

Guilt Gone in a Single Day

In the name of Jesus, Joshua, who redeemed us on Good Friday.

In our Good Friday text from Zechariah, the Holy Week Prophet, we see Satan going after the high priest Joshua. The devil was the prosecutor, accusing the high priest of sin before God's supreme court. But the LORD was on Joshua's side, and the charges were dismissed. In the midst of this exchange, the LORD makes a prophecy about Good Friday, as recorded in Zechariah 3:1-10.

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 fine garments on you."

Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." 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 obedience to me 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.

"Listen, High Priest Joshua, you 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. In that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree,' declares the LORD Almighty."

I. Jesus Gives Us New Clothes

Joshua was the high priest when Israel returned to Jerusalem after the 70 years of exile in Babylon. This was about 500 years before Jesus was born. Joshua was the high priest but was still a sinful human. That gave Satan a strong case against him. Joshua was a guilty sinner. He had a guilty conscience. He knew his many sins. That is why each priest had to offer sacrifices for his own sins before he could offer sacrifices for the people. Joshua knew what he deserved. Then he heard his Advocate order the prosecutor to back off! ***"The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! This man is a burning stick snatched from the fire?"***

The Lord had chosen Jerusalem, signifying all the Jewish people, including this "burning stick, Joshua. He deserved to be condemned, but he had been snatched from the fire of judgment by the grace and mercy of the Lord. "Satan's charges will not hold up since Good Friday!"

— Picture me as Joshua in a courtroom. — The judge, seated above everyone else, is weighing the evidence and pondering the verdict. I am on trial. The prosecutor is none other than Satan himself, and he's got a ton of evidence on me. All his accusations could stick, because they are all true. "Look at the evidence, Judge. My sins of thought, word and deed are too many to count. No doubt: I am guilty! I am too sinful to be a priest – a pastor. Like Moses, not me! Like Isaiah, not me! Like Jeremiah, not me! I was like Joshua: "Now Joshua was dressed in 'filthy' clothes as he stood before the Angel." The word translated as "filthy" comes from a Hebrew word that means disgusting. Our sins are an abomination in the eyes of God. The soul that sins should die! But the Angel [Jesus Christ in the O.T.]

tells us: ***Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?***” Jesus raced into the fire of hell on Good Friday to prevent me from roasting in the fire of hell.

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 fine garments on you.”

Then Zechariah said, “Put a clean turban on his head.” So, they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with fine garments.

“Clean garments”! “A clean turban”! Doesn’t Joshua look much better? What is left for the accuser to accuse? The formerly filthy sinner now looks like a dignified high priest. More important, he is declared holy—so holy he can appear in the presence of the Holy Judge. He has been justified.

Your filthy clothes have been taken away; Jesus himself wore your stained garments! In exchange, Jesus dresses you in his own clean garments; they are now your new clothes! The prosecutor’s charges are dismissed. Isaiah describes the complete makeover in these words:

***I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.***

***For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness. Isaiah 61:10***

Zechariah has more good news for us.

“Listen, High Priest Joshua, you 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.’”

Israel’s priests were “symbolic of things to come.” They were set apart for the Lord and dressed in priestly robes. They interceded with the Lord for the people, picturing the work of the Savior. And they sacrificed countless lambs, foreshadowing the Lamb of God, whose sacrifice would make animal sacrifices unnecessary.

Jesus, who is also called the Branch in Isaiah and Jeremiah, will branch off from the root of Jesse’s family tree and become a prophet like Moses, a deliverer like Joshua, a king like David. Jesus would also be a stone, a firm foundation, with an inscription identifying him as the Messiah and Savior. Think of Pilate’s inscription that identified the crucified victim as “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.”

Now a clear reference to Good Friday: ***“I will remove the sin of the earth in a single day.”*** That is why we are here: to give thanks on this day. Every person’s sin . . . every pastor’s sin . . . removed on a single day . . . by a single sacrifice . . . by a single Savior who snatched us burning sticks out of the fire. It was all finished on that Friday. It was a good Friday. Joshua was acquitted. Israel was acquitted. Every pastor who is preaching today has been acquitted. You are acquitted. You are forgiven. You are dressed in the clean garments of Christ’s righteousness. Every pastor is a priest like Joshua who announces this good news: “You are acquitted! You are justified! You are not guilty. You are saved!

II. Jesus Gives Us a New Life

A pastor today should be like Joshua with a new life, a new purpose, a new calling in life.

The angel of the Lord gave this charge to Joshua: “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Walk in obedience to me and keep my requirements; Govern my house and have charge of my courts, and you will be My witnesses into all the world.’”

Here’s my witness: God’s law requirement for sinners is that we repent, that we turn away from our sin and toward our Savior. God’s gospel invitation is that we believe in the One he has sent” (John 6:29).

Trusting in Christ and his merits alone, we have the new life Jesus earned for us on the cross. This new life will be eternal life in heaven.

As a priest, Joshua had this responsibility because the priests were “symbolic of things to come.” They were had a high calling, just as today’s pastors are. On Good Friday and every Sunday, I am obligated to faithfully announce God’s grace-filled gift: forgiveness for all sins, of all sinners, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. May God make me a faithful Joshua.

Only through holding to this gospel does a pastor walk in obedience and keep God’s requirements. Only through striving to imitate Joshua – which is the Hebrew name of Jesus – does a pastor retain the privilege to govern God’s house and have charge of his courts. Only through proclaiming the “**It is finished!**” of Good Friday — and believing it himself — will a pastor retain a place among those standing before the Lord.

The LORD says: *I will remove the sin of this land in a single day. In that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree,’ declares the Lord Almighty.*”

We can extend that invitation now. Let your neighbor know that under the cross of Christ there is forgiveness; under the vine of Christ there is abundant fruit; and under the fig tree of Christ there is cooling shade from the hot, harsh, hostile world.

Satan went after the real Joshua, Jesus, the Deliverer, the highest Priest, on Good Friday, trying to make him fall. Had Jesus failed, we would still be wearing filthy clothes. Instead, Satan failed, while Jesus succeeded in removing the sin of the world in a single day. The price has been paid. **It is finished!** That is my Good Friday message to you: “You have clean clothes and a new life in Joshua, Jesus, our Deliverer // our Savior! “ Amen.