

The Rev. Billy Cervený:

[01:00:05:09 - 01:00:07:06]

Father thank you for the gift of your word.

[01:00:08:11 - 01:00:30:08]

Thank you that you give us hearts that can be fertile soil for that word to fall on. I pray Lord right now that you would break the ground of our hearts that they would receive your word that we would understand who you are Jesus and that something beautiful will grow. I thank you that you are who you say you are help us to believe that's true we pray this in your name Jesus amen.

[01:00:33:00 - 01:09:03:21]

Revelation 22 we were in the last that's the last page of the Bible we just read pretty cool huh so we've been we've been doing the last three or four weeks we've been talking about the book of Revelation and I love this this passage that we would just read and yesterday I was I was on the phone with a buddy of mine I was driving in my car and I swerved to miss like this chunk of a bumper that was in my road it was in the road and all of a sudden I was you know I got startled and our conversation turned to near-death experiences in vehicles and his men are prone to do we begin to do the one-ups men thing where you say you know without you think that was bad this is the time that I drove a motorcycle through a Starbucks or whatever we have all these kind of different stories I was remembering I told him I said the the the scariest I have ever been in a vehicle was actually the closest I've ever come to dying was in an airplane and I don't know if it's the closest I've ever come but airplane near-death experiences to me are a lot worse than like in a car because in a car I have a little control I can drive into a yard or I can do whatever the only thing you can do in an airplane is dig your fingernails into the armrest that's it tighten that belt down a few years ago I was flying back from Los Angeles and I was going into Philadelphia and we were going through a storm and it was kind of bumpy and the flight attendants were pushing the carts through the through the center aisle and I'm sitting there and I'm watching it get bumpier and bumpier and no you couldn't when you see this the flight attendants begin to sweat and start getting nervous and giving each other sideways glances you realize that this is not a good scene and they were getting to pack it up and all of a sudden this it gets bumpier and bumpier and I don't mean it got bumpy like oh we were just kind of hitting speed bumps it was like a little kid was holding the plane and shaking it with all he had and I'm sitting there I grabbed my seatbelt I was probably a size you know I jerked down to a size 26 waist I am locked in I'm not moving and I look over and I promise you as I watch the flight attendant stand next to me the plane dropped so much I saw her go horizontal she hit the ceiling of the plane she fell down the drink cart laid on top landed on top of her she broke her arm I remember thinking to myself this is it it's like a scene from lost and all of sudden as quickly as it came it went away and I remember what struck me the most about that besides the fact that it was terrifying and it was but I remember what struck me most because at that point of my was what was going through my mind because at that point in my life I was walking with the Lord I was walking with

the Lord and I knew that my salvation with Jesus was because of his goodness and not mine I knew that he held me tight and it was never letting go I knew that I was a blood-bought lamb of Jesus and that it wasn't about me earning my salvation but it was what he had earned for me but in that moment when I was on the plane the weirdest thing happened as I sat in that seat I remember thinking to myself what if I'm wrong what if it is about what I do what if I have not been good enough what if I'm not being kind enough what if I've not given enough what if I didn't have it done more grandiose acts of service it was just gnawing in my ear and it terrified me and when I sobered up after that from my fear it really confused me and I thought to myself is my faith that week like I really really believe this stuff and I was walking in this way and I was already doing ministry in some ways and I and I was like is my faith that week and what I've learned since then is that you know I live this side of heaven and I have this flesh that I live in and whereas my spirit is redeemed my flesh is not and my flesh can't stand the gospel of grace it can't stand it it wants to be in control of his destiny and it's always looking for a little toehold a little thing to whisper in my ear to try to get me to grab control of my life again and in that moment when I thought I was going to go down in that airplane it started whispering in my ear oh you didn't do it you're not good enough I was trying to pry pry my grip around Jesus and try getting me to hold on to those armchairs of my own life now the funny thing about this is we all do are we all have a version of this we all have these little tells because we all have this flesh that hates this gospel of grace and if you walk with Jesus and you know who he is and you understand what it means to be saved by him you know the kind of battle at times in your heart and mind is sometimes we raise an eyebrow am I really this way the ways that we can tell there's a couple little tells that we have one of them is when we really mess up and I mean when you've done that thing like the hundredth time that you promise you'd never do again and you start bargaining with God like I've got to promise you I'll never do that again please don't reject me please don't push me away or please don't let me have the consequences of my saying Lord please I'll be better I promise you I'll be better and we just kind of crawl our way back there and we think that it's somehow at any point in my journey with Jesus that it was because of my goodness that he was blessing me or another way that we can do it it's kind of the flip side of that coin is that it's the pride that rears its head when we're doing pretty well but you feel like you know I'm kind of like I'm living a spiritually righteous life right now I'm reading my Bible a lot I'm doing I'm serving a lot of church and there's this aspect in our heart you feel like that God's either blessing you because you kind of deserve it right and those two things they sound a little different right they sound really different but they're two sides of the same coin this idea and this kind of thing that creeps in in our flesh it says you know what I don't need this gospel of grace where do we get this confidence how do we walk with confidence in our salvation to where when we get into the the bumps in our life that we don't have a sudden begin to feel the fear of like does God really have me how do we how do we rest in our salvation in that way Revelation 22 that passage we just read puts its finger right in the middle of this how we can drink deep and have the security and what in Jesus and then this passage it's like I said it's the last page of Scripture and we've read this a couple weeks now the Apostle John his he's encountered the angel of the Lord and God has given them this vision and he showed him the new heaven the end of the days and he showed him how the new heavens and the new earth is coming down and he says to behold the lamp the place the dwelling place of God is with men and he sees the people bringing the glory of all the nations come before the Lord and it's this beautiful moment and then here Jesus kind of snaps them out of that vision and he's speaking directly to John and what he says here in verse 12 he says behold I'm coming soon and I'm bringing my recompense with me

to repay each one for what he has done when you read that passage what he's saying is I'm coming soon the Greek word in here doesn't mean he's coming tomorrow it means that when he comes he is when the day comes it's going to happen definitely unavoidably and without delay when the time comes it says I'm bringing my recompense with me there's a word we don't use a lot and some people translated this I'm paying wages or I'm bringing my reward and the point Jesus is making here is he says the time has come I've given you the prophets I've given you the scriptures I've given you preachers I've given you I've given you churches I've given you my word spoken through people I've spoken to you in the broadest brushstrokes of creation and the nuance details of your of your life but now is the time I am coming and people will now get what they deserve

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right it's a little bit different picture than the Jesus we see kind of petting the lamb in the bookstore right they leave the 99 or leave the 99 to get the one Jesus he's common it's strong and then it says in verse 14 blessed are those who wash their robes they may have they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates but outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters everyone who loves and practices falsehood master your question when you read passages like that in Scripture because they're all kind of all through Scripture does it make your heartbeat a little bit are these kind of scary passages do you ever think like because what he's saying is is that you know there's a group that's in this group that knows how to wash their robes really well and this group that's out and like me when I read passages like this these rattle me it's like I'm on that plane a little bit and I begin to ask the question like have I washed my robe right who's in and who's out I mean I read that list of the people that are outside his gates and I'm not a sorcerer I mean I've watched the Harry Potter movies but you know but you go there's some things on that list that I kind of it can identify with and Jesus is coming and it says wash your robes what does that mean those to straighten up the fly right so I want to figure out what that means what does it mean to wash our robes I want to understand it I find it helpful the first thing I like to look at in this passage to understand what those robes are about in in verse 22 is I want to look at the reward that's offered to the people that wash their robes and it helps us understand it because what it says here it says that he they wash the robes today they may have the right to the tree of life and enter the city by the gates now the tree of life it's a it's a familiar image in Scripture if you've been around certainly I talk about a good bit but it's it's ironically it's only mentioned in two places in the Bible on the last pages what we're reading right here in revel in Revelation and on the very first pages in the book of Genesis in the book of Genesis we see the tree of life it's planted in the center of the garden and God says you can eat of the tree of life in fact you can eat of all these trees and it represents this unbridled relationship with God it represents eternal life represents purpose represents meaning it represents wholeness it represents all that stuff and God says you can eat in Adam and Eve you can eat of all these trees especially the tree of life but there's one tree you can't eat of the tree the knowledge of good and evil and Satan comes in and what does he do he deceives them and he says he convinces them that they eat of this tree of the knowledge of good and evil that they'll become like God yet they don't need him God's just trying to limit you so what happens is they they eat of this tree of the knowledge of good and evil and whereas the tree of life brought life and relationship with God and healing and purpose and meaning this

tree of the knowledge of good and evil it brought death it changed their spiritual DNA they went dark and they lived lives marked by death and destruction and shame and awareness of their nakedness so after that story happens in Genesis 3 you see God do two things first and most famously God says to them you can't stay here and he takes them and he cast them out of the garden now for most of my life I got to be honest with you I always thought of God sending them out of the garden of Eden that that was a punishment that they had done this that God was just kind of repulsed by them like you got you guys need to go there's separation for me you just need to leave but when you read the scripture that's not what it says what it says is in verse verse 22 says the Lord the Lord God said the man has now become like one of us knowing good and evil he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life lest he eat and live forever do you catch that what he's saying here and what he's doing here he's not punishing them he's protecting them what he's saying is that that that you've eaten of this tree of life and now your life is marked by brokenness it's marked by shame you are it is marked by a separation from me and if I let you in here and you go and you eat of the tree of life you will live like this forever you will live in this fallen state forever that is a definition of hell you will live separated for me and God says no I love you too much I don't want that for you I'm gonna protect you and I have a plan so the second thing you see God do and that when he sends them out and this is something we read over quite a bit is it says that he dressed them before the Lord makes them leave he he kills an animal he dresses them in an animal skins he covers this nakedness it's just beautiful picture it's an interesting thing too is when you read scripture from that to the point where we get in the book of Revelation the number of times you see in scripture where God or someone that represents God is dressing another person or they're covering them with something it's this beautiful picture this is a beautiful foreshadowing you got Adam and Eve where he's dressing them in the in the in the animal skins you see Joseph where his father is blessing him with a technicolored coat right the book of Zechariah you see Joshua he has these filthy garments removed from him and he's vested in these priestly robes then you look at Luke 15 the prodigal son what does he say when the prodigal comes he says he killed the fatted calf he puts a ring on his finger and he wraps a robe around him there's three things you got to see here the first thing is this in every example that you see someone in scripture that is being given a garment like that these gifts are always given to undeserving people always a second thing you see is there's never an example where the person that is receiving it is actually putting it on themselves it's always someone coming and wrapping them in it and the third thing is that every one of those examples that I just listed out to you it's a it's a picture of belonging it's a picture of extravagant undeserved blessing it's a picture of righteousness that's being laid on them the reason that these are these things these stories are laced throughout scripture is because they're foreshadowing there are these little breadcrumbs that God's dropping to say this is what Jesus is gonna do for you that when he dies and he goes goes into the grave and he rises from the dead and he pours out his Holy Spirit what Isaiah 61 10 says says he's clothed me with garments of salvation he's wrapped me in robes of righteousness this is what happens to us when we come to Jesus that we're given these robes of righteousness that they are that they are put on us by undeserving people and we're they're not put on us by ourselves there they are given to us and they are symbols they are not just symbols for us when we are wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus we are given a new identity we become new people you become you become an heir a brother of Christ righteous holy and we see it we can when we are this side of heaven we can taste and we can experience these things in pockets but we read revelation we see revelation 21 and 22 what the what the writers doing and what God's doing is he's pulling the curtain back and he's giving

us a picture of what's happening in Revelation 22 the robes that he's talking about the robes he's talking about are not like bathrobes it's not a common robe that you would wear to the marketplace the robe he's talking it's a high priestly robe you remember last week when we talked about how the Spirit of God is poured inside of us and you are a royal priesthood that's what he's saying here he's in that we are a royal priesthood now the difference here you got to see the difference in Genesis where God is wrapping Adam and Eve in animal skins

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he's trying to cover their shame here when we're given the robes of Jesus our shame has been removed our sin has been removed and we are wrapped in righteousness we're not hiding anything in Genesis the animal skins were to protect Adam and Eve as they are sending them into exile here when we receive the robes of righteousness for Jesus it's what we wear as our as we are welcomed and called back home well Jesus says that one's mine and you could know it by the robe they're wearing isn't that beautiful but I still got a problem

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because when we read our passage here it says that we've got to wash those robes that maybe I was given a white garment at one point let me tell you what I've worn this robe a lot and I got some some fingerprints on it some smear I spill I'm not a very you know I'm kind of messy and I don't screwed up my life

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I'm not live the right way how do I wash my robe in Revelation and seven it tells us we see people in robes and we see these people that need to have their robes washed and it says the multitude washed their robes and made them white how in the blood of the lamb see when scripture calls us and it says hey wash your robes it's not about washing and cleaning yourself to wash your robe is to return again and again to the one who washed you in the first place Jesus is to come home to the only one the only thing that can cleanse you period it's not about self-reliance it's not about self-effort it's not about being a better person it's not about it's quite the opposite washing my robe means to push back the voice of my head when I'm when I'm on those bumpy plane flights when the world wants to tell me that I'm a sinner and I'm fallen and I'm undeserving washing my robe is to open scripture and say you know what you're right I am undeserving that's why in Ephesians it tells me that it's by grace I've been saved not of my own doing not of my own doing it's the gift of God not a result of works so that no one would boast the robe I have I didn't deserve this I didn't even put it on myself and if I didn't do anything to deserve it what makes me think I can do anything to lose it to wash my robe means when I wake up I'm not falling on my face like I mentioned earlier for the hundredth time for that same moral failure that we all have our own version of that to wash my robe in that moment is to fall on my knees before Jesus and remember yeah Lord you call me your own because you're good enough

not because I'm good enough and in that place you set me free to wash my robes is when those old wounds and those old voices maybe that thing that was said to you the thing that you were called or that thing that you've walked under the boot heel of that your whole life and it's stolen so much from you and it begins to whisper in your ear again and to wash your robes is not moment is to say no I know that's not true as an act of spiritual warfare I push that back I am fearfully and wonderfully made my God Jesus he has my name written in the palm of his hand

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that's when we lock arms with one a truck at one another and I say I need to you to whisper this in my ear I need you to help me understand I need to know because I'm having a hard time knowing today you've heard me up here say that like what do we hear is this community that we're this imperfect community that's learning what it means to be loved by Jesus it's learning what it means to be loved to love like Jesus and to impact the world to learn what it means to be loved by Jesus to wash our robes here's the crazy thing that happens is that when you do that and you and you and you continually return to the gospel and you continually remind yourself you can do it through prayer through scripture through worship through the liturgies through the communion table guess what happens it begins to take root and you begin to remember and it begins to go deeper into you not because you're perfect but one day in these surprising moments you'll realize that you're on an airplane and all of a sudden the airplane dips and you don't go crazy thinking oh my gosh did I get it wrong but you feel the robes around you and you say Lord you got me you love me and you'll never let me go because I know that even if this plane walks down it goes down I have a level of peace and that one day when I approach and I and I die I will approach to the tree of life and I will come to those gates and in that moment was I'm wearing those robes that cherubim with the flaming sword that was keeping them out would now step aside as I hear my name called and I go through the gates into the new heavens in the new earth where I will walk with the cool in the cool of the day with the Lord well he will say well done good and faithful servant to you to us as a church to me and that will be a day marked by joy marked by life marked by peace and marked by goodness amen amen

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