

## **“Be Strong in the Lord by Wearing the Garment of Praise”**

by Elder Bill Jones

In these past months, we have written about how to be strong in the Lord. We have discussed putting on the full armor of God with all its various attributes, such as TRUTH, RIGHT-EOUSNESS, PEACE AND FAITH. This is so we may be able to successfully contend for the things in this life which are pleasing to the Lord, and which He assures us are good for our well-being. This month, it is being suggested that our efforts to acquire strength in the Lord may also be supplemented by “Wearing the Garment of Praise.” It is a metaphor expressing the gladness and thanksgiving felt by God’s people when filled with the joy of the Lord.

To further enlarge on this metaphor, we can say that the garment is made from a fabric which is developed from the experiences and association we have with God. Its quality and usefulness is dependent on the effort we put into it. To put on the Garment of Praise is an attitude; it represents a pattern of thought we have developed which is a realization or understanding of what God is like. We put on this realization and wear it like a garment. It becomes a part of us. It represents who we are and the relationship we have developed with our God, because we have taken the time to recognize the nature of God who is our Father.



Because we have done this, we find strength in the assurance of who God is and confidence that He is unchangeable.

In the scriptures are recorded the many testimonies which bear witness of God's love for us and the plans He has for us, plus the actions He takes to provide for our welfare. He always seeks to provide comfort, bring joy to our hearts, minister to our minds and direct our thoughts. He does not leave us alone, because He knows how unpredictable the world is—the dangers, sorrows and hardships. If we have the slightest doubt that God watches and waits for the opportunity to bring us comfort and minister to our needs, there is no better example of assurance than the scripture in Luke 4:18.

The scripture is Jesus' recorded statement concerning what He knew to be His obligation to His fellowman and mankind in general. It expresses the manner in which He would render service and bring ministry as per God's instructions.

While reading the scripture, we should not fail to recognize the significance of the timing when Christ chose to express His feelings and His identity to the people. At the same time, Satan chose to tempt Jesus in the wilderness and try to dissuade Him from fulfilling His mission on earth. Satan offered Him false promises of obtaining great recognition and power. The Evil One knew it was important to try to distract Jesus from what God intended for Jesus to do. Satan offered Him everything but that which would bring hope and rejuvenation to the souls of men and women. The contest for Satan was to see if he could find success in limiting the time we spend in the presence of God.

So it was that Jesus, after rejecting the temptations of Satan, was able to stand in the synagogue on the Sabbath day in Nazareth where He had been raised, and read from the book of Isaiah.



The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath  
anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;  
he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted,  
to preach deliverance to the captives,  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty them that are bruised.

**Luke 4:18**

What do we discern from these words? The words should lead us to understand that it is ALWAYS God's intent to do something for us that shows His love and, in some way, provides joy for us—no matter the situation. The time we spend with Christ leads to life-changing events. If we spend enough time with God or Christ, it will change how we see things. It will change our understanding. That's why we spend time in worship and in prayer. Such time spent leads us to putting on that Garment of Praise. It can help us see what God wants for us and the many ways He reaches out to us. The more we put on the Garment of Praise, the more familiar we become with it. We see how it feels and how it comforts us; we see how it can turn our lives around and give us renewed hope, strength and confidence.

The Garment of Praise can be described simply as finding a warm coat to put on after wandering hopelessly lost in the cold. The Garment restores our lives and our hope. That is why Satan seeks to find ways to limit our time with God.



*Let everything  
that has  
breath praise  
the Lord.*

The act of praise is being thankful for God's blessings. It is gratitude and respect toward God. It is an awareness that prompts us to remember to do good and to share with others. Such sacrifices please God. Jesus' coming to atone for our sins provides us with joy. To recognize such a blessing fills us with God's Holy Spirit. We seek to express this by finding ways to honor and serve our Lord.

In the 2nd Book of Nephi in chapter three, Nephi testifies of God's goodness to him despite his weaknesses. His thoughts are reflective of our own as we come before our Lord. Nephi says such things in verses 30 through 50 (paraphrased): "Behold, my soul delights in the things of the Lord. My heart ponders continually upon the things which I have seen and heard. My soul grieves because of my iniquities. When I desire to rejoice, my heart groans because of my sins. Nevertheless, I know in whom I trust. My God has been my support. He leads me through my afflictions and He preserves me. He fills me with His love. He confounds my enemies. If the Lord has visited me in so much mercy, why should my heart weep, and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow: Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul. Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say, O Lord, I will praise Thee for ever; my soul will rejoice in Thee, my God, and the Rock of my salvation."

We put on the Garment of Praise that our thoughts may remain focused on the quality of life our Lord desires for us.

