

# My Silver Sweater

by Shirley Goodman



I have an old, silver colored sweater in my dresser. It was a hand-me-down from my daughter when she was in high school. She graduated in 1990, so that gives you some idea of how old this sweater is. Purchased from a store that has long since gone out of business, the hems of the sleeves and bottom are tattered, with threads hanging loose like tinsel on a Christmas tree. No longer fit for public viewing, I wear it only in the house on days when I'm cleaning or just hanging out. Although I have about ten other sweaters that are newer, warmer, and without a single loose thread, I prefer this silver mess over all the others. It is by far the most comfortable sweater I own. I just don't want to part with it yet.

Sometimes I watch a TV show where two fashion consultants show up at someone's door and offer them the opportunity to give up their current wardrobe in exchange for tips on how to dress appropriately for their body and personality style, followed by a five thousand dollar, new wardrobe shopping spree. As I watch the old clothes get trashed, I always wonder if the people who go there really bring ALL their clothes. There are lots of items in my closet that I would gladly part with, but I cannot imagine giving up my silver sweater.

Oddly, I started thinking about all this today while I was doing my devotions. In Hebrews 12:18-25, the writer contrasts the old covenant of the law with the new covenant of Christ. He repeats this theme throughout Hebrews. Apparently, he was passionate about a person accepting all that is available through the new covenant. He wants his audience of Jewish converts to turn in the old in exchange for the new.

But they were comfortable with the old, familiar customs of Judaism. They kept going back to their old ways, blending their new beliefs with the old into an unrecognizable form. He keeps reminding them to stick with the new and get rid of the old, to cut the tattered threads of the law in exchange for the new covenant with Christ. Reading this I thought, “Ah, I guess times haven’t changed much.”

Just like I refuse to stop wearing that frayed sweater, there are old habits and ways of being that we refuse to change. Jesus says “Here... I have something new for you.” We say, “Thanks, but I’m just fine with what I have now.” There’s no immediate need for the new. Oh, we know the time will come, but we’re just not ready to part with the old yet. Or maybe we want both... a blend of attitudes and behaviors for any occasion. The new for public viewing, and the old for when we’re home alone. A belief system that results in an unrecognizable form.

Verse 25 says, “See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks.” (NIV). When Jesus offers us something, we know it will be better than what we have, and there is no reason to refuse it. He wants to clothe us in his righteousness. He makes all things new – the old has passed away. Why then do we resist, holding onto what is worn out and should be discarded?

Frankly, I don’t think it matters to God what I do with my silver sweater. It’s a tangible item that has no moral value, and I cannot take it with me when I die. But I do think Jesus cares about what I do with my salvation; with the revelation of truth he gives me; with the new attitudes and behaviors he offers that can replace the way I have always been. It’s not about what I have; it’s about who I am. Jesus gave his life so that I could be a completely new person! Redemption is free for the asking. As a New Testament believer, it makes no sense to go back to the way I used to live, fearing God’s rules and seeing a distance between us that cannot be bridged. With Jesus, I am more than side-by-side. His Spirit dwells in me. He is the “new and living way.” He ties up the loose ends of my self-centeredness and renews my spirit daily into a new way of being.

What a God!