

lands, and all that they could see was the clothes which they gambled for.

But it would be hard to convince the penitent thief that Jesus gave nothing but clothes. He could testify that he gave new hope and a clean heart that day, that he gave the unspeakable gift of salvation to him. Many failed to see that and so Jesus invites you to come to obtain this gift without money and without price.

II. They Sought to Win the Best by Chance

One garment of Jesus was appreciated by the soldiers and seemed to be desirable above all the others. This was the seamless coat or robe worn by peasant men of Galilee. The one worn by Jesus must have been woven by the loving hands of his mother. To divide this garment would have ruined it. Its worth in mere patches would be almost nothing. So they said, let us not render it, so they agreed that whatever disposition was made of it they would not destroy it. Each soldier wanted it for his own. Let us cast lots for it they said.

We do not suggest that this seamless robe had any

THE GAMBLERS AT CALVARY

John 19:23-24

We would first of all like to get a fresh idea of the scene of the mob and the soldiers at the foot of the cross which, when studied, would cause even the angels to weep. He has been stripped of his garments, suffering and ashamed. We have but to look back in the Garden of Eden to see when the first Adam stood naked and ashamed and condemned and offended before God. Now, in order that man might be clothed, we see that the last Adam endured the cross. As we see, these men are keen about his clothing and yet they are indifferent concerning his grace. He said, "Father, forgive them", but they did not seem to be interested in his grace, only his garments. These soldiers symbolize a great mass of people today who are interested in the by-products of Christianity but are not interested in Christ.

I. Interested In the Secondary While they

Ignore the Primary

These men gave attention to the four garments which were of about equal value: a pair of sandals, a turban, a girdle and a cloak. The tunic was of more value, and as

was the custom of the Roman soldiers, they recognized that the garments of the victim belonged to the crucifying soldiers. Early historians tell us that this was the practice and the soldiers proceeded to appropriate the garments of Jesus for themselves. His clothes were henceforth to be worn by them. There was no need for the disciples or for the mother of Jesus to object because this was finally decided by the soldiers. Men do the same thing with the by-products of the cross today. When we think about medical science which was not in existence as we know it today, when Jesus came to earth, the concern for man's release from disease, with its able physicians, hospitals, and healing ministry is a direct product of our Lord.

We think about the uplift of women and we recognize that this, along with many other secondary benefits, came with the Christ.

We accept these without expression of gratitude. The world uses them, the world enjoys them, the sick man in the hospital may demand the best of the medical profession and at the same time curse Christ with his next breath. The

doctor who may have acquired skill and received the aid of the healing which God is able to give to his patients, and yet discredit God. The student may attend the university and then announce that he is an atheist or agnostic.

The use of these products of Christ's sacrifice do not change the hearts of men. As we think of the sandals which the soldier gambled for, he had never worn them to the places of vice and sin but often to some place of prayer in Gethsemane. But on the feet of the soldier whose possession they came to be, they would frequent the places of sin and probably never again seek the presence of God.

Here is a truth which comes to light too often overlooked, wearing the garments of Jesus does not constitute one a Christian for this is a matter of inward experience. As a matter of fact, taking these secondary things they ignored the primary.

What did Christ give away beside his old clothes? Those soldiers were there. They knew what was happening, they could testify that Jesus did not give any houses or

spurning his claims, and the atonement remains a mystery in their lives. They feel no obligation to the Christ nor to the church which he purchased with his own blood. There are men today who seek to win the best gifts of Christ by chance and put little attention to their obligations to Christ and his church.

When we think about his gift of salvation we would do well not to rend it. There are some people who would not deny it or criticize it or destroy it. They are all convinced that there is nothing more important than salvation. At mother's knee, in Sunday School, from the pulpit they have heard the story of his cleansing power. They have no difficulty in understanding this message. They fear God too much to say a word against the cross. All of us know people like this and yet they hope to win the best by chance.

For they do not definitely, sincerely seek to possess Christ in the scriptural way of response and faith. Like the soldiers they say, let us cast lots for it. They hope that by chance fate or somehow God will save them before (they come to die). They certainly would not want to step

special significance. It was not as a rabbit's foot to give one great power, but it does tell us that their desire to possess it illustrates a very common attitude today in reference to the most precious gift that Christ offers at Calvary. We must keep in mind that these Roman soldiers who supervised the crucifixion of Jesus were in perfect order when they divided up the clothing of Jesus. However, they resorted to the ancient practice of a baser sort, namely gambling. They marveled at the seamless robe and turned to gamble for it.

At this point I should like to mention a note from Dr. Maston's book, "Right or Wrong", when he said he stopped in Cincinnati one night and happened to walk by a parochial school building where it was a weekly feature to have bingo. He said there must have been 1500 people present who had paid \$1.00. People were winning prizes announced over the public address system. The profits, he was told, went to the church and the school. We conclude that the gamblers at the cross are still in action. As you read the newspapers, someone has said that 50 million adult Americans gamble regularly. Ernest Blance in (May, 1950) said that 26 million Americans played bingo, 22 million played dice

or cards for money, 19 million bet on athletic events, 8 million on horses each year. They tell us there are 14 million slot machine addicts who play these one-armed bandits. So you see it mounts as you add to this the Irish Sweepstakes, purchasing a chance on an automobile, or a trip or a wheel at the carnival or football and baseball pools. If we approach gambling from the (mathematical) viewpoint there is enough proof that any person who gambles is not exercising good common sense. The probabilities are always against the better. There is an old saying that horseplayers always die broke. That is not only true of horseplayers but of others who are possessed by the gambling habit. All (carnival games) are fixed so the operators can be sure to get from 50 to 90 per cent of all the money spent or wagered. For example, the (pinball) machines are called one armed bandits because usually the machine gives back only from ten to twenty per cent of all the money put into the slot.

They tell us that gambling has reached such an extent in some parts of the country that families are suffering in contrast to the use of alcohol. In 1949 in (California) an organization known as Gamblers Anonymous with a member-

ship of 21 was started for the purpose of helping each other to break the gambling habit. They tell us that this organization has now increased their members in the thousands. As we think of dishonesty and fraud and scandal and corruptness that goes along with this we are more conscious of its effect. Too often this is protected by society and politicians who are frequently the servants of it. Even the slot machine is a threat to good government. People trying to get something for nothing. Law enforcements officers receiving ... On every hand you read and hear about people who have created gambling debts and then have started to steal in order to cover up their losses.

(Men still divide Christ's garments) among them. They cease the gifts and influences of Jesus and the by-products of Christianity, then, like the gambling soldiers on Calvary, they leave Christ on his cross ignore, rejected, naked and humiliated. We see this happening daily. There are people who take the gifts of Christ and gamble them away. For (men join the church) in order to help their business connections. This to me is a form of gambling. These soldiers turned their backs upon his divine presence,

finally finishing his term of service in Jerusalem and returning to Rome and he wears this garment and people ask him about it. He probably tells them that this was the robe of a strangerman of Galilee whom he helped to crucify. He probably knows of and relates a few things that happened at the cross for these friends of his. How that he prayed for those that were putting him to death, and he boasted about his souvenir that it was something special. He probably related how one of the thieves quieted down in a strange way after committing his life to God. And I can imagine his friends ask if he thought the centurion was right, could he have been the Son of God. He probably replied, why worry about that, this robe is the thing to get excited about. But his friends perhaps wanted to know more about that thief and what Jesus said to him and he probably tries to piece together what Jesus said in his conversation with him and these friends probably wanted the same kind of peace. And then, no doubt, they want on to question him about the sealing of the tomb and how the body disappeared. Some of them had heard reports. But the soldier stuck to his story that the best thing about the deal was that he got this robe out of the crucifixion, and he was satisfied. Friends, this was a mighty poor souvenir

out into the dark without being saved. They hope that that day will come without effort, and that saving will be entirely convenient. They do not want to pay any price but will take a chance on the seamless garment. To them, somehow, it all adds up to a fairy tale. They wish upon a cloud but is it not foolish and a fearful thing to live a life of chance. It is not necessary that you cast lots. The Bible teaches that man may by his voluntary choice direct life. He may deliberately turn from the destroying sin that is before him. He may put his life in the control of the Holy Spirit.

III. Serving the Lord Jesus and Not Knowing It

Why should these men at Calvary react to the situation as they did. Was it not that God had previously planned this very thing to be done. These soldiers were ones God had selected to do it. This brings us to the mysterious presence of God, that things do not just happen. There is a God in control. Nebuchadnezzar learned this the hard way, that God worked according to his will and that he had the power to protect Daniel. These men stand in absolute freedom to submit to God's sovereignty. You cannot escape

God's control and at the same time you should not refuse God your life. Too many people treat this responsibility lightly. They are aware of their weakness and still they gamble away their only hope. These men were (serving their government) right in the presence of the Lord Jesus and yet they did not recognize him as the Saviour of the world. In fact, they rejected him as the Saviour. Is this not true, as I have (previously mentioned) that we accept a great many things that Christ is responsible for without giving him credit. There were not (hospitals) that these Roman soldiers could go to when ill. When Jesus came into the world there were many scenes of disaster without mercy. There were no (orphanages) for the children and yet men today continue to divide Christ's garments in the hospitals, not knowing that these agencies did not exist before the coming of Christ. Modern men do not recognize that (education) was an outgrowth of the coming of Christ. The great universities of our country, Oxford, Cambridge were established by Christian people. Harvard is the result of a minister giving his library for a school because he believed in education. Princeton and Yale were founded by Christian ministers. As we look about us we realize that Christ gives us the opportunities of developing, for he

says, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free". He is the inspiration of literature. When you think of the (writings) of Bunyan, of Milton, of Scott, of Hawthorne, The fine arts are also rooted back to Christian influence in the works of Handel, or Mozart and of Bach. We think of paintings and political heritage; especially a visit to (Jamestown) will help you to see that the one remaining thing of the colony is the old church tower. The moral influence of Jesus is felt throughout every phase of life. Men are willing to use these many things and yet ignore Jesus. As he said to one of the disciples, "Have I been so long time with you and hast thou not known?".

IV. Leaving Calvary with a Souvenir

We might use our (imagination) and watch these soldiers march away from Calvary without concern for the Son of God. They are totally blind to the spiritual significance of the hour. His (sacrifice) has meant nothing to them, but it is certain they treasure the souvenirs. It seems to me that the crucifixion would have made a mark upon their minds and they could have possessed the trophy of life.

I can imagine the soldier who won the (seamless robe)

to take away from Calvary. To wear this daily in the
village where he lived was a most interesting souvenir which
he had brought home from overseas duty.

But you say this was a confirmed habit or custom. Yes,
but you will (find people) today who are willing to do anything
for a little worldly advantage. They will hang you for your
clothes, they will murder you physically to attain their
selfish end. His disciple sold him for thirty pieces of
silver. Why is it then a wonder that this ignorant soldier
who crucified him gambled for his garments.

This was done in (great haste) as soon as he was crucified,
before he was dead. They hastened to divide his garments
before his very eyes. This is typical of a good many people
today who love to gain and are ever in haste as soon as the
victim is in the grips of some affliction, before the grave
is open they are already searching for the keys dividing
the spoil.

In this there was a (literal fulfillment) of the ancient
Scriptures of old.

So. Mex. - Oct. 18, 1959 P.M.
So. Mex. - March 1, 1959 A.M. -

Everything connected with (true greatness) becomes interesting. The birth-place and the house in which a man lives, his chair. The garments of Jesus are also full of interest. They fell into (thoughtless hands) and what a change. This was once worn by the Son of God, afterwards to be worn by a thoughtless soldier. Yet at the same time it may have been good that they did not fall into the hands of his friends or there might have been the danger of idolatry, for you remember that it was the woman who had been sick for many years who touchd the hem of this garment and was healed.

Therefore, let us (arrange our affairs) as far as we can before we die and leave some good gifts to fate. It matters but little what becomes of our garments when we are finished with them, but we should will the best things that we have to the service of Christ. It was sin that robbed Jesus of his clothes and nailed him to the cross. It was sin to ignore his grace. It was sin to gamble before the dying eyes of Jesus. It was sin to with-hold their love.

But let us remember that many people today are neglecting the primary thing and yet at every turn leave

things to luck or chance. They withhold their love, they treasure a few souvenirs of sin. Think of what they might have had instead of a few garments.

(If you had been there) would you have acted as the soldiers did?

But you are there, you are face to face with Calvary every moment and you are doing exactly what they did. You are enjoying his material blessings and refusing his grace. You are gambling with chance to bring you eternal hope. You are treasuring the things you can not possess but for him.