

## Clothe Yourselfes

by Tricia Berg

*Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! Luke 12:27-28*

Many people relate the above passage to only being about trusting God to physically provide what we need, but there is more to it than that. We are in the habit of dividing up the Scriptures into pieces and many times it causes us to fail to connect related concepts. It continues as follows:

*For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. **Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning** and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must **be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**" Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him apart and put him with the unfaithful. And **that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.** But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light*

beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more." Luke 12:30-48

So in context, the message is a warning to be ready and not to let the cares of the world worry us or distract us from serving our Lord and Master faithfully, even if His coming appears to be delayed. These words are directed at people who should be waiting, because they are servants of the Lord, not to the general population which is totally unaware of these things. The parables of the sower and of the wise and foolish virgins, among others, carry the same warnings. (Matt. 13, 25) We must clothe ourselves in, and remain clothed with, the righteousness of Jesus, our Savior. (Rom. 6, Eph. 4:17-24, Eph. 5:6-11, Eph. 6:14-15, Philip. 1:9-11) Jesus said that we can do nothing unless we abide in Him. (John 15:1-10) In Revelation 3:4, Jesus commended SOME of the believers in the church at Sardis who had not soiled their garments. The others received a warning.

*"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who **have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**"* Revelation 3:1-6

*Besides this you know the time, that **the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.** The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. **But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.** Romans 13:11-14*

Does that sound like He wants us to feel free to wallow in the mud again each time He cleanses us with His precious blood? Definitely not! (2Pet. 2:22) ALL of the exhortations to live a holy life are directed at people who are already

saved. (2Tim. 2:3-7, 1Pet. 1:14-16, 1Cor. 5:12-13) People who are not saved have no hope of pleasing God no matter what they do. Faith must come first. (Heb. 11:6) If we don't believe (or perhaps we say we do, but our lives prove that He is NOT our Lord because we don't sincerely believe in our hearts), then we are NOT saved. (Rom. 10:8-10) There is no amount of good behavior or deeds that can save us. Jesus is the only way. (Acts 4:12) Once He is our Lord, then we are meant to behave like it, all of the time, until He returns (whether for us personally or for all who belong to Him). He died to set us free FROM sin, not TO sin. (Rom. 6:1-2) If sin is acceptable to God at some point, for anyone, then why would Jesus have to suffer and die to wash ours away?

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them**. Ephesians 2:8-10*

*But now that you have been **set free from sin** and have become **slaves of God**, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:22-23*

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth**. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin**. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us**. 1 John 1:5-10*

Let's be clear on this--there is NO WAY anyone can win the battle against sin UNLESS they are born again, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (Philip. 2:12-13) It's by HIS power that we can overcome. When we slip, He will forgive us and cleanse us when we confess it to Him. That is a far cry from willfully living a sinful lifestyle without a care in the world about repentance or forgiveness. (Heb. 10:24-31, 1John 3:4-10) The point is not to scare anyone who is sincerely doing their best according to the strength given to them by God, but to wake up people who have bought the lies of the enemy, who delights in causing us to stumble or sleep when we should all be watching and waiting. (Eph. 6:12, 1Pet. 5:8, Matt. 25)

*Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. **So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore **encourage one another and build one another up**, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11*

I am not here to point fingers at individuals or groups and decide who is ready and who is not. We are all works in progress, with the key word being "progress." (2Pet. 1:5-11) Even Paul said he was determined to finish well, not giving up until the race was over. The "race" is our Christian walk after we receive the Holy Spirit, since obviously we don't "race" or do anything else in an attempt to earn salvation. (1Cor. 9:23-27, Philip. 3:8-21) Each of us needs to listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit as He reminds us of what the Bible tells us about how we should live (John 14:26) - assuming that we love God enough to read it after He made a way for us to be reconciled to Him after our fall into sin, at excruciating cost to Himself, and all of the care He went to have what He wanted us to know recorded for us. (2Tim. 3:16-17)

If we continue sinning (again, this is not the same as stumbling, but a way of life) and claim to be born of God, then the Bible says we are liars. (1John 1:5-10, 1John 2:1-6, 1John 3:6) Another thing we need to make sure to understand is that there is a BIG difference between trying to earn salvation by obeying the ceremonial law out of fear of punishment, and behaving as a person who, in gratitude and love, understands that Jesus purchased them back from the dead with His very blood. (1Cor. 6:19-20, 1John 4:18) It is insulting to suggest it's possible to add anything to Jesus' perfect work OR that it's acceptable to revert to living like a heathen who doesn't know God at all after coming to faith. (Gal. 2:21, Jude 1:4-5, Rom. 3:8, Eph. 4:17, 1Thess. 4:2-8, 1Pet. 2:12, 1Pet. 4:3)

*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on*

*him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that **you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:14-19*

The "tolerance" that the world claims we must show to sinning believers is NOT taught in the Bible in the way they would like it to be and claim it is. This is not "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." We're not to sin against anyone, cause anyone to stumble or even approve of sin--let alone celebrate it! (Matt. 5:19, Matt. 18:7) Jesus said, "go and sin no more" to the adulterous woman he saved from a literal stoning to death (not merely a rebuke meant to bring her back to her senses), and to a crippled man whom He healed, He added, "so that nothing worse may happen to you." (John 5:14, John 8:11, 1Cor. 15:34, 2Tim. 2:22-26) Jesus also told us to REBUKE our brother if he sins against us, but to forgive him if he REPENTS, no matter how many times he sins against us. (Matt. 18:15-17)

Did Jesus say we should behave violently or use threatening or foul language, etc.? Absolutely NOT, but as Paul said, we must speak the truth in love, caring more about each person's soul than whether or not we are comfortable or popular. (Eph. 4:11-32, Eph. 5:4, Titus 3:9-11, Rom. 12:17, Matt. 5:11, 1Pet. 2:21-23, 1Pet. 3:14-17) Remember, this is about believers, not the world. We who belong to Jesus are to be LIGHTS to the world, and there is NO WAY to do that if we exhibit the same unenlightened behavior that unbelievers display. (Matt. 5:13-15, Luke 6:43-49) It's both hypocritical to expect more of others than ourselves, and deceitful to let people think that is how a child of God should behave. (1Pet. 4:15, Eph. 5:3, Matt. 7:3-5, Rom. 2:3)

Paul told us we are to be gentle in trying to restore to fellowship a brother or sister in Christ who has strayed, all the while being careful not to fall into sin ourselves. (2Tim. 2:22-26, James 5:19-20, 1Thess. 4:3-8, Gal. 6:1, Jude 1:23) If they refuse to repent (and we're talking about actual sins here, not differences in opinion on fine details of how to serve God), then they are to be as an unbeliever to us, NOT one of us. (1Cor. 5:11) It's better for people to know the truth about their condition than to be deceived into thinking they are fine when they are not. (1Cor. 5:5, 2Pet. 3:9)

If the church is "a hospital for sinners," then we need to do our job and CURE people of it (by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit--preaching the full word of God and praying earnestly and continuously) rather than let the plague spread throughout the entire Body of Christ. (Acts 20:26-27, 1Thess. 5:14-22,

1Cor. 5:6, 13) We need to *stand firm* in the word, *unashamed* of ALL of the Scriptures, not just the parts we "like" and not only when it's convenient for us. (Mark 8:38, Eph. 6:13)

We will be held accountable for what we did with the gifts God gave us for the building up of the Body of Christ. (Matt. 25:14-30, Rom. 12:4-8, Heb. 10:26-31, 1Pet. 4:3-5, 1Pet. 4:11, 1Pet. 4:17, 1Pet. 5:14-23, Gal. 6:2-5, 1Cor. 3:11-15, Rev. 11:18) Let's focus on Jesus and help each other to be ready for when He returns, working in our Lord's vineyard, so that we can all rejoice with Him in the honor that He receives from the way we devoted our lives to His glory. Let's work while it's day. (John 9:4, Matt. 9:35-38)

*And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy." **"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."** **Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.** Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, **"Surely I am coming soon."** **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!** The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. Revelation 22:10-21*

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