

Zechariah 3:1-10 - From Filthy to Festal

Some of our favourite truths of Scripture are often accompanied by a picture of some sort that help us grasp the truths of what is being proclaimed more fully. Parables are an example, and for many the truths that are conveyed in the parable of the prodigal son are a favourite! A son had so wildly ruined everything and the father so graciously welcomed him back into his loving arms. Pictures of our Saviour help us understand what he is like. One of my favourites is the picture of Jesus as the good shepherd who lovingly carries that worn, afraid, helpless sheep in his protecting arms. You probably have some favourites that come to mind as I am talking about these pictures of Biblical truths, but I'd be willing to bet that none of your minds jumped to the book of Zechariah for your favourite scriptural picture. But maybe that'll change after we have an opportunity to ponder this section tonight.

This chapter is loaded with pictures! A burning stick, dirty clothes, rich clothing, the Branch, a stone, a fig tree. But it all starts with a high priest. The role of the high priest was a big deal! The high priest would be the person who would represent the people before God. He would enter into God's presence and make sacrifices for the people. He would raise up prayers on behalf of the people. He was an important part of the worship of the Israelites, but something remained the same for the high priest. The book of Hebrews says this, **"Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people."**

Though he was the high priest, he was still a human. Which gave Satan all of the material that he needed to accuse. He could dredge up guilt from Joshua's past. Foolish actions and mistakes that he had made, in his personal life, as the spiritual leader of the Israelites. He could unearth the evil thoughts that may have lurked in the heart of this man who appeared holy in his priestly robes, but Satan wouldn't have to work too hard to find accusations. Because being a human being he was afflicted with the same thing that afflicts all human beings. Sin.

The mirror of God's law is unmercifully clear when we take an honest look at it. Be perfect therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect. Love your neighbour as yourself. Love God first of all above everything. Satan doesn't have to do too much digging in my life to bring his accusations and the accusations come fiercely. Picture yourself in a courtroom, the judge who is seated above everyone else is weighing the evidence, pondering what verdict he should call upon you. You feel everyone's eyes fixed upon you, because you are the one that is trial here. The prosecutor Satan, he comes with evidence piled up on you. And all of it's true. That accuser is right there next to you and me saying, "what do you want to see judge?" I've got all of the evidence that you need...listen to the words that come out of their mouths, filled with hatred, bitterness and rage. Look at the actions they carry out, prioritizing personal pleasure and leisure more than you God. And do you want me start with their thoughts...we don't want to be here all day! The accuser comes accusing and we are left standing wearing all of the accusations out in the open for the world to see. Crushing the natural pride that is within of all of us human beings.

Our text pictures it like that of someone wearing filthy clothes. The hebrew word filthy is used for that of a dirty diaper of a child. Our actions don't look or smell any better than that of a child's dirty diaper and that is not pretty! We deserve the same fate of that of a diaper to be cast away and never seen again!

But like a branch that is plucked from the fire, we are rescued from the fire of hell and eternal damnation. Because your Saviour stepped in to defend you. He stepped before the accuser Satan to defend you and rather than allowing Satan to accuse your name, he gave you

his name in your place. He stepped in front of the accuser with his own name, and the name of our perfect Saviour silenced the accusations of Satan. Because what accusations could he now bring against him? There were none!

But what about the filthy clothes? There is no doubt we wear them. And the filthy stains of sin cover us all! And the accuser still comes bringing those accusations against me! The Lord had a plan for those filthy clothes. As he snatches us from the fire of the accusers and steps in for us, he doesn't just ignore the evil. Something had to be done about the filth. Rather than ignoring it he removed it. And there is only one way that the stain of sin can be removed. The book of Hebrews again speaks of it, **"without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."** The shedding of blood from our Saviour on the cross wasn't an overlooking of evil, but rather an act of love of our God to remove the filthy clothes. Jesus wore the filth of your sin on the cross, so that your wardrobe could be that of the perfect Saviour.

In Joshua see yourself. As the Angel, given divine authority, says, **"remove the filthy garments from him."** See yourself, standing there before the accuser, and see the ability for him to accuse melt away. Because the filth is gone. You stand wearing the garments of Christ, you stand clothed in his holiness. You wear the righteousness of your Saviour, the accusation comes, but the accuser only sees the spotless garments of Jesus. Where is the charge now? Case dismissed!

Don't forfeit these clothes. The accuser will come attempting to get you to turn away from your God. **"Walk in obedience to me and keep my requirements."** As someone who now wears the robes of Christ, we are given the encouragement, to walk accordingly. Don't take those white clothes and walk through the mud! Rather look to the Branch, Jesus, and bear fruit accordingly. As branches who are offshoots of THE branch, we are called to act accordingly. To bear fruits of gentleness, patience, kindness, self control, to bear fruits in keeping with repentance! A branch finds its source of life from something deeper than what is on the surface. What allows a branch to pour forth fruit is the source from which the fruit grows. Fruit only grows when connected to Christ.

That is the picture of the stone. Now we don't know 100% what is meant by the eyes on the stone. But this stone is also a picture of Jesus, who in scripture is described as the perfect cornerstone of the church. Everything relies on this stone. Everything about the church relies on this Saviour. If the focus is not always and only on the cross of Jesus, than the church is missing the point and it will eventually crumble. But when the church has eyes fixed on Jesus, humbly recognizing sin within ourselves, turning to him, we can hear those words, **"I will remove the sin of this land in a single day."** Not hide it, remove it!

Wearing our festal garments that have been given to us by Jesus through faith. We now bask under our fig tree. This is a picture of peace and contentment. Maybe like you're sitting outside with your legs kicked back on the first warm shorts weather day and you just feel a rush of peace. When the weight of accusations are lifted off of our backs and we are draped with the festal robes of Christ, we sit in peace and security. Unashamed. Unafraid. Confident. That I stand as innocent before my God.

One big picture here in Zechariah 3. One big picture that humbles, and exalts. That calls for fruit, but reminds where that fruit will flow from. That empowers you to sit in peace and safety. One big picture that once again forces you and me to look...to Jesus and take hold of our peace. The accuser will accuse, but draped in his name, there is no case to be made! Your sin has been forgiven! Go in peace.