

## **A Golden Girdle**

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

*"And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle" (Rev. 1:12-13).*

*"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Heb. 1:9).*

For the moment, it is the last part of Revelation 1:13 that will occupy our thoughts. "*Girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle*". The symbolism is very simple and I think very plain.

A girdle speaks to us of strength. We have numerous references to girding conveying that idea of strength unto action. It speaks to us of responsibility. We find very often the girdle carrying responsibility. In Ezekiel the angel carries upon his girdle the inkhorn. You follow what happens and you see it is a very responsible ministry that he fulfils. And other things are carried on the girdle, speaking of taking responsibility. Then again the girdle speaks to us of action or energy, energy in service.

Then this is a golden girdle. The gold speaks of what is of God, especially as to His nature — righteousness, truth, faithfulness. This is the gold of the divine nature.

Then the girdle of gold is about His breasts, speaking of love, devotion, that which is of the heart.

So the picture is simply drawn, but we have here the Son of Man standing and presented in the strength and energy of His devotion to what is according to God's nature and taking responsibility for that. And, when you come to think about it, that is all that the book of Revelation right on to the end is about. It is devoted action and responsibility on the part of the Lord Jesus to what is according to the mind of God. That runs through every phase and aspect of this whole book.

Before we reach the girdle, we are told of His robe. "*Clothed with a garment down to the foot*". It is an undefined and undescribed garment or robe, but it is not very difficult to discover what it represents. Many suggestions have been made. Some have thought that it must be the priestly robe. Others have thought that it must be the kingly robe. Maybe that both in principle are right if you interpret that not so much in the matter of office as in spiritual function, but I think it is more than that. May it not be that this robe, undescribed and undefined, speaks of His completeness as Man according to God, the new creation Man, the one new Man, the seamless robe. He is set forth here so clearly as the Son of Man and we shall find as we move on through the book that it is what is meant by the Son of Man that governs everything — what He is, not only who He is. That is, not that it is a certain Man, a certain Person, but a certain kind of Man, a certain kind of Person. Here you have the new creation in Christ Jesus personally, the new creation Man.

We note how this book of Revelation takes up everything that has gone before in the Word of God and gathers it up and applies it in a new forcefulness, and we have read earlier of putting off the old man and putting on the new man. "*Seeing ye have put on the new man*"; and the common idiom there is that which refers to putting on a garment or putting off a garment. 'You have put off like a garment the old creation, and you have put on, like a garment, like a robe, a new man', and here is the garment down to the ground. The priestly garment was girded and lifted a little in priestly action. Here is something which encompasses all. We are not far from the truth if we regard this

garment down to the ground as speaking of the completeness of Christ as representing God's thought concerning man. He is a complete and inclusive presentation of what the new creation is according to God's mind, and the thing which holds that garment closely to Him — its strength, is its energy, is its devotion — is this girdle; what is according to God's mind. You see what there is in this simple and yet very beautiful and also profound symbolism as, with everything in view, the Son of Man steps forth and is presented. It is on this wise, according to this, that everything will be handled, judged and dealt with.

Well now, let us notice this further thing, that the essential title of the Lord in this book is "*Jesus*". Jesus Christ sometimes, but Jesus; the testimony of Jesus. That is the Son of Man title and here "*one like unto the son of man*" — Jesus, and that means representation — Son of Man. So that here everything is being governed by this representative form or, to use other words, everything is governed by the idea of new creation in Christ Jesus, the full expression of divine thought is governing all the procedure of the book of Revelation. It is not just a bit of the technicality of the book that is represented by that. It is something for us to recognize.

The Lord is coming to deal with His people first. Judgment must begin at the House of God, and so in the first section of this book, it will be the churches, it will be comprehensively the church, being dealt with. After that, there will be a movement outward, the nations, the world, will be dealt with. To the ever-widening bounds of the universe this whole thing will move out until it has touched the utmost and ultimate bound of things, and it will all be on the same basis, by the same principle, in the hands of one Person who represents this one thing. It is the Son of Man, God's thought as to His creation, God's mind as to what the creation ought to be, and eventually, when on the basis of what the Son of Man is as the inclusiveness and fulness of that divine thought, not as to Godhood but as to Manhood, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. That is the end. You begin with the Son of Man who is the personal embodiment of the new creation and you end with a universe with Him at its centre conforming to His image, a new heaven and a new earth. When you have recognized that, you are able to come back and see what a place this girdle has.

After this, you have a description of His person. Two things are said about His adornment and then seven things are said about His person, and the seven things as to His person are the expression of these two things about His adornment. The seven things have to do with His head and His hair, His eyes, His feet, His voice, His hand, His mouth, His countenance. We are not going to speak about those features at the moment, but there are seven definite things said about His person which are very effective things. Eyes as a flame of fire — they are very effective; out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword — a very effective thing; His countenance shining as the sun in his strength — that is something very effective. There are seven very effective things about Him, but those things in their effectiveness are the expression of these two things — the garment and the girdle. All that effectiveness is the issue, in the first place, of what He is, and in the second place, of that to which He is devoted.

It is with this thing, the girdle, then, that we must be occupied. Here we have the church comprehensively in the churches as the first sphere of His activity, of His judgment, and it is as though the great statement was made that the church and the churches have their very existence to be an expression of Him as the new creation, an expression of that which is according to God's mind, and He approaches every church on that basis. He is girded with a golden girdle to speak to the Lord's people and to determine what among them is of God and what is not of God. His whole procedure is governed by a great heart passion of devotion to what is according to God's mind. Presently He will move out to the world in judgment on the same principle, and then you will find in Revelation 15 that seven angels come out of the sanctuary. They are girded around the breasts with golden girdles and they pour out the seven judgments upon the world. You see the symbolism is just the same. Judgment of the world is in the spirit of a mighty devotion to have things

wholly according to God's mind. It is the passion of a burning love that God should be satisfied. That is what lies behind, and, having said that, we have said anything and everything that can be said. We need not add a great many words to that if only it is grasped what that means. Any further words will only be by way of helping to that end.

The Lord Jesus in the final issue draws near to the church girded with His great passion and jealousy of heart that His Father might be satisfied by finding things according to His own mind. He will presently draw near to the world, if He has not already begun to do so, with the same passion. The world will know its suffering, its tribulation, all those terrible conditions mentioned in Revelation 15 when the seven angels come forth girded about the breasts with golden girdles; that is, the world will be dealt with on this one principle — how far God is satisfied with the condition and God will only be satisfied by finding what is of Himself in His creation. It begins with us. It is His great love, this consuming love, this all-girding, energizing love that everything shall satisfy God in its nature, in its essence. The Lord wants the church to be the expression of that; He wants the churches to be an expression of that; He wants everyone in the churches just to be the embodiment of that, a great passionate love that God should be satisfied with the condition, the condition being the very nature of God, and, when you have said everything, it all amounts to this, a great girding strength of love for God's satisfaction, God's pleasure.

The Lord Jesus was girded with that all the days of His walk here on the earth. That was the fire of His life, that was the strength of His life. He moved with that golden girdle among men. That was the energy of His overturning the tables of the money-changers and driving the commercialists out of His Father's house, the girdle of this jealousy that things should satisfy His Father, and here was the old creation coming into the things of God, the gain of this world, the lust of this life, all the divisive competitiveness that is in this old nature coming into the very house of God, and He who is jealous with a burning jealousy and devotion to God His Father cannot tolerate anything like that. He begins in the House of God.

He would have us girded with this same golden girdle, that is He would leave us characterized by this great love for the Father which works in this way — to have everything that satisfies the Father. Is it not impressive, in the light of this, that the very first message in the book of the Revelation centres in this, *"Thou hast left thy first love"*? Many things good and commendable — but, *"Thou hast left thy first love"*. And the last two messages are these. Philadelphia, no word of reproach, but this great declaration, *"I will make them ... know that I have loved thee"* (Rev. 3:9). Philadelphia — love of the brethren — *"I have loved thee"*. Then Laodicea, rejected, spewed out, because there is no passion of love. *"Thou art lukewarm, neither hot nor cold"* (Rev. 3:16). There is no trace of this heart devotion, jealous concern, that things should be all for God. That is God's thought about the new creation, and His people are to be the embodiment of that thought.

If the seamless robe is not only the robe of the Lord Jesus personally but the robe which represents His church also with which He has clothed Himself, then it must correspond to Himself, that is, it must express the mind of God. The church His Body must express God's thought as to the new creation. And the new creation is that in which there is nothing but satisfaction to God. When He first created, before sin and evil entered in, God looked upon the work of His hands and said, *"It is very good"*. When He has finished His new creation, He will look upon it and say again, *"It is very good"*. And that is how He looks upon His Son as the personal embodiment of it, *"it is very good"*; *"In whom I am well-pleased"*. And He is now at work conforming us to the image of His Son and what must there be about us and in us which gives Him His occasion, His ground, His opportunity, the cooperating factor? It must not be a Laodicean indefiniteness, neutrality. It must be a Philadelphian devotion. We ask for open doors. Oh, it is to Philadelphia that He says, I have set before you an open door. The answer comes along the line of

Philadelphia, a passionate love, a devoted love to the Lord and to what is according to His mind; not an abstract thing, but working positively, not destructively but constructively. I do feel that the Lord would call us to give attention to this matter of the positive aspect of His love in our hearts to have things according to His mind. I said positive, because I do not think we get very far in constructiveness in things according to God in all the time being occupied with what is wrong. It is the easiest thing in the world to see what is wrong. Love will never fail to see what is wrong. But what is the reaction of love? Is it not in the very essence and nature of love to improve, to have the better, to work for the better? Is it not in the very nature of love to save, to redeem, to secure? Let us not be mistaken about our love and think that it is all love to continually denounce what is wrong. Eyes of flame are the eyes of love and love is not blind, but love does see, and see as nothing else sees, and sees the wrong, but then love seeks to secure and deliver on the positive side, to realize all that is possible for God.

So, when the Lord Jesus comes to the churches, seeing all that is wrong and mentioning the things that are wrong, He entreats, He appeals, He exhorts, He promises, and it is only when He comes to the position where there is no real concern at all that He can do nothing but spew it out of His mouth. If there is anything positive, He will encourage, He will appeal. That is His jealous love.

Shall we ask the Lord to gird us with His own golden girdle, the girdle of His devotion to the Father, this great love, that the Father may have satisfaction, and let us not think that we can bring satisfaction to God simply along the line of discerning what is wrong, but in seeking with all our heart to have things otherwise, on the constructive, building-up side, because knowledge puffs up and love builds up. Oh, let us ask that the marks of a true love may be found in us, that is, building up. There is ministry for pulling down, but it is never wholly that. It goes hand in hand with ministry for building up. One like unto the Son of Man, having a garment down to the ground, girt about the breasts with a golden girdle. Out of that devotion to the Father's will all effectiveness proceeds, every kind of effectiveness, and it is a mighty effectiveness, as this book shows.