

# The Fiery Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

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Text

Jeremiah 13:1-27

Topic

Jeremiah is told to wear a sash around his waist to symbolize God's relationship with the nation of Judah

Title

*"One Man's Sash is Another Man's Typology"*

## Introduction

"Who are you wearing?" is easily the most asked and answered question on any red carpet. The celebrities are all decked-out in gowns and suits, the ladies adorned with borrowed but beautiful and costly accessories. When they answer, "Vera Wang" or "Versace" or "Louis Vuitton" or "Gucci," it's a huge moment of recognition for the designer.

**You might be surprised to learn that the prophet Jeremiah was fashion conscious.** As he went about Jerusalem and the surrounding cities he wore a "linen sash" (NJKV) around his waist. *He was stylin'!*

There was no red carpet but if someone had asked Jeremiah, "who are you wearing?" he'd have answered, "Yahweh."

You see, **God had told him to wear the sash to communicate a message to Judah**, saying in verse eleven, "for as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so have I caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me..."

God thought of His people as a beautiful adornment that the other nations would see and ask, "who are you wearing?" to which they would answer,

“Yahweh,” thus giving testimony to the true God Who was reaching out to save them.

As you read through the New Testament you come to a passage (it's Titus 2:10) that says of us, as believers, “that [we] may **adorn** the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.”

### **God still thinks in terms of our adorning Him and His Gospel.**

Instead of adorning the Lord the Jews distorted Him to the surrounding nations and God had to discipline them. Let's not make their mistakes. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Adorn The Gospel; Do It With Praise, and #2 You Adorn The Gospel; Don't Do It With Pride.

#1 You Adorn The Gospel;  
Do It With Praise  
(v1-11)

The "sash" that "clings to the waist of a man" is an article of clothing that goes by several different names in various Bible translations.

- The New International Version calls it a "linen belt.”
- The New American Standard Bible calls it a "linen waistband.”
- The New Revised Standard Bible calls it a "linen loincloth.”
- The New English Bible calls it an "apron.”
- In the King James Version, it is a "linen girdle.”

It is best understood as a long linen sash about a handbreadth wide that was wrapped around the waist.

Jeremiah 13:1 Thus the LORD said to me: "Go and get yourself a linen sash, and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water."

Jeremiah 13:2 So I got a sash according to the word of the LORD, and put it around my waist.

Jeremiah went sash-shopping! Whenever these prophets did *anything*, it was a big deal. God was always using props to speak in parables and figures through them to His people.

Either Jeremiah didn't normally wear a sash or he bought one that was particularly fancy. It would be immediately noticeable, then, as he went about town. It made a statement - much more than a fashion statement.

Commentators are stressed about what is meant by "do not put it in water." It seems to me that the Lord was telling Jeremiah *to not launder it*. Just wear it and keep on wearing it day-after-day.

When we would take our short-term missions trips to the Philippines, I would sweat so much that my shirt would develop salt patterns. It was gross. Let's just say I could barely wear a shirt one whole day, let alone day after day. The Lord was letting Jeremiah know that his new fashion accessory was going to get dirty, then dirtier, then filthy as he wore it over time without washing it.

Jeremiah 13:3 And the word of the LORD came to me the second time, saying,  
Jeremiah 13:4 "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."  
Jeremiah 13:5 So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me.

After some time had transpired, and after folks had noticed Jeremiah wasn't laundering his sash, he was told to take it to a river and stash it in a hole in a rock.

I said 'a' river because we're not sure it was, in fact, the Euphrates in Babylon. That is how it's translated into English, but good language scholars point out that in Hebrew the spelling for "Euphrates" and "Parah" are identical. Parah was a village just outside Anathoth, Jeremiah's home town. Considering the distance to Babylon was 700 miles round trip and that he'd have to make that journey twice, it's unlikely that he actually went to Babylon. The symbolism works without him having to go all the way to Babylon.

No one saw Jeremiah do this; at least that's what I get from the command to "hide" the sash. Afterwards it would be obvious as he walked about that his once fashionable, then filthy, sash was gone.

Jeremiah 13:6 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."

Jeremiah 13:7 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.

To which we might comment, "Duh!" Hold on; here it comes.

Jeremiah 13:8 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Jeremiah 13:9 "Thus says the LORD: 'In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 13:10 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.

**Jeremiah 13:11 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.'**

It's a figure, typology, to preach to God's people. Through Jeremiah God pictured Himself a man wearing a beautiful linen sash. The sash was His one outstanding fashion accessory; it's the one thing that adorned Him. Israel and Judah were to adorn the Lord like a sash in that when the other nations of the world looked at them they'd see beauty and holiness and grace in their representation of the nature and character of God.

Because of their sin, however, they looked more-and-more like a sash that was soiled until one day the sash was gone - no longer being worn by its owner. Where'd the soiled sash go? It was taken away *by its owner* to a river, hidden in a rock there to further decay, until finally it was no good as a sash anymore.

Thus would God "hide" His people by the rivers of Babylon so they would recognize and then repent of their sin.

The Jews *did* adorn the Lord - **just not the way He desired and deserved**. He intended them to adorn Him "for renown, for praise, and for glory."

“Renown.” We use the word when we talk about someone ‘making a name’ for himself. The idea is that the Jews were to be great PR people, spreading the knowledge of the Lord, His holiness, His salvation. They were to make a name for Him among the nations.

“For praise” seems to mean *to elicit (to call forth) praise*. In other words, through their representation of the Lord the Jews were to elicit the praises of the lost for the God of Israel Who was seeking to reveal Himself to them. They would see the beauty of the Lord and be drawn to Him.

“For glory” is the third way they were to represent God as His sash. In Matthew 5:16 we read, “Let your light so shine before men **that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.**” “For glory,” then, means that by *attitudes* and *actions* the Jews would always be pointing away from themselves and to the Lord.

Since we are to “adorn” the Gospel, these three words - “renown,” “praise,” and “glory” - are just as applicable to us.

Am I good PR for Jesus? What do people think He is like based upon my overall presentation of Him to them?

As for praise, it’s not my praising Him but others seeing that He is praiseworthy because of what He’s done for me and wants to do for them.

“For glory” means I better not get in the way, taking any credit. Instead there better be something supernatural about how I live, something heavenly.

We’re down-to-earth folk here in the real California, not really all that fashion conscious. Still, each of us has our own fashion style and it makes a statement. Start thinking about the ‘statement’ you make as an adornment, as a fashion accessory, to the Lord. Because there, too, you **are** making a statement by your walk and through your talk.

#2 You Adorn The Gospel;  
Don't Do It With Pride  
(v12-27)

Several times in this section the Lord points to the “pride” of His people - their sinful, selfish pride - as a root of their problem. As we run through the remaining verses we'll get some idea of what constitutes pride.

Jeremiah 13:12 "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?'

Jeremiah 13:13 "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!

Jeremiah 13:14 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." ' "

“Every bottle shall be filled with wine” was a saying the Jews used to indicate that a good harvest was being gathered and thus “every bottle,” or wineskin, would be able to be filled.

The Jews would ridicule Jeremiah as if he wasn't telling them anything they didn't already know. But the message was that the ‘harvest’ would be one of the Lord's judgment against them. The Babylonians would come and the Jews would be terrified and run about as if they were drunken men.

The “pride” working in their hearts was that they were living harvest-to-harvest, focusing on material things, while the spiritual was being neglected. If our approach to life is mostly material, mostly physical, it's pride on our part.

Jeremiah 13:15 Hear and give ear: Do not be proud, For the LORD has spoken.

Jeremiah 13:16 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.

Your walk with the Lord is depicted as an ascent along a narrow mountain path. You need light so you don't stumble and fall. The “pride” here is thinking the path is much broader, with lots of detours you can indulge in

along the way. *It's not!* You need the light of His Word, His lamp at your feet.

Jeremiah 13:17 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.

Every now and again Jeremiah interjected his own feelings. Knowing God as the Great Shepherd, he saw the Jews as the Lord's flock "taken captive." In the sharing of his heart about their sad state of affairs we are reminded that, if we would adorn Jesus, we must look out upon the whole world with compassion.

Jeremiah 13:18 Say to the king and to the queen mother, "Humble yourselves; Sit down, For your rule shall collapse, the crown of your glory."

This was a prophecy. Both King Jehoiachin and his wife, Nehushta, would in fact be carried off as captives. Implied is that their "rule" was bringing *them* "glory," rather than bringing glory to the Lord. Humble yourself so the Lord can be exalted. Jesus saves - **not** our wisdom or talent or abilities.

Jeremiah 13:19 The cities of the South shall be shut up, And no one shall open them; Judah shall be carried away captive, all of it; It shall be wholly carried away captive.  
Jeremiah 13:20 Lift up your eyes and see Those who come from the north. Where is the flock that was given to you, Your beautiful sheep?

The Jews had established fortifications in the "South" against invasion but they would not stop the advancing armies of King Nebuchadnezzar.

We try to fortify our lives; then we trust in those fortifications. Health and wealth are the two most prominent fortifications we build. Both of those come into play as we get to retirement age where we think we'll have the health to enjoy the wealth we've managed to squirrel away. That's fine, **as long as we don't ignore the furthering of the kingdom along the way.** "Seek ye **first** the kingdom of God," *then* think about things on the earth. Otherwise it's pride.

Jeremiah 13:21 What will you say when He punishes you? For you have taught them To be chieftains, to be head over you. Will not pangs seize you, Like a woman in labor?

The Jews were to be separate from the surrounding nations in order to express the wonder and the glory of the Lord. Instead they adopted the disgusting practices of the surrounding nations. In doing so, they put themselves in submission to those people and their practices because to whomever you yield yourself, to that person you become a slave.

“Like a woman in labor” is a common expression in the Old Testament to describe the unavoidable pain and suffering of God’s judgment once it falls upon you. It’s a warning to repent before it’s too late to stop the consequences of sin.

Jeremiah 13:22 And if you say in your heart, "Why have these things come upon me?" For the greatness of your iniquity Your skirts have been uncovered, Your heels made bare.

This is a description of how a prostitute would be treated for her sins - she would be “uncovered” and “made bare.” It describes the backslidden believer as a prostitute, pimping himself or herself out to the world when, in fact, they belong to the Lord. Pride tells us we can serve two masters but that is never true, never possible.

Jeremiah 13:23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.

The Jews were so “accustomed to do evil” that for them to change would seem as impossible as the examples given. He was saying that, if you’re not careful and diligent, you can become “accustomed to do evil.”

Jeremiah 13:24 "Therefore I will scatter them like stubble That passes away by the wind of the wilderness.

Jeremiah 13:25 This is your lot, The portion of your measures from Me," says the LORD, "Because you have forgotten Me And trusted in falsehood.

“Stubble” was the broken straw separated from the wheat after the grain had been trampled out by the oxen. Sometimes it was burned as useless; at other times left to be blown away by the wind from the desert. The point here is that rather than bearing fruit for the Lord, their lives were really stubble.



The mention of being either fruit or “stubble” reminds me that we will all one day stand before Jesus and when we do we will want to be able to see that we built lives with precious, spiritual materials rather than the “wood, hay and stubble” of the things of this world.

Jeremiah 13:26 Therefore I will uncover your skirts over your face, That your shame may appear.

Jeremiah 13:27 I have seen your adulteries And your lustful neighings, The lewdness of your harlotry, Your abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! Will you still not be made clean?"

This last figure is that of an adulteress caught and brought naked to be stoned to death. It's what the Law of Moses demanded.

The pride here is in thinking your sin won't be found out; that you will get away with it. Even if it isn't exposed, think of what sin does to your relationship with your Lord.

God mercifully said to them, “Will you still not be made clean?” Caught and condemned by their spiritual adultery, *God was urging them to repent.* Judah was the woman caught in adultery and, like the woman caught in adultery in the Gospel of John who was brought to Jesus, forgiveness and restoration were preferable and possible.

**You are the Lord's sash.** How do you look? Are you just as beautiful and fashionable as when first He put you on? Or are you soiled from having picked-up so much filth from the world?

Let us **adorn** the ever-living God!