

New Clothes for Triumphant Saints

✠ **Shake off your dust (vv.1-2)**

✠ **Trust in the LORD (vv.3-6)**

In the name of Jesus, our triumphant Savior, dearly redeemed triumphant saints of Zion:

Can you guess the source of this quote? *“It’s true that we all have flaws, but why compound the problem by walking around looking like a refugee from a time travel experiment gone wrong or a bad day at the munitions factory? Some fashion trends don’t flatter the human form (there, we said it), and others probably only suit about 1 percent of the population, if that. Our motto is, why look bad for the sake of fashion? Shouldn’t clothes make you look better or -- miracle of miracles -- good?”* (Stacy London and Clinton Kelly from their TV show website: *What Not To Wear*)

Dear friends, what you wear can be very personal in a physical, emotional way. We’re surrounded by fine clothing stores. And for many of us outlets and thrift stores, hand-me-downs are our choice if only we know what not to wear. But spiritually speaking, we need to get far beyond TV’s *Frumpy Lumpland* and way past *Classy Hill*. We need to see how we look in the eyes of God by the “Before / After” pictures of His holy Word. Today we look back in the pages of His-story to some real refugees who suffered in the munitions factory of the LORD’s fearful judgment and loving discipline. Here we find what not to wear. Here God picks up the tab on **New Clothes for Triumphant Saints**.

✠ **Shake off your dust (vv.1-2)**

To get the whole picture we need to look at a map of the ancient world. This spot on the globe has been the world’s focus long before satellites and cable news networks. Here the Tower of Babel rose to the skies in defiance of God. And here the LORD confused the languages to scatter mankind over the face of the earth. Nations rose and fell here. Far to the south was Egypt from which God delivered His people through Moses in the Exodus. And in the Fertile Crescent north of the Arabian Desert another power rose up, the cruel Assyrians with bragging kings like Sennacherib and Esarhaddon. When God’s people rebelled and refused to repent, He finally used the Assyrians to carry off the Ten Northern tribes into captivity. They never returned. He poured out *“the cup of God’s wrath,” “double calamities...ruin and destruction, famine and sword”* for which there could be no consolation. (51:17ff) Thousands of Israelites became refugees. And little Judah was left to face mighty Assyria alone.

Imagine hearing stories about Assyrian atrocities on your neighbors. How they ripped open pregnant women and stacked the heads of city elders beside the gates for all to see. And those were the “lucky ones” who still had eyes. The Assyrians liked to put out the eyes of captives. 100 years later the Babylonians did so to the last king of Judah. But before they put out the eyes of King Zedekiah, they made him watch the execution of his officials and all his sons. God Word through Jeremiah the prophet came true. Zedekiah went to Babylon as a captive, but never saw it. God’s Word still comes true for leaders of God’s people. His holy writer James says, *“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”* (James 3:1 ESV)

When you believe in the one true God, you admit by faith that Isaiah was right: *“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”* (64:6 NIV84) We look around and see God using wicked people to punish wicked people and humbly confess, “There, but for the grace of God, go I.” But when we’re down on our knees in humble repentance, that’s when God comes in kindness and grace to lift us up with loving words like these: *“Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more*

come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean.” God tells us what not to wear when He takes off the filthy rags of our own righteousness and gives us the bright, shining robes of His beauty and holiness. He calls us out of the gloom of depression and despair into the bright light of citizens who belong to *“the Holy City, the new Jerusalem.”* Very soon we will see her, *“coming down out of heaven God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”* (Revelation 21:2) It will be the home of righteousness where all who hate God and His people will never be found again. And we who were captives of sin, death and hell will rejoice in the deliverance won for us on Calvary’s cross and guaranteed by the glorious resurrection of our conquering Savior-King Jesus Christ. *“Shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.”*

✠ **Trust in the LORD (vv.3-6)**

Sometimes you feel as if you’re worth nothing to anybody. It strikes at all ages whether you’re young and wishing you could grow up quicker or years past retirement and wishing you could just go home to live with Jesus. And the world doesn’t help they way they exploit everyone like cruel Assyrians and spit you out as soon as votes are cast and bills are paid. But God has a whole new set of clothes for His children which you’d never find if you shopped all of New York City. Maybe you and I are worthless to the world, but not to God. *For thus says the LORD: “You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.”* All the world’s gold could not buy these clothes for us.

Look back where God’s people had been. *For thus says the LORD God: “My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there....”* They were strangers and aliens making bricks and suffering genocide until the LORD delivered them with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Egypt’s superpower army and her stubborn Pharaoh were drowned by the LORD’s own hand in the Red Sea. Centuries passed and now the Lord’s prophet Isaiah points out that *“the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing.”* Not for riches, not for power, just a lust for blood that terrorized nations and made God really angry. The drinking parties of Assyrian kings honored their idols and mocked the true God of Israel as if the LORD was nothing more than myth and legend. God will not allow such proud nations stand. He puts them in the dust. His promises kept little Judah alive under the wise rule of faithful Hezekiah until Sennacherib’s army had conquered all the way to Jerusalem. And then one night the Angel of the LORD struck. Imagine Hezekiah and his faithful Jews waking up to 185,000 Assyrian army corpses. The wicked king of Assyria could not survive worship in his idol temple. His own sons killed him and escaped.

“Continually all the day my name is despised. Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here I am.” God’s Name is His reputation just as many Americans are learning from identity theft. It isn’t just the hassle of clearing your name of debt, but sometimes felonies are committed in the name of innocent people who then have a criminal record. God has a record too, all good – delivering His people, keeping His promises, punishing evil doers in the end. As C.S. Lewis said, “The mills of the Lord grind slowly, but they grind exceeding fine.” We learn the Lord’s full reputation in God’s Word, the Bible. That’s why the Bible is the fully opened Name of God. His Word kindly teaches the greatest lesson of all: We can truly **Trust in the LORD**.

What He did to make us saints, holy ones of God, is the most magnificent of His mighty acts of deliverance. The Exodus from Egypt, the death of the Assyrian army, deliverance from Babylonian Captivity all foreshadowed this deliverance. But none can hold a candle to the full light of Christ washing away our sins with His holy, precious blood. Next time you feel unloved, think about your Baptism when God put His Name on you and gave you His **New Clothes for Triumphant Saints**. When God says, *“Here I am,”* you need to picture your heavenly Father at your bedroom door when you’re afraid. When you wake up shaking, His loving hands hold your head up. “Look at me,” He says. And you see His smiling eyes in the face of Jesus Christ. Better than what not to wear, put on **New Clothes for Triumphant Saints**. Then press on to glory with God for Jesus’ sake. Amen.