity. I am told that a camel ride is quite an uncomfortable event. Then there was dust from the sandy caravan route they traveled. She also needed to be so careful that a needle didn't slip and prick her finger and spot the dress with blood. If her hands had been dirty they would have left smudges on the garment. All of these, and perhaps other problems incident in such a journey, picture our constant need for care and discipline in our embroidery. They mean that we must be careful to discern between many things in the Narrow Way, and discipline ourselves to do only those things that we know to be right. The embroidered wedding dress, our resurrected character is a combination of good intentions and studious application of these good intentions. Wanting to embroider the characteristics of Abraham's house, was a good first step to the beauty of the dress. But the glorious beauty of the dress lay in Rebekah's faithful and diligent work to produce those characteristics in the dress. And so our prayers and actions must first petition the Lord for the clarity of spiritual discernment. Then we must ask the Lord for strength to obey the truth, made clear by that discernment. It is easy and important to say to the Lord, "Dear Father, please show me Thy will." It is not so easy however, yet just as important, to ask for the strength to obey what He has shown us, and then be busy in exercising the spiritual discernment He gives us.

There are many areas of spiritual discernment. We would like to consider just five. Each of them takes energy on our part to see the truth from error and then be busy about applying it to our lives. The embroidery of the New Creature's wedding dress is not something that the Lord takes the will for the deed, though He does expect the will to come first.

The discernment of right from wrong is an important fundamental precept. This discernment is basic and sublime, yet easy to compromise. Right is that which is just. Wrong is that which is unjust. The two are contrasted by black and white. But life isn't just black and white, is it? It more often seems to be varied hues of gray. And so our discernment must find the justice in situations first. Then, since gray shades the picture so often, we must temper the justice element with love. Justice however must never be compromised by love, Love can never violate justice and be acceptable in the wedding embroidery. God himself has set us the example of so great a sacrifice in order to avoid any compromise of justice. Therefore in each situation we must think justly first, and then lovingly.. This is a true test, dear brethren, for it often requires us to take a difficult stand for the truth--appearing as though offending those we love and have loved for a long time in the Lord, yet our stand will be in a loving manner, so there is no question as to the spirit motivating the stand itself. It is just as easy to be right (technically) on matters of the truth, but have the wrong spirit; as it is easy to be apparently sweet in manner, but ignoring the principles involved. Both of these are wrong.

In reflecting on the standard set before us on the union of truth and peace, we see that righteousness, purity comes before peace. Experience also tells us that peace founded on anything less than righteousness, disintegrates into confusion and conflict. An example of the right balance is given us in Melchizedek, King of Salem. Zadok means righteous-ness; and the Scriptures tell us that Melchizedek was a king of righteousness, and secondarily he was King of Salem (peace). James .3:17 tells us that the "wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable." Each experience we have in standing for the truth is an opportunity for us to willingly bear the reproach for our stand. The crisis proves our discernment of both the truth and our opportunity to find and use the most peaceable and loving spirit in that crisis. Positiveness with harmlessness is often the difference between being considerate of others' characteristics in our stand, and running roughshod over them.

Deception is another test of our discernment. Every feature of truth is promptly counterfeited, to deceive the very elect, if possible. 2 Thess. 2:10-12 warns us of strong delusions. A better translation is a warning us of a frenzy of delusions. Not only are the delusions many in number but they are also frantic, wild. The apostle warns us that this is especially true now at the end of the age. The danger to us seems to be the unsettling or losing of our balance in the midst of the frenzy. But the Lord has given us the truth. The divine plan is clearly and harmoniously outlined for us in the ministry of the Pastor. The frenzy is the frequent and various variations from the truth of the Harvest message. Satan's approach to Jesus was by way of deception. Jesus rejected them with a clear recognition of the deception and a Scriptural rejection of the error. For us today, the Scriptures tell us that Satan's evil angels still loyal to his direction come at us as seducing spirits. Our discernment in each situation must be so clear that we can recognize each deception for just what it is and reject the error with the word of the Lord. Mark 13:38.

Discernment of doctrine is also very important. It means we hold dear that which we have received from the Lord, and that we are charged to convey to others. The sound of the shepherd's voice is clear. Constant study keeps the voice clear to us. And when a false imitator comes to call us with a slight variation of the truth, we will recognize this as the voice of a false shepherd. It is important not only that we recognize the error of the wrong voice, but that we put the voice away from us. One who is playing a poorly tuned instrument in an orchestra is told to stop playing until the instrument is properly tuned. When the U.S. Treasury Agents appointed to the counterfeit-money squad train for their work, they study only valid money. They never study counterfeit money because it would dull their perception and reduce their ability to discern the bad money when they did see it. The Apostle advises us to try the spirits. (1 John 4:1) This requires us to be so familiar

with the truth that when we hear new ideas, we immediately apply our clear knowledge of the truth and recognize it for what it really is--truth or error.

Another area of discernment is our responsibility to encourage others in righteousness. All our actions toward others must be for the sole purpose of encouraging the new creature's growth. As we lay down our lives for our brethren it must be to encourage them in the truth. Often this takes the form of assisting them materially in some way. But if we stop with just their material needs, we have neglected the most important part of our mission of help. It is like taking a basket of food to the needy: --then cleaning their house, washing their clothes and arranging bright flowers--and then leaving with the basket under our arm. Therefore our relationship to our brethren must be first to nourish the new creature. This is consistent with our initial relationship with them. We are not attracted by their talents, nor by their wealth, charm, or whatever--we are attracted by the Lord's love of them and their response of love for Him. It is this relationship that should continue. It is an easy thing to let the carnal things of life encroach on our spiritual relationships. If we let it do this then we are undermining the true brotherhood of Christ and fostering the flesh. Continuance in this, not only crowds out the spiritual values once held mutually dear, but also prohibits further embroidery of growth in the spirit. Jesus' prayer for his brethren was for the holy spirit to be their comforter and guide into all truth. He sets us an example of interest in the brethren that is pure and emphatic about our interests in developing righteousness in our brethren. Jesus was a faithful High Priest. Our ministry is the same. There are many testings here from our brethren. It is so easy to slip into a promotion of the flesh in our personal relationships. But when we persist in the spirit, and try to kindly and firmly put aside the flesh, we open ourselves to attack. It will soon be that we are hated for the truth a sake and receive malice, hatred, evil speaking and evil surmising. These will hurt, especially wince our motives and actions were pure. But our Lord again set us a good example by pressing on with the good and letting God correct the wrong in His own good time. Jesus knew what Judas was going to do when he betrayed him. He had known for some time that the disciple was a thief and had evil motives. But he never accused him nor made a spectacle of him. Even his instruction to go and do what he had in mind was a gentle statement of fact. And so we should bend all our energies toward encouraging righteousness in our brethren.

The fifth spiritual discernment of our Narrow Way which we must embroider into the wedding dress is our sense of the scope of our responsibility to the truth. Can we sit at home and rejoice in the truth we have and be content not to protect and defend the truth in the face of attack? Can we accept the truth today and realize its beauty and power, and then tomorrow say that it was all a mistake and excuse it for some other idea? Of course the answer is, "No," to both questions. Jesus answered Pilot that he was born to bear

witness to the truth, and to die for it. God asked him to do this each day of his life, as well as the last day of his life. And he defended the truth with vigor and zeal. He sacrificed all the natural qualities of a perfect man every day for the purpose of promoting the truth. Our responsibilities extend beyond ourselves, beyond our families, beyond our ecclesias, beyond our conventions, as far away as there are any brethren, or potential brethren who need encouragement.

And who doesn't need encouragement, especially today? We should rejoice in every opportunity to promote the truth, the whole truth, and nothing else. Often this means we take the initiative to help when our brethren disclose their need in one way or another. The Lord has entrusted the message of truth to us, who are the harvest grains. The wheat protects all of it and promotes all of it with their life. The tares are unwilling. Gideon's army was selected because it recognized that it was always to be on the alert to an attack, and to Gideon's command. It recognized that the safety of Israel, God's people, rested on their shoulders. They took the responsibility seriously. Those who were not worthy of being in that little band of 300, fell back because of fear or for their own comfort. Both factors were more important to the unqualified soldiers than obeying the general or protecting God's people. Also the Lord reminds us that there would be many who would say that they loved the Lord and they will parade their wonderful works before him to prove it. But the Lord will say that he doesn't recognize them because they followed their own judgment, and failed to recognize their responsibility to Him.

Spiritual blindness is also a severe danger when embroidering the wedding garment. It produces nothing worthy of the occasion. It is interesting to note that blindness disqualified one from the priestly office (Lev. 21:18) and disqualified an animal for sacrifice (Lev. 22:22). We have been given the spiritual vision that only the Lord can give. No one understands the truth, except in a purely intellectual sense, unless the Lord gives him that understanding. We are not in darkness, therefore as children of the light we must watch and be sober. (1 Thess. 5:4-7) Paul rebukes the spiritually lazy (Heb. 5:11), because they had received of the Lord's table but they did not grow. And so the principle applies to us as we embroider our individual garments. If we are content with ourselves and fail to watch and be sober, we will become blind to the truth as the Lord unfolds the beauties and strengths of the truth to the Lord's people. If, on the other hand, we energize our treasures by daily activity, study, discussions on the truth, when with the brethren, by meditation, prayer, hymns of praise (making melody in our hearts), we will keep our spiritual eyesight keen and be enabled to continue our embroidery successfully.

The pressures of the day provide the needed testings to produce the wedding garment of glory and beauty. And as we slide off the camel and cover our face with the veil, we pray

that the Lord will see only the beautiful character we have been preparing for almost 2,000 years, and greatly desire our beauty.