

Text: Zechariah 3:1-10 (Pew Bible pg.940)

Title: “A Man God Can Use”

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles to the OT book of Zechariah. As you're turning I want to let you know that God did some great things at our Youth Camp. I spent two days with them this week, and we have some students that are hungry for God and who want to see God move in their generation. We had a number of students saved and who will be baptized soon. They return today at 12:30 or so, so parents be sure and claim them. Also I want to report to you that we have heard from our Indonesia mission team and more than thirty people have been saved in the little village where they are working. Continue to pray for them as they return this week.

Now with your Bible open to Zechariah 3 let me give you a little background. There's a connection between Zechariah and the prophet we studied two weeks ago ... Haggai. They both are part of encouraging and strengthening the Jews to rebuild the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem.

God had an extraordinary task for two men, Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest. They would lead the Jews to rebuild the Temple, the most important feature of the faithful worship of the Lord. He raised up the prophet Zechariah, in part, to prepare the men for what God wanted to do through them. In the Zechariah 4 the Lord had a word for Zerubbabel. But here in Zechariah 3 the Lord has a word for Joshua to help him become a man that God could use. To get us started let's read Zechariah 3:1-4.

Note: One of our men commented to me a few weeks ago that on Mother's Day we always try to make the women feel good for what they are doing. But when it comes to Father's Day we try to make the guys feel bad for what they're not doing. Well, I hope that is not the case today. Men, I want you to be encouraged that God wants to use you, and will use you as you allow Him to do His great work in your life.

There's something here about:

1. HIS RESPONSIBILITY (v.1a)

Zechariah 3:1 - Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.

Note: Joshua is the high priest. A priest represents God before the people in his leadership; and he represents the people before God in his prayer. The word “standing” is a word that was used to describe the posture of the priest as he went about his responsibilities in the temple. And on this Father's Day it's important for men to know that God has an important place for us in His work. We have a priestly responsibility in our homes and in our church.

1 Peter 2:9 - But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

ILLUSTRATION – I have a friend in New Mexico who is a rancher. Years ago he told me of how one morning he walked out across the yard to the barn where he was going to feed his horses. It had rained the night before so as he walked his boots left deep imprints in the mud. He turned around and saw that his little boy had followed him out of the house and into the yard. The boy was struggling to step into the boot prints of his dad as he walked across the yard. God used that image to remind my friend of how important it was for him to live in such a way that his footprints led his son along the right way.

As we think about the man God can use, there's also something here about...

2. HIS RIVAL (v.1b)

Zechariah 3:1 - Then he showed me Joshua ... and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.

So while Joshua was carrying out his ministry before the Lord, standing next to him was Satan, the accuser. The word "Satan" means "the accuser." So it literally means "the accuser stood beside him to accuse him." Satan stood beside him to "satanize" him. Satan is there to resist Joshua's efforts to be the man God wanted to use.

If you think you can try to fulfill the ministry and responsibilities that God has for you to do without resistance from Satan, you better wake up. We're in a battle. But God is stronger than Satan, and He has given us all the armor and the weapons we need to stand against Him.

Ephesians 6:11 - Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Here is an important principle in spiritual warfare. You don't stand strong against the devil ... you stand strong in the Lord against the devil. Your victory over Satan is only through Christ. Notice what it says in...

Zechariah 3:2a - The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you!"

Let the Lord be your protector in the battle. God knows who you are and He knows the desires and the devises of Satan against you.

There's something his responsibility, his rival and also about...

3. HIS RESCUE (v.2b)

Zechariah 3:2b - Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"

Joshua is God's man, rescued by the Lord along with the rest of the Jews when the Lord brought them out of captivity in Babylon. God's rebuke of Satan is based on His rescue of Joshua.

Listen, Satan may accuse you, but that doesn't matter. God has accepted you and...

Romans 8:1 - Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

ILLUSTRATION – Last summer when we were with our choir on mission in England we stopped to tour the Wesley Center in Bristol ... John and Charles Wesley's headquarters there in the south of England. In one of the rooms I saw a painting that depicted an event I had read about in John Wesley's biography. When Wesley was five years old the Wesleys' home caught on fire in the night. All the children were removed safely from the house, but John was still trapped inside. A farmer from nearby spotted the boy looking out of an upstairs window with flames all around him. Several neighbors climbed on each other's shoulders until the man on top was able to grab John and pull him out of the flames. Only moments after he was rescued, the house exploded in flames. Throughout his illustrious life John Wesley referred to himself "as a brand (stick) plucked from the burning," quoting Zechariah 3:2. He felt he had been like a stick plucked from the fire for the special purpose of preaching the gospel to others. And through the preaching of this one rescued man hundreds of thousands of people came to a faith in Christ.

Sir, have you been plucked from the fires of hell? If not, you can do that today. Put your trust in Jesus. If you have been rescued by Christ, you need to know that God has a purpose for you just like He did for Joshua and for John Wesley.

There's something else here about the man God can use ...

4. HIS RESTORATION (vv.3-5)

So Joshua was among the people the Lord had rescued and redeemed spiritually and physically from their captivity in Babylon. But now look at his condition:

Zechariah 3:3 - Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel.

His filthy clothes represented Joshua's sin. You see the fact is that Satan had every right to accuse Joshua. He was a mess and Satan could rightfully say to him, "Joshua, look at you standing there all nasty in your sins. What right do you have to call yourself a priest ... a man of God?" And Satan loves to do that, doesn't he?

Joshua was given a responsibility ... a task. The people needed his leadership but he could never be the man God could use unless something happened in him ... something only God could do. The words here paint an ugly picture. Joshua's clothes are more than just dirty; Joshua stinks to high heaven. Earlier in the OT we read about the garments of the priests that were to be changed often, and the bodies of the priests that were to be washed often. All this signifies their cleanness before the Lord ... not just physically, but most importantly, spiritually. But Joshua's sin, and the sin of the nation was now obvious.

But the Lord dealt with Satan, and He deals with Joshua's sin.

Zechariah 3:4 - The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.”

Two important things happen for us in the restoring work God does for us through Christ:

- We are cleansed from our unrighteousness. Joshua was told to take off his filthy clothes. And the Lord said, “Just as you have taken off those clothes, see I have taken away your sin.” That’s what God does for us in Christ.

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

- We are clothed in His righteousness. So the Lord takes away Joshua’s sin, but then He gives Joshua rich, clean new clothes. And that’s what God does for us in Christ.

Philippians 3:9 - and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

What an amazing picture of God’s mercy and grace. Joshua standing there in the dirty, smelly clothes of his sin, and God comes and takes those old dirty clothes away and gives him a new uniform ... one of dignity and glory and righteousness. In fact Zechariah is so excited about what he is seeing in this vision that he bursts out in v.5, “Oh yeah, and how about a turban (a priest’s hat) for his head, too.”

Do you see what a great work of God this is? Joshua couldn’t do it for himself, and you, sir, cannot do it for yourself. Something has to happen in you and for you that only God can do.

There’s something here about...

5. HIS REQUIREMENTS (vv.6-7)

Zechariah 3:6-7 - The angel of the LORD gave this charge to Joshua: “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here.

There are two requirements ... to walk in the ways of the Lord and to keep His requirements. The first requirement has to do with his integrity ... walk in My ways. The second requirement has to do with his ministry ... keep My requirements (the requirements for the priests in conducting their ministry).

God will bless the man who is faithful to Him.

Psalm 1:1 - Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

Psalm 1:2 - But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1:3 - He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Finally, there's something here about...

6. HIS REDEEMER (vv.8-10)

Now in these last few verses of the chapter Zechariah is looking way off into the future to the coming of the Messiah, the Redeemer of all people.

Zechariah 3:8-9a - “Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua!

The Lord says, “You men of God, as you live out your life in holiness and integrity you are a sign pointing *the* Man of God ... the Messiah. We know Him as Jesus. In the OT the Messiah is often described as the suffering servant of the Lord. He is called the Branch that mysteriously springs up to provide salvation. He is called a stone ... the corner stone upon which everything else is built.

Men we need to know that as we live out our lives as godly men we are pointing others toward this Jesus.

CONCLUSION

And look at the last part of v.9:

Zechariah 3:9c - ... says the LORD Almighty, ‘and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.

What an amazing turnaround! In a single day God can make everything new. He does it through His Son Jesus Christ. In a single day, everything can change for a man, a woman, a child ... for a family ... for a nation.

ILLUSTRATION – D.L. Moody was a man God used in an extraordinary way in the late 1800s. He was a pastor and evangelist in whom the Spirit of God had done a powerful work. He said something that has been quoted through the years, and it is so true: "The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him."