

Isaiah 64:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our
righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf;
and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Analysis

'But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.' The Hebrew 'tame' (unclean) indicates ritual defilement. Even 'righteousnesses' (plural - best efforts) are 'filthy rags' ('ed' - menstrual cloths, ceremonially defiling). Sin's effects are universal ('all') and comprehensive.

Historical Context

This profound confession demolishes self-righteousness. If the best human efforts are defiling, salvation must come from outside humanity entirely - pointing to Christ's righteousness.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does this verse address any residual self-righteousness?
2. What does it mean that even our righteousnesses are 'filthy rags'?

Interlinear Text

וְנִהַי	כִּטְמֵא	כָּל־נֹ	וְכָב־גֹּד	עַד־יָם	כָּל־
H1961	But we are all as an unclean	H3605	rag	are as filthy	H3605
	H2931		H899	H5708	
צִדִּיקֹתַי יְנוּ	וְנֶבֶל	כָּל־נֹ	כָּעֵלֶה		
thing and all our righteousnesses	and we all do fade	as a leaf			
H6666	H5034		H5929		H3605
וְעֲוֹנֵי נֹ	כָּר וְחַ	יִשָּׁאֵנוּ:			
and our iniquities	like the wind	have taken us away			
H5771	H7307	H5375			

Additional Cross-References

Romans 7:18 (Parallel theme): For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Romans 7:24 (Parallel theme): O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Zechariah 3:3 (Parallel theme): Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

Isaiah 53:6 (Parallel theme): All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Titus 3:3 (Parallel theme): For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

Job 14:4 (Parallel theme): Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

Job 25:4 (Righteousness): How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?

Philippians 3:9 (Righteousness): And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Isaiah 46:12 (Righteousness): Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness:

Psalms 51:5 (Parallel theme): Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

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