

A ROTTED SASH OR THE GLORY OF GOD

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Jeremiah 13:1-17

"Thus the Lord said to me [Jeremiah]: "Go and get yourself a linen sash, and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water." So I got a sash according to the word of the Lord, and put it around my waist. And the word of the Lord came to me the second time, saying, "Take the sash that you acquired, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole in the rock." So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me. Now it came to pass after many days that the Lord said to me, "Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the sash which I commanded you to hide there." Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the sash from the place where I had hidden it; and there was the sash, ruined. It was profitable for nothing. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Thus says the Lord: 'In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts, and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing. For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,' says the Lord, 'that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear.'

"Therefore you shall speak to them this word: 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Every bottle shall be filled with wine." ' "And they will say to you, 'Do we not certainly know that every bottle will be filled with wine?' "Then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land—even the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—with drunkenness! And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together," says the Lord. "I will not pity nor spare nor have mercy, but will destroy them." ' " Hear and give ear: do not be proud, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before He causes darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while you are looking for light, He turns it into the shadow of death and makes it dense darkness. But if you will not hear it, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock has been taken captive."

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The Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, of which we have recorded in God's Word, in Jeremiah 13. There are two messages in this passage with different imagery. The first is the sash that God told Jeremiah to bury by the Euphrates River and then the other is how God told Jeremiah to speak to His people how their wine bottles

would be full, which sounds like a good thing, which seemed to be saying that the harvest of grapes was going to be good, and there would be merriment and good times to follow. I really love this story because it first of all gets down to the bottom line of what we are called to as God's people, that is to cling to Him, to cling to Jesus, for He indeed is our life, and then secondly in the overall message that the things of this world, including our sufferings, are not worthy to be compared to the glory that God has prepared to be revealed in us. (**Romans 8:18**) God wants for us to live in His eternal glory, to be His children, to be partakers in the fullness of His eternal kingdom, as Jesus says in **Revelation 21:7**, "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son", that is, to be joint-heirs with Jesus (**Romans 8:17**), our Lord and Savior, and to be His representatives, His ambassadors, His testimony to His incredible mercy and grace, as it says in **Ephesians 2:7**, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Then as an added bonus to this message we have a Word to us that what may seem impossible to us, and especially to those of the world (that is, those who are not children of God's), but with God it is possible and in fact it is a promise from God that if you "confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (**Romans 10:9-10**) What that is saying to us, as was what God's Word was saying to the Israelites, is that if we are confessing Jesus as our Lord and that we are being saved by His Righteousness, our lives should be a testimony of that and we should be living it as Jesus is our Lord and that God wants us to live according to His Righteousness and not according to the ways of the world. We are being called to be holy as He is Holy and perfect as He is Perfect. WE will certainly fall short of that but we have to have it in our hearts to want Him to work in us His holiness and His perfection. God knows who are His. He knows our hearts. As I've said before. If it is in your heart to always be wanting more of Jesus you're on the right path. This process or journey is in God revealing to us His Ways and His revealing Himself to us, and to lead us to loving God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind. So, for us the ultimate message is to not give up, don't lose heart, keep calling to Jesus. As the Word says "For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"" (**Romans 10:13**), that is not just a one time experience but a lifetime commitment for us to be calling on our Lord and Savior. After all, can we expect God to save us if we call on Him one time and then thereafter to turn our backs on Him? We can look to the example of the Israelites to see how that plays out.

So we have at the beginning of this story, God telling Jeremiah to take a sash, that is, a belt made of some sort of fabric and to go and bury it in a hole in a rock by the Euphrates River. That is one

place has been described as an impossibility by some Bible scholars, or perhaps I should say, Bible critics. Around that time period there was plenty of turmoil and unrest amongst the nations of the Chaldeans and the Assyrians and then with Israel and Judah. Basically, God was telling Jeremiah to go into the enemies territory and put a sash in a hole in a rock by the Euphrates River. How many of us today, if we were told to do such a thing, would go "huh God, you want me to do what?" But with God, if He calls you to something, of course He is going to make a way, right? If God is calling each of us out of the darkness and into His marvelous light, to come out from amongst the ways of the world and live in His Righteousness, He will make it happen! Amen?

Was it impossible for Elijah to outrun King Ahab's horse or chariot from Mt. Carmel to Jezreel, which is said to be around 20 miles? No, the Word of God tells us it happened. Do you believe it, I do? Was it impossible for Rahab the harlot, that is, the prostitute, and her family to be spared from slaughter or death when the Israelites marched around the walls of Jericho once a day for 6 days and on the seventh day, after the 7th time around the walls the walls "came a tumbling down", as the song says? An interesting side note to that is that Rahab's residence was on the wall yet with all the walls falling down her place apparently remained intact in time for the Israelites to gather up Rahab and her family before the Israelites killed all of the surviving residents. Was it impossible for Moses, a man wanted for murder of an Egyptian to be sent by God back to Egypt to lead God's people, the Israelites out of Egypt to the promised land, to eventually take over what was called Canaan land which was inhabited by great giants of whom they were not God fearing people? If you don't believe the Word of God is God's Word, that it is God's redemptive plan for His people, from the beginning of the Bible in Genesis to the last book in the Bible of Revelation, then you are undoubtedly going to struggle in your faith in what are the many promises of God. Yet God firmly established the Revelation of His redemptive plan through His sending His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on a cross for our sins, to die on that cross, taking our sins upon Himself, as well as the wrath that was due us for our sins against God, and then making it possible for us to be reconciled to God, be forgiven of our sins, and to be promised eternal life in Christ. Just as Jesus rose from the dead unto eternal life we too will overcome death and be welcomed into God's eternal kingdom and glory, to those who believe and put their trust in Him.

So God told Jeremiah to bury the sash in a hole in a rock by the Euphrates River and then after a period of time God told Jeremiah to go back to the sash and retrieve it, to which it was likely just a rotted mess. It was certainly as the Word tells us, "profitable for nothing." Does that sound familiar to something Jesus had said? To give a visual to how we are to live for Christ, Jesus told His

disciples, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." That should say to us that not only can we not save ourselves but we are of no spiritual value towards God's building of His kingdom outside of Christ. This isn't a knowledge alone thing to where we have the knowledge of the truth and then we just parrot it to others. It is the indwelling of Christ in His believers, that is, those who are born-again as Jesus said we must be, but to have God working in us His Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption. Jesus did not say that the knowledge of Him is the Way and the Truth and the Life. Jesus said that HE is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6) After Jesus had explained to His disciples that He was going to be leaving them He said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." We will only overcome IN CHRIST JESUS!

Going to our story in Jeremiah, the Israelites had no trouble in the knowledge of God and His ways. The problem with God's people was that they were not obedient to God and His ways. God spoke through Jeremiah, to tell the Israelites, that as they "refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts, and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing." The Israelites had a natural propensity for going through the motions and rituals in their religion but they were not living as though they were God's people, that is, children of God. In speaking to the Jewish leaders, that is, the scribes and Pharisees, in quoting Isaiah, Jesus said, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:8-9) So it was with the people of Jeremiah's time and so it would be with us if we were trying to live according to a list of rules and laws, rituals and practices. Going to church alone doesn't please God, honor God, or ensure our salvation. Telling others about God or Jesus with our lips, that alone won't please God, honor God, or ensure our salvation. It is in Christ alone, abiding in Christ, that is, having an active and continuing fellowship with God in Christ. And if we are practicing in that fellowship with God in Christ then we will naturally be obeying God and being led by His Holy Spirit to as the Apostle Paul said to the Philippians, "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13) That includes God working in us to be holy as He is holy and in sharing the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ as we are all called into the Great Commission in being part of God building His eternal kingdom.

Just as God spoke through Jeremiah, that He had purposed His people, that is, "the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to

cling to Me", He is purposing us as well to cling to Jesus for He is our life. That is where we can draw from that more vivid illustration that He is the vine and we are the branches that are attached to Him and that He is working through us to bear much fruit for God's glory. Once again, we were created FOR God's glory. That should be to us a very humbling truth. Through the prophet Isaiah God says, "Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." How incredible it is that we were created for God's glory. Here is that great mystery that has been revealed to us through our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." By the Holy Spirit we are being transformed, from His glory to ours-in Christ Jesus. But just as Jesus said, "**without me you can do nothing**", that really is speaking eternally. The glory that will be revealed in us is the glory of God through Christ Jesus. While we are called to live as though we are sanctified in Christ Jesus, that is that we are set apart in God's holiness, most of that transformation will happen as it says in **1 John 3:2**, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." From Glory to glory-in Christ Jesus. As I mentioned that it is God working in us to will and to do for God's purpose and pleasure, just prior to that Scripture Paul says this, to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." He, after all, is God Almighty, Creator of all things. We are living in God's plan and purpose. Just as was the example of God, through Moses, leading the Israelites to the promised land, to enter His rest, we are too being led by God through the Holy Spirit, which IS the Spirit of Christ, to an eternal rest in God's glory in Christ Jesus. "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience." (**Hebrews 4:11**) The Israelites lost sight of the overall plan and purpose of God. God wasn't just calling the Israelites to follow a bunch of laws and ordinances because He wanted to maintain control over them. God is calling us into His eternal kingdom in His perfection and holiness. This time on earth is God distinguishing the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats, and of who wants to live in His holiness and according to His sovereign reign.

Our next illustration in this story in Jeremiah is that God told Jeremiah to tell the Israelites that their wine bottles would be full. You can just imagine the reaction of the people hearing that. Some boldly proclaimed, "Do we not certainly know that every bottle will be filled with wine?" It was likely getting close to the time of harvesting the grapes as it was apparently a given that the people would say that. It would kind of be like someone prophesying that it was going to rain as the storm clouds were present just to the west

and there was great thunder and lightning. The same could be said about the condition that we face presently, in this nation, as well as worldwide. "A storm is coming!" Right? The people of the world though would say, "oh that is just the rough before the right". The Israelites were taking that message about the full wine bottles and thinking, "ah yes, good times are ahead, there will be merry making and joy and happiness." Consider the prophetic word to us about the last of days. Jesus said, "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark." (Matthew 24:37-38) Consider this: once the rain started falling it was too late for those who mocked and laughed at God's warning.

For our story God said to them about what the people thought were good times ahead, "Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land—even the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—with drunkenness! And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together," says the Lord. "I will not pity nor spare nor have mercy, but will destroy them." What we can get from God's ways, according to how He dealt with Israel and Judah and according to His Word, just because all seems to be well and the people are living in merriment, giving in to an uninhibited lifestyles of drinking and drugs and lusts of the flesh or in chasing after idols of this world—chief among them could be said is the love of money, He will come as a thief in the night. That isn't just speaking of the return of Christ. None of us are guaranteed a breath beyond the present, none of us can say with absolute certainty that we will be here on this earth tomorrow. Another good friend of ours just passed away the other day. Praise the Lord that he truly loved the Lord and I am most certain that he is now in God's perfect rest. As we've looked at in Paul's correspondence with Timothy that he knew when his time on this earth was up. (2 Timothy 4:6) It has been said, the Lord won't take us home to His glory, until our job is complete—until our ministry has been fulfilled. God knows precisely what He wants to accomplish in each of us and through us, nothing more and nothing less, just as Paul knew when he had "finished the race".

"Give glory to the Lord your God before He causes darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while you are looking for light, He turns it into the shadow of death and makes it dense darkness. But if you will not hear it, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock has been taken captive." I ask that each of us, keep clinging to Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. I ask that you keep praying for those that God has placed in your life. Whether someone seems to have it all together or not, please be praying for one another. Please be praying for us as we

continue to be praying for each of you. There are some days I feel as if I'm bound in chains, figuratively speaking, as Paul spoke of. Other days I am filled with the Spirit in order to do what God has called me to do. I suspect that is the way with each of us. We have seen in ministry the most unlikely persons rise up in God's strength and we've also seen the most unlikely persons to fall from God's grace. We have a very real concern for those who have a head knowledge but don't have any evidence of the fruit that comes from a relationship with God in Christ and we are also concerned for those who are trusting in their own works towards salvation or eternal life. We are likewise concerned for those who are battling to overcome day by day. But with each of us, we are being told to get right with God today. Tomorrow doesn't exist yet, only in the minds of men and the Wisdom that is in God. For us, we must be looking unto Jesus who is the ONLY Way, Truth, and Life. There have been many before Him who have claimed the same and there have been many more after Christ who have claimed the same. There is but One who has been spoken of from the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 3:15 and the last book of the Bible in Revelation where Jesus says, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." (Revelation 22:12-13)