



Only by Grace, Always by Grace

Zechariah 3

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#### What if All the Accusations Are True?

In Zechariah 3, not a single person ever denies that the accusations are true. Not Joshua, the High Priest who is “on trial”; not Zechariah, the prophet who is witnessing the scene; and not even God himself, who is the hero of the story. When you see that, you are ready to grasp the power of this vision.

Joshua, the High Priest is on trial before the throne of God. Satan is on hand to accuse him. Literally Satan means accuser in Hebrew. Joshua is covered in filth. The filth on his clothes symbolizes the sin and guilt of his heart and life. And he IS guilty. Deep in his heart he knows this. He has nothing to say in his own defense. He can't explain it all away.

The implication is obvious. How can Joshua answer God's call to build? How can God do anything through a sinful man like Joshua? The question is vital, not only for Joshua, but also for all of the people who had answered God's call to build; if Joshua can't answer the call, then there's no way any of them can answer the call. After all, Joshua was the most spiritual guy in town. Joshua came from a long line of super spiritual, super committed priestly families. He had a rich spiritual heritage and he had taken the huge step of faith and obedience to leave Babylon and return to rebuild the temple of the Lord. But none of that made him acceptable before God. None of it made him worthy to be used by God. There was still sin and guilt hidden in his heart. All the accusations were true and Satan was going to rip him to shreds before God because of it.

#### Who Needs the Gift of Righteousness?

The power of the story is that Joshua does nothing. There is nothing he really can do. He can't deny his sin and he can't justify himself before God. If this scene is going to end well, then God himself is going to have to intervene – and He does! God doesn't excuse Joshua's sin; neither does He deny his guilt. Instead, God rebukes Satan, takes away Joshua's filth, and clothes him in perfectly clean garments. All of this is the Gift of God. It is the gift of righteousness freely given to Joshua. This is the only way forward. Receiving this precious gift of God is exactly what Joshua needs so that he can stand before God without shame and continue to show up each day and answer God's call to build. As it was for Joshua, so it was for every single one of them and for US too!

#### Jesus, Priest and King

There is something even more dramatic in this vision. Joshua learns that all of this is symbolic of something yet to come. God says that He will bring His servant: “the Branch” – and He will remove the sin of the entire land in a single day (Zechariah 3:8-9). This is a prophetic word pointing forward to Jesus Christ. Later, in Zechariah 6:9-14, this person, the Branch, appears once again and we learn that He is both Priest and King. This is Jesus. As priest He atones for our sin and gives us the gift of righteousness. As the risen Lord He reigns as King. (See Hebrews 10:11-12)

#### Living in the Power of the Gospel

Zechariah 3 is a powerful declaration of the Gospel of Christ in the Old Testament. It reveals the core issue before us as we answer God's call to believe in Christ and to build for Christ. The issue is acceptance with God. How can God possibly accept us when we are sinful and guilty before Him? Satan uses our shame to hold us back in our relationship with God and our service for God. We feel unworthy...and sometimes, we make the mistake of trying to justify ourselves before God. We know we have problems and shortcomings, but we think if we do enough “good” to compensate for our sins that we will be OK. Then we are filled with religious pride and self-sufficiency, which is equally a disaster.

But here is a vision of the power of the Gospel for our lives. It is the gift of God's intervention, to make us righteous before Him as a gift of Grace through Christ. It is God's silencing of the accusations against us. And then God reveals that our High Priest, Jesus, is also our King. This is all you need to know and trust. In every situation of life, Jesus is your Priest and King. He is equal to every threat and challenge we will ever face. He is the victor over Satan. He is the

cleansing of our sin. He is our perfect righteousness. He is the risen King who leads us to triumph. See this and live. Believe this and then get up in the power of Gospel Grace and begin to build.

More verses: Philippians 3:4-11; Romans 8:1; Romans 8:31-34; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Hebrews 9 and 10.