



Zechariah 3:1-8
Robed in the Righteousness of Christ

NKJ Zechariah 3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.

2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

4 Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

5 And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the LORD stood by.

6 Then the Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying,

7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If you will walk in My ways, And if you will keep My command, Then you shall also judge My house, And likewise have charge of My courts; I will give you places to walk Among these who stand here.'

I decided to preach on this subject because we have reached the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy and before we come to discuss the Moral Law, I want to do all I can to avoid some of the more grievous misunderstandings that attend it.

The first is the idea that we can be saved or justified by the keeping of the law, or that it is some sort of combination of faith and our good works that save us. I also want to do all I can to eliminate the idea of what is called *Covenant Nomism*, that teaches that we become part of the community of the faith, the congregation of the justified by Faith, and that we remain in it by our works of obedience. Or that our final justification will in any sense be grounded in our own good works.

For instance, I want to do all I can to put to rest the pernicious teachings of Norman Shepherd who has stated that *our* works of obedience to God's law are necessary for our perseverance and justification:

"The exclusive ground of the justification of the believer in the state of justification is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but his obedience, which is simply the perseverance of the saints in the way of truth and righteousness, is necessary to his continuing in a state of justification (Heb. 3:6, 14)."

"The righteousness of Jesus Christ ever remains the exclusive ground of the believer's justification, but the personal godliness of the believer is also necessary for his justification in the judgment of the last day (Matt. 7:21-23; 25:31-46; Heb. 12:14)."

And finally "good works, works done from true faith, according to the law of God, and for his glory, being the new obedience wrought by the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer united to Christ,

though not the ground of his justification, are nevertheless necessary for salvation from eternal condemnation and therefore for justification (Rom. 6:16, 22; Gal. 6:7-9)."

The second misunderstanding is the polar opposite to the first and teaches that the Law is of no use to the believer, and that after our Justification by Faith Alone we may happily ignore it and live in sin – this is sometimes called *Antinomianism*. Rather I want us to see that we are saved in order to as verse 7 puts it walk in God ways and obey his commands: *"10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."* And that there is a use of the Law as the Westminster Confession of Faith puts it in Chapter 19: ***"Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly"***

Now to give you some brief context for this vision, the people of Israel have returned from their 70 years of captivity in Babylon. During those 70 years the temple has lain in ruins and the Priesthood and the worship of God has been suspended. Zechariah the prophet was given a ministry of encouragement by the Lord, a ministry to encourage the people, who were understandably weak and dispirited that the period of the Lord's anger against them had passed, and that they should return to Him, the Lord was eager to welcome them back like the prodigal and He was zealous for the rebuilding of the temple and for Jerusalem. He sent Zechariah therefore to "Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees" and to restore to them the joy of their salvation.

Now in this vision given to Zechariah, the spiritual condition of the people is symbolized in the state of Joshua the High Priest. They were convicted of their sins and aware that they had no holiness of their own to recommend them. They stand before the angel of the Lord, and the word ANGEL is capitalized in most bibles because it is generally held that this angel, the same one who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and Joshua before Jericho is actually the pre-incarnate Christ.

Satan stands at their right hand, whispering that if they entered the courts of the Lord would they not defile them with their presence? What hope did they have of the Lord's favor, had they not failed God in the past, would they not do so again in the future? Wouldn't it be better if they simply gave up and gave themselves over to sin entirely?

Then the LORD, the Angel, rebukes the Devil and his accusations and suggestions. He does not say, *"These people are holy enough to stand before me, all they need do is just work a little harder and they can cleanse themselves of sin!"*

No, the Lord says, I have chosen these people to be mine, yes they were like a stick about to be burned up in the fire, meaning they had no hope of anything but judgement and hellfire, but I myself have chosen and plucked them out of the fire. He does not deny that they are sinners, but the Lord as T.V. Moore puts it says ***"I have chosen them in spite of this sin, not that they should continue in it, but that they should be freed from it"***

Here is Joshua, the High Priest, the holiest one in Israel standing before the Lord, and all he has is filthy rags. That brothers and sisters is everyone's condition, by nature is just as Isaiah puts it: ***Is. 64:6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.***

Here then is the first part of the great exchange, the wonderful of God that is Justification by faith alone. The taking away of the filthy garments, the removal of our iniquity. This is done by Jesus Christ taking up that iniquity himself, and making full atonement for it. As it says in Is 53:5 But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

As Peter put it: it was Jesus Christ “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree” and through this imputation of our sins to Him who knew no sin and his atoning sacrifice, our sins are washed away, the filthy rags are removed. But if my old filthy clothes are taken away, what am I now wearing? *Nothing*. The priest could not minister to the Lord clad in his own sins, just as Isaiah could not stand in the presence of the Lord without being purged. No man can approach the Lord in his sins.

But neither can we come into his presence, naked. We still need a righteousness that will qualify us to be in his presence. A garment not of our weaving. The rich robes that Jesus speaks of.

To be saved we do not just need to have our sins washed away, we need to have our righteousness established. Trip to the Island when all we have is debt scenario.

Without this garment This the wedding garment that Christ provides.

Matt. 22:8 "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.

9 'Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'

10 "So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.

12 "So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.

2 Cor. 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

So they put a clean turban on his head – the ability once again to minister before the Lord because of what the Lord has done. That priesthood is of course ended now and through the atoning death of Christ we may all enter into the holy of holies:

Heb. 10:19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 and having a High Priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

It is faith alone, that accomplishes this Justification, not our own works. Luther in Erfuhrt was going mad trying to atone for his own sins and be righteous enough to minister before God until he found Romans 1:16-17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Finally Joshua is admonished to walk in the ways of the Lord – the people now Justified by Faith Alone are to do works befitting their new status, that relationship as brands plucked from the burning - ***A Brand Snatched from the burning: Three men, Charles Williamson, Archibald MacIver, and Robert Budge who had enlisted to serve in the 71st and 42nd Highland Regiments ("The Black Watch") and told they must serve in the dreaded lowland Hamilton and Edinburgh Regiments that did not wear the kilts and spoke English and not their native Gaelic.***

Kneel by their coffins, their minister came over to speak to them but was interrupted, they must first listen to the General Orders, which because of the necessity of translation took several minutes to read. King George III.