



Put on the Garment of Praise (Is 52:1-12)

A. Your God Reigns

1. The prophecy of Isaiah 52:1-12 is addressed to the captive daughter of Zion, i.e. God's people living in the capital city of Jerusalem, who were mourning in the dust because they were captured and mocked by their enemy. The city was in defeat and shame, but God comforts her and promises her a glorious deliverance and great redemption.
2. God is specifically calling two groups of people to herald His great deliverance.
 - (i) Preachers of good news to go to the mountains and proclaim, 'your God reigns.'
 - (ii) Watchmen on the walls to call upon God in intercession.

God says, then they will see the LORD baring His holy arm in the sight of all nations, and the ends of the earth will see His salvation (v10). God tells His people to go forth from the land of their captivity and return to their land. They are to be careful not to touch anything unclean as they depart and carry the holy vessels of the Lord because He will go before them and be their rearguard as in the day of Exodus (v12).

What a great promise to those who are in captivity, sitting in chains of discouragement!

B. Garment of Praise

1. However, God calls them to first (v1-2):
 - (i) Awake.
 - (ii) Take off the sackcloth and put on the *garment of strength and splendour (beauty)*.
 - (iii) Shake off the dust (break the chain of slavery and shame) and rise to sit enthroned.

Can you imagine the impact of these words on the Jewish exiles who have returned from captivity, as they saw their ruined city and land devastated by invasion? If they ever needed courage, it was then.

2. What is the garment of strength and splendour? Why is it called the garment of strength and splendour? How do we put it on so that instead of mourning in dust and chains, we can take our seat on the throne? Jesus came to comfort all who mourn and grieve in Zion by bestowing on them three gifts (Is 61:3).
 - (i) Crown of beauty (honour) instead of ashes.
 - (ii) Oil of gladness instead of mourning.
 - (iii) The garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

So that the Lord will display His splendour through His redeemed people as they rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the devastated lands. It takes a lot of work to restore the land devastated by war. Unless they are anointed with honour, gladness, and praise, they will be useless for the tasks.

3. *'I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.'* (Is 61:10)

There are garments the Lord put on us, and there are garments we must put on ourselves in response to God. God has put on us the garment of salvation and robe of righteousness, and in response to God's mercy, we must put on the garment of praise which is opposite to the spirit of despair! One repels the other. You cannot have on both the garment of praise and the spirit of despair at the same time.

C. God Enthroned

1. This is how we 'enthroned God' over life's devastating situations. When we praise God, we are putting on the garment of strength.

'But you are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You; they trust, and you delivered them...' (Ps 22:3)

How did the men and women of faith enthrone God over them in times of crisis? By expressing their trust in the Lord by giving extravagant praises to Him. God is the King whether we praise Him or not, but when we praise Him, we build a throne for Him in our lives upon which He sits and rules.

2. *'No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.'* (Is 60:18)

The land governed and ruled by God is free from destruction within its borders, but the walls and gates into the city are called 'Salvation' and 'Praise.' (Ps 100:5 – *we enter His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.*) There is no other entrance into the city of God's dwelling. Our praise makes God's salvation which God worked into us, effective. That is why Isaiah calls the garment of praise, the garment of strength. When God's people give God active, joyful praises, God's strength is released into our lives, and we make God's rule effective in our lives.

'He who sacrifices thank offerings honours me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.' (Ps 50:23 NIV)

Let us decide to give God extravagant praise this year and see the salvation of the Lord.

D. Jehoshaphat's Praise (2 Chr 20:1-30)

1. The vast armies of enemy nations - Moab, Ammon, and Edom, etc - invaded Judah during the time of King Jehoshaphat. He did not have the power to withstand the combined forces. He proclaimed a fast in Judah and sought the Lord. God spoke to Jehoshaphat through a prophetic utterance by a Levite (Jahaziel) that God would directly intervene and deliver them from the trouble.

He said, 'Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours but God's. Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions, stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.' (2 Chr 20:15-17)

2. Jehoshaphat responded by appointing praisers and worshippers against the invading armies. The next day they went out to face the armies and they sang, *'Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever.'* (2 Ch 20:21) It was not even the warfare song, but it wiped out the enemy! (Chr 20:21-26) As the men of Judah began to sing praises to the Lord, the Lord sent an ambush against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mt Seir, and they destroyed each other until not one was left standing (20:21)!

The spoil of the battle (which they did not fight) was so great that it took three days to collect them. Then on the fourth day, they assembled on the valley of Berachah (lit. blessing), and there they blessed the Lord, so that valley became the valley of blessing. Some may say, 'What a foolish thing to do in the time of war.' But the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom.

3. How did this happen? Ps 149:1-9 illustrates what happens in the spirit when God's people come together to praise Him. Our praise confuses the enemy, and it executes the written judgment of God on the kings and nobles of the earth who mocks God. Furthermore, our praise of God binds and limits their activities with the 'shackles of iron.' We restrain and bind the world rulers bent on doing evil.

That is why the devil tries very hard to shut down the church from praising God because they cannot stand the praises of God's people. It confuses them and binds them with chains. Our weapons of war are powerful in pulling down the strongholds of the enemy.

E. Silence the Enemy (Ps 8:1-2)

'O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! Who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.' (Ps 8:1-2)

'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise.' (Matt 21:15-16)

Strength is perfected in praise. Babies do not depend on their strength. They are the perfect example of weakness. Yet God can use their praise to give strength to His people and to silence the voice of the enemy. Praise is the perfect weapon of strength to silence Satan's voice.

Why do we need to silence Satan? Because Satan is the accuser of our brethren. Satan accuses us day and night to make us feel guilty (Rev 12:10). Our praise of God's salvation and righteousness silences Satan's accusation. Amen!