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THE GARMENT OF PRAISE

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It is apparent, when reading through the Psalms, that the writer of those beautiful songs had learned something about praising God, about forming the habit of praise in daily life. David wrote in Psalm 34:1, *"I will bless the Lord at **all times**: His praise shall **continually** be in my mouth."* In 35:28 he said, *"And my tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness and of Thy praise **all the day long**."*

Isaiah 61:3 speaks of the people of God receiving *"...the **garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness**..."* The word *heaviness* means to feel weak, despondent, faint and feeble, to feel obscure or alone, to have a sense of failure in your heart and a cloud of darkness hanging over your life. Do you ever have times when you feel oppressed, or fearful, or just defeated by circumstances - days when it seems that a dark cloud is hanging over you and hindering you from moving on with the Lord and with life? If so, take heart, because there IS a solution; there is a way out. Your loving Father has provided for you a *"garment of praise"* which comes from above, and as soon as you put it on, it will dispel that *"spirit of heaviness"*, which comes from the pit. The word *praise* here means a song and a sense of brightness. No matter how difficult the trials or how adverse the circumstances, you CAN walk through them with a continuous sense of brightness, joy, and faith simply by making the deliberate willful choice to praise God. Then continue to make it moment by moment, day by day. When you wake up in the morning, *"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise..."* (Psalm 100:4)

The key word is choice. You may say, "But, I don't feel like praising God!" Of course you don't! When you are going through darkness and difficulty, what you *feel* like doing is retreating, withdrawing, trying to escape, and "figuring out" some way, *any* way, to get out from under the cloud. Granted, that IS the natural human response - but it is also the wrong one. The right response is to get on the attack with the weapon of deliberate praise to God when it seems to make no sense, and then stay on the attack with

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the habit of praise. Praising God has nothing to do with emotion, or for that matter, with intellect or circumstances. It is an act of the will and a matter of faith, necessity, and God's worthiness to be praised. Satan's aim is always to disorient, depress and immobilize, but his efforts are defeated by the act of praise.

Praise glorifies God, "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me...*" (Psalm 50:23) Through praise the heart is encouraged and the spirit is lifted, "...*I will lift up my hands in Thy Name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips.*" (Psalm 63:4,5) By the act of praise the powers of darkness become confused and defeated, "*And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments....and they [the forces of satan] were smitten [defeated].*" (2 Chronicles 20:22) Praise affirms faith and confidence in God, "*I will praise Thee: for Thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.*" (Psalm 118:21)

In 2 Chronicles 20 we find a young King in a lot of trouble. There was a dark cloud of fear and dread hanging over Jehoshaphat as he contemplated the threat posed by three armies coming against him and his people to destroy them. His natural response was to fear and retreat, but instead, he turned his focus to God in faith and put on the garment of praise, "...*he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness...*" As a result, the enemy became confused and destroyed themselves and the people of God emerged victorious. The three words *praise* in 2 Chron. 20:19-22 mean to celebrate, to be clamorous, to worship God and be loud about it.

Dear Christian, are you in a difficult time today? Maybe you are not going through a great storm at the moment, but there is just a sense of darkness, a sense of oppression hanging over you. Well, that dark cloud can and will be removed, and the brightness of the Son can and will shine through if you will put on the garment of praise and form the habit of wearing it all the time. Make the deliberate choice of faith right now, and begin praising God - out loud. Praise Him for EVERYTHING; your salvation, your life, your trials, your circumstances - everything. You will soon find that you cannot wear the garment of praise (celebration and worship) and the sackcloth of sadness at the same time. Begin now to praise God with your heart and your voice, and do not stop until you see Him face to face. The very act of doing so will bring confusion to your enemy and confidence and peace to you. "*I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all Thy marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee: I will sing praise to Thy Name, O Thou most High.*" (Psalm 9:1,2)

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

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