

My Servant, the Branch

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

Zechariah 3:6-10

God has just “*roused himself from his holy dwelling.*” Not from sleep or slumber, but from provocation. God rises in response to a condition to carry out a specific task that only He can successfully perform. What is this task? It is found in verse 9, “*I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day.*”

He has rid Joshua of his soiled garments and dressed him in “*pure vestments.*” Notice the theme and Biblical theology of clothes in the Bible:

1. **Adam & Eve** – in the aftermath of their disobedience, Adam & Eve sewed together fig leaves to make clothes to cover themselves (**Genesis 3:7, cf. vs. 21**). The fig leaves were their own work, and a failure. The garments of skin (3:21) were God’s work: the skins came from a death, and God made them and dressed them.
2. **The Prophets** - Our best is filthy: “*All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment*” (**Isa 64:6**). God’s provision is clean: “*He has clothed me with the garments of salvation*” (**Isa 61:10**).
3. **The cross**: The soldiers stripped Jesus and gambled for His clothes (**John 19:23–24**). He was stripped so that we could be clothed: “*As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” (**Gal 3:27**).
4. **The end**: “*They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*” (**Rev 7:14**). “*Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life*” (**Rev 22:14**). The tree Adam lost is opened to people in washed robes.

Salvation by grace will produce the fruit of obedience. Justification is the root. It is the act of God’s grace, where He pardons all our sins and declares us righteous in his sight. This is how the Christian life begins. Sanctification is inseparably linked to justification, and it is the work of God’s free grace, where we are renewed in the image of God and increasingly enabled to die to sin and live to righteousness.

I. God Calls His Cleansed Priest to Obey (3:6-7)

A. The Condition of Obedience (3:7) **Joshua’s cleansing (3:4) had no “if”; the “if” is about his service.**

1. The If:

- a) Walk in my ways (A reference to personal godliness)
- b) Keep my charge (Faithfulness in ministry as high priest).
 - (1) If Joshua walks in God’s ways and keeps His charge, then God will give him authority over the people as His priest. Perhaps even more glorious is Joshua’s access to God’s presence as high priest.
 - (2) The mercy of God and His forgiveness in the provision of righteousness to Joshua was not a license for moral laziness or carelessness in his behavior. He was called to godly living. (**See Romans 6:1-2; Titus 2:11-12**)
- c) God’s demand for obedience (two examples: David to Solomon (**1 Kings 2:3**) and Paul to Timothy (**1 Tim 4:16**))

2. The Then:

- a) You shall rule my house and have charge of my courts
- b) Give access to my courts. “*I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.*” (3:7). This is a place among angels in God’s courtroom (3:4). For a priest, that is the highest privilege there is. Christ secures it for every believer: “*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace*” (**Heb 4:16; cf. 10:19–22**).

II. God Points the Priest to the Unfailing Servant, the Branch (Zech 3:8)

The Sign: “*Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign.*” The whole Levitical system and the priests specifically point past their present failures to a better Priest who is coming and will not fail.

A. **Zech 3:8** is not the most impressive of promises at first glance. God picks up the promise He made

through Isaiah and Jeremiah. **Isaiah 11:1**, *“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”*

The Hebrew word *šemaḥ* means a sprout or shoot, a small green thing growing out of a stump. In 519 BC, David's family tree was exactly that: a stump. Zerubbabel, of Zechariah's day, was David's descendant; however, he was a Persian-appointed governor, not a king. God promises that life will come out of what looks dead. When everything looks dead and cut down, God says, *'Watch the stump.'*

1. Righteous Branch - **Jeremiah 23:5**, *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”*
 2. My servant, the Branch - **Zechariah 3:8** *“Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch.”*
 3. The Man whose name is the Branch - **Zechariah 6:12**, *“And say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord.”’*
 4. The Branch of the Lord - **Isaiah 4:2**, *In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.*
- B. God has charged Joshua to obey (**3:7**), but in the same breath announced the One whose obedience will never fail: His Servant the Branch. Paul would later point to this reality:
1. **Romans 5:19**, *For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*
 2. **Philippians 2:8**, *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
 3. The believer's obedience is the fruit derived from the obedience of Christ as the root!

III. God Will Remove Iniquity in a Single Day (Zech 3:9)

- A. The “*stone*” casts many shadows of meaning across the Bible. I think this passage echoes all 3.
1. A temple stone. The stone is “*set before Joshua*” (**Zech 3:9**; cf **4:7**)
 2. An engraved stone. *“I will engrave its inscription.”* Like the high priest's stones (**Ex 28:9-11, 36**)
 3. A messianic stone: *“My servant the Branch.”* (**Zech 3:8**; **Psa 118:22**; **Isa 28:16**, cf. **1 Peter 2:6-7**)
- B. The “*single day*” forms the mountain peak of this passage
1. For the Jew, it pointed to the Day of Atonement (**Lev 16**), which was repeated because it never brought “remission of sins,” only forbearance. It always pointed to a greater, “*single day*.”
 2. That day came. Christ “*offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins...by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified*” (**Heb 10:12, 14**; cf **7:27**; **9:12**) The single day is the cross.
 3. The national dimension: “*this land*.” (See **Zech 12:10**; **13:1**; **Romans 11:26-27**) Every year Israel's high priest went in, and every year he had to go back. God says, 'One day, I'm going to finish it.' And on a Friday outside Jerusalem, He did. The price was paid once, in full. For Israel as a nation, that finished work will be applied “*in that day*,” when they look on Him whom they pierced.

IV. God Will Fill the Land with Peace (Zech 3:10)

- A. The description of **Zech 3:10** was Israel's familiar picture of peace and plenty. **1 Kings 4:25**, *And Judah and Israel lived in safety...every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.*
- B. A propagated peace: “*Invite his neighbor to come*.”
- C. A promised peace: “*In that day*.” (**Micah 4:1-4**)
- D. The Branch bears fruit. The passage moves from a stump to a shoot to the whole land full of plenty.

V. Light for our Path

- A. You cannot obey your way into God's favor; that's backward. God's favor comes first, followed by obedience! If failure is discouraging you, remember Joshua, standing in clothes he didn't earn!
- B. Grace, God's favor, is not permission to coast on the commandments (**Titus 2:11-12**)
- C. If your life feels like a stump, the promise isn't that your stump blooms on your schedule. The promise is that the Branch has already grown, and you live from His root.

Picture what Joshua could see in 519 BC. A half-built temple. A governor who should have been a king. A priesthood just pulled out of the fire. And himself, freshly cleaned, standing there in clothes he didn't earn.

Then God says, *Walk in My ways.* And Joshua could have thought, *I'll try. But my grandfather was a high priest, and they killed him. My people have failed for a thousand years. What makes me any different?*

And before he can even finish that thought, God says, *Hear now, Joshua. You're a sign. I'm bringing My Servant, the Branch.*

In other words: Joshua, you're not the answer. You're the arrow pointing to the answer.

Five hundred years later, that Branch grew up out of the stump of Jesse in a little town called Nazareth. He walked in all God's ways, every step, every day. He kept every charge. Never failed once. And then, on a single day, outside the walls of Jerusalem, He did what every Day of Atonement had pointed to: He removed iniquity. Not covered it for a year. Removed it.

That's why your obedience matters, and that's why your obedience doesn't save you. You walk because you've been clothed. You obey because the Branch already obeyed. The fruit grows because the root is alive.

And "*in that day*," Israel will sit under its own vine and fig tree, calling to its neighbors, "*Come sit with me*," and nobody will be afraid. That day is coming because the single day already came.

God is not finished. He started with a stump. He'll finish with an orchard.