

# Handling Accusation

## *The context of accusation*

One of the most notable examples of Satan accusing God's people is found in Zechariah chapter 3. We see Satan standing to accuse Joshua, the high priest, in the context of God's building, that is, where God is relating believers together in Himself. This reveals that wherever the building of God is taking place, you can be sure that Satan's attack will be there in the form of accusation against the saints. The accusation that is leveled at the saints is particularly aimed at their personal condition. This is the subtlety of Satan. His intention is to so weaken the conscience of the saints that their spirit will be affected to the point of disintegrating the building of God.

Joshua, standing there in his filthy garments, was not living for his own personal interests, but for God's building, the temple. Thus, when we see Satan standing there to accuse him, it is clear that this accusation is not just a personal matter. It is not merely on an individual level. This is accusation directed at one who had returned for the recovery of God's building. It is a unique kind of attack against the saints who are living for God's building, in order to so deflate their inner life that their relatedness with each other in spirit would cease. Living under accusation from Satan will definitely cripple one's ability to be related in spirit for God's building.

When the enemy accuses us, he comes in to stir up in us an inordinate propensity to look at ourselves and our condition. Satan's goal is to accuse us in such a way that it produces a sense of wanting to give up fellowshiping with the saints. So do not take this kind of accusation in a personal way. It is not merely your problem, especially when you are living for God's building. If our hearts are set on God's building, we have to expect that the subtle enemy will come to turn us in on ourselves with accusation over our condition - past, present, and future. But thank God for Zechariah 3. It exposes this kind of attack and shows us how to handle accusation from Satan.

## *Our position while under accusation*

Zechariah 3:1 says, "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord." It will help us if we can visualize this scene. In the picture below we see Joshua standing with his eyes fixed upon the Angel of the Lord, which is the Lord Himself. Notice, Joshua is standing before the Angel of the Lord. He is looking in one direction. He is faced off, solely beholding the Angel of the Lord. This is his position. The picture also shows us that Satan is standing at Joshua's right hand to oppose him. This means Satan is there to accuse him, to bring an accusation against him. So we have Joshua, with his eyes gazing in one direction, while Satan is at his right hand accusing him.

Satan's accusation is related to Joshua's filthy garments. In other words, Satan's accusation is not without some basis. Had Joshua been standing there without filthy garments, Satan would have had no ground to accuse him. But the fact that Joshua was clothed with filthy garments did give the enemy a basis to accuse him. Satan was attempting to divert Joshua's eyes from the Lord to his filthy garments. This is Satan's way to accuse. He lays some specific charge against us about a specific sin that we have committed, and then he points his finger at us and pounds our conscience - all with the intent to turn us away from looking at the Lord.

Verse 3 describes Joshua's condition. He is "clothed with filthy garments" - garments splattered with filth. The Hebrew word translated "filthy" here is the same word translated "refuse," or human waste, in other places in Scripture (Deut. 23:13; Prov. 30:12). This reveals the nature of the filth that was splattered on his garments. Nevertheless, Joshua is standing before the Angel of the Lord. This shows us the way to handle accusation. Despite our condition, our eyes should be on the Lord. Though our condition has not changed - our garments are spotted with real filth - our eyes are not turned down to gaze at the filth on our garments. Our eyes are on the Lord Himself. This is the proper position to handle accusation.

We keep our gaze fixed upon the Lord regardless of thoughts in our mind that are seeking to persuade us to turn away. These thoughts are what Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 2:11 as Satan's thoughts. They are thoughts that agree with Satan's way of looking at our condition. While Satan is talking and accusing, trying to get into our mind to turn our eyes upon our condition, we are tempted to look down on our filthy garments. But we need to remain in one position - we need to just keep standing before the Lord with our eyes fixed on Him. Keeping our gaze fixed upon the Lord releases the Lord Himself to deal with Satan, the accusing one. Handling accusation in this way directly affects God's building.

If we do not keep our gaze upon the Lord, we will look at our filthy garments and come under Satan's accusation. This accusation will in turn be transmitted into our relationships with the saints. We will start looking at their filthy garments and become little satans to one another, accusing the saints in our minds. This destroys God's building. But hallelujah! Our eyes are upon the Lord. He is the One appointed to deal with Satan - "And the Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke you, Satan!"

### ***The teaming up of the Triune God to deal with Satan***

In Zechariah 3:2, as Joshua keeps his attention fixed upon the Lord, the Lord intervenes for him: "And the Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke you, Satan!" We may need to read this again to see if we read it right. "And the Lord said . . . The Lord rebuke you, Satan!" Satan was accusing based upon some real ground that could be found in Joshua's condition. He accuses us based upon our sinful condition. But the Lord rebukes based upon "the Lord." Now we must ask, which Lord? That is, which Lord tells which Lord to rebuke Satan? This involves the Triune God.

Brothers and sisters, this is a most marvelous utterance in Zechariah 3:2 because it reveals the teaming up of the Triune God. It is an utterance from the Lord to the Lord, unveiling how the Lord rebukes Satan. When the Lord says to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you," this is the teaming up of the Father and the Son to rebuke Satan, the accusing enemy. When we are standing helplessly before the Lord, with Satan at our right hand seeking to press our sins and condition against us, the Lord comes in to deal with the situation.

Knowing how to handle accusation is crucial when God's building is emerging on the earth. If the enemy cannot frustrate God's building in outward ways, he will come in this subtle, hidden way to wound the boldness of our conscience and the buoyancy of our spirit so that we could not release Christ for the building up of the church. If he can put you under something that will deflate your conscience and cause you to turn your eyes away from the Lord onto your condition, then the enemy has succeeded in that instance. So we need to see how the Triune God teams up to rebuke the accuser of the brothers.

### ***God's way of looking at our condition***

Satan has a way of looking at our condition, but God has His own way of looking at our condition - through the eyes of His economy. When we are under accusation, if we keep our eyes upon the Lord, we release the economy of the Father and the Son to deal with the accuser. The economy of the Triune God over us comes into effect in our experience. God's choice and justification over us and the Son's redemption of us become the way God looks at and relates to our condition, our filthy garments. The Father and the Son team up to rebuke the enemy over every charge and accusation. This is exactly how Paul handles accusation in Romans 8. After he lays a solid foundation for a life lived in the Spirit in the first part of Romans 8, he then anticipates the accusation against that life in verses 31-35. When charges and accusations come against God's chosen ones, Paul says, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (v. 31).

### ***How God is for us***

We have to know how God is for us. How is God for us? Do we know how God is for us? If we try to answer this question by considering our past history, our present condition, or our future prospects, we will surely fall prey to Satan's accusations. Let us instead answer this question from the Word of God. The truth will set our conscience free. In Romans 8:32 Paul says, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered

Him up for us all . . ." This is how God is for us. God is for us in such a deep and profound way that He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up on the cross for us all. This has nothing to do with our condition. This has to do with the transactions of the Triune God over us.

Dealing with accusation is a one-sided affair. Nothing is mentioned about our side, our condition. Everything that is said is related to what God has done and how God is for us. Satan wants to drag us into the realm of our condition, but God does not touch that realm. God only speaks of His choice, His justification, His redemption, His dispensing of Himself into us, and His present intercession for us. This is the realm where God is, in respect to us. "How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (v. 32). Oh, brothers and sisters, this is how God is for us.

In answering how God is for us we also need to look at both Zechariah 3:2 and Romans 8:33. In Zechariah, in the presence of accusation, the Lord says to Satan, "The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" And Paul, in the presence of charges, says in Romans 8, "Who shall bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who justifies." From these two passages, we see what realm we need to be in when Satan, the accuser, lays charges against us through our own mind. God's defense of us is in the realm of His choice over us, not in the realm of our condition. God is for us because He chose us.

When Paul boldly presents the challenge to the enemy, "Who shall bring a charge against God's chosen ones?" Paul's answer brings in God with His justification of His chosen ones and Christ with His redemptive economy of death, resurrection, and intercession: "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (v. 34). Paul's answer to accusation reveals the double-team work of the Triune God. "Double-team" is a term used in sports when two defensive players team up against one offensive player to stop him. Two team up against one. This is how God is for us. God is for us based upon His choice and justification of us and the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Who can challenge that?

In Zechariah 3 the Lord Himself handles Satan's accusation in the realm of His choice over us: "Satan, are you going to accuse Joshua about his filthy garments? The Lord rebuke you, O Satan. The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" The Lord does not defend or justify Joshua's filthy garments; neither does He explain why Joshua's condition is such. He does not request that Joshua come up with any righteousness of his own to offset his filthiness. He only says that Joshua is a brand plucked from the fire. He is part of a "chosen Jerusalem." Then the Lord removes Joshua's filthy garments and clothes him with rich robes (Zech. 3:2-5). This is the way God handles the accusations of Satan.

### ***Do not come down to the level of your condition***

When Satan accuses us over our condition, we may come down to his level and be tricked into negotiating with him. The moment we look at our filthy garments, we have already come down to his level. Remember 1 John 2:1: "If anyone sins, we have [present tense] an Advocate with [prov~ / face to face with] the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Notice that this verse does not say, "If anyone looks at his sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." And it does not say, "If anyone makes an inward resolve to change his condition, we have an Advocate with the Father." No, it says, "If anyone sins, we instantly and continuously have an Advocate face to face with the Father." This means that when sin affects our condition, and our garments get filthy, our position should be as absolute as the position of Jesus Christ with the Father - face to face. Keep your eyes on Jesus at all times, especially when your condition tempts you to look someplace else!

The Triune God is looking at those who have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. In Their sight we are glorified and in the Holy City. This is how God viewed His people in Numbers 23-24. When Balak, the king of Moab, wanted to curse the children of Israel, God would only let blessing come out of the prophet Balaam's mouth. Numbers 23:21 says, "He [God] has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel." This was spoken at a time when the condition of Israel was deplorable (Num. 25:1-3). Even at that time, God did not come down to the level of His people's condition. He only related to His people according to His choice over them and His positive purposes concerning them.

### *God's love-choice*

Brothers and sisters, we have to rejoice that we are God's chosen ones. Who can be against God's chosen ones, either personally (Zech. 3) or corporately (Num. 23-24)? When it comes to the realm of accusation, what is true concerning me individually in my relationship with the Lord - I am God's chosen one - should also pervade my relationships with others. We are all under God's love-choice. He chose us simply because He loves us. Deuteronomy 7:6-8 clearly reveals the cause of God's choice over us: 6 "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. 7 The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples." In other words, the Lord is saying, "I did not choose you because of your number, because of your condition, because of your potential, because of some quality in you." No. "But because the Lord loves you" (v. 8). This is the cause, the reason, for the Lord's choice over us. The cause is found within God Himself - He just loves us. Who can dispute this love? Paul says in Romans 8:35 and 38-39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . neither death, nor life . . . nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." God's choice is a love-choice.

### *The need for higher sight*

When it comes to God's building, you cannot afford to get subjective over your personal condition. You are not just an isolated Christian trying to ward off the devil. You are a chosen, living stone in God's building to express His Son. Such a revelation gives you a higher sight than the condition of your garment. Such a vision will catapult you out of your morbid introspection into a fresh occupation with the excellencies of Christ and God's eternal designs over you. It is difficult to convey how deep the feeling of the Spirit is over this matter.

Let us again consider the scene in Zechariah 3 and how the Lord responded to Satan's accusation. Filthy garments? Yes. Bad condition? Yes. Satan accusing? Yes. Now let us hear from the Lord. What does the Triune God say about this? The Father teams up with the Son, and the Son teams up with the Father, and They say, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" The accused one is a chosen one. We are God's love-choice. Do not regard yourself lightly. God's choice is stamped upon us. Paul says, "The solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The Lord knows those who are His" (2 Tim. 2:19).

To turn in on yourself with condemnation is to merge with Satan's thoughts. God's thoughts are different: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11). Then in Zechariah 3:2 the Lord says, "Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" God's thought is that we are chosen brands plucked from the fire. Yes, we were in the fire - the fire of the world, the fire of sin, the fire of filth - but God Himself came after us and plucked us out. Hallelujah! What did we do? Nothing in ourselves. We were just plucked from the fire. Even the Hebrew tense (hophal) for the verb "plucked" is passive. This means that it was all God's mercy and grace that sought us out, found us, and stirred us up to love Him and give our lives for the building of His house. This is how the Lord evaluates us as the stones for His building. So do not let Satan drag you down to the level of your condition.

Now what are we going to do with Satan's accusations? Nothing. While Satan stands there, we, like Joshua, are going to watch God's handling of His chosen ones. Joshua did not take his eyes off the Lord. He was just standing before the Angel of the Lord, indicating that he did not move. He was transferred from the realm of cleaning up his own condition to having his eyes fixed upon the Lord. This same scene is repeated again and again throughout the Bible. When the children of Israel were bitten by the fiery serpents, they were told to look not at their bite but at the brazen serpent on the pole, and they would live (Num. 21:6-8; cf. John 3:14-15). And when the book of Hebrews says, "But now we do not yet see all things put under Him," we are not told to double our efforts, but to "see Jesus" (Heb. 2:8-9). And in Revelation chapter 12, when the accuser of the brothers comes in to accuse the saints before God day and night, the saints are

directed not to examine the validity of the accusations, but to enjoy the blood of the Lamb. Our eyes are upon the Lord. This is our fixed position.

### ***Positioned to let God speak***

From our fixed position, God begins to speak and deal with the negative situation. In Zechariah 3:4 He says, "Take away the filthy garments from [Joshua]. And to him He said, See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes." Sometimes when you fellowship with a saint you just want to say, "See . . . See. Look at what Christ has done for you! He has removed your iniquity." The sense of the Hebrew word translated "iniquity" refers not just to the sinful deeds themselves, but also to the guilt that comes with them. Iniquity includes the resulting condition of guilt that brings in a state of feeling wrong and accused. On the negative side, the Lord takes away the filthy garments; and on the positive side, He clothes us with rich robes. These robes are Christ Himself as our righteousness (Isa. 61:10; 1 Cor. 1:30).

"Filthy garments" refers not merely to Joshua's personal failure. It also refers to the contamination and the filth that was splattered on him because of his contact with worldly Babylon. In the same way today, this generation is becoming more filthy and more contaminated so that you cannot even go to the grocery store without getting splattered with some filth at the checkout stand. But our experience at the grocery store is not just a personal struggle going on in an individual way. We are not trying to overcome this contamination merely for our own spirituality. No, we must come into a higher realm! We must realize that Satan's design is to disintegrate the building of the church. We are chosen ones for God's building! The Lord has removed our iniquity in one day at the cross! That is why when we come to a meeting of the church with our garments splattered with filth from the day, we can just stay positioned before the Lord with an open mouth and say, "Jesus, I love You! Thank You for Your blood. Thank You, Lord Jesus! You have removed all my sins and my guilt. You have done it." While we are beholding Him, the Father and the Son team up together to rebuke Satan. The enemy is defeated. Hallelujah! God's speaking spreads a table before us in the presence of our enemy. So in the presence of an accusing Satan, we are eating and drinking Jesus and being built up together in spirit as God's building.

### ***The issue of handling accusation God's way***

When we handle accusation in God's way, there is an issue - we enjoy His rebuking of Satan, His removal of our filthy garments, and His robing us in rich robes. When God does a work over us in this way, then we hear His further speaking. Zechariah 3:6-7 says, 6 "Then the Angel of the Lord admonished Joshua, saying, 7 Thus says the Lord of hosts: If you will walk in My ways, and if you will keep My command, then you shall also judge My house." The word "judge" here is not just the usual Hebrew word for judge. It is a word that includes the thought of contending. It means "You will contend for My house. You will govern My house."

God deals with the enemy according to the divine revelation of the finished work of Christ, the efficacy of the blood, and our being fixed only upon Him and what He has done for us. Look at the issue of that - the filthy garments are removed, and the accusation of the devil over our condition is silenced. The result is that we will judge and contend for God's house. We will govern His house. When we handle accusation in God's way, there is something that spontaneously rises up in us to contend for the church life. There is a jealousy in us for the protection of God's house. We want to deny our self so that no member would be cheated of life because of us. You and I do not want to be a cause of life leaking out of God's building. This genuine care for God's building is the issue of handling accusation in God's way.

The slightest accusing thought in our life becomes a major opportunity to keep ourselves fixed on the Lord, and to let Him rebuke Satan. The way you can detect the enemy's accusation is by its effect on you. It eats away at you. It whittles you down until everything in your world revolves around yourself - "me, myself, and I" and "poor me." Such a person in this condition has no concern for God's house. But, like Joshua, when we know we are forgiven and robed with righteousness, we contend for God's house and have charge of His courts. We watch and guard the courts of fellowship in God's house.

Then the Lord says in Zechariah 3:7, "I will give you places to walk among those who stand here." This means He makes a way for us in the church life. We fit into the building. When we are without accusation and enjoy the liberty of the Spirit, we fit everywhere in the church life. There are many places for us to walk.

### *God's building as a wonder and a testimony*

In Zechariah 3:8 there is a further revelation concerning God's building. The Angel of the Lord says, "Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you, for they are a wondrous sign." This means that all the ones gathered together for God's building are "a wondrous sign." This word in Hebrew means "displays of God's power," "miracles," "models to look at." This means that those in God's building are a kind of phenomenon and testimony to the world and to the universe (cf. Eph. 3:10). Look at us motley people. Look at our condition. Look at our histories. Look at it all. But now we are washed in the blood, we are robed with Christ, we are built up with one another in the Spirit. We are a wondrous sign. We are a testimony to the heavens of God's building work executed in Christ Jesus.

The last part of Zechariah 3:8 continues this thought: "For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH." This is Christ being brought forth as a result of the Lord Himself handling Satan, the accuser. When we remain fixed before the Lord, we are in a position to bring forth Christ in our experience. Only a non-accused person can let Christ grow. You cannot grow in the Lord if you are looking at your filthy garments. You stultify your growth. You frustrate your growth because your eyes are in the wrong place (cf. Gal. 5:1-4).

So if you have filthy garments on, just stand there before the Lord. Even if Satan is at your right hand and you feel him accusing you, tempting you to look at the filth on yourself, keep your eyes fixed on the Lord. Stay there. Sing to Him from your depths. Sing another verse. Go deeper. Cry out, "Abba! Father!" Then watch His Spirit bear witness with your spirit. Watch the Father and the Son team up. Listen to what They say: "You are a child of God. You are an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ" (Rom. 8:15-17). When God talks, no one dares to interrupt, including the devil - "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died" (Rom. 8:33-34). This is awesome. It is a wonder to the universe.

### *Letting Christ branch out and build us*

When we stand against all the devil's methods of disintegrating the building by personal accusation, we have an open channel to enjoy all that the Lord is, and then God brings forth Christ, His Servant, the BRANCH. Christ grows and branches out into all our relationships. This branching of Christ through us - our growing up into Him - becomes the building. Thus, following Christ, "the BRANCH," in Zechariah 3:8 is "the stone" for God's building in verse 9: "For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: Upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription, says the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." This is Christ as the Stone with seven eyes building the church. When Christ relates us together in the building, there are seven eyes. This means the church is a place full of light. Nothing goes unnoticed. Everything is exposed by the seven eyes. There is an eye everywhere. But thank God for the eyes, the exposure, and all the measurement that goes on in the church life (Zech. 4:10). It is all for one thing - to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, and to let Him remove our filthy garments, robe us with rich robes, and give us places to walk for His building.

Finally, Zechariah 3:10 describes the atmosphere of such a church life: "In that day, says the Lord of hosts, everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree." Consider the atmosphere. You are not waiting to be invited by others. You are not saying to yourself, "I wonder if someone is going to pay attention to me. I wonder if I am going to be invited to sit under someone's tree. No one said hello to me this morning." No, the spontaneous reaction of life in the Spirit is, "Everyone will invite his neighbor." This means that when Christ as the Branch grows (v. 8), and when He as the Stone has built us up together (v. 9), there is an absence of self-centeredness in our relationships. We are not easily offended. You find that you are automatically inviting your neighbor to fellowship under your vine and under your fig tree. What a

picture of God's building!

May the Lord deeply impress us with all these experiences in Zechariah, especially with how to handle accusation. Why? Because handling accusation in God's economy directly affects our ability to be related to one another in spirit. Zechariah makes us aware that when we are in the building of God, Satan is there to tempt us to look at our condition, and to turn us away from gazing upon the Lord. But we can fix our gaze upon Him through our singing, our praying, our serving together, and our meeting together. Then we just find ourselves fellowshiping in the homes of the saints - under the vine and under the fig tree. This is God's building today!

- *Bill Freeman*

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