

# The Firebrand Priest in the Filthy Clothes

by Ian Paisley

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*The sermon 'The Firebrand Priest in Filthy Clothes' presents a graphic and uncompromising picture of the high priest Joshua, who represents a sinner saved by grace, and emphasizes the importance of coming to Christ for salvation.*

**Duration:** 38:42

**Scripture:** Zechariah 3:1-2, Zechariah 3:8-10, Matthew 21:42, John 1:14

**Topics:** "Gods Grace", "Sin Redemption"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the concept of grace and its transformative power. He describes how every person is like a burning brand, destined for destruction, but through God's intervention, they can be saved. The preacher uses the example of John, a sinful and lost soul, to illustrate the need for God's grace. He then references the book of Zechariah, where the word 'branch' is mentioned in relation to Jesus Christ. The preacher highlights the significance of this word in different parts of the Bible, representing Christ as the servant, the man, and the Word made flesh. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the condemnation of sin and the power of God's grace to redeem and transform lives.

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## Transcript

Pick up the authorized version of the Word of God in front of you in the pew and turn with me to the Old Testament, to the book of the prophet Zechariah, Zechariah's prophecy at the chapter three. You'll find the book of Zechariah right at the end of the Old Testament. We have, of course, first of all Haggai, Zechariah, and then after Zechariah, the other two renaming books as Zechariah and then Malachi.

You can find that in your Bible. Turn to it, please, by the grace of the Lord. The third chapter of Zechariah.

I'm reading the whole chapter. And he showed 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 rebuketh thee, O Satan.

Even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuketh 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 a change of remnant. I said, Let them set a fair mitre. So they set a fair mitre upon his head and clothed him with garments.

And the angel of the Lord stood by. And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest.

Thou and thy fellows that sit before thee. For their men wonder that. For behold, I will bring forth my servant the branch.

For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua, upon one stone shall be seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave the grieving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine, the fig tree.

Ending our lesson at verse ten, God will stamp His own holy Word off him. Open your Bible at the third chapter of the book of Zechariah. In this portion of Scripture, we have the graphic, uncompromising Word of the living God.

All which must be condemned is condemned by God with no uncertain sound. All that can be condoned is condoned, and all that is commanded is done in the same forthright manner. There is a crystal clear plainness about the language of God in His Word.

God give me great plainness this night in this pulpit, as I declare the plainness of the holy Word of the thrice holy God. I dare not, as a preacher of the gospel, mince my words. With staggering forthrightness, the divine author, God the Holy Spirit, reveals to us the fire-brand priest.

Dax and filthy, this is not a pleasing picture. Its sinfulness and its repulsiveness are plain to be witnessed. This should have been a holy priest.

He was a high priest of Israel, but instead he was a heinous priest. This priest should have been clothed in the garments of beauty and glory. But instead he was robed in filthy obnoxious.

What should have been attractive to behold is repugnant to behold. And what should have been scented with the incense of the temple of God stank because of its putridness. Only God Almighty could reveal such a picture.

The natural eye could not perceive behind the outward, but God can reveal the depth and the quick of the sinful soul. Nothing can hide God's eye from the sinful heart. Note carefully the opening of this divine revelation and its exposure.

The acute figure is Joshua, the high priest, the great successor of Aaron, the head of Israel's priestly economy. He stands before the angel of the Lord. The word angel of the Lord is often used in the Old Testament.

It stands for our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. He is the Lord of His own house. He is the Master of all assemblies.

He is the sole king. And He is the only head of His church. This great high priest has no priesthood.

He is without father. He is without mother. He is without descent.

He has no beginning of days nor end of life. Hebrews chapter 7. He has no successor either. For He's made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7 verse 17. Here in this portion of Scripture, the originator of evil is exposed. Satan is uncovered as the resistor of God's... I want to point out, first of all, we have the person identified.

Secondly, we have the office specified. Thirdly, we have the pleas signified. Fourthly, we have the state of Joshua, his past typified.

Fifthly, we have his dirty, unclean, filthy garments nullified. Take them away. We have Joshua's appearance beautified.

Clothe him in a change of remit. And we have his future ratified. So they set a fair mitre upon him.

Let me look with you first at this person identified. The person is called Joshua. What does Joshua mean? Joshua is the Old Testament word in the Hebrew for Jesus in the New Testament Greek.

It means Jehovah, the salvation. The picture painted here depicts the sinner. But the sinner experiencing salvation.

And only the holy Jehovah can be the savior of sinners. Joshua's appearance tells its own story in the loudest possible way. The fallen priest is revealed in all his filthiness and in all his repugnance.

And in all his sins and in all his guilt. His depiction is under the penetrating light of the God who. He is called Joshua, Jehovah the salvation.

That is the picture of the man after God saved him. Sinners, big sinners, black sinners, broken sinners, fire brand sinners, beast sinners can thank God be saved. By the only true and living God.

The Lord Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. Complete atonement thou hast made.

And to the utmost farthing paid, what e'er thy people owed. How can wrath on me take pleas? It's sheltered in my righteousness. With so much for the person identified.

Look with me at the office. What office did Joshua hold? Was he a priest? No, he was more than a priest. He was the great high priest.

The successor of the great Aaron. The brother of Moses. We might well ask, who are these priests? They're budding everywhere across the world.

And they're making their words loud, dogmatic and strong. Who are they? All the priests of this world are fake priests. Lying priests.

There are many such priests in Christendom. And many such false priests in the Muslim world today. There are many such priests in all the religions of the world.

They are like the sons of Korah. They take too much upon themselves. In apostate Christianity, these self-styled priests stroll forward and claim.

They are the only legitimate priests in the whole world. But they alone are the successors of the apostles. And that a miracle power drops from there.

We simply reply, you could not have any such apostolic succession. For the apostles themselves never claimed any priesthood at all. Think of Peter.

You would think Peter, the chief of the apostles, would have known if he was a priest. But he didn't. He wrote in his epistle, 1 Timothy 2 and 5, Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house and holy priesthood.

All believers are the priests. And again he said in 1 Peter 2 and 9, Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood. These fake priests have no direct descent from the apostles, but continue to make their darkest claims.

They are no priests at all. As C. H. Spurgeon said, the only priestly office which they hold is that old Babylonian harlot, accepts them as foster children and gives them a name and a place to partake of her idolatry and abominations. Well spoken, Mr. Spurgeon.

Who are these true, who are the true priests? Every sinner of every age, of every generation, who has washed his robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb. Every one of the redeemed are gods of God. Joshua here represents us all.

He is a type of a sinner saved by grace and washed in blood. But let us look at the place signified. Where is this man, Joshua, standing? He is standing before the angel of the Lord.

Only through the sinless mediator can any sinful man ever stand before God. Only through Christ. Only in Christ.

Only by Christ. Only with Christ before God. We bless God for the mediatorial ship of our blessed Savior, Jesus Christ.

There is one mediator between God and man. Christ Jesus. Thank God in Him.

Thank God I am accepted tonight in Him. Thank God I am received tonight in Him. Thank God I am seated tonight in Him.

Thank God I am part of His mystical body tonight. I am a joint heir with Him. A joint partner in Christ our medium of access.

We have pardon, rest, and righteousness. The Father draws, the Spirit seals, and everlasting life receives. Those all who in the Lord believe, the witness in their souls receive, through grace are made for glory meet, and stand in their head complete.

Every one of us were on fire as a brand burning in the judgment and destruction fire of God. But God put in His hand and He plucked us as a brand from the burning. I trust God will put His hand in you, sir.

I trust God will put His hand in you, dear sister. I trust that God will put His hand this night on you, young person, and pluck you as a brand from the burning. The brand cannot save itself.

If you do not pluck it out, it will burn to a cinder. And if God does not pull you out of the fire of judgment, you will burn forever in its everlasting. Notice the battle, the record of which is recorded here.

There stands poor Joshua in all his filth. He is filthless. He is undone.

He is a pathetic soul, stinking with the stench of his own iniquity. Scabs of dark damnable sins are upon him. And the doom of damnation overshadows him.

Poor lost soul, fallen from the highest office of the Jew's religion to the deepest filth of hell itself. The flames of the fire of his sin have already been kindled. He is a brand burning in the fires of his own choice.

And here is the devil, that old serpent himself. He resists the sin. He uses all the weaponry he has at his disposal to cause Joshua to perish.

One of the titles given to the devil in the New Testament. It means Prince of Flies. It literally means acting in all his satanic flyness.

Seeks to bring about Joshua's eternal destruction. But another warrior appears on the scene. He enters the list in ear of Joshua.

He is the angel of the Lord. He is the messenger of the covenant. He is God's son.

He strikes into Satan's heart with his almighty word, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. This was also the action of Christ. When he was upon this, he rebuked Satan.

As he indwelt Matthew 16, he turned and said, Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offence unto me. For thy favour is not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

The challenge which the Lord made to Satan, Satan never answered. For there is no one able to answer but positively what God says. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Remember this was an everlasting deliverance for Joshua.

Christ deals in the celestial commodity of eternal salvation. Christ imparts everlasting life. But an almighty dismissal of Satan is here recorded.

Satan says, Christ, I have saved this man out of the fire. I have quenched the fire in which he burned with my own most precious blood. I have chosen him from all eternity to be saved.

I have saved him in time and I have saved him forever. All is changed in Jesus. Yes, I myself have worn the dress of Satan.

I have donned the devil's and the felon's uniform. I have been a mere plaything in the prison house of Satan. But thank God, the polluting sin, the filthy dress, the obscene clothing, the gaudy decorations have all been washed away.

What a wonderful thing it is to be a child. Nullify these guilty. Remove the dirty clothes of flesh.

Cleanse away all the stains and marks of sin. Make the soul whiter than snow in the blood of the everlasting covenant. Give this sinner new clothes.

Don't forget to put the fair miter on his head. Put on him a spotless, unseamless robe of my righteousness. Put the ring of eternal wedlock on his finger and the everlasting shoes of the preparation of the gospel of eternal peace on his feet.

This my son was dead. He is alive again. He was lost.

Ralph Erskine, one of the sturdy leaders of the Secession Church of Scotland, who wrote, Fair as the moon, my robes appear, While graces are my dress, Clear as the sun, While found to wear my Saviour's righteousness. My moon-like graces, changing much, Are soiled with many a spot. My sun-like glory is not such, My Saviour changes not.

Though hellish smoke my jury stain, And sin deform me quite, The blood of Jesus makes me clean. And His obedience makes me white. Then let the law and rigor stand, And for perfection call.

My Lord discharged the whole demand, My surety paid it all. Let every high self-righteous thought be utterly cast down. Free grace alone the work hath wrought, And grace shall wear the crown.

Oh, may I practically show my interest in that grace. Be all I am, and have I do, Devoted to the Lord. Sixthly, His appearance beautified, Let them set a fair miter.

Sin is not only removed from the Lord, But righteousness is imputed. When Christ cried, It is finished, My old dirty garments all fell off. When Christ cried, It is finished, My new garments were put in me.

As John Bunyan said, When he got his pilgrim to the cross, He said he was given a new suit. A suit has never stained, And never can be stained. And when I get to heaven, I'll say to every angel, You haven't a suit like mine, Washed in the blood of the Lamb.

I wish sooner I could tell you Of what it's like to be washed in the Savior's blood. I wish I could explain to you The peace and the joy and the happiness Of a soul that can stay clean, Eternally clean, In the blood of the Lamb. God attires the sinner in the righteousness of some.

He sees me in Christ, The spotless Lamb of God. You can search the books of heaven, And you'll not find one book that says Ian Paisley is a sinner. But you will find a book where it says The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, Cleanseth Ian Paisley from all his sin.

You can have that pardoned sinner now by coming. I am wrapped this night as I stand here In the robes of the Savior. All this is mine, Because Jesus the righteous is mine.

From my head, with its fine miter, To the shoes of pure gold, I have been born again. I'm a new creature in Christ. All things have passed away.

All things. Of course, as far as my conduct is concerned, I am chained myself to God's command. All the claims of God's unchangeable law Have been fully answered for me By Jesus the righteous one.

It was old Joseph Irons, the great preacher, Who said, Ye souls condemned by Sinai's law, And sunk in deep distress, To Calvary look and comfort draw From Christ our righteousness. This is the name by which he is known, The name his saints confess. He is on him, humble souls, An old, a lord, a righteous man.

A just title, a pardon sealed, A spotless wedding dress, Yea, grace and glory are revealed In Christ our righteousness. O that my faith could Jesus claim, No more should doubts depress, Then would I triumph in his name, The Lord our righteous. And finally, his future was certified.

I will bring forth my servant, the branch. It is interesting that in the Bible, There are some passages of scripture In which that word, the branch, is mentioned. And they are printed in capital letters In our authorized version, Because they are all important.

There are four Gospels. The first Gospel is the Gospel of the King. But Christ, in the Bible, Is called the branch and the king.

Mark is the Gospel, Not of the sovereign, but of the servant. And again, in the Bible, We read that the servant is the branch. Luke's Gospel presents Christ as the man, And again, in the Old Testament, The word is used about the man who is the branch.

And last of all, the Gospel of John, Has a statement, The word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. In the beginning was the word, And the word was with God, And the word was God. So Christ is the branch, As the sovereign, As the servant, As the man, And as God himself.

When I get to heaven, I not plead anything of myself, For I have put my faith, For time and for eternity, On Christ the King, On Christ the servant, On Christ the Savior, And on Christ, Very God of very God, And very man of very God. I plead with you, dear sinner, As you sit in this seat, To pray that great prayer, That I quote so often as I preach the Gospel, And will continue to quote it. Just bow your head.

Just say then, O my Lord, prepare my soul For that great day. Wash me. Wash me in the precious blood that flowed.

Meet me in heaven, Because you have been washed In the precious blood of the Lamb. Let us bow our heads. As our heads are bowed, And our eyes are closed, I would urge sinners tonight To come to Christ.

This has been a solemn meeting. God has been speaking to your soul. You never really felt as you feel now.

You need to come. I'll be in this room Immediately after the service. Let's kneel together.

Get this matter settled forevermore. Escape for your life. Tarry not on the plain.

Haste to the mountain, Lest you be consumed. But thank God there is room At the cross for you. O God our Father, Write thy word upon the hearts Of men and women.

And grant that there will be A great coming to Christ. And a great trusting in thyself this night. For Jesus' sake, And the people of God's sake.

Amen.

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