

Robes of Righteousness

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[0:00] Turn in your Bibles to Zechariah chapter 3.! The best way to get there is to start at Matthew and go back to books.

! You'll see Malachi and then Zechariah. Zechariah chapter 3. Zechariah was a prophet after the exile.

Remember the Lord punished and disciplined Israel for their sin. Sent them far away into exile, into Babylon. And so at this point, the people have returned from exile back to their land.

But they aren't doing well. They aren't doing well. They're very discouraged. God wants them to rebuild the temple. And after beginning, outsiders came in and stopped them.

And after that, everyone sort of lost heart. They ran out of steam. And so there it was. The temple was nothing but a few stones in a line.

[1:04] And God's people were stuck like those stones. Stuck in their sin. Stuck in their guilt. Stuck in their despair. Stuck in the past.

Stuck in their sin. And that's how things are. as Zechariah begins his ministry to these people. and into that situation the Lord speaks very graciously and kindly to them and his words are so full of promise and hope and so let's see what he has to say to them and to us in Zechariah chapter 3 and listen as I and follow along as I read the entire chapter 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 the Lord said to Satan the Lord rebuke you Satan the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel 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 then I said put a clean turban on his head and so they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him while the angel of the Lord stood by 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 those standing here listen oh 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 there are seven eyes on that one stone and I will engrave an inscription on it says the Lord Almighty and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day and in that day each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree declares the Lord Almighty well we can divide this chapter into basically three movements the three little sections accusation salvation and then peace and the first movement that we see the first part of the song of this chapter is accusation and if you were here last Sunday evening this is what we looked at as the vision begins Zachariah is brought into the heavenly courtroom and there he sees Joshua standing before the

Lord and Joshua is representing the people of God he's representing he's not standing alone he's representing them he's representing them and so in him we we see a picture of all of God's people we see a picture of us and if you're a Christian we see a picture of you we see a picture of me and Joshua from head to toe is filthy filthy and his clothes aren't covered with dirt the idea is excrement so if you've had ever had a baby and you're holding the baby and then the baby has a blowout and covers the whole backside and I don't miss those days but that's the picture that's the grossness of this it's not just dirt it's disgusting and it's a picture it's a valid picture of our sin it's a clear picture of our sin and Isaiah said even our best deeds are filthy rags it's the same word filthy not just dirty excrement covered nasty disgusting unclean things and to make things worse

Satan is standing right beside Joshua and he's playing the outraged prosecutor again he's playing this outraged prosecutor so offended at the sins of God's people and and so he's saying look at these people God aren't you holy how can you stand them how can you let Joshua be here how can you let these people stand in your midst how can you bless them and the biggest problem of all is that his accusations are true he's not having to make up something in order to accuse us we are accused and we are filthy Charles Spurgeon said truly if Satan wants to accuse us any page of our history any hour of any day will furnish him material for his charges yesterday you were impatient the day before you were proud another day you were slothful and on another angry if the old accuser wants reason for accusation he may indeed find as many as many as he wills and continue to accuse us as long as ever he pleases for we all together are an unclean thing so we're filthy and we're accused and it's only when our consciences become aware of that do our consciences become aware of reality but our consciences don't make us guilty they only echo what is true here and so if you're feeling this way then you can understand how Joshua feels you can see yourself in this passage but praise God he doesn't leave Joshua there he doesn't leave us there and so that brings us to the second movement of this passage salvation now so how sad and how terrible and how awful it would be if God left us there and said now you need to clean yourself up if God left us guilty and accused but we saw this again last week look at who comes to our defense it's Jesus Christ the righteous the angel of the Lord comes the Lord said to Satan the Lord rebuke you and again we saw this last week who is the that is the Lord but can also speak of the Lord well it's Jesus Christ and he says the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire so Jesus comes to their defense to Joshua's defense and he says God has chosen them God has chosen them and and they were thrown into exile but the Lord snatched them out of the fire and so is he gonna go to all the trouble of snatching them out of the fire and then dispose of them and leave them to perish now that's how Jesus begins his defense but our Lord goes on and thankfully he does because at the end of the day no amount of words will fix what is wrong

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Jesus goes on for his dirty people and he speaks for us but he does more than that and that's what I want to look at especially tonight he does more than speak for us Joshua is there filthy disgusting guilty before God before men as clear as can be and he strips Joshua of his filthy clothes and dresses him in rich garments that's what the grace of God does the mercy and the kindness of God the love of God and that's what he's done for us he's stripped us of our sins left nothing on left not a single bit of our old clothes on and so where did those filthy rags go where did all that sin go well who can say the Bible says it's as far as the east is from the west it says he's hurled them into the deepest parts of the sea and so our sin is not in the shallows it's in the depths of the sea you're not going to be walking along the beach and one day your old filthy nasty clothes come up against you and you're not going to find them on the beach no because it says he's hurled them down he's hurled them into the depths of the sea so such power that they'll never be able to rise up against us and so where did they go well the Bible says they go to the place where God remembers them no more the place beyond God's memory and it's all free it's all unearned it's all unmerited kindness and grace does Joshua say anything in his defense does Joshua do anything to clean himself up no God comes to the rescue it's God who saves and God does it for us and it's complete forgiveness complete forgiveness but it's more than that we aren't left naked we aren't left naked we receive all of Christ's righteousness and this is the other side of justification of being declared right it's not only the forgiveness of sins it's not only the doing away and the forgiving of sins it's also imputation it's a big word it means crediting to someone's account putting onto their record and so it's the crediting of Christ's righteousness to us and so too often we remember that justification involves the forgiveness of sins

I have been forgiven but just as precious and just as important and just as necessary is this gift of righteousness too often we remember forgiveness but then turn around and act like we have to earn some righteousness but no the righteousness too is a gift of God and so tonight I just want to think for a moment let's look at these clothes that we get to wear let's look at this clothing that we have on and I say we it's all of us there's lots of differences between Christians young Christians old Christians weak Christians strong Christians there are many differences between Christians but there is no difference at all here we are all wearing the righteousness of Jesus Christ and so let's look at these rich clothes they're rich they're rich they're not just suitable the righteousness that you have on is not just suitable it's not just enough it's not just barely covering

God does not give us a pair of overalls just to clothe us no it's rich no it's rich robes of righteousness more than enough gorgeous extravagant well how extravagant how glorious Pastor John quoted it we have become the righteousness of God how righteous is are you in your justification what is the righteousness accredited to every single Christian here it measures up to the very righteousness of God and indeed it is the very righteousness of God so when God looks at our standing in heaven our righteous standing it's the same as his think about that it's the same as his we have the same right and credentials for heaven as Christ himself as God himself

God could sooner throw himself out of heaven than throw one of these people who have these clothes on him clothed in this righteousness and so when God considers your righteousness when the holy law sifts through your record looking for any problems looking for any mistakes looking for any shortcomings not only failures but where we didn't measure up where we didn't do what we should have done so not only sins where we did what we shouldn't have done but sins where we didn't do what we should have done when God's law goes looking and sifting through your record it's full it's full it's overflowing with righteousness to recommend you to God so the supreme court is in the midst of a transition now with Antonin Scalia passing away now president Obama's team has to begin looking for someone to fill the spot on the supreme court and before they just put names forward there's this significant amount of vetting that has to go on they find someone who's a potential candidate and then what begins then is the process of going through every little detail of that person's life looking at their record looking at what how they've ruled looking at their personal lives looking at their professional lives going back to college and going through what they did back then all this vetting their lives their history it's all gone over with a fine tooth comb and they're looking for anything that will disqualify them anything that will look for they're looking for anything that will be in an embarrassment to the president or somehow cause a problem well there we are the perfect law of God is going through our record going back to not only when we were in college but when we were in high school and when we were in middle school and when we were in elementary and going all the way all through our whole life looking for things to disqualify us and as God looks at you as you are wearing these robes as they've been given to you it's like he's looking in the mirror at himself he's looking in the mirror at himself rich garments rich rich rich is Christ himself rich is the righteousness of God and that's justification all your all your sin all your sin dear saint your past sin your present sin your future sin stripped away and perfect glorious righteousness given to you put on you credited to your account and so it's not worked in you it's put on you it's not something that you work for it's something that God freely gives to all who believe you come to

Jesus Christ and you are justified freely and there's not 80% justification there's not 50% justification it's 100% justification for everyone who comes to Jesus Christ and so it's not just as if I had never sinned it's just as if I had always obeyed it's as if we always obeyed because Christ active obedience is given to us his obedience of living his obedience of obeying his mom and dad his obedience of loving his disciples of loving his friends it's all of his whole righteous life of loving others as he loved himself and loving God with all of his heart and mind and soul and strength all of that love is credited to us as righteousness and it's not only his active obedience but it's also his passive obedience his obedience unto death his death on the cross and obedience to the father is counted as mine that's how rich these clothes are it's not that

[17:47] I died on the cross but the righteousness of Jesus loving his father loving his father so much that he would give up his life that's how rich these clothes are and that's your record that's your standing that's your security as if you yourself lived and died the life and death of Jesus Christ now what did those people need well they needed to see the gospel in the midst of being stuck in their sin and stuck in their despair and not going anywhere they needed to see the gospel and what do we need who are so weak and who can feel so guilty and in despair it's the very same thing it's Jesus Christ and his life and his death and the passage moves on because there's more to the story there's more to salvation than just justification with this guilt of our sin dealt with we go from being useless to useful and that too is a part of our salvation

God doesn't just justify us and then have us sit around and wait for heaven and that's the point of verse five so Zacharias sees what's happening and he chimes in himself and he says I said put a clean turban on his head and so they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him now the turban was the head piece of the high priest wore and sewn and embroidered into that head piece were the words holy to the Lord and this was part of his outfit if he was going to appear before the Lord he had to have this on and so this was part and parcel of his being able to stand before God and going to work for God and representing God's people and so now he's ready to work he's ready to be put to use and so what is God saying to Israel to us so there's Judah they're they're they're not they're not working they feel so useless and he's saying don't be discouraged you aren't useless anymore you are forgiven and more than that you are now useful you are holy to the

Lord you're ready to stand before him you're ready to be put to use but the question is how can all this be how can all this happen are these just words that we are talking about can God just simply take away sin can God simply give me righteousness how can God just take a people and move them from useless to useful and here if you've tasted the bitterness of sin you're saying give me something strong give me something real not just words the world lives on dreams and fantasies I want something solid so how can this be how can God forgive and save rescue people out of their filth well the answer comes in verse 8 listen oh high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you who are men symbolic of things to come

I'm going to bring my servant the branch the branch and Isaiah that's the name for the Messiah servant of the Lord who is going to come and lay down his life the branch it's one of the Messiah's name he's the he's the Davidic king who's going to save his people and the Lord says this is how it's going to happen the branch is coming and then at the end of verse 9 he says I will remove sin the sin of this land in a single day so when the branch comes the branch is going to do something on a single day that takes away sin now this story this chapter is really a story of two priests named Joshua two high priests Joshua the sinful high priest and Jesus the great high priest who did away with sin once for all every year

Joshua participated in the day of atonement he was the most important person on that day and every year he would take a goat and he would lay his hands on it symbolically transferring the sins of the people to that goat and then he would drive that goat out into the wilderness to never be seen again and then another goat would be slaughtered and his blood would be taken into the holy of holies before God himself and so year after year Joshua did this and sin was covered but it was never taken away if it was taken away then they could have stopped the whole business but it was never really done away with but this is what Zachariah is pointing out Joshua and his associates they're symbolic they're symbols they're signs pointing to someone who is to come and when Jesus came he offered himself once for all so John the Baptist could say behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and in one day through his sacrifice sin was completely removed just as those clothes were completely stripped off of those people all the sin was completely removed and so it's the story of two

[23 : 22] Joshua's and just like Joshua the high priest Jesus came before the Lord and as Jesus came before the Lord he too was covered in filthy garments not his own sins but the sins of his people the one who knew no sin became sin for us but now there's no one to speak on his behalf Joshua doesn't have someone to speak for him or Jesus didn't have someone to speak for him and so finally Jesus defends us finally not with words but with his life by taking our place we saw how wonderful it is last week to have our advocate defending us but our advocate finally saves us not by saying

Satan rebuke you but in suffering the penalty that our sins deserved the whole penalty and so he was driven away like that second go or that first one the first one was driven away he was driven away so that we could be brought in and he was taken outside the city gate Hebrew says he was taken outside the city considered a curse and so that we could go to the heavenly city and he lost his place for a time at the father's side so that we could with boldness come before the throne and so why are we here this Friday because on a single Friday about 2,000 years ago our savior hung on a tree cursed cursed but he was cursed to take away sin he was cursed to take away sin and what happens now that sin is taken away well the chapter goes on with one last verse a third movement and it's peace and that day each one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree declares the

Lord Almighty so after the removal of sin there's this wonderful transformation that takes place with the people of God now they begin to enjoy peace rest shalom peace with God peace with each other so imagine an agricultural society where everyone is enemies if you see some one of your enemies enemies coming to your vine or your fig tree what are you going to do you're going to get up and defend your property you're going to defend your plant but the cross changes everything instead of enemies people are brought together and so instead of now standing up and defending what is ours which is how the world works now we invite people to enjoy what God has given us so Jesus takes away all takes us all the way from filthy dirty to extravagant peace from shame and embarrassment and hiding to now inviting people into our lives and so what are we celebrating tonight brothers and sisters well we're remembering our justification remembering what

Jesus did for us and it's by his blood that we have been justified his blood cleanses us from sin his blood gives us a righteousness that we never had before and Romans says since we have been justified we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ you aren't at war anymore with God and he's not at war with you and since you have been justified you have peace with God but tonight we're also celebrating the peace that we have with one another the love that we have for one another we are all dear brothers and sisters all of us who are in Jesus Christ all brought in to the same family by the same Lord by the same Savior through the same sacrifice and so let's eat together as a family rejoicing in what God has done for each one of us and if you think about it it's not something that you can only rejoice in for yourself or it's not something that you only have to rejoice in for yourself

God did this for your brothers and sisters as well and you can rejoice in his love for them even as you rejoice in his love for you so let's eat together as the family of God as you