

Introduction

CLOTHED WITH CONFIDENCE

Joshua stood accused.

As the high priest of God's people, he should have been confident: clothed in sacred robes, interceding for the nation, leading them to rebuild and rejoice. Instead, he stood paralysed before the angel of the Lord, whilst Satan crouched at his right hand, cataloguing his failures. The accusations were damning. Worse still, they were *true* (Zech. 3:1).

Joshua's garments were filthy. Stained with the reality of sin, his own and his people's. Their decades of exile in Babylon bore witness to it. Their forgetfulness of God's promises proved it. Their fear, laziness, and half-hearted obedience confirmed it. How could a man clothed in such filth dare to stand before a holy God? How could he be of any use in leading God's people?

These were the questions that haunted Joshua. God had made glorious promises. He had brought them home from exile and commissioned them to rebuild the city and temple. Yet it wasn't what they had hoped. Enemies surrounded them, the work stalled, and, worst of all, God's people remained what they had always been: *sinner*s.

Perhaps you know something of Joshua's predicament.

You know God's promises. You've been given His Spirit. You know the gospel is true, that God's Word is sure, that

His purposes cannot fail. Yet, you lack confidence. You lack confidence before God because you know yourself:

- You know the prayers you haven't prayed this week.
- You know the resentment you've nursed, the gossip you've entertained, the lust you've indulged.
- You know how your possessions or relationships or job can lead to discontentment, or even bitterness.
- You know how fragile your faith feels, how quickly you give up when things get hard.
- You know the gap between who you're called to be and who you actually are.

You lack confidence in what you're called to do, because you, and God's kingdom, can seem small. The church is flawed. Your witness feels ineffective. Your service appears insignificant. Your kids don't seem to listen. Like Joshua, you know God's great promises, but you live in what feels like 'a day of small things' (Zech. 4:10).

Where can you find confidence? In the same place Joshua found it: being clothed in the righteousness of another.

Cleansed and Clothed

Joshua was high priest around 520 B.C. After seventy years of exile, seventy years of judgement for their persistent idolatry, God brought a remnant home to Jerusalem. Now they were to rebuild. This was meant to be the great day God had promised, yet it was disappointingly small (Zech. 4:10). The new temple foundation was pitiful compared to Solomon's glorious temple, so pitiful that the old men wept when they saw it.

Then the prophet Zechariah received a vision:

He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. (Zech. 3:1)

Joshua stands in the heavenly courtroom, and Satan (whose very name means 'accuser') is there to prosecute. Every failure, every compromise, every moment of weakness is evidence. Joshua is guilty. The filthy garments prove it. Then comes the divine interruption:

And the LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?' Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Remove the filthy garments from him.' And to him he said, 'Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments'. And I said, 'Let them put a clean turban on his head'. So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. (Zech. 3:2-5)

There was nothing Joshua could do to cleanse himself. That was the unbearable truth behind Satan's accusations: they were true. By himself, he was unable to stand before God. Unfit to serve Him.

Yet, God cleanses Joshua. He takes his iniquity away. God doesn't stop with cleansing, though. He *clothes* Joshua. More than washing his filthy garments, He replaces them with pure vestments. God doesn't simply forgive and forget. He cleanses *and* clothes. Removes the guilty record *and* replaces it with a clean one.

Now Joshua is ready: ready to stand before God, ready to serve, ready to lead. In the face of Satan's accusations, in the face of opposition and discouragement, even in a day of small things, Joshua can now have confidence. Not because he has cleaned himself up, but because he has been cleansed and clothed by God.

Clothed in Christ

This picture looks forward to how God would cleanse and clothe all who hope in Him. It looks forward to the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Satan could rightly accuse each one of us, yet anyone who trusts in Christ is cleansed and clothed!

Through Jesus life, death, and resurrection, our robe, our record of sin, guilt, and shame, is taken away. We are cleansed because Jesus took our sin upon Himself on the cross. Yet God doesn't leave us naked. As Jesus takes our guilt, He also clothes us with His own spotless robe, His perfect record. We are clothed with Jesus perfect righteousness.

This is the reality of imputation: our sin counted as His, His righteousness counted as ours.

Because we are cleansed and clothed, we can have confidence. Confidence before God, to approach His throne boldly. Confidence in all we're called to do. Confidence for the future, because the God who has clothed us in Christ's righteousness will complete what He has begun.

Commissioned to Serve

Once Joshua had been cleansed and clothed, God assured him that he could now walk forward in confidence:

And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here'. (Zech. 3:6-7)

Notice the order. Cleansing and clothing, *then* commissioning and calling. Joshua's confidence for service flows from his new standing. He can 'walk in my ways' because he has been given new garments. He can 'rule my house' because his guilt has been removed. He has 'the

right of access' because God Himself has granted it. This is not a call to earn his standing by performance. It is a call to live out of his standing by grace.

Your Confidence

How was God able to replace Joshua's filthy clothes with clean ones? Where did the pure vestments come from? Joshua's cleansing and clothing pointed forward to a new day:

Behold, I will bring my servant the Branch.... and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbour to come under his vine and under his fig tree. (Zech. 3:8-10)

We live in the day when this promise is being fulfilled. God kept His word and sent His servant, the Branch, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The iniquity of the land was removed in a single day, as Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave. The new day when God's people will live at peace, in abundance, has begun to dawn.

If you trust in Jesus, you too have been cleansed and clothed. Like Joshua, you stand not in your own filthy garments but in the pure vestments of Christ's righteousness. Satan may still accuse. Your conscience may still condemn. You may live and serve in a 'day of small things', yet you can walk forward in confidence.

You too have been commissioned. You too are called to walk in God's ways, to serve in His house, to live out the good works He has prepared for you. Not to earn your standing. *Because of your standing.*

Joshua's story is your story. His cleansing is your cleansing. His clothing is your clothing.

The Heart Behind this Book

I have spent the last two decades wrestling with imputation and its implications. Discovering it as a young Christian transformed my understanding and my walk with Christ. Since then, I have wrestled with what it means to live in light of my righteousness in Christ. Imputation has reshaped my thinking, transformed my worship, steadied my prayers, and directed my ministry. My love for imputation led me to complete a PhD which focused on it.¹ As I have served God's people in secular Sydney and diverse Dubai, I've seen again and again that imputation, like nothing else, can fuel joy, hope and confidence.

This book flows from that conviction: *Christ's righteousness gives resurrection confidence*. All who share Christ's righteousness share His resurrection life. That means you can face God with confidence for eternity, and you can live with confidence in the everyday.

This book will help you stand, serve, and suffer with confidence. It will show you how the imputation of Christ's righteousness gives you confidence, before God and in all of life. Confidence not in yourself, but in the one who has clothed you in His perfect righteousness.

1. My PhD dissertation, completed in 2022 through Sydney Missionary and Bible College, was titled 'Imputation and Obedience: The Theological Relationship between the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness and Christian Obedience'.