

## Zechariah 3:1-5

*Zechariah 3:1 (NASB) 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. <sup>2</sup> The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! **Is this not a burning stick plucked from the fire?**” <sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. <sup>4</sup> He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.” <sup>5</sup> 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.*

What a fascinating passage! So many details invite our attention: Joshua’s filthy clothing, Satan accusing him as unworthy to be God’s high priest, the angel of the Lord who rejects Satan’s accusation and grants Joshua forgiveness and affirms his role as high priest. We could spend many pages explaining and applying these details. Instead, let us focus on how the Lord described Joshua: *“Is this not a burning stick plucked from the fire?”*

Have you ever plucked a burning stick from a camp-fire? The stick is on fire, consuming itself from within. Yet it has also been ignited by the fire that surrounds it. You pluck it from the fire, blow out its flames, and there it is – black and smoking, but intact and ready for any use you may have for it.

In the same way, Joshua’s life was on fire from his own sinful choices (symbolized by his filthy clothing). He was also an Israelite – a member of a nation which had come under God’s judgment because of



its multi-generational rebellion against Him. Left to himself, Joshua was doomed to incineration. Yet God plucked him from the fire, forgave him of the guilt of his many sins, and commissioned him to be His representative. The angel of the Lord was mysteriously instrumental in Joshua's rescue. *He rebuked Satan's accusations. He removed Joshua's guilt. He clothed Joshua in clean festal robes and put a priest's turban on his head.* Today we know the identity of this divine messenger. He is the Lord Jesus, and His death on the cross was the basis of Joshua's rescue and reclamation.

*"Is this not a burning stick plucked from the fire?"* Can you relate to God's description of Joshua? Recently, God reminded me that this is an apt description of my own life.

- Before God rescued me through Jesus, my life was on fire. I had chosen to live independently from God, to be my own god. At first, this path seemed wise and liberating. But each choice in this direction only ignited another flame licking at my soul. The apostle Paul describes it this way: *"For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another"* (Titus 3:3).
- But it wasn't just my wrong choices that set my life aflame. I was also part of a family on fire. Generations of godlessness resulted in a bonfire, a whirlpool of dysfunction into which I was born. When God showed Isaiah this same plight, he cried: *"Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips"* (Isaiah 6:5). God created the family to be a powerful "system" that communicates His life and love to its members. But when a family departs from God, it becomes a death-dealing system that ripples down through the generations. Except for two believers in my own extended family, our system was very broken. And apart from God's rescue, the dysfunctional fire continues unabated.



- Who can explain the mercy of God, that He would rescue someone like me – a burning stick in the midst of a great fire? I said “Yes” to Him when He came to rescue me – but it is only His mercy that made this rescue possible. When one is perishing inside a burning house, he does not boast that he allowed a fireman to carry him to safety. Rather, he marvels that someone would risk his life to save one so utterly doomed. In the same way, Paul says: *“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for us appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy . . . (which) He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:4-6).*
- God plucked me, a burning stick, from the fire in order to make me His child, and to give me a unique role in representing Him in this poor dark world. Why would He entrust such a privilege to someone like me? When I was a young believer, I thought God was lucky to have me. But the more I go on with God, the more amazed I am that He works through me. “(God) does use me. But . . . the axe cannot boast of the trees it has cut down. It could do nothing but for the woodsman. He made it, he sharpened it, and he used it. The moment he throws it aside, it becomes only iron. O that I may never lose sight of this.”\*

*Thank You, Lord Jesus, for your great mercy. Like Joshua, I am a burning stick plucked from the fire. Help me to live today as a grateful recipient of Your mercy. Work through me today to offer Your mercy to others.*

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\* Samuel Brengle, cited in Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Moody Press, 1994), p. 62.

