

Introduction: What makes for a good relationship? There are many answers to this question. Some qualities on which many people would agree are: deep concern for the other person's needs and well-being; listening to and observing the other person in order to understand his or her hopes, dreams and plans to make a difference in this world; a desire to support the other person using whatever abilities I have; honesty, unconditional love, and faithfulness to the other person. *** This is not a hypothetical exercise. Whether people know this truth or not, the most important relationship for any and all people is their relationship with the God who created everything and entered into a covenant with Abraham and the nation of Israel. *** Today's story about Jeremiah from the last twenty two years before the Babylonian slaughter of the Jews, the captivity and the seventy year exile, is the low point of Israel's relationship with Yahweh. We need to understand Jeremiah's call and his role as a prophet. He was called by God in his early teens first to announce the tearing down of God's people so He could later build them up again; second, his message would not be received by the people and they would act to harm him, but Yahweh would rescue him (Jeremiah 1). *** Our Psalm excerpt comes from a poetic history of Yahweh and His people from the time of the exodus under Moses, through the time of the judges after Joshua, and all the kings who ruled in Judah until they were taken captive to Babylon where they stayed seventy years. So, the time period of both texts coincides. *** May God use His Word IN us this morning so we repent and whole-heartedly seek Him to be made holy as He is holy (Leviticus 11:44-45).

I. Yahweh gives Jeremiah directions about a linen waistband to illustrate the prophecy he must give to Judah that He will destroy their pride for going after other 'gods'. (Jeremiah 13:1-11)

A. Yahweh gives Jeremiah three things to do with a linen waistband, and it is destroyed. (Verses 1-7)

1. Thus said Yahweh to me [Jeremiah]: You are to go and buy for yourself a linen waistcloth, and you put it around your waist, and you will not bring it near water. (Verse 1)

Mission: Jeremiah was called to go where he was sent and to act according to Yahweh's appointment for him: to pull out by the roots and to destroy; to rebuild and to replant (Jeremiah 1:7-10).

2. Then I bought the waistcloth according to the word of Yahweh, then I put it on my waist. (Verse 2)

Faithful: Jeremiah was faithful to do the first thing Yahweh told him to do.

3. Then the word of Yahweh to me a second time was: You must take the waistcloth which you bought, which is on your waist, and you must arise and go to the Euphrates (River), and you must hide it there in the crevice of a rock. (Verses 3-4)

Word: The second word from Yahweh told Jeremiah to go to the Euphrates River, some 350 miles north of Jerusalem, and hide the linen waistcloth there.

4. Then I went and hid it by the Euphrates (River), according to what Yahweh commanded me. (Verse 5)

Obedience: Even though it meant a long journey, Jeremiah did as he was told by Yahweh.

5. Then, after many days, Yahweh said to me: You must arise and you must go to the Euphrates (River) and you must take from there, the waistcloth which I commanded you to hide there. (Verse 6)

Command: Stage three of the actions Jeremiah was commanded to do by Yahweh. First, he was told to buy and wear the linen waistcloth. Then he was given a word of command to hide it in the crevice of a rock by the Euphrates River, about a three week journey from Jerusalem. Now, he is commanded to retrieve the waistcloth he had been commanded to hide.

6. Then I went to the Euphrates (River), then I dug, then I took the waistcloth from the place where I had hidden it; and behold! the waistcloth was destroyed, not profitable at all. (Verse 7)

Destroyed: Jeremiah has obeyed all Yahweh commanded him. Much time has passed. The result of his obedience to his God was a brand new linen waistband has been destroyed by the elements and it has no value whatsoever. What did it all mean?

B. Then Yahweh tells his prophet how the waistband illustrates that Judah's pride has destroyed their relationship with Him. (Verses 8-11)

1. Then the Word of Yahweh came to me: Thus says Yahweh: According to this (what you did with the waistcloth), I will destroy the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. (Verses 8-9)

Judah's pride: Yahweh begins to reveal to Jeremiah the meaning of his actions. God's people had become falsely proud. Earlier Jeremiah had been given this Word from Yahweh: If any man has pride, let it be in this, that he has the wisdom to have knowledge of me, that I am the Lord, working mercy, giving true decisions, and doing righteousness in the earth: for in these things I have delight, says the Lord (Jeremiah 9:24, BBE; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

2. This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who walk in their stubborn heart, and walking after other 'gods' to serve and worship them, they will be like this waistcloth which is not profitable at all. (Verse 10)

Other 'gods': It is now clear what Jeremiah's actions signified. Israel has turned away from their covenant God in whom they should have boasted with pride for all He had done for them since the days of Moses in Egypt, and were worshipping other 'gods' who are no better than the idols they invented out of their stubborn hearts!

A destroyed waistband illustrates Judah's proud idolatry

3. For, as the waistcloth cleaves to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house (family) of Israel to cleave to Me, and the whole house (family) of Judah, says Yahweh. to be to Me: people, name, praise and glory; and they did not hear (to do so). (Verse 11)

Purpose: All the people of Israel were to cleave faithfully to their covenant God.

As a result of this intimate relationship praise and glory would go to their God.

But they were unfaithful to God and proud of themselves so there will be consequences.

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II. Yahweh will execute His wrath on all Israel without compassion because they defiled the land with innocent blood and became abhorrent to Him. (Jeremiah 13:12-14 & Psalm 106:37-43)

- A. Yahweh will pour out the wine of the cup of His wrath of judgment on Judah's kings, priests, prophets and people, showing no pity. (Jeremiah 13:12-14)
1. You speak to them this word: Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: every jar will be filled with wine; and, they say to you: do we not certainly know that every jar will be filled with wine. (Verse 12)
Parable: Yahweh tells Jeremiah to speak to His people in a parable about wine. They show their ignorance by mocking Jeremiah and bragging about their indulgence in wine.
 2. You say to them: Thus says Yahweh: Behold, I (am) filling the inhabitants of this land: the kings sitting on David's throne, the priests, the prophets, and all inhabiting Jerusalem with drunkenness. (Verse 13)
Judged: With this, Yahweh hints at drunkenness as judgment. Over one hundred years before this, He spoke through Isaiah that He would make them drunk in His hot anger (Isaiah 63:1-3). Later, when Judah was captive in Babylon, He said through Jeremiah He would make drunk their princes to eternal sleep (Jeremiah 51:54-57). And for we who live in the church age, John tells us that all who worship the beast instead of God will drink the 'wine of the wrath of God' (Revelation 14:8-10).
 3. I will pulverize them one against another, fathers and sons together, says Yahweh, I will not spare, I will not pity, I will not have compassion from (the) destruction of them. (Verse 14)
Triple destruction: Bottom line: Because of the proud and drunken worship of false 'gods', nothing will keep the covenant God of Israel from destroying His people. Using three closely related synonyms for the compassion of a mother for the baby in her womb, He says He can no longer feel this way about His wayward children!

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Application: Two thousand five hundred years later God is telling us to repent of our sins, especially of failing to love God with everything that is in us, because if we do not God may destroy us; and, we will realize it is better to cut out an eye than to be guilty of lust (after other 'gods' and idols in unfaithfulness to Him) and so to be in danger of the eternally burning garbage fire (Matthew 5:27-30). So, we must strive to be faithful to God and His Word

- B. Yahweh's people defiled the land He gave them by sacrificing innocent blood to idols so He abhorred them and allowed enemies to oppress them. (Psalm 106:37-43)
1. Then they sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons / then they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters // whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan / then they defiled the land with blood. (Verses 37-38)
Defiled: These words were written during the Babylonian captivity which began at the end of Jeremiah's public prophetic ministry. With much poetic repetition, the psalmist seeks to wake up the remnant of God's people that they had defiled the land God graciously gave them and had defiled themselves by sacrificing their own children to the idols of the pagan people they had failed to destroy in the days of Joshua and the judges.
 2. Then they became unclean in their deeds / then they were harlots in their practices // then they kindled the anger of Yahweh against His people / then He abhorred His people. (Verses 39-40)
Abhorrence: By their unfaithfulness to their covenant God, they became unclean in all they did. Therefore Yahweh burned in hot anger to His people so He abhorred them.

Yahweh abhors those who defile themselves with idols

3. Then He gave them into the hand of the nations / then they ruled over them, those hating them // then their enemies oppressed them / then they were brought into subjection under their hand. (Verses 41-42)
Consequence: As a consequence of the unfaithfulness of His people, Yahweh gave His people over to the nations hating them. They were oppressed by their enemies who ruled them in malevolent power.
4. Many times He delivered them / and they were rebellious in their purposes / then they were humiliated in their iniquity. (Verse 43)
Repeated 'backsliding': This describes of the days of the judges (Judges 2:16-18) and the twenty two years of Josiah's sons who ruled while Jeremiah prophesied until the captivity (2 Kings 23:28-25:21; Jeremiah 1:1-3). Despite God's gracious deliverances, His people continued in rebellious iniquity!

Application: Because all people are born with this tendency to resist the grace of God we must all pray we will grow in the grace of God in Jesus (2 Peter 3:14-18) in order to make every effort to be found blameless in Jesus, sanctified as He is sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:2-8) when we all meet Him (1 John 3:1-3).

Conclusion: Yahweh gives Jeremiah directions about a linen waistband to illustrate the prophecy Jeremiah must give to Judah, namely that their God will destroy their pride for going after other 'gods'. Yahweh will execute His wrath on all Israel without compassion because they defiled the land with innocent blood and became abhorrent to Him by subjecting them to oppression. And, even after He delivered them many times, they still fell into rebellion.

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