

"Not by works of righteousness."

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Man's Patchwork and Christ's Seamless Robe.

After the great earthquake of January, 1907, which practically destroyed the town of Kingston, Jamaica, large numbers of homeless people flocked to the old race-course, and there, in the course of a few days, sprang up a small town of huts of every description.

Great ingenuity was displayed in their construction. Old crates and packing-cases were largely used, doors and broken framework from ruined wooden houses were requisitioned. Here and there biscuit and oil tins beaten out flat or patches of canvas or clothes were worked in, and since each man built his hut just where he fancied, the general effect was very quaint. Amidst such scenes we frequently preached the gospel to attentive audiences.

One day, on crossing the race-course, I noticed that practically every hut boasted a flag of some kind. Flags of many nationalities and of no nationality fluttered in the breeze, though the Union Jack largely predominated. In the distance was one of unusual size, and failing to make out its design, curiosity tempted me to walk across to inspect it. On drawing near I saw the black owner seated complacently beneath it, and the flag I discovered to be his patchwork quilt mounted on a pole!

This thing instantly resolved itself into a kind of parable before my mind, and I thought sadly of many of my fellow-creatures who are travelling to eternity under the patchwork flag.

"Are you right for heaven?" is a question often asked.

"**I hope so**" is the almost invariable answer.

"But under what flag are you? Upon what does your hope rest?"

An average reply runs somewhat as follows:-

"Well, you know, I was always well brought up (1); and I have lived a decent and respectable life (2); I always pay my way (3); I do nobody any harm (4); I attend public worship (5); I say my prayers (6); and read my Bible (7); I am a member (8); a communicant (9); a Sunday-school worker (10); I give as much as I can to good causes (11); and I trust that if I come short at all before the judgment seat the merits of Christ will make good my deficiencies (12)."

Do you perceive the patches that go to make up this flag under which so many are sitting today? I have numbered them that you may clearly see them.

Now let me plainly say that to work in the merits of Christ in this way as part of the patchwork is adding insult to injury. It is an injury to the glorious atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ to be linked up with any paltry effort of our own, but to bring it in last of all as a kind of make-weight for the scales, as the last patch, entirely subservient to the others and only added to make the symmetrical outline of the flag complete, is an *insult* indeed!

Depend upon it, this patchwork flag is entirely meaningless and unintelligible. Heaven does not recognize it. It will never enter there.

The *red* of the atoning blood; the *white* of a soul which that blood has cleansed; the *blue* of a heavenly life upon earth; or the *stars* of glory which result from the *strifes* of Calvary, will have a place

there: this miserable patchwork business — NEVER! In truth it is the flag of a rebel against God, for "going about to establish their own righteousness [they] have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10: 3).

Let us change the figure as we assert the positive side of this matter.

The ground of the Christian's safety and peace is the *one indivisible* work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that *alone*. It is like unto His coat of which we read: "Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout" (John 19: 23). Nothing could be more opposite to patchwork than that. Being without seam there was no natural line of partition. It must be cut or rent to divide it, but that would mean its destruction. Therefore it was that the soldiers said, "Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be" (John 19: 24).

Even so is it with Christ's glorious work. From the top — Godhead's highest glory in heaven — it was woven in one piece throughout down to Calvary's depth of woe, until He cried out "It is finished." Then without a seam the work was done! His work was the "*one* righteousness" (Rom. 5: 18). "This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10: 12).

My reader, let me say with all reverence — it is a case either of *take it or leave it*. Accept it in its undivided entirety, making it altogether and only your resting-place, or turn from it altogether, for if it is not *everything* in the matter of your salvation, it is *nothing*. You cannot detach a small piece to weave into patchwork of your own. To do so is to *destroy* — not THE WORK, but the *effect* of the work as regards your soul.

Man's love of patchwork was manifested very early. Immediately sin entered the world, Adam and his wife made an ineffectual attempt to hide their nakedness from the eyes of their Creator. "They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Gen. 3: 7). An apron made from fig-leaves must have been patchwork indeed! Any of my readers who is familiar with the shape of a fig-leaf will agree with me in this. This is the first mention of the fig-leaf in the Bible, afterwards it becomes symbolical of man's good works (so called), the outward profession of religion (compare Mark 11: 13, Luke 13: 6-9). Yet when Adam wore his fig-leaf apron and found himself in the presence of God he was the first to condemn it and treat it as though it did not exist. He said, "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself " (Gen. 3: 10).

When a little later both Cain and Abel desired to draw near to God the same thing became manifest. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord" (Gen. 4: 3). See him approach with his offering of choicest fruits heaped together! Do you not recognize the "patchwork" idea once more? Let each separate fruit represent a patch and you have it.

Abel, on the other hand, "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" (Gen. 4: 4). Recognizing the death sentence which lay upon him, he drew near with that which spoke of *death* accomplished in his stead — of the one finished work of Christ.

"And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect" (Gen. 4: 4, 5). Man's patchwork is rejected, Christ's one offering is accepted. Thus it must ever be.

Where are you resting, dear friend? and on what is your hope based? Solid rest and peace can never be yours until, abandoning all else, your faith looks up to the *one finished* work of our Lord Jesus Christ ALONE.