

July 30

### Jeremiah 13-15

In today's scripture Jeremiah continues in his mission of bringing the message of captivity to the people.

In chapter 13 God gives him a visual illustration of what is about to happen. The Lord tells Jeremiah to go out and buy a new belt! I'm thinking Jeremiah liked this kind of word from the Lord. After all, everything the Lord had told him up until now had been pretty negative stuff. Now he was getting to wear a brand new belt. I'm sure it looked and felt good around his waist. Then the Lord tells him to do a curious thing. He was to take his nice new clean belt and hide it under some rocks. Well, it was nice while he it. Now, sometime later, he's told to go find it again. When he uncovers it, this once nice clean brand new belt is now ruined and useless.

There's something special about belts. They add shape and style and hold things together. You cinch up your belt and it makes your clothes feel good on you. Belts also add a finishing touch to your outfit. Women usually have a lot of belts. Guys only need a few, maybe a black one and a brown one. A guy depends on just a few belts. I know I don't feel dressed without a belt. I'm sure in those days, since men wore loose fitting garments belts were an essential part of their clothing, and probably brought a statement status and design.

In the same way the Lord wanted his people to be a belt around his waist, tied closely to him, and an accessory that could bring him glory. Instead they corrupted their ways, detached themselves from him. They became dirty, broken, and useless.

In the rest of chapter 13, Jeremiah goes on to tell the king (Jehoiachin), and his mother that they are about to be deposed and carried off into exile. The nations they had allied themselves with will actually be their captors.

In the rest of today's reading we get another picture of the heart of the nation. As they experience the consequences of their sin and cry out to him for help, he will not listen. Once again Jeremiah is told not to pray for them. There is no real change of heart, there is only the sorrow of getting caught .

The same time Jeremiah was bringing God's message of coming destruction, there were other prophets bringing an opposite message of comfort and the promise of safety and prosperity. God says that not only did he not send them, but that they will certainly be killed along with their families.

King Manasseh had so corrupted the nation, that even though there were reforms made by Josiah, it was too late. The people's hearts were set on doing evil. This condition reminds me of other scriptures that warn of the danger of heart hardening that cannot be remedied. Three times in the book of Hebrews we are warned of the danger of hardening our hearts. Proverbs 29:1 says: "A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed- without remedy."

As we reflect on today's reading may the picture of Jeremiah's belt challenge us who are "in Christ" to stay tied close to him and bring him glory.