

ABC's of SALVATION

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

DIVINE CLOTHING

“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by” (Zechariah 3:1-5).

IN THIS vision Zechariah saw Joshua, the high priest and representative of the people, standing before the angel of the Lord, with Satan at his right hand to resist him. Joshua was clothed with filthy garments which the angel of the Lord ordered removed. A change of raiment was given unto Joshua, and a mitre was placed upon his head. Blind indeed must be the person who does not see here a full orb picture of the salvation of the sinner. Let us note some of the phases of salvation found here.

I. Man By Nature

Joshua was **“a brand plucked out of the fire.”** He was dressed in filthy robes. In Isaiah 64:6 it is written, **“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”** In God's sight men are sinners by nature and by practice. They are blackened and charred brands suited for the burning. What is pictured in this vision is specifically stated in the New Testament. In Romans 3:23 it is written, **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”** Again in I John 1:10 it is written, **“If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”** These and scores of other portions of God's unchangeable Word witness to man that in him **“dwelleth no good thing.”** Man's indifference, unbelief, or rejection of this does not change this evidence **“one jot or tittle.”**

II. Man Subject to Satan

The vision shows **“Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.”** Not only was Joshua clothed in filthy rags, but this malevolent being was at his side.

To the religious leaders of His day, the Lord Jesus Christ said, **“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do”** (John 8:44). In that portion of the Scriptures where the very peak of divine revelation concerning the believer is reached, it is written, **“In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”** (Ephesians 2:2). Note the words **“now worketh.”** Every man who has not been **“born from above”** is energized by and under the control of this prince of the power of the air. The present world condition is accounted for by this fact and this alone.

III. The Sovereignty of God

The order was, **“Take away the filthy garments.”** God has rights and prerogatives which belong only to Himself. One of these is found in Exodus 33:19 where it is written, **“I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.”**

- God had the right to choose His people in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).
- God had the right to write His members in His book when as yet there were none of them (Psalm 139:16).
- God had the right to save Saul of Tarsus when the fiery, Christ-hating Pharisee was persecuting with all the viciousness of his being the followers of the Nazarene.

After what God did for this persecuting Pharisee, it is not Strange that He made use of this same one to write, **“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”** (II Timothy 1:9).

IV. The Sinner’s Part

No word passes the lips of Joshua in the vision. He accepted what was being done for him.

Someone asked Mr. Spurgeon how he harmonized the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. The laconic reply of that great preacher concerning these two doctrines was, “I had not heard that they had had a falling out.” His answer was simple, sane, scriptural, and satisfying to the honest inquirer.

The sinner has nothing to do in the matter of his salvation save to receive it as a gift. In the gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ is offered as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, and to **“As many as received him, to them gave he power (authority) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”** (John 1:12).

Do not confuse believing with doing. It is ceasing from doing and resting upon what has already been done, for it is written, **“To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness”** (Romans 4:5).

V. Justification

“I will clothe thee with change of raiment” were the words of the angel of the Lord to Joshua.

This is what God does to the believing sinner. Like the father with the prodigal, our heavenly Father brings out the best robe and puts it upon the believer. This robe is the robe of righteousness.

Sainted John Bunyan wrote: “The believer in Christ is now, by grace, shrouded under so complete and blessed a righteousness that the law from Mount Sinai can find neither fault nor diminution therein. This is what is called the righteousness of God by faith.”

Many people are disturbed by the injunction in I Peter 1:16, **“Be ye holy; for I am holy.”** The preacher was not far wrong when, in a sermon upon the righteousness with which the believer is clothed, he said, “Brethren, it is imparted, imputed, and imported.” It is “imported” for it comes from above—from God. **“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”** (II Corinthians 5:21).

The believer’s judicial standing before God is in Christ, and is as perfect as that of Christ. What a blessed thing to be clothed in the righteousness of God!

VI. Crowned

“Let them set a fair mitre (diadem) upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head” (Zechariah 3:5).

A beautiful scene in glory is described in Revelation 5:9,10, where it is written, **“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”**

While this refers to the future; yet even now believers are **“a royal priesthood”** (1 Peter 2:9).

Later in the same chapter in Zechariah we read that Joshua and his fellows were **“men wondered at.”** Even now the angels of glory **“desire to look into”** this salvation of God provided for the sons of Adam’s lost race (I Peter 1:12). Of the present, it is recorded in Ephesians 3:10, **“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places (heavenlies) might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”**

Of the future, in the same epistle it is written in 2:7, **“That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”**

Sinners, saved by grace and robed in the righteousness of God, are now and will be throughout the ages of the ages **“men wondered at.”**

VII. A Present Possession

When the filthy clothing was taken off Joshua, the new clothing was immediately put on.

It is no uncommon thing to hear some saint close his prayer with the words “And in heaven at last save us.” People are not saved in heaven—it is a place to which saved people go. When the angel of the Lord stripped Joshua of his filthy garments he also said, “**I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee.**”

On the day of atonement, the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of Israel were confessed over the live goat, and put upon his head, and he was sent away into the wilderness never to return. By many figures of speech, such as, “**As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us**” (Psalm 103:12), God hath made known to the believer that He has put away his sins.

A decree of oblivion has been written on the records of the Supreme Court in heaven. The believing sinner has been robed in the righteousness of God in Christ and is passed from death into life and shall never come into judgment (John 5:24). He is now as surely saved as he will be ten thousand years hence.

Though clothed in rags, by sin defiled,
The Father did embrace His child;
And I am pardoned, reconciled,
O Lamb of God, in Thee!

It is the Father's joy to bless;
His love has found for me a dress,
A robe of spotless righteousness,
O Lamb of God, in Thee!

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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