

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

As God worked to teach Israel about the consequences of their sin and unfaithfulness, He used worldly examples to teach heavenly truths. He did it for their benefit, for the wisdom He would gladly give to His people is impossible for sinners to receive.

The unbelieving can't repent in the Biblical sense of the word. Those without faith in Christ cannot know true contrition. They may be sorry they've been caught doing something wrong. They may be afraid of punishment. But true contrition comes only as a fruit of faith – as does true repentance. Recidivism is the way of the ungodly.

In mercy, that they turn and be saved, God spoke to Judah through the Prophet Jeremiah. He is the Prophet that would lament as he watched the destruction of Jerusalem. Judah would not hearken to his Word. But before that came to pass, to save His people from destruction, God gave Jeremiah an object lesson with which to rebuke Judah.

God directed Jeremiah to take a linen sash, a belt, and to wear it around his waist. So the Prophet did as God directed. The sash became part of him, he grew fond of it. It was with him each day.

Judah, like that sash, had been the favored of God. It was given to them, and to no other nation, to draw nigh unto God. He heard their prayers. He sustained and protected them. He bestowed upon His people His saving gifts. He received in response their praise and offerings. So the sash is a sign of God's favor, a mark of faith, a priestly vestment, worn by those with faith in the one true God.

But then the Lord came to the Prophet again. He told him to remove the sash and to bury it. As acquired, a linen sash would be of fine material, clean, pure, unsoiled. To bury it is first to remove it from ones presence, to cast it off. And then, placing in the ground is to ruin it, to make it unredeemable.

“...there was the sash, ruined. It was profitable for nothing.” It would never again serve the purpose for which it was created. It was worthy of burning, and nothing else. The sash is a parable for fallen man. It represents those who will not hear the Word of God, those who follow the dictates of their hearts.

The proud cannot wear the sash. God condemns the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. Pride puffs up. So pride and faith are antithetical. Faith knows that fallen man is but dust, daily waiting to be returned to the dust from which he was formed.

Faith is humble, knowing that but for the grace of God all flesh is like grass, here today, gone tomorrow, green in the morning, dry and dead in the evening, like a ruined sash, worthy only to be burned. Faith knows that the pot is only lifeless mud - but for the potter, who fashions and fires it into something useful. So faith cannot be proud. Faith can only be thankful.

Hear then the Word of the Prophet. Pride is of evil people. They are evil because they cannot hear God's Word. Pride is focused on its own word. So pride deafens the proud. They cannot walk in God's Way. Their pride leads them astray, that they go not in the Way of God, but rather follow the crooked path of the dictates of their evil hearts. And so it is with everyone, indeed even with you, inasmuch as you have desired to do it "your way" rather than to submit to God.

Impatience, selfishness, and greed are pride's corollaries. And each is a form of idolatry, putting self before God, serving and worshipping self rather than the God that made you. So, like the Prophet's sash, all fallen men are profitable for nothing, worthy only of fire.

God commanded the Prophet not to put the sash in water. But in His mercy, God commands that you be put in Water – that you be washed clean, baptized in the Name of the Triune God. It is there that your filthiness, your pride, your idolatry, your sinfulness, is washed away. And it is there that your waist is girded with the belt of truth, making you a member of the royal priesthood of the redeemed.

The sash is a vestment of a priest. In fact, the Hebrew word used by Jeremiah is the same word used to describe the sash of the True High Priest, the Christ, of whom "Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist." Those who believe in the one True God are a chosen nation, a royal priesthood.

As a priest, you eat of the priestly portion – you eat of the sacrifice, of the Body of Christ given for you, the same Body that miraculously multiplied the loaves and fish. But unlike the priests of old, you drink His Blood, for the life is in the Blood. Without the shedding of Blood there is no remission of sins. So as you drink His Blood, you are forgiven anew.

Like the Prophet's sash, you may be buried. But it will not be Jeremiah that unearths you from the place where you are hidden, rather it will be Jeremiah's Lord, the Christ. He was buried like the Prophet's sash, His Body lifeless, counted as worthless. But no Prophet was sent to unearth Him. He Himself left that hole in the rock. And He who defeated the grave will call you forth from your grave. Your ruined body that was laid to rest will be made new.

You who believe the heavenly, you who partake this day of the heavenly, you will receive a heavenly body, a body worthy not of fire, but of everlasting life. You will be made what God always desired His Israel to be – a holy people that cling for eternity to the only True God as a new sash clings to the waist, His redeemed people, for renown, for praise, and for glory.

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