

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE



Getting Started:

- What are your favorite songs from your teenage years that you still rock out to when nobody else is listening?
- What is the weirdest thing you've ever eaten for breakfast that is not a breakfast food?

Going Deeper:

- What is God showing you this week as you read His Word and pray?
- What decisions or life struggles do you need Biblical direction or prayer for?

Message Summary

Zechariah 3:1-7

October 24-25, 2020

This week, we had the privilege of hearing from our Bowling Green Campus Pastor, Mike Norman. Pastor Mike shared from the book of Zechariah, which is in the Old Testament and often overlooked as we read through our Bibles. In our time together, we took a closer look at the vision Zechariah had of the high priest Joshua being cleansed by God. The scene is that of a courtroom drama similar to many popular TV shows like *Perry Mason*, *Matlock*, or *Law and Order*. The location of the courtroom is in heaven, where we see God overseeing the proceedings as the judge. As with any trial, we see a prosecuting attorney as well as a defense attorney. Joshua is representing the people of Israel, just as he does every time we see him. He stands before the court clothed in filthy rags that are symbolic of his sin, guilt, and unrighteousness. We were reminded at this point that righteousness means to be in right standing with someone. Joshua is standing in the place of the Israelites because of their unrighteousness. Reflecting on Israel's history, we see that they constantly fell into idol worship. They also struggled to follow God's rules and commands including rules on marriage or

rebuilding the temple. No matter the reason, they stand before God filthy. As a witness to all of this, we were asked how we would feel to be in Joshua's place as he stands before the judge completely exposed where no sin is hidden from Him.

"Everywhere we look in this life we see comparison, judgment, and condemnation. Social media, for some of us, seems to play a critical role in fueling these feelings. This stems from a place deep down inside where we ALL feel like we just don't measure up. There's a voice that we hear telling us repeatedly that we're not who we say we are. Maybe the voice says to you, "You're a fake" or "Nobody likes you" or "You will never be good enough" "We want validation that we are liked, or noticed. It's a sign of being seen or accepted. But that feeling only lasts for a short while. Then it fades away and insecurity begins to creep back in."

Joshua, who also represents us, stands in his filthy clothes in the presence of God, unrighteous and not measuring up. We then see the presence of Satan in the room. He is the accuser or prosecutor. Even though we commonly think Satan's goal is to tempt us and enslave us in sin (which we can do well enough on our own), his main purpose is to be our accuser. He works on a case against us day and night. He wants to drag as many with him as possible. And for those of us who follow Christ, he wants to destroy our spiritual peace by whispering that we are an imposter and that we don't measure up. But in truth, he is not wrong; we have sinned and not measured up to God's law. His accusations are true and it weighs heavy on us. His words penetrate our hearts and paralyze our spirit.

Next, we looked at how *"The conscience is an invention by God designed to remember and reflect the law of God."* We learned that it is like an antenna that needs to be turned into God's frequency. This helps us stay connected to Him and His truths. But Satan also has a competing frequency that is trying to dominate and hijack what God is broadcasting. There are a lot of things in this world that work to jam God's frequency. We will have a season where we hear the broadcast of the enemy a little clearer. This happens when things aren't going as planned in your life or there are troubles at home, in your relationships, or at work. For some, it is the experience of loss or struggling with illness while others are just in a season where things are cold with God. This is at times translated as "God is punishing me and I deserve it." We can do a lot to jam the frequency of truth on our own, not to mention all of the waves of frequency jammers we face every day. *"The Accuser will use anything to disrupt, disconnect, and redirect you to his message."*

As Christ-followers, the signal can get hijacked, as well. Doubt can creep in when we are sharing our faith or the good news of the gospel with someone. We could be fighting distractions when we are trying to spend time with God in His Word or focus on prayer. It can be exhausting to combat and block all of the distractions. Some of you may be experiencing this right now as you are reading this summary of a very good message. If we listen to the accusers broadcast too long, we will develop a spiritual problem called condemnation which is a misfiring of our conscience. We struggle to remember and reflect on the law of God. We may become numb to the accusations and find we are passive about our right standing with God and have a blah position when it comes to our walk with Him. *"Or we can be overly sensitive to it and fall into a mindset of works-based salvation. We feel the weight of not being good enough, so we work hard to earn back God's love. As if we had lost it somehow. Either way, what we need to work on is recalibrating the conscience."*

For the Christian, we have the advantage of being made new in Christ and having the transforming power of the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit as our recalibration tools."

This brings us to the other person in Zechariah's vision. The one who is standing in our defense and making a plea on our behalf. He is described as the advocate, and He speaks with authority for us. Thankfully, we don't have to defend ourselves because, "*We will never find peace, by arguing for our innocence.*" We don't need to defend ourselves as followers of Jesus. We don't stand before the judge alone. Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are standing there with us. "*So, the Son is our Advocate with the Father, interceding for us, and the Spirit is our Advocate as a counselor, guiding us into the truth and testifying that indeed we belong to Christ.*" Just like any good defense attorney, Jesus pleads our case before the judge. He is not going to just stand there and agree with the accuser. He acknowledges the Father as a righteous judge and shows that a price has been paid and asks that a pardon is given in spite of our sin.

As the judgment is handed down, we see God pardon Joshua and choose Jerusalem. The brand or stick is plucked from the fire just as we are as Christ-followers. We have been saved from eternal punishment in hell, but we still carry the char and scars of sin in our life. We are reminded that we live in a fallen world that is marred and distorted from its original intent. "*Just because we are removed from the fire doesn't mean that the damage goes away. The fire goes away but the char remains. But, for those who don't follow Christ, their stick remains in the fire.*" After the stick is removed from the fire, we see there is no one to condemn us. Jesus has argued our case and paid the penalty for us. No one can bring charges against God's elect; it is God who justifies! "*At our right hand is our accuser, but at God's right hand is our Advocate. That is so important. But that's not all...Our accuser has been thrown down!*" No one stands to condemn Joshua, and God orders his filthy garments removed. Then, he is clothed in pure vestments. And because we are in Christ Jesus, we have been declared clean, as well.

The final challenge we received was to envision a church full of people who have learned to deal with the prosecutor. This means we would have no guilt and be able to stem those times of discouragement that drive us into depression. If we all preached the gospel to ourselves, things would look so different and it would help us deal better with the accusations of the enemy. Just picture this, "*Worship would be off the charts glorious, we would be eager to run to God, we would make it a priority! We wouldn't be afraid, we would not be ashamed, and we would not be so self conscious. We might actually even have a sense of humor about ourselves because we know how ridiculous it is that we are even worthy to be called Christians. Lastly, there would be great oneness, because we would finally stop being so insecure about who we are and how we look to others. We wouldn't need the "Like" Button. Because we would finally trust God when He says, 'Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with newness.'*"

DISCUSSION & APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Take a moment to read our sermon text:

Zechariah 3:1-7

After briefly reviewing the message summary, use these questions to further examine the sermon and to discuss how these truths apply to daily life, so we can “be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (Jas.1:22). Based on your knowledge of the people in your life group, select the questions that will best help you frame the group’s discussion of this sermon and sermon text.

GENERAL SERMON QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is the key message of these verses? Explain why you think this.
2. After hearing the message and reading the scriptures, what was your biggest takeaway and why?
3. In what ways do these truths, which were written thousands of years ago, apply today?
4. Which point in the sermon spoke to you the most? How did it affect you?
5. In what ways do these passages point to Christ? What can we share with others about Him from what we just heard and read?

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION WITH PASTOR MIKE

1. How often does the question “Am I acceptable” keep you on the sidelines and prevent you from taking action in your next step of faith?
2. Did the vision of a trial, where you are the defendant, Satan is the prosecutor and Jesus is your defense attorney, help you see the gospel in a clearer way? If so, how?
3. If we could be a church who preached the gospel to ourselves daily and rejected the message of the “prosecutor”, how would that change our Life Group experience?

Read Zechariah 3:1-7, Revelation 12:10, 1 John 2:1, John 14:16-17, Romans 8:34, Romans 3:22-28

1. In what ways do we face judgment today? How can we combat those comparisons, judgments and condemnations?
2. What emotions and feelings do you experience thinking about standing before God in judgment?
3. Who is the accuser? Why is it important that we know who this is and what his goal is? What is his mission? When he is accusing you before God is he right in doing so? Why or why not?
4. Define righteousness in your own words. How do we achieve this? Can we?
5. What is the purpose of our conscience? How is it like an antenna? How does the enemy try to jam God’s frequency and how do we jam the frequency on our own? In what ways can recalibrate our conscience if we find it is misfiring?
6. Why is it not a good idea that we defend ourselves before God as He judges us? What is the role of the advocate (Jesus) in the trial we are watching? How can that picture give us hope as Christ-followers?
7. Even though we are saved from the fire, what is the effect of sin on our lives? What happens to the accuser?
8. What is the final judgement for Joshua? How is his innocence signified?
9. How can we have confidence that our outcome will be the same?
10. Who do you know that needs to hear this message of hope? Pray for them now.

The Challenge - Life Application

- Read the passages used in this week's message. Write down any scriptures you need to be reminded of on sticky notes and place them around the house. Try to memorize as many as you can.
- Reflect on the message and ask God to give you His strength as you follow Him.
- Pray that, as Christ-followers, we would reflect the change God has made in us.
- Go back and listen or watch the sermon if you missed it or you need to be reminded of its truths.

Weekly Prayer Focus

Pray for Our Church:

- Ask God to use us as instruments for His purpose and glory.
- Pray that we are a GOING church, proclaiming the gospel to the nations.
- Ask God to help each of us to live a life that reflects Him.
- Pray for all of our campuses.
- Pray for our pastors and leadership here at Gateway.

Pray for Our City:

- The government and civic leaders
- Those in need in our community and the services that help them
- The fire and police departments
- Schools, students, and teachers

Pray for Our World:

- Pray for the Christ-followers in Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Cuba, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh.
- Pray for all of those who are being persecuted in harm's way for the Kingdom.
- Pray that the message of Christ will reach all of mankind.

Pray for Life Groups at Gateway:

- Pray for those who are leading our groups.
- Pray that everyone involved in our groups would continue to be rooted in the Word and connected to each other.
- Pray for relationships to grow with other Christ-followers and that we will encourage and care for one another.
- Pray for discipleship opportunities.