

A Burning Stick Snatched from the Fire

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In Zechariah 3, we read:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, ***“The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?”***

Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.” Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by. (Zechariah 3:1-5, emphasis added).

In verse 1 we see that Joshua was “standing before”, or ministering before, the angel of the Lord, and there also was Satan standing at his right hand to accuse and condemn him. We again see Satan depicted as the “accuser of our brethren” in Revelation 12, where we read: “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, ***for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.***’” (Revelation 12:10, emphasis added).

Satan, the accuser of every believer, was “thrown down” by what Jesus Christ accomplished for us at Calvary, when He fulfilled God’s plan and purpose to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Even though Satan accuses us before our God continually, we know from God’s word that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). There is no one who

can bring a charge against any of God's elect, and there is no power in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from His love (Romans 8:33-39).

Continuing in Zechariah 3, we read that in response to Satan's accusation against His servant Joshua, the Lord answered him saying: "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" (Zechariah 3:2). This burning brand, or burning stick, "plucked from the fire" is symbolic of everyone who has been saved from the fire of God's wrath against sinful man, having been brought to faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

Left to ourselves, we would continue in our own way, much the same as Saul of Tarsus was intent on carrying out his own plans, which were contrary to God's (Acts 9:1-2). But fortunately for Saul, he was one of those who was foreknown by God and predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29-30). Saul was one of those who had been chosen by God before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:4-5). And in God's time, Jesus Christ intervened in Saul's life to bring him to faith in Himself, and to give him an entirely new assignment for his life (Acts 9:3-16). Saul was a burning stick snatched from the fire of God's judgment, and the same is true of every one of us who is brought to faith in Christ.

In Zechariah 3:3, we that Joshua was clothed in "filthy garments" as he was standing before the angel of the Lord. And he said to Joshua: "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes." We see in verse 5 that Joshua's filthy garments were removed from him. He was then clothed with "festal garments", and a clean turban was put on his head as the angel of the Lord was standing by. Angels are messengers of the Lord, and when they speak, they speak the words of God Himself.

Joshua's filthy garments that were taken from him are symbolic of the iniquity that God had commanded to be taken away from him. The festal garments that were given to him are prophetic and symbolic of the righteousness of Christ, without which no man will enter the kingdom of Heaven. These festal garments are the "wedding garments" in Jesus' Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14). Those who are clothed in wedding garments will be welcomed at the wedding feast that the King has prepared for His Son. However, those who might present themselves to be one of God's people, yet they are found by Him not to be clothed in wedding garments, will be thrown out into outer darkness, where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 22:11-13).

Every believer is as a burning stick snatched from the fire of God's wrath against sinful man. We are spiritual Jerusalem, whom God has chosen (Zechariah 3:2). We are those whom the Father has given to His Son, and we will all come to Him (John 6:37). We have been drawn to Jesus Christ by God the Father, and we will all be raised up at the last day (John 6:44). We were all foreknown by God in that we were chosen by Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him (again, Ephesians 1:4-5). Being foreknown by God, we were predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29). And all those whom God predestined, He also called to faith in His Son, and all those whom He called, He also justified, and all those whom He justified, He also glorified (Romans 8:30).

In Romans 8:29-30, Paul describes the order of salvation, or the chain of events whereby every believer comes to faith in Christ and is ultimately glorified together with Him in Heaven. This Scripture teaches us that God foreknew, God predestined, God called, God justified, and God glorified. Notice in every "link" of this "chain" of events that only God's action is mentioned, and there is no mention whatsoever of man's action, assent, or cooperation being required for salvation.

Our salvation is God's own doing from beginning to end, and it has nothing to do with any work of our own (Ephesians 2:8-9), any choice of our own (John 15:16), or any decision of our own will (Romans 9:16). We were saved because God chose to show mercy to us and not harden us with all the rest (Romans 9:18).

God made us to be the "good ground" in Jesus' Parable of the Sower. We were given ears to hear (Matthew 13:9). And only God's elect, or those whom Jesus calls His sheep, will hear His voice (John 10:3-4, 10:27). All the rest will not be able to hear (John 8:43, 8:47, 10:25-26). When the seed of the word of God fell upon our ears, we heard it, we understood it, and we were brought to faith in Christ (Matthew 13:23, Romans 10:17). By the grace of our Sovereign God, it has been granted to us to know and to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to all the others it has not been granted (Matthew 13:11, Colossians 1:26).

And even though Satan stand at our right hand to accuse and condemn us, our God will rebuke him, because we know on the authority of His word that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. God our Father, who began the good work of salvation in us, will Himself carry it through to its completion (Philippians 1:6), and neither Satan nor any other power in all creation will be able to separate us from His love (Romans 8:37-39).