

The Ruined Waistband - An Illustration of Judah

Jeremiah 13

Outline

- 1-7 | Jeremiah is told to buy a waistband and hide it by the Euphrates, then retrieve it, which he does, only to find it ruined
- 8-11 | God tells him that the waistband represents how He will ruin Judah for their idolatry instead being what He made them to be
- 12-14 | God is about ready to accomplish what He has prophesied
- 15-19 | Humble yourselves because the captivity is coming
- 20-27 | Why? "Because you have forgotten Me And trusted in falsehood."

Reflections

In this chapter, we find one of the illustrations that Jeremiah is told by God to use in order to convey the message to the people of Judah that God is about to accomplish the previously promised captivity and exile. Jeremiah is told to buy a waistband, some kind of sash to be worn around the waist like a belt. Then he is told to go and bury it next to the Euphrates, indicating what country would carry them into captivity. Again he is told to recover the waistband, which he does only to find it ruined.

Jeremiah then gives the explanation of why this was taking place. God made them a people to cling to God just like the waistband clings to a person. They were to be "a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen" (Jeremiah 13:11). Jeremiah urges the nation's leaders to give up their sinful pride and give glory to God because the captivity is sure to come.

Jeremiah then describes how the nation will be shamed by God for their habitual idolatry. He describes the spiritual condition of the nation by asking two questions and then giving the answer.

Jeremiah 13:23 NASB "Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.

The single answer to the two questions is no. A person can't change the color of their skin nor can an animal change its hide. This is not meant to be derogatory but a statement of the natural condition of a person's skin or an animal's hide. It cannot be altered, though some try. Jeremiah claims that the people of Judah have become so accustomed to sinning in idolatry, their chance of changing their habits are about as good as someone trying to change the color of their skin or an animal their hide.

Again we have to remember that this is a message that is coming several centuries after God established them as a people. Yet they repeatedly turn to worshiping idols rather than staying faithful to the one true God who freed them from servitude.

There is hope for our day and age. While many would look at the state of our nation, the United States, or any nation for that matter, and realize that we have ingrained habits of idolatry. Habits of worshiping ourselves or at least our own selfish desires—lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—which are only temporary.

1 John 2:15-17 NASB Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. **17** The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

We shouldn't think that just because judgment is delayed doesn't mean that it's not going to happen. God is longsuffering and patient, waiting for and wanting people to repent. For the people of the southern kingdom, judgment took approximately 600 years. There is still time to repent. Consider the words of Peter (underlining added).

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II Peter 3:3-10 NASB Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, **4** and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." **5** For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, **6** through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. **7** But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. **8** But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. **9** The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. **10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Man might not be able to change the color of his skin, but with God's help, he can break the cycle of habitual sin and receive forgiveness. The transformation takes place over time and it will take longer in some people than in others but it can only be accomplished through the intentional effort of the individual, rooted in faith in God, choosing daily to deny himself, or more correctly his sinful desires, choosing instead to live for God. Paul and Peter both offer some insight into this process.

Romans 5:1-6 NASB Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. **3** And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; **4** and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; **5** and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. **6** For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

II Peter 1:2-9 NASB Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; **3** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. **4** For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. **5** Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, **7** and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. **8** For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

Choosing to do away with old habits and developing better new ones, rooted in our faith in Jesus, is exactly what Paul was talking about in Galatians. We also see the same call to transformation in Hebrews and Romans (underlining added).

Galatians 5:19-25 NASB Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, **21** envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

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patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23](#) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24](#) Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. [25](#) If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

[Hebrews 12:1-3 NASB](#) Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2](#) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [3](#) For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

[Romans 12:1-3 NASB](#) Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [2](#) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. [3](#) For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Peter urges his readers to give up these old sinful habits and choose to live godly lives as well.

[1 Peter 4:1-6 NASB](#) Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, [2](#) so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. [3](#) For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. [4](#) In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; [5](#) but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. [6](#) For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

On a personal note: I've had some success in the area of breaking bad habits. My biggest challenge to overcome was pornography. I came to a point in my life that I knew I needed to change what I was doing, so I began to ask for help. At first my efforts were all mine. I didn't really ask God to help me other than turning to some Christian friends. In spite of that, I believe that God did intervene in my life by introducing me to a number of people whom He used to help me begin the process of change I needed to make. I would like to say that I have conquered all my bad habits, I still struggle with some things but I am getting better. Now, I recognize my need for God and seek His presence. I thank God regularly for the fact that I am a recipient of His mercy and grace. I certainly didn't deserve it. If God is willing to help me, I know that He is willing to help you, and so am I. Feel free to [contact](#) me if you would like.

Heavenly Father, You promise in Your word that nothing is impossible with You. We pray that Your Spirit will help us overcome our sinful natures and put on the new life that can only be found through faith. We thank You for the willingness of Your Son to give up His place in glory and come to earth in the form of a man and give His life as a sacrifice for our sins. We praise You for raising Him from the dead, giving us victory over sin, and making us more than conquerors through Him. Help us live each day for You, to Your glory and honor. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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