

Luke 15:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

Analysis

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. Grace erupts in immediate, extravagant restoration. The father addresses "his servants" (τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ, tous doulous autou), commanding them to clothe the son with symbols of full sonship, not the hired servant status the son proposed. The "best robe" (στολὴν τὴν πρώτην, stolēn tēn prōtēn) literally means "the first robe," likely referring to the finest garment reserved for honored guests or the father's own ceremonial robe—a covering that replaces the son's filthy, pig-stained rags with dignity and honor.

The "ring" (δακτύλιον, daktylion) placed on his hand signifies authority and family identity—signet rings sealed legal documents and represented the family name. This gift grants the son power to act in the father's name, conducting business and making binding commitments. The "shoes" (ὕποδήματα, hypodēmata) distinguish free sons from barefoot slaves—only servants and the poor went unshod. Each gift systematically reverses the son's degradation and restores full sonship privileges.

Theologically, these gifts picture justification and adoption. The robe represents Christ's righteousness covering our sin (Isaiah 61:10, Zechariah 3:3-5). The ring symbolizes the Holy Spirit as seal and pledge of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). The shoes indicate our freedom from slavery to sin and our status as beloved children (Galatians 4:5-7). The father's immediate, unconditional

restoration—before any probation or penance—demonstrates that salvation is entirely God's gracious work, not earned through human effort.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern culture highly valued honor and shame. The father's lavish gifts publicly restored the son's honor before the household and village. The best robe would be visible to all, announcing the son's restored status. The ring granted legal authority—ancient business was transacted through sealed documents, and possession of the family signet meant power to represent the father. Shoes marked free status; slaves typically went barefoot or wore simple sandals.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do the three gifts—robe, ring, and shoes—symbolize specific aspects of our salvation in Christ?
2. What does the father's immediate restoration without probationary period teach about justification by grace through faith?
3. How should the father's extravagant welcome shape the church's treatment of repentant believers who have wandered?

Interlinear Text

εἶπεν	δὲ	ὁ	πατὴρ	πρὸς	τοὺς	δούλους	αὐτοῦ
said	But	G3588	the father	to	G3588	servants	him
G2036	G1161		G3962	G4314		G1401	G846
ἐξενέγκατε	τὴν	στολὴν	τὴν	πρώτην	καὶ	ἐνδύσατε	αὐτοῦ
Bring forth	G3588	robe	G3588	the best	and	put it on	him
G1627		G4749		G4413	G2532	G1746	G846
καὶ	δότε	δακτύλιον	εἰς	τὴν	χεῖρα	αὐτοῦ	καὶ
and	put	a ring	on	G3588	hand	him	and
G2532	G1325	G1146	G1519		G5495	G846	G2532
ὑποδήματα	εἰς	τοὺς	πόδας				
shoes	on	G3588	his feet				
G5266	G1519		G4228				

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 6:11 (Parallel theme): And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Genesis 41:42 (Parallel theme): And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

Esther 8:2 (Parallel theme): And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

Isaiah 61:10 (Parallel theme): I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

Esther 3:10 (Parallel theme): And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

Revelation 7:9 (Parallel theme): After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

Revelation 19:8 (Parallel theme): And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Romans 8:15 (Parallel theme): For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Revelation 2:17 (Parallel theme): He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

Psalms 18:33 (Parallel theme): He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.