

# God's Provision for Spiritual Stagnation - Part 1

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Zechariah chapter 3, it's right at the back of the Old Testament. I think it's what, the second last book of the Old Testament. So if you start with Matthew and you work your way forward, you'll get Malachi and Zechariah.

And so Zechariah chapter 3, and we'll read verse 1 through to the end of the chapter. It's only 10 verses, so it's not too many. Zechariah chapter 3 verse 1, hear the word of the Lord.

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.

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've taken away your sin, and I'll put fine garments on you.

[ 1 : 03 ]     And 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. Then the angel of the Lord gave this charge to Joshua.

This is what the Lord Almighty says. If you walk in obedience to me and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge over 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'm going to bring my servant the branch. See the stone I've set in front of Joshua. There are seven eyes on that 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. This is the word of the Lord.

[ 2 : 04 ]     Let's pray and ask his blessing on the preaching of his word. Our Father, we thank you for the word open now before us. And we do ask, O Lord, that you would open our eyes as the psalmist prays, Lord, that we will see wonderful things in your word.

We ask that you would open our hearts that we would receive that which we see, Lord. And we pray, O Lord, that you would quicken, excite, Lord, and open our will, O God, for us to not only be hearers, but also doers of your word, O God.

And so bless us now as we sit listening to the preaching of your word. We ask you these mercies in Jesus' name. Amen. God's provision for spiritual stagnation.

I'm sure this is a common experience for many to feel stuck in a rut. I actually went on to Google and just like looked at the origin, the nature, the genesis, if you will, of this expression, stuck in a rut.

It's quite fascinating, but for the sake of time, I think I'm just gonna take it for granted that we all understand what it means to be stuck in a rut, proverbially speaking, figuratively speaking, to be stuck in a rut.

[ 3 : 13 ] We could find ourselves there professionally in terms of our career. We could find ourselves there relationally. Perhaps there's a particular relationship at this time where we just feel we're not making any progress in it.

We feel stuck in a rut. We can also find this financially. Amen. Stuck in a rut. Oh, it's just me, sorry. We can also find this financially.

Stuck in a rut. Or especially if you are preparing a PhD proposal like I'm doing, you find yourself stuck educationally. You're just stuck. You know, you just can't make any headway.

You just can't seem to figure this thing out. And you ask yourself, why have I enrolled in this program? Why am I doing this to myself? And so forth. But the book of Zechariah picks up another important area we could be stuck in.

Another important area where stagnation could be happening in our lives. The book of Zechariah speaks about spiritual stagnation.

[ 4 : 12 ] Or to be stuck in a rut spiritually. We're in our lives before the Lord. We're in our Christian life. And in our worship to God. And in the various aspects of our devotional life, we could feel stuck.

We could feel stagnant. Perhaps the trials of life, the worries of this world, the sin that we battle with, and the flesh that we deal with, leave us feeling spiritually stuck in a rut.

To an extent, this was the experience of the people of God here in the book of Zechariah. And over these two chapters, chapter three and chapter four, I want us to look at this theme of being spiritually stuck.

Spiritual stagnation. So this week, we'll look at chapter three. And Lord willing, next week, we'll pick up chapter four. And we'll see what God provides his people who find themselves at this juncture in their spiritual journey, in their pilgrimage towards the New Jerusalem.

The book of Zechariah, just for context, tracks the history of Israel after having been in exile for 70 years. They've now been set free. They've now been released from this period of exile in Babylon.

[ 5 : 25 ] And they've been sent back to their home. And they've been sent back to rebuild. They've been sent back to rebuild. And so Zechariah tracks their history. And this is the great theme of not only Zechariah, but the other minor prophets in the Old Testament.

Books like Haggai and Malachi. They show us Israel's efforts to rebuild after ruin, rebuilding their walls, rebuilding their temple.

And here we see in Zechariah, he prophesied to a small community of Jews living among the ruins of Jerusalem after having returned from exile in Babylon.

This community had begun rebuilding the temple. On the initial return, we see this recorded for us in the historical book of Ezra, chapter three. They've begun rebuilding, but the work had stopped and they'd become spiritually stagnant.

The walls are incomplete. The building has not progressed beyond what they ought to have. They've stopped the work and become stagnant, the people of God.

[ 6 : 37 ] In fact, God speaks through the prophet Haggai and says, you have put my work off to focus on your work.

We read, for instance, in Haggai chapter one, verse one, these words, you don't have to turn there. In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel, son of Sheatil, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, son of Josadak, the high priest.

This is what the Lord Almighty says. These people say, the time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house. Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai. Is it a time for yourselves to be living in your paneled houses while this house remains a ruin?

And that sets us up for the context in which where these people found themselves. They were set to a task by God. They've now become stagnant and complacent in this task.

And God is now raising up prophets like Zechariah to speak to these people and to bring them, as it were, out of their spiritual stagnation. The work has stopped.

[ 7 : 51 ] They've started to, as we see in Haggai, almost started having an inward focus. And we learn here then that a mark of spiritual stagnation is a propensity towards self-indulgence.

A propensity towards focusing on the self instead of God. If we are spiritually numb, it means we are possibly carnally invested.

No outward focus, no outward influence from God, no outward expression to God, no busying or being busy with the work of God, does lead to spiritual stagnation.

I looked at my pool over the last couple of weeks and I tell you, I haven't touched that thing in a couple of months, at least two months. There's been no outward pressure from the pump. There's been no airflow into the water.

And that thing has just been standing there without any external influence whatsoever. And I assure you, it's not as blue anymore. In fact, that lack and deprivation of outward effort, outward influence, has caused a stagnation.

[ 8 : 59 ] And stagnation that has not just stood in its current condition, but had deteriorated. It had deteriorated. And that's what happens with stagnation. That's what happens with spiritual stagnation.

It is not that we just remain the way we are, but it is that we become worse. There's regression that takes place. This is what we see in the life of the people of Israel. Zechariah, as well as Haggai's ministry, consisted of encouraging the people to continue the work of rebuilding, to push them out of the rut, as it were.

God gives Zechariah in this book, eight visions. This book of Zechariah is made up predominantly of eight visions. And in chapter three, we find ourselves in the fourth vision.

And God has given assurance in chapter one, that he will rebuild Jerusalem. And now he comes to effect that work by bringing the people out of their spiritual rut.

Yeah, in chapter three and chapter four, God will address the issue of leadership. Chapter three and chapter four deals with the two primary leaders in Israel, the high priest Joshua. And chapter four, we'll see the governor Zerubbabel.

[ 10 : 10 ] But that's for next week, Lord willing. In Joshua this morning, in chapter three, we see God reestablishing the priesthood after the exilic exile period.

And we also see how God deals with the sins of Israel's complacency, spiritual stagnation, and disobedience. There will be no rebuilding without renewal.

And God brings in renewal. Similar to the book of Job, we looked at last time, there's a heavenly scene that unfolds here. And it seems like whenever I preach, we're just in the heavenly scenes, but that's fine.

We'll go again this morning. Chapter three, verse one, there's a heavenly scene unfolding. And so we'll make the first point, which is, by the way, that was just introduction.

So we'll make the first point, which is the heavenly courtroom, the heavenly courtroom. The first scene in this dramatic vision is of a heavenly courtroom. Joshua is standing before the angel of the Lord and Satan on his right.

- [ 11 : 12 ] The defendant standing, the prosecutor at his right, with the charges, the accusation, and the judge of all the earth before them. That's the courtroom setting.

Now what occasions this is, of course, God's previous vision to Zachariah, assuring him that there will be a rebuilding. And now a reinstating of the priesthood.

And this also happens to be what occasions Satan's attack and the charge is now brought to Joshua. So we see here, we learn at least that the devil, he's a great disruptor, a great destroyer, a robber, and a thief of life, of good, of beauty, of truth, and of grace.

His intentions here with these accusations against Joshua are not noble. They're not sincere or out of concern for righteousness. Where God builds up, Satan tears down.

He does this through using our sins against us, our weaknesses against us, our hurt against us, our guilt and our shame against us.

- [ 12 : 24 ] He always stands ready to not let a bad situation in your life go to waste. He stands ready to not let a sin situation in your life go to waste.

And so, ready with the accusations, he goes on the attack against Joshua before God. And so he does, even in our lives, accusations, sowing doubt, sowing seeds of shame and guilt and discontent.

You're no saint, he tells us. You have no place among these people who are clearly more godly and more spiritually vibrant than you. When you seek to pray and to humble yourself before God, he whispers, look at this hypocrite taking on an external posture while the inward is not the way it's supposed to be.

He goes on the attack with accusations when we plan to come to church and fellowship with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. He reminds us, you have no place there.

What are you doing there? Why did you go there? The husband, who tries to lead his family in devotion and who tries to lead them before the Lord during the course of the week, he tells him, stop fooling yourself.

- [ 13 : 39 ] They know who you are. Why are you doing what you are doing? These are some of the early seeds he lays that eventually blossoms into spiritual stagnation.

Accusations. So in this heavenly scene, Satan reprises his role as the accuser and he goes for Joshua the high priest and by extension, because Joshua as a priest represents the people, by extension, he goes for the very people of God.

If he can discredit the priest, he can discredit the people and he can impede the work of God. And so that's the courtroom setting. We've got the accuser, got the defendant, we've got the judge and the situation and the scenario is all set up.

Second thing I want you to notice is the heavenly rebuke. The second scene in this drama is a heavenly rebuke. Notice Joshua remains silent amidst the accusations, amidst the sowing of doubt and the highlighting of guilt.

As Satan stands by his right hand side and accuses him, Joshua remains silent. The high priest has no word. Joshua does not defend himself.

- [ 14 : 59 ] He does not deny the accusations and he does not respond to any of it either. This is first a lesson to us that dealing with the accusations and attacks of the devil.

We do not engage in dialogue with him. The first time it happened back in the garden when we engaged in dialogue with him, it didn't quite turn out the way or in a good way. So we kind of, you know, don't do that and we just look to the Lord.

And so Joshua's got this thing nailed down. He's not engaging in or with Satan. He just stands there. He doesn't protest his innocence. Why not? Why not?

I think verse three has the answer. Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel of the Lord. Why is Joshua not protesting his innocence?

Why is Joshua not standing and trying to resist these charges? Well, it's because he's guilty. It's because his garments are filthy. It's because he's standing there and he's standing in shame.

[ 16 : 00 ] He's standing there and what the Satan is saying, despite what the intentions and the motivations are, what he's saying is true. The evidence is there. He's standing with the evidence.

Joshua is standing with exhibit A right there and he is guilty. Guilty as charged as they would say. He stood there with filthy garments.

His guilt was obvious, clear to Satan, how much not more clear to God. Charles Spurgeon, I'm beginning to quote Spurgeon, the Baptist preacher, quite often in my sermons, but Spurgeon writes, truly dear friend, if Satan wants to accuse us, any page of our history, any hour of any day will furnish him material for his charges.

Yesterday you were impatient. The day before you were proud. Another day you were slothful. Another day you were angry.

Oh, what a den of unclean birds the human heart is. If the old accuser wants reason for accusation, he may need indeed find as many as he will, many as he wills, and continue to accuse as long as ever he pleases, for we are all together as an unclean thing.

[ 17 : 26 ] We can look to any day in our life. Any page in our history will furnish him with material to level charges against us. The Puritan William Gurnall, 17th century author, he writes in what is really today a masterful book on spiritual warfare called The Christian's Complete Armor.

And in it he talks about our proper reaction to Satan's accusations. There Gurnall writes, and I quote, he says, let these accusations make you more humble.

To be honest with ourselves, we must admit that many of his charges are all true. If Satan, whose eyes and understanding are so darkened, can charge us with this much, what could the light of God uncover?

What a wonderful opportunity again to acknowledge our own sinfulness and the overriding mercy of God. By this attitude, listen to what Gurnall says, by this attitude, we take the very bricks Satan is throwing at us and we use them to build a monument to the glory of God.

Do you notice in the courtroom of heaven? Do you notice in this highest court we are called to? When Satan stands at Joshua's right hand accusing him and discrediting him, though they are grounds, notice who comes to Joshua's defense.

[ 18 : 52 ] Verse two, the Lord said to Satan, the Lord rebuke you, Satan. In the face of all of these charges, in the face of all of the accusations, in the face of the filthy garments, right there, we see the Lord comes to Joshua's defense.

Again, the Puritan Matthew Henry in his commentary, he notes, it is the happiness of the saints that the judge is their friend. The judge is their friend.

And so we see the Lord comes to his defense. The Lord rebukes you. Satan then stands under the eternal rebuke of God. A rebuke is a denouncement.

It is a direct and it is a sharp disapproval. Satan stands under the eternal disapproval, disfavor and denouncement of God and he is silenced by God's rebuke.

Jude in the New Testament tells us that when Michael, this glorious, powerful archangel, was fighting with Satan over the body of Moses, even Michael did not seek to engage with the devil.

[ 20 : 01 ] But we read in Jude, Michael says, the Lord rebukes you. This is our defense against these accusations. The Lord disapproves strongly and denounces him sharply.

So his accusations hold no power, no weight. Even in this cosmic court of heaven, he is, he stands, he remains rebuked.

So we see, the Lord is our defense. Think about the comforting truth here. Your sins play out before the heavenly courtroom of God with your greatest accuser, right there, and your greatest defender, and your defense is strong, your defense is sure, your defense is God.

In the rebuke to Satan, the Lord says, the one who has chosen Jerusalem, do you see that in verse 3? The one who has chosen Jerusalem rebukes you. The Lord doesn't rebuke Satan because his accusations are false.

The Lord is not rebuking Satan because he's saying something that's untrue, but because he has chosen us, he has chosen Joshua, he has chosen Israel for his purposes.

[ 21 : 13 ] What causes God to defend us guilty sinners is not that Satan is wrong, it is not that we are right, but it is that we've been chosen, we've been elected by God, and that settles it.

God's gracious choice of us, despite who we are, is the grounds upon which we stand, not our goodness, not our works, not even the pretentious efforts that we put on.

Nothing shakes this ground of God, it is impenetrable. God asks Satan as we read on, God asks in this heavenly courtroom, Joshua, verse, then he said to Joshua, see, I've taken your sin and I'll put fine garments on you.

And we see in the latter part of verse 2 where it says, the Lord rebuke you, say to the Lord, I've chosen Jerusalem, rebukes you. Is this not this man, a burning stick snatched from the fire?

What a description of God's rescuing effort. Is this man not a burning stick snatched out of the fire? this is what God asks.

[ 22 : 31 ] Observe the imagery, the fire of God's judgment fell upon Judah. They endured the sheer hot flame while in the furnace of exile.

Now they've been set free. Now they've returned as exiles. There's been redemption, yet they have fallen into the similar patterns of spiritual slothfulness and Satan pounces now.

Is this not the problem and the pattern with all of us? God rescues, he redeems, he saves, we repent, and then soon we find ourselves tempted, and we are wandering, and our hearts are restless, and we are at it again.

I don't know where you may be in this pattern. Are you being tempted to drift again? To wander? Are you being tempted to just coast? Bye?

Are you perhaps right there now in that place of sin that God saved you from? Are you actually there entertaining the sin God has already delivered you from?

[ 23 : 41 ] Playing with the fire that God has already plucked you out of? God says, is this not a burning stick I plucked from the fire? Is this not the one that I took out of that mess, out of the rot, out of the sin, out of the judgment?

This dear friends is a wonderful description of our salvation. God plucked us from the fires of judgment, from the flames of the spirit, and from the hopeless furnace of vanity, emptiness, and it is the great and gracious work of our salvation that we need reminding of when our hearts feel like drifting and spiritual stagnation sets in.

Has God not rescued you? Has God not rescued you? There's an Afrikaans chorus that we sing on the Cape Flats. I've noticed there's quite a few Afrikaans folk here at the Union Chapel and it's great.

And it employs the very words of this song, of this prophecy of Zechariah 3. And just in case there's maybe a talent scout here, I'm not into changing careers, I'm not going to sing because I might be noticed and the scout might want me to change a career part, so I'm not going to sing it.

But it's worth quoting it, at least if you speak Afrikaans I think you'll appreciate it and I'll do an interpretation. But the Afrikaans refrain goes, Like a burning stick, like a burning stick, he snatches me from the flames like a burning stick.

[ 25 : 31 ] That's the impression God brings you. What a precious picture. That as the flames of judgment creep near and as our sin fuels that fire making it bigger and making it hotter, God in his quenching grace comes and he plucks you out like a burning stick out from the fire.

fire. In our spiritual stagnation and as we suffer under the load of guilt and shame, we must be reminded, as God reminds Satan here, I've plucked this one out of the fires.

I've chosen them not on their own merits, not on their own account, but despite them and because of my everlasting love and mercy. Yes, friends, the judge is our friend.

The third point as we move quickly, the heavenly pardon. We've seen the heavenly courtroom, the heavenly rebuke, the heavenly pardon. Again, the setting is the courtroom, the charges were brought, guilt is clear, the filthy garments are the evidence, but God's defense is strong.

I want you to look at the heavenly pardon. People are often under the illusion or the view that somehow they need to, in order to be accepted by God, in order to be right with God, they need to somehow not either have sin, they need to somehow not have sin, or they need to somehow cover their sin, or they need to somehow deny their sin, or they need to somehow bury their sin, or lessen their sin, downplay their sin.

[ 27 : 03 ] But what if you can come with your sin? What if you can approach God with your filthy garments? What if you do not need to first take it off, but you can come just as you are? What if God does not want you to deal with it because you can't?

What if he says, I can deal with it? And so we see here, filthy garments in the presence of God. He takes it away, and he casts it in the words of the psalmist as far as the east is from the west.

Spiritual stagnation is often fueled by our graceless mindset. We are often graceless, and we project that on God. Oh, I won't forgive me.

I won't forgive that. I won't be able to deal with that. And so it's often fueled by our graceless mindset that makes us feel unable to come to God, without load, without burden, without shame.

We need to have this gospel truth imprinted on our hearts. God, going to the book of Romans, justifies the ungodly. Jesus is the friend of sinners.

[ 28 : 06 ] it was interesting, in the week, I sold my coffee machine. One of the coffee machines, I owned a coffee shop at one time, so I had this small coffee machine that was just taking up space, and I thought I'd just sell it.

And so, long story short, I had a guy within five minutes express interest in it, and so he came by, he sent his dad actually, because he was a school teacher, so he was in class, and then he said his dad, an elderly gentleman, will come and collect the coffee machine.

And so, within an hour, the dad was there at the house, and so, we have this very friendly, overly friendly, Maltese poodle, and so she's the welcoming party, right, so when you come, knock on the door, she's there first, and so she doesn't only welcome you, she wants to run down the street, and go greet a few other neighbors, so I had to just put her one side, lock the door, and secure her there, and so I opened up for the gentleman to come in, and come and get the machine, and as he comes in, somehow, her name is Molly, somehow Molly found a way to get out, and there I just see a run past me, on top of the gentleman, you know, obviously greeting him and saying hello, and all sorts of other lovely things that poodles do when they greet you, and immediately it was a Muslim gentleman because he still had his Muslim robe on, the prayer robe, so he was going to pray now, but before that he made a stop there, so he had his long prayer robe on, and I could tell he's immediately uncomfortable, he stepped back, and he's words in response to

Molly was, no, I can't go pray, because in Islamic theology, you go through a purification before you can go to pray, before you can go to God, and so he's gone through his purification, he's just picking up something, and then he's going to go pray now, but now Molly has come, this animal has come, and somehow in their theology, that makes you unclean again, so he has to go and purify again before he can go, but between the house and the mosque, it's probably not enough time, so he's like, I can't go and pray now, he wasn't angry, upset, we went on into the house, spoke a bit, I secured Molly again, but really, I was literally busy, just preparing, working through this message, and it struck me, you know, Joshua stands before the presence of the Lord with filthy garments, Joshua stands in the presence of the Lord with filthy garments, friends, the good news is, and the good news we see in scripture, God welcomes the unclean, God welcomes the sinner, not outwardly unclean only, but inwardly unclean,

God welcomes them, we come with our filthy garments, and we receive not by water, not by soap, not by ritual, but by the precious blood of Christ that was shed on the cross, we are clean, we see a glimpse of this here, in Joshua chapter three verse four, the angel said to those who were standing before him, take off his filthy clothes, where are you running to with those filthy clothes, where are you hiding with those filthy clothes, in the presence of God, his word is, let me remove those filthy clothes, let me take off those filthy clothes, so he, he removes it, God demonstrates how sinners are made right before him, he chooses us, he defends us, and he takes away our sin, Joshua remains silent without response, without a plea, and it reminds me again of the hymn writer who penned these words, I have no other argument, I have no other plea, it is enough that Jesus died, and that he died for me, those who run away from heaven, those who try and flee

[ 31 : 45 ] God, because they feel themselves too sinful, those who run away with their filthy garments, they miss the chance, they miss the chance of having those garments removed, they miss the chance of having God clean them up, Martin Luther, the 16th century reformer, he had this ongoing battle with the devil, as God was using him mightily, Satan was opposing Luther greatly, and at one time it was so intense that Luther wrote to his friend, Philip Melanchthon, about the spiritual depression he experienced, one experience, one experience was in a dream that Satan appeared with a long scroll on which Luther's sins were written and with care, Satan would read out each one one by one, while mocking Luther's pathetic desire to serve God, assuring him that after all he will end up in hell, Luther caught up in a spiritual struggle, jumped up and cried, it's all true Satan, many more sins which



I have committed in my life, of which are known only to God, but write this at the bottom of your list, the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God cleanseth me from all my sins, write that at the bottom of your list, write that at the bottom of your list, and not only that, not only does he remove our guilt, take away our unquity, forgive our sins, notice we see in chapter 3 verse 4, I will clothe you with a pure vestment, God doesn't only take away, remove, he also gives, he doesn't only take away the sin, but he grants the newness, that's why 2 Corinthians chapter 5 17 says, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, he's a new creation, salvation is not becoming neutral, it's becoming righteous in Christ, we have to finish now, so just very quickly, the assurance that God gives, heavenly assurance, this is how God works in our salvation, we are charged, he comes to our defense, he pardons us, and then he assures us of pardon, the message this morning is that the guilt, the shame that often causes and prolongs spiritual stagnation can be resisted when we remind ourselves that we've been plucked out by

God's gracious hand, and that if he is for us, who can be against us, this is the doctrine of assurance, it's vital in our confession, we've got an entire chapter devoted to it, spiritual stagnation often comes because we have forgotten the gracious provision and pardon of God, and we do not live in the truth of our assurance, Satan comes with attacks, the conscience accuses us, and we have no recourse, but we fend off these offenses on the conscience by rehearsing the doctrine of God's salvation and his assurance, that he forgave us, he meant it, you say, what's the doctrine of assurance, it's basic, it's simple, that when God forgave you, and when God saved you, and when God renewed you, he meant it, he meant it, and he's not going to change his mind, he's not a man that he should lie, he meant it, and that's what you need to be assured of, that's what you need to realize, and when God did a work in your heart, he is, he meant to do that work, and who can stand up to him, who can overthrow his strong arm,

I'll just go down to the last point, we see that was the heavenly assurance that we need, and then finally, the heavenly promise, the heavenly promise, verse 8, here we see the heavenly promise, God seals this vision by reiterating his commitment to send forth the Messiah, the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the great hope of the Jews, this is the great hope of the world, and it's the grounds upon which God will redeem and forgive, it is the seal of his words of forgiveness and grace and mercy, and everything that he has done here in this heavenly courtroom to save Joshua and clean Joshua is underscored, it's under, it's highlighted and underlined by this truth that the branch is coming to seal in his blood these very words of hope, of truth, of mercy, and of forgiveness.

[ 36 : 44 ] I will send forth the branch, I will remove the iniquity in a day, and I will restore peace among the people. Zechariah 3 tells us how God, because of his gospel promise, advocates for us in the face of accusations, in the face of a guilty conscience, and in the face of, or in the presence of Satan's taunts.

God says of you, God says of you, is this not a burning stick I pluck from the fire? like he rescued Jonah from the belly of the fish, like he called forth Lazarus from the pangs of death, so he plucked you like a burning stick from the flames of hell.

You've been rescued, you've been chosen, Satan has been rebuked, and when the list of your sins is unrolled in your heart and in your mind, that's fine, right at the bottom, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth me from all my sin, and then go forth and live in the victory that he provides, the obedience that he provides through the presence of his Holy Spirit.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your word this morning and we do ask that you would seal these truths to our hearts.

We ask that you would move us on, Lord, from a place of spiritual stagnation or if we feel stuck, Lord, in any particular way, may we be reminded this morning that you save, that you secure, that you forgive, that you cleanse, that you make new, and may we have the assurance of this by your spirit, Lord, sealed in our hearts.

[ 38 : 52 ] Bless us now, Lord, as we continue to worship you. In Jesus' name, Amen.