

THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR

Meditations on the Last Days of Christ

By

F. W. Krummacher

Copyright © 1947

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

THE DIVIDING OF THE RAIMENT

THE SCENE we are about to contemplate is remarkable even for those who are either unable or unwilling to share in our belief. It represents the taking possession of an inheritance, in which - at least in some respects - we ourselves are interested. A dying bed presents itself to our view - an individual at the point of death - a legacy, and the heirs. Happy is he who is justified in numbering himself with the latter! Let us approach near, and direct our attention, first, to the Testator, and then to His legacy and heirs.

A testator, as you are aware, is one who bequeaths an inheritance.

We find such a One in that part of the Gospel narrative which we are about to consider. The place where we meet with Him is indeed the last where we ought to seek Him. We are standing on the summit of Mount Calvary. The company by whom we are surrounded are certainly, in part of high rank - senators, priests, and centurions meet our view. We might suppose that if there was a Testator here, He could be found only among these dignitaries. But such is not the case. Look up, and behold the bleeding Man upon the accursed tree between two companions in suffering. This is real degradation, misery, distress and pressure, and is death in the most complete and horrible sense of the word.

But how will you be astonished, when I inform you that this Man, the poorest of the poor, is the very One whom we went forth to seek. "What!" you exclaim, "not the Testator?" Yes, incomprehensible as it may seem, it is He and no other. Look at the inscription over His head. Pilate caused it to be written; but, believe me, God has had His hand in it, however seemingly it may stand in contradiction with the bleeding form to which it has reference. It is no bitter scoff, but actual truth:

"Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

"What!" you exclaim again, "that Man a King?" O, my friends, something still more and greater than that! The lines there do not say enough. We will strike them out and put in their place "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of kings," But even this title is too vague. Let us place another in its stead: "Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God." Nor does this title satisfy us.

We blot it out and write, "Jesus of Nazareth, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Creator and Preserver of all things, God blessed forever." This epitaph may remain, for the description is most firmly and irrefutably founded.

It was He, it is He, even amid the horrors of such a death; all things are His, heaven and earth, the bliss of paradise and the trees of life by the river of the city of God, and the crown of honor on its pillars. But that which He possessed from the beginning, He possessed only for Himself, or at most, only for the holy angels that had remained faithful. Not the least glimmer of His glory could He bestow upon us sinners, without trenching upon His honor and majesty. Divine justice, which necessarily condemned us, decidedly protested against every impartation of the kind; likewise His divine holiness, which blesses only those who are free from sin.

Now, if the rich Lord of heaven was nevertheless desirous of bequeathing some part of His property to us, it was first of all necessary that He should satisfy these exalted opponents of our fallen race, in a holy and divinely appointed way. And to this He agreed, when He undertook to yield, in our stead, that obedience which we owed, and to endure in His own person, the curse inflicted upon us. And both these He accomplished at the moment in which we now find Him; and by His vicarious endurance of our misery He builds a bridge for us unhappy mortals, by which we are enabled to reach His own felicity.

But because, by His rendering this satisfaction, He acquires the power to receive us sinners into the fellowship of His blessedness, we shall do well to remove the inscriptions we have just attached to His cross, however well founded they may be, and leave the first and original one, **"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."**

It is the most characteristic in its place; for why did the Lord suffer and die, but because He was not merely the Son of the living God, and regent of the world and those upon it; but also because He became the King and the beatifying Prince of Peace of a spiritual Israel, gathered from among sinners.

We are now acquainted with the great Testator - the Man who is bleeding on the cross. And it is because He hangs there that He acquires the power to restore the justly disinherited children of Adam to their lost possessions.

But in what does the legacy consist?

Its noblest part will be seen in that portion of the narrative we are about to consider. In it a jewel glitters, with which is combined the pledge that no good thing will be withheld from us. From the summit of the cross cast your eyes down to its foot. Four assistant executioners are seen cowering down together, busily engaged in a peculiar manner. They inherit all that the Man possessed whom they have nailed to the cross - his clothing. They are occupied in parting the wide upper garment, and dividing it among them. But on more closely examining the underclothing, they see in it a singular piece of art, for the dress is without a seam, woven entirely in one piece. This vesture, they think, ought not to be cut; and hence they agreed to cast lots for it. They do so, and he who is so fortunate as to win becomes possessor of the whole garment, from that moment on.

Scrutinize narrowly this gambling group beneath the cross; for what they are doing is extremely significant.

At first sight we would suppose that this was far from being the case; but the fact that the whole of the four Evangelists, including the beloved disciple, mention, on the dictate of the Holy Spirit, this division of the raiment, is a pledge to us of its symbolical importance and divine meaning.

Besides this, the executioners, without any idea of it, are fulfilling, by their division of the garments, and their casting the lot for the unseamed vesture, a Scriptural prophecy almost a thousand years old. We read that **“this was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled,”** and know that it is the twenty-second Psalm which is here referred to.

In that sacred song, which may be regarded as a prophetic effusion of the suffering Lamb of God, the Redeemer utters beforehand by the mouth of David, the thoughts and feelings by which He would subsequently be affected during His crucifixion. It is there said, **“Dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me. They pierced my hands and my feet; I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.”** Then follow the words, **“They part my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture.”**

What do you say to this passage? Must not expressions of this kind from the spirit of prophecy surprise and astonish even the most unbelieving? David could not have uttered these words with reference to himself. The description only suits the Sufferer, in whose life we now see it actually interwoven. He who bleeds on Calvary is therefore the mysterious Individual who announces Himself in the Psalm as the Redeemer of the world. But while it adds great importance to the trivial act of the division of the raiment by making known the Lord Jesus as the true Messiah, we shall find that something of a still more momentous nature is included in the passage.

We must first inquire for what reason the Lord caused these words to be inserted in the prophetic lamentation of the Psalmist.

“They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots.”

He certainly did so not merely with the intention of recording a circumstance trifling in itself, from the subsequent fulfillment of which it should be evident that He was indeed the promised Messiah. Consider that they are rather His own feelings and sentiments which are there expressed. They are, in part, complaints and expressions of suffering; but also comprise a heart-cheering view of the incomparable results which would accrue to sinners from His sufferings.

In the latter class must be included the words, **“They parted my garments, and for my vesture they cast lots.”**

The Lord in them encourages Himself by the blessed consequences of His blood-shedding. But in what does He perceive them? Naturally, not in the fact of His earthly garments being divided among sinners. He evidently takes this outward division of His raiment as a symbol full of meaning, and regards it in a sense incomparably higher and more spiritual.

And what is that?

Thus we might ask if there was no mention in the Holy Scriptures of a garment which Christ had acquired for us. But you know that it is frequently alluded to. This spiritual legacy of a robe is there sensibly represented. Such is the object of the transaction on Mount Calvary.

What we read respecting Adam is worthy of our most serious consideration.

Before he gave way to sin, he shone in the white and honorable robe of perfect innocence. He was treated as a beloved child in his Father's house. He was permitted to approach Him, and cast himself upon His bosom, when and wherever he pleased. Everything was put under his feet, and his happiness flowed in an inexhaustible stream. The holy angels were his comrades, and the peace of God his food, early and late.

But scarcely had the unhappy fall occurred than his situation was entirely changed. We now behold him fleeing and even hiding himself from the face of God, and hear him reply to the inquiry, "**Adam, where art thou?**" with the lamentable confession, "**I was afraid, and hid myself, because I was naked.**"

What was expressed in this confession but our own state by nature? Adam's nakedness is ours. We also are destitute of the glory we ought to have before God. We are naked. Not a thread of that righteousness which avails in the sight of God is left us. Sin has banished the last gleam of the radiance of our original beauty.

But this fact is dreadful and momentous beyond degree.

Does not even sound reason tell us that we dare not appear naked and unadorned before a holy God? Cain felt that he was thus naked in the sight of God, and became a prey to despair. The same feeling prompted Judas Iscariot to destroy himself. This truth smote the conscience of the Philippi an jailor, and he was upon the point of throwing himself upon his sword. And what efforts do we see made on dying beds, to lay hold of something wherewith men may appear clothed before God!

As true as a holy God lives in heaven, so surely shall we be excluded from His fellowship if we have not a holiness to place in the light of His countenance, which shall reflect the purity of His own perfections. But where are we to procure such attire? Not from our own looms. It is elsewhere provided for us.

Hear what the apostle says, "**Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.**" These words direct us to that which leads to a most blissful discovery.

We return to the soldiers under the cross. They are busied in dividing among themselves the upper garment of the dying Jesus. They are not prohibited from parting this. The upper garment symbolizes the outwardly operating fullness of the Saviour's power and life; and in a second signification, the spiritual endowment intended for us.

This is divisible, and it also appears divided in the assembly of the faithful. One had more, the other less of this legacy. To one, the gift of knowledge was allotted, to another the gift of prophecy by the same Spirit; to a third the power to work miracles; to a fourth, the discerning of spirits (I Corinthians 12). A distinct measure of these gifts of the Spirit was not required in order to be saved.

But there was one kind of legacy which was quite indispensable to everyone who desires to stand in the judgment.

Its emblem you find in the hands of the mercenaries under the cross. Beside the Lord's upper garment, another prize has fallen to them, and it is this which forms the peculiar capital of their inheritance.

It is the vesture or body-coat of the Man of Sorrows, which He used to wear under the mantle; therefore such a dress as the high priest was obliged to put on when he entered into the most holy place on the great day of atonement. That such a priestly garment is found on the body of Jesus, that it is inherited by one of His murderers, and falls to him wholly and undivided, is extremely significant.

A child must be conscious that he is here standing before hieroglyphics which conceal something important and profound. But what is the marrow of this sacred symbol?

Beneath the resplendent robe of His wonderful and active life, the Saviour wore another, the garment of a perfect obedience which He yielded, even in distress and death. Nothing was wanting in Him. Many eyes-human, angelic, and satanic-have scrutinized it, but all have been filled with wonder at the sight.

Even the eyes of God beheld it with delight, and a voice from heaven declared, "**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**"

It was a garment wrought entirely of the golden threads of the purest love to God and man, without spot and without a seam, and woven in one piece. You see it is the robe of righteousness of the Son of God, which is symbolized by the coat without a seam, for which the lot is cast at the foot of the cross.

But you ask in surprise, "Did this also belong to Jesus legacy to sinners?" Without a doubt. Hear what the Scripture says: "**As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.**" And again, "**As by the offense of one, condemnation came upon all men, so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life,**" or which procures life (Romans 5).

Not merely was forgiveness intended for us, but also something further and greater. Paul testifies that the Lord assured him that His people should receive "**forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified**" (Acts 26:18).

Here, therefore, are two things mentioned.

Forgiveness would only secure us against deserved punishment, and bestow upon us the negative blessing of being uncondemned. But according to the counsel of a merciful God, we were to be positively exalted, blessed, and beatified; and for this purpose we required a righteousness which commended us not only to the sparing magnanimity, but also to the loving good pleasure of a holy God.

Christ acquired this for us also.

While fulfilling the law as our Surety, He placed that incomparable obedience before the eyes of His heavenly Father which, being mercifully imputed to us on the part of God is on our part laid hold of by faith, and after being appropriated by us, causes us to break forth into the song of the prophet, **“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. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations”** (Isaiah 61:10, 11).

From the inheritance, let us now cast a cursory look upon the heirs. Who is it that inherits the costly attire? Only think, one of the murderers who are sitting beneath the cross is the fortunate man. This circumstance tells us that, according to the divine intention, no wickedness, however great, excludes unconditionally from the inheritance.

First, these men know how to value the preciousness of the seamless vestment.

Next, they perceive that only in its undivided whole it was of value and a real treasure;

Finally, they are satisfied that they shall obtain possession of the costly garment entirely gratuitously, by a cast of the dice, and therefore without any merit of their own.

Do you now understand these hieroglyphics? Become poor sinners, learn to understand the demands of God upon you, and be content to be justified by grace. The symbol under the cross will then find in you its actual antitype.

How the heir of the seamless garment will have rejoiced at the prize he won! We have inherited the robe, which makes us objects of the divine good pleasure, and shall the chords of our harps be silent? Doubtless the fortunate man immediately put on his legacy and wore it thenceforward. Let us avail ourselves of the hint thus given us, to **“put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Even the earthly dress of the crucified Jesus will have exercised a manifold influence on the mind of the mercenary, and have at times affected him, made him shudder and feel ashamed, and doubtless have caused the image of the Man from whom he inherited it never to be effaced from the mirror of his remembrance.

Reflect, therefore, with what powerful and salutary influence the substance of that shadow, the righteousness of Christ Himself, must be accompanied, as regards the heart and life of those who are able to appropriate it by a living faith.

The soldier might - as regarded his upper garment - have occasionally gone about poorly clad; and yet, if one looked deeper, it would not be denied that he was more richly attired than many a king. Is not the case similar with the children of God, whose external dress is often, especially in the days of trial, anything but splendid? and yet the eye of all heaven rests upon them with pleasure; and the words are applicable to them, “The **king’s daughter is all glorious within.**”

Let us congratulate ourselves, therefore, on the incomparable inheritance left us by Him who expired on the cross.

Let as many of us as have reason to number ourselves among the heirs of Christ maintain the conviction, lively and fresh within us, that we are already justified in Him before God; and that the love of God is not measured out to us according to the degree of our personal holiness.

Let the watchword of our faith, “Jehovah Tsidkenu,” the Lord our righteousness, with which we overcome the world, be more and more fluent on our lips.

~ end of chapter 42 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
