

CLOTHES OF SALVATION

“When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes ...” John 19:23 (NIV)

Rod Farthing, the Development Director of ARM Prison Outreach International, recently shared the testimony about Corrie Ten Boom in his "Ministers' Minute" entitled, "...They took his clothes ..." He writes:

“Corrie Ten Boom was a wonderful Christian lady of Dutch extraction who saved many innocent lives during the dark days of the Holocaust in W.W.II. For her devotion to doing what was right, she and her sister were imprisoned in a concentration camp. On one occasion, they were humiliated by being stripped of every piece of clothing they had. It was an invasion of their decency and dignity and seemed, at first, to be totally without purpose or benefit. But a thought struck Corrie in the midst of her embarrassment... ”

“When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes ...”

She turned to her sister and said, "I never thanked Him for all that He endured for me -- I never thanked Him for willingly being stripped and humiliated for me. Now I appreciate what He did for me more than ever before."¹

When the soldiers took his clothes, this was not because Jesus was powerless to stop them. Christ, being equal to God yet being found in the form of a man, willingly laid down his physical human life for mankind. Being in union with God from the beginning he also willingly unclothed himself in a deeper spiritual way for our salvation. Consider the garments of the Lord prior to leaving them behind:

“Praise the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great; you are **clothed with splendor and majesty**. He wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent.” Psalm 104:1-2 (NIV)

It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be **clothed with majesty** and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.’ Zechariah 6:13 (NIV)

“He who was clothed with splendor and majesty was stripped of it for us.”
Says Rod Farthing, who points out the sacrifice of Christ with this verse:

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” ~2 Corinthians 8:9 (NIV)

Rod beautifully explains the sacrifice and grace of God in Christ's humanity and willing death on our behalf. I would like to continue on from what he has written and explain how these truths are applied to us. I hope to present to you an understanding of how our being baptized into the name of Jesus connects us with the mysterious grace of our LORD who being God in the flesh, has somehow become for us the very “clothes of our salvation.”

¹ Farthing, Rod, "Ministers' Minute" entitled, "...They took his clothes ..." Volume III, Number 4, 2004

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God foretold this exchange in a prophecy recorded in Zechariah:

“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?" Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you." "...Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come." ~Zechariah 3:1-4, 8. (NIV)

Unclothed of his majesty upon the cross, Jesus took upon himself our filthy garments stained with sin. In exchange, he offers his own “robe of righteousness” as a “garment of salvation.”

“I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." Isaiah 61:10 (NIV)

Notice from these verses that one cannot claim we "put on" righteousness by doing good works. It is not by works of the law, our own righteousness, humility or compassion for as God says through Isaiah:

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. Isaiah 64:6 (NIV)

The above scriptures were given to the Jews as a promise of hope to come. The time when their sins and ours could be forever “taken away” and in exchange we are given a “robe of righteousness.” This promise is fulfilled in Christ Jesus. He is the rich "garment of salvation" that God lovingly offers to *put on* each of us. He offers His “clothes” to you today if you’ll receive him by faith. Consider what the scriptures say about *when* we receive these “Clothes of Salvation” by faith and the blessings that come as a result:

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:26-29 (NIV)

"...since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." Colossians 3:9-11 (NIV)

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires...and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." Ephesians 4:22, 24 (NIV)

"Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." Romans 13:14 (NIV)

In the Greek language the same word for "clothes" and "put on" in the above verses is the word used in "clothed" in Galatians referring to baptism. The word is *Enduo* (1746) in the Strong's concordance. It means: to sink into (clothing), put on; clothe one's self. The King James version of the bible even translates the verse in Galatians as "put on" Christ rather than "clothed" as the NIV reads, however it implies the same concept.

What a beautiful word picture for us! By faith, upon the time we are baptized into the name of Jesus, we receive these rich "garments of salvation" that Isaiah prophesied about; we are "putting on" Jesus Christ our salvation! As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, we are seen as "clothed with Christ" in all his righteousness in the eyes of God! Consider how Jesus himself referred to this special "clothing" in this parable about the kingdom of heaven:

"Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.

"Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

"For many are invited, but few are chosen." Matthew 22:9-14 (NIV)

In the parable of the wedding feast all the people were invited: good, bad, rich and poor. There was no distinction made here as to the righteousness of each one. It was whether they had "wedding clothes" that mattered. But what exactly are the "wedding clothes" in this analogy?

Dr. Mickey Anders of First Christian Church in Pikeville, Kentucky quoted the following in regard to the wedding clothes in his October 13, 2002 article entitled, "When Showing Up Isn't Enough:"

"The key to understanding this allegory is the symbolism of the wedding robe, which Jesus does not explain. Augustine thought of it as the charity of 1 Cor 13 -- Luther as faith -- Calvin as good works ."²

In his article on this same parable "Christ's Assurance of Justification by Faith" Hans K. LaRondelle writes:

"All depends on the proper interpretation of the "wedding garment." If we understand this through Revelation 3:4, 5, 18, where Christ provides the necessary white clothes, then it means that He offers us His *own* righteousness by grace. This implies that a rejection of Christ's righteousness is a declaration of self-righteousness, to the effect that one does not sense the need for (Jesus') sacrificial death and atoning blood." (Lesson 4, January 15 - 21)

² Bruner, Frederick Dale, *Matthew: Volume 2, The Churchbook, Matthew 13-28, page 777* (Dallas: Word, 1990)

That's a powerful statement worth taking into consideration:

“a rejection of Christ's righteousness is a declaration of self-righteousness, to the effect that one does not sense the need for (Jesus') sacrificial death and atoning blood.”

If we reject this righteous robe offered by Christ through faith at the time of our baptism, we are thus declaring in self-righteousness pride that we do not need to unite with Christ and be “washed” in his atoning blood to be saved. If we *dare* to cling to our own ideas thus replacing what God has commanded, where is the fear of God in that? Doesn't a Sovereign God have the right to make up the rules as he sees fit?

In my research I have noticed many bible scholars say that in a traditional wedding of that time, when a "king" got married, the clothes for the wedding guests would be provided by the king.³ The guests merely had to "put on" the clothes they were offered. They didn't buy them or earn them or work for them, they simply had to 'put them on' to be accepted. Is it so hard then for us to see that we too must allow ourselves to be "clothed with Christ" to be acceptable to a Holy God? Only *Christ* is declared righteous in the sight of God. Only *his* blood can cleanse us from sin. Only *his name* can save us. We are Immersed (baptized) into the "name" of Jesus (In full authority of the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit) that saves when we enter the water of baptism by faith.

When we are immersed into the name of Jesus, Paul tells us in Romans chapter six, this is where we meet Christ in his death, burial and resurrection; the Gospel message that saves us. For in Christian baptism, we each individually "unite" ourselves with Christ's work done on the cross, we “put on” his righteousness as a "garment of salvation" and arise out of the water a regenerated "new self" or "new life" cleansed from sin and indwelt by the Holy Spirit having placed complete faith in his work to save us."



So I ask *you* today, “Got Wedding Garments?”

Why fight against God and go naked? Come receive the clothes he has to offer. Wash your “filthy robes” and make them white in the blood of the lamb today!

I'll let the words of Jesus speak for himself for he says:

³ Evangelist Robert L. Sumner writes:

“As we know from the history of Oriental custom in our Lord's day, wedding garments were provided by the host for wedding guests. This man's lack was inexcusable and his speechlessness indicated his realization of that fact. *A garment had been provided for him by the king and he had refused to wear it!*”

"I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see." Revelation 3:18

"Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost." Isaiah 55:1 (NIV)

Notice you can't "buy" these clothes with money...it's free! The clothes are free! Salvation is free! But it will cost you your "life." Jesus says it in these words:

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." Mark 8:35 (NIV)

To be a true follower of Jesus we all must personally take up our own 'cross' and follow him. Jesus never meant for this to be a "one time" commitment. The cross is carried daily, but there is an initial time referenced by the Spirit of God according to scripture when we are first "crucified" with Christ by faith into his suffering and death. When is this time? Paul again connects the time we 'died to sin' and 'united with Christ' as the time we were baptized into Christ:

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?...For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with,[Or be rendered powerless] that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin." Romans 6:3, 6 (NIV)

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:24 (NIV)

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

Christ's death on the cross, which he called a "baptism" in Luke 12:50, was both a physical event with a spiritual event happening simultaneously. Our "baptism" into his death, in the name of Jesus, is both a physical event performed in water, with a spiritual event taking place by faith at the same time. Not everyone is willing to accept this understanding as the Apostle Paul explains:

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." ~1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV)

We take up our cross for the first time in the waters of baptism (seen as foolishness in the eyes of the world) and in humility unite ourselves with Christ, by being "buried" with him in baptism and rising in newness of life through faith in him.⁴ Upon our baptism, the

⁴ Romans 6:3-7 (quoted at end notes)

power of the sinful nature is cut off, our sins washed away, and the guilt removed.⁵ We rise with him out of the water having the power to follow his ways faithfully for the rest of our lives as we abide in Christ. For upon our baptism, we are forgiven and cleansed from our sins by faith, and our bodies become the temple where the Holy Spirit takes up residence and empowers us with the ability to live a life pleasing to God.⁶ It is worth all the momentary shame and sacrifice, for there is true joy set before us! Here is the good news and it never changes:

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.... And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 7:9,15 (NIV)

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14 (NIV)

"Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved." John 10:7-9 (NIV)

Why I am telling you all this? First off, I want you to have *Hope!* Secondly, I want to *unite* with all believers in Christ in the truth of God's word so that we can share the Gospel message of Christ without shame. When we unite together in the truth as one body we are able to defeat the devil who has taken many captive to do his will.

"...everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15:4-6 (NIV)

Could it be if Christ were here today the Spirit of God would say this to your church:

"I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds *complete* in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you "Yet you have a few people...who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy."
He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Revelation 3:1b-6

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." Revelation 16:15 (NIV)

Let us not be mere pretenders in Christ "having a form of godliness but denying its power." (2 Timothy 3:5) Let us remain faithful to Jesus, believing and obeying His Word

⁵ Colossians 2:11-12, 1 Peter 3:21, Romans 6:6-7, Acts 22:16, Hebrews 10:19, 22-23 (quoted at end notes.)

⁶ Acts 2:38 (quoted at end notes.)

like the Patriarch Abraham who was commended for his faith and considered righteous before God because:

“... his **faith and his actions** were working together, and his faith was made *complete* by what he did.” James 2:22

We need to hold true to the Gospel message as it has been taught through the Apostles who spoke inspired directly through the Holy Spirit of God. We must teach nothing more and nothing *less* than the very truth he holds out to us in His Word. Once we have “put on” Christ, may we continue to spur one another on toward love and good deeds; loving each other sacrificially the way he demonstrated in his love for us.

For it is in that kind of love where we find those like our Savior Jesus who would willingly set aside their garments for the sake of those weaker ones whom they would save. Listen closely as I close my letter with this story by Ruth Seamands...

WERE YOU COLDER THAN THIS?

It was Christmas Eve in Korea. An expectant mother walked through the snow to the home of a missionary friend where she knew she could find help. A short way down the road from the mission house was a deep gully spanned by a bridge. As the young woman stumbled forward, birth pains overcame her. She realized she could go no farther. She crawled under the bridge. There alone between the trestles she gave birth to a baby boy. She had nothing with her except the heavy padded clothes she was wearing. One by one she removed the pieces of her clothing and wrapped them around her tiny son - around and around, like a cumbersome cocoon. Then, finding a discarded piece of burlap, she pulled it over herself, and lay exhausted beside her baby.

The next morning the missionary drove across the bridge in her Jeep to take a Christmas basket to a Korean family. On the way back, as she neared the bridge, the Jeep sputtered and died, out of gas. Getting out of the Jeep she started to walk across the bridge, and heard a faint cry beneath her. She crawled under the bridge to investigate. There she found the tiny baby, warm but hungry, and the young mother frozen to death. The missionary took the baby home and cared for him. As the boy grew, he often asked his adopted mother to tell him the story of how she had found him. On Christmas Day, his 12th birthday, he asked the missionary to take him to his mother's grave. Once there he asked her to wait a distance away while he went to pray. The boy stood beside the grave with bowed head, weeping. Then he began to disrobe. As the astonished missionary watched, the boy took off his warm clothing, piece by piece, and laid it on his mother's grave.

Surely he won't take off all his clothing, the missionary thought. He'll freeze! But the boy stripped himself of everything, putting all his warm clothing on the grave. He knelt naked and shivering in the snow. As the missionary went to him to help him dress again, she heard him cry out to the mother he never knew: "Were you colder than this for me, my mother?" And he wept bitterly.

Rod Farthing comments on this story with these words:

“When Christ came, He stripped himself of every royal garment and entered into our world of hatred and cold indifference. Why did He do it? ...Our coldness broke His heart and now it freezes Him out. We complacent Americans who are saved, satisfied, and sitting! We who pray, "Give us compassion for a lost world," and then "sacrifice" a dollar for missions. We with our elegant homes and brimming garbage cans. We who have the money, knowledge, and manpower to take the gospel to every creature, and yet we don't. We who say we love the lost, and neglect to tell a

lost neighbor about a loving Savior. Jesus' love through us is blocked by frozen lips that ought to be warm to speak for Him.

Lord Jesus, we take off our garments of pride and self-righteousness, glittering but transparently filthy rags that they are, and lay them at Your feet. In our naked need we cry, "Were you colder than this because of us, Lord?" And we weep bitterly, because we know You were."

May those of us who have not yet received the "garments of salvation" Jesus has to offer (to those who have faith in him) delay no longer to be clothed with Christ by being immersed into His name. For our Lord Jesus himself warned us clearly out of his love:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" Matthew 7:21 (NIV)

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 3:36 (NASB)

It is also my prayer, LORD Jesus, that those among us who have been "washed" and yet have soiled the clothes you so generously gave them LORD; I pray they would repent in response to your kindness and patience. May they come to you now for forgiveness and cleansing by admitting their faults personally before you, confessing them to be the unholy things they truly are. May they choose to walk forever in the power of your Spirit instead of "wallow" in the pool of sin and deception which lasts only for a season. LORD Jesus, may you grant each of us repentance from walking in the ways that displease you. May you gently lead each of us to a knowledge of the truth found only in your Word that we may escape the trap of the Devil who has taken us captive to do his will. For it is in the Name of Jesus we have been purchased with a great price and by his name we now pray, Amen.

THE WONDERFUL CROSS

Written by Jesse Reeves, Chris Tomlin and J.D. Walt

VERSE ONE:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.

CHORUS:

Oh the Wonderful Cross
Oh the wonderful Cross
Bids me come and die
And find that I may truly live.

Oh the Wonderful Cross
Oh the wonderful Cross
All who gather here by
Grace draw near
And bless your name.

VERSE TWO:

See from His head, His hands, his feet
Sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown.

(Repeat chorus)

TAG:

Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

“Clothes of Salvation” was written by Bonnie Jo Winberg
(a fellow ambassador for Christ)

†Footnoted scriptures listed below:

† **Romans 6:3-7 (NIV)**

“Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

Colossians 2:11-12 (NIV)

“In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.”

1 Peter 3:21 (NASB):

“Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”

Romans 6:6-7 (NIV):

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

Acts 22:16 (NIV)

“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.”

Hebrews 10:19, 22-23 (NIV)

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, . . . let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”

Acts 2:38 (NIV)

“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”