

Home Depot is a chain of large warehouses that sells home products wholesale. I was in one of their stores recently just as a new work shift arrived, and I watched some of the employees "gird up". They put on black, wide-band belts - or girdles - that were required by their employer. These girdles provided added strength in lifting heavy items, and they helped safeguard against injury. They were an apparel made specifically for the workplace.

The girdle of Jeremiah's day was similar. It too was considered workers' apparel, and it was worn like a belt around the midsection. The phrase "gird up your loins" meant to place the cloth belt snugly about your waist prior to undertaking some particular labor - to put it on, tighten it up and prepare for work.

Jeremiah speaks of a certain girdle as God's very own. It was a belt that the Lord said He girded Himself with - one that "clave" to Him for a time - but that eventually He cast off as ruined and "good for nothing".

This girdle of God represents a people who once had been called by His name: set apart by covenant, tremendously anointed, near to His heart, dearly loved and much blessed. They were a holy, sanctified remnant people - bound closely to the Lord by His covenant promise. God had said He would gird Himself with this pure remnant as He goes forth in these last days to do battle with His enemies.

But the people that this girdle represented had a deep-seated flaw: a seed of iniquity had settled in their hearts. They had spiritually rotted and decayed - and God had to cast them aside, because they

The Girdle of God

had never allowed themselves to truly be cleansed by Him!

Isaiah confirms that God will gird Himself only with a righteous, faithful people:

"And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" ISA 11:5

This speaks of Christ's own righteousness, holiness and purity. But it also speaks of all who are in Christ - those who will become His girdle of glory in these last days!

The apostle John saw an awesome vision of Jesus coming to judge the churches of the last day:

"One like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and a girt about the paps with a golden girdle" REV 1:13

Jesus will be wearing a golden girdle as He comes forth for His work of judgement!

This girdle will be like the one worn by the high priest in the Old Testament (Exodus 39:9). It was ornamented, bejeweled and woven with golden threads. These threads represent the body of Jesus Christ - a pure, holy, sanctified people that Jesus causes to cleave to Himself. They are the manifest presence of the Lord - a praise and a glory to His majesty:

"For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man... so have I caused to cleave unto me... a people... for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory" JER 13:11

This ornamental girdle was beautiful to behold - because there is a

beauty to God's holiness! All mankind, all kings and principalities, were to look upon that girdle of God as something royal - a diadem, a beautiful source of glory to the wearer. It was to be a wonder to the world of God's majesty!

Jeremiah Was Commanded by God to Get a Linen Girdle - And to Wear It Without Ever Washing It!

Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water" JER 13:1

Jeremiah was instructed to wear this girdle on the outside of his clothes. Today, he could wear it on any street in almost any American city, and no one would take a second look. But to the Jewish society of his day, he would have stuck out like a sore thumb!

The Jewish masses dressed very much alike, in conformity with the times. And as they caught sight of Jeremiah parading down the streets in a girdle, they certainly would have recognized this as a sign! This is because Jeremiah was well known among the people. They knew that everything he did - including what he wore - had an important prophetic meaning!

When Jeremiah first appeared on the streets of Jerusalem wearing the linen girdle, the guessing game began: "What is the meaning of the girdle? What is the prophet trying to say to us?"

The educated priests and rulers prided themselves on interpreting for the people the prophet's mes-

sage. They probably told them: "It's very obvious. God is saying to us what we all know - that we are His chosen people! We are His girdle worn proudly, His glory and strength, the excellency of the ages, united to Him by covenant. He will never leave us or forsake us. We are bound to Him as surely as that girdle is bound to Jeremiah!"

As the prophet walked by, you could almost hear the people clapping: "Amen, Jeremiah! We get the message. Right on - praise God!"

But in a short time those same priests and people were frowning! They watched Jeremiah with a deep puzzlement - because day by day the girdle got dirtier. It was becoming soiled and unclean; spots were beginning to appear.

But the prophet kept wearing it!

"Why is he not daily washing it?" they wondered. They all knew the girdle represented them - so why did he allow it to cling to him with filth and stench on it? Soon they were angry, hissing - because to the Jewish mind of that day, cleanliness was a form of godliness. And this soiled, smelly girdle was an offence!

They could no longer believe the girdle represented them! They must have run to the priests and said: "That girdle can't mean us! God doesn't allow dirt to cling to Him. We sacrifice, pay tithes and keep the law. We pray every day and fast.

"The girdle must represent the wicked heathen around and among us. If we were that kind of people, God would have cast us aside. He'd never wear a stinking, dirty girdle upon His waist!"

Not so! The dirty girdle was Israel. Yet it also represents every single servant of God who has never been wholly, totally cleansed!

Israel called themselves by the name of God. They observed all the religious forms and rituals. And yet God saw something deep in their heart that was going to destroy them - something that had never been dealt with.

All along there had been a flaw, a fly in the ointment - a secret, hidden sin in their hearts: They were idolaters! They lusted after the Midian gods, because of the sen-

suality and sexuality involved in their worship. And now Israel had conjured up their own doctrines to suit their life-style. They had secret, deadly lusts that had never been plucked out!

God wanted to show Israel that in spite of ceremonial cleansing they had never been cleansed at heart. He told Jeremiah, "These people have never allowed Me to go deep into their hearts and pluck out their idolatry. No matter how meticulously they pay their tithes or come into My house, there is something inside them that's causing decay and rot!"

The Girdle Is the Servant of God - the One Who Is Busy For Jesus. Convinced He Is Redeemed!

This servant may be a lover of lost souls who sacrifices his life by praying, fasting and giving. He cleaves to the Lord, enjoying covenant blessings. But deep inside he still holds onto a secret sin, a besetting lust - and he keeps falling back into a temptation that he never overcomes!

He cries out, day after day: "Lord, I'm sorry - forgive me! Don't let me die in my sin. Be merciful to me! You know how weak I am, how easily this lust overcomes me!" He sins and confesses, sins and confesses... but he never goes to the laver - he never allows himself to truly be cleansed! And he becomes blind to his danger!

A brother in Christ came into my office recently and said, "All my life I've heard sermons on King Saul. I've read all about him. Brother Dave, yesterday I talked to him!"

He was referring to a man who appeared to be truly holy - one who prayed for hours, sitting up half the night interceding for others. His conversation had always been full of Jesus. But now he is living with a woman in adultery!

This had been the third such episode in his life: he had fallen into this same sin every few years! All along he had appeared to be a holy man, a prayer warrior. But he was never delivered from a stronghold of sexual lust - and now it had ruined him!

Next, Jeremiah Was Commanded to Wear the Dirty Girdle on a Long, Arduous Journey to the Euphrates River!

This journey would cover 250 miles. Some biblical scholars such as John Calvin believed this trip was merely a vision; nobody would actually travel that distance on foot to bury a girdle. But I believe the trip was real - because God had a powerful truth He wished to convey!

You see, Jeremiah was well known and respected throughout Israel and Judah. He was admired even among the surrounding nations. Foreign kings acknowledged God was with him. And now, by his walking the distance to the Euphrates, every village along the way would see the famous girdle. The trip would take weeks - and it would set every town abuzz as Jeremiah passed through. Everyone would want a glimpse of the dirt girdle, to speculate about its message!

Yet what probably was most mystifying to the people was Jeremiah's destination: the Euphrates River. Everyone knew the Hebrew word "Euphrates" meant "river of fruitfulness." They all would have asked themselves, "Why would Jeremiah be taking a dirty, soiled girdle to a place of fruitfulness? It's awful, full of stench! Why doesn't he cast it off and burn it? The unclean cannot be fruitful!"

God Was Giving His People a Picture of His Patience Toward Those Who Cling to Him While Still Holding Onto a Secret Sin!

Indeed, it is possible to cling to a secret sin in your life and to go on with Jesus. You can still sense His presence and be in covenant with Him. Everything may seem fine. In fact, it might seem you're right on the brink of the greatest blessing ever - fruitfulness like you've never known, a whole new realm of usefulness opening up before you.

Yet it doesn't matter who you are - pastor, street worker, choir member or layperson: If you have hidden, habitual sin, you're on a death march! You're headed for a black hole - for darkness like you've never known. You can harbor sin and appear to be getting away with it - yet not be aware that a patient Lord is waiting for full repentance before He leaves you to your sin and gives you over to ruin and decay!

God had endured such sin in Israel for years before He brought them to ruin. In fact, the prophet's jour-

ney was a perfect illustration of this. The Euphrates was far out of the way - and Jeremiah's journey showed how far out of His way God goes in being patient with His servants who are trapped by a besetting sin. He's a loving Father - and He continues in longsuffering for years.

But the time comes when you are given a final call- and your day of conviction passes! God then knows you refuse to part with your sin:

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" ECCL 8:11

Recently, a young pastor came to me with tears in his eyes. He spoke of an older minister who was a role model for a host of pastors. This man had had a reputation for dignity and honesty, and doors had opened to him for greater ministry. The younger men had pointed to his life and said, "Even if all the great televangelists fall, at least we have our beloved brother as our example. He is so full of Christ - he exudes the very essence of Jesus!"

But now, said the tearful young man, "I've found out he's been carrying on a secret affair for the past twelve years. I'm devastated - I can't believe it! He's exposed, ruined - gone!"

Beloved, that man had been on a death march to the Euphrates! God had gone out of His way with him for twelve years, because the Lord is patient, always wanting His vessels to come to true repentance. This man could have cried out at any time: "I'm filthy! I have hidden sin, and I want to be cleansed and free!"

But something happens when sin sets in! God's Spirit had come to him time after time, with message after message. God had done everything in His power to speak. Yet still this man wouldn't part with his sin - and now his life is in ruins! Hardness and blindness had set in!

God commanded Jeremiah:

"Go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole" JER 13:4

The girdle arrived at the place of fruitfulness only to be cast aside - not simply shelved, but buried and abandoned. Jeremiah stood at the edge of the river, and off came the

girdle: he dropped it into a hole, covered it with dirt, put up a marker - and waked away!

This is a picture of God "taking off" the cleaving pastor. Christian worker or so-called believer. What a frightful thought! The days of cleaving are over - God's patience has gone. And now He says, "You are finished - I am giving you over to your filth. You are of no more use to Me!"

I will never forget the sad sight of a TV evangelist, at the peak of his fruitfulness, weeping as he was handcuffed, manacled and taken off to prison. The arresting officers pushed his head down to enter the car, and down he went - into a dark hole near the Euphrates! He was just at the age of usefulness, when he had the ability to be really fruitful for God. But instead he was let down into a hole of despair!

God had sent him warnings year after year, from prophet after prophet. But he held onto hidden sin - and for the last seven years of clinging to that lust, he was on a death march!

Are you on a death march right now - about to be cut off from every blessing you know, because you have not dealt with a secret sin? Beloved, if you keep flirting with an old lust or habit, if you have not been thoroughly washed in the water of God's Word - then you are headed for a black hole of despair!

Fruitfulness will be just before you - and yet suddenly you will be isolated, cast off and abandoned by the Lord! You will be buried in a cleft in the rock by the river, stripped of everything - your good name, your reputation, your ministry, your whole future. You will be buried in a desolate hole of shame and despair to rot and decay, completely ruined!

Not Only Was the Girdle Hidden, to Rot and Ruin - But It Was Dug Up and Brought Back As an Example!

After a time, God commanded Jeremiah to go and dig up the girdle. So the prophet brought it up out of the hole:

"And behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing" JER 13:7

It was ruined, useless - good for nothing! Why did God tell Jeremiah to dig it up? Why didn't He just

leave it buried, to show that this was the end result of sin? Most of Israel had forgotten all about it. Some probably thought, "At least he finally cast it off and buried it - whoever it was he was preaching about!"

But here came Jeremiah again, parading through the streets with that same girdle - now tattered, filthy and in total ruin. It was absolutely worthless - it couldn't even be worn! He preached:

"This ruined girdle is Israel! It represents you - good for nothing! You were cleaving to God, but He is going to cast you off. You have become a stench - you are useless to Him!"

God was saying, "You have been My girdle - I caused you to cling to Me. But you have refused to hear and obey Me! Instead, you walk after your idolatries and cling to the evil in your hearts. Now I will not only cast you off - I will also bring you to ruin and hold you up to the world as a warning! You will be an example of those who won't rid their soul of sin!"

Every newspaper, TV and radio network carried the tragic story of the former street-preacher-turned-comedian who was killed in a head-on collision. Years ago, people on the West Coast had told me, "You really need to hear this young street preacher. He's the most on-fire evangelist to come along - he is so powerful!" He was stirring campuses all over the West Coast, winning many souls.

But this young man had a problem: he had never really laid down his love for drugs, alcohol and sex. Eventually he became bitter, and he turned against God. He ended up in Las Vegas as a headline comedian, and his routines were based on blaspheming God and blasting the Bible. He grew to great fame. But he was cast aside - and he ended up in a hole of despair, contemplating suicide!

Finally, he died in a fiery crash on a lonely highway last year. His last words before dying were, "Why, Lord - why?"

Beloved, God had dug up the girdle! He was saying to the world, "I want to show you the end result!"

God Had a Very Good Reason For Giving This Illustrated Message -

Both to Israel and To Us At This Very Hour!

God was on the brink of pouring out His wrath upon Israel - and He had no time for a dirty, useless girdle. God needed pure, holy vessels for the work He was about to do. And that is exactly where America and the world are right now! God is on the brink of pouring out His wrath like wine - and He is placing the bottle on the lips of the people!

Jeremiah prophesied:

"Every bottle shall be filled with wine" verse 12

Yet this didn't make sense to Israel. To them he was merely stating the obvious - like saying, "Hats are for covering the head. Clothes are for keeping you warm. Shoes are for walking." The people cried, "What kind of riddle is this? Of course, bottles are made for wine! What's the point?"

Jeremiah answered, "You are the bottle - and God is going to fill you with wine of His wrath! Just as bottles are filled with wine, so you will be filled with wine, so you will be filled with drunkenness. You will become drunk with madness!"

"I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together" verse 14

To "dash" means to smash suddenly and violently. God was saying, "I'm going to dash these drunken people against one another until they destroy each other!"

This dashing speaks of calamities, disasters and a human madness that robs men of their right mind. And the Lord is pouring it all out right now - on nations, on sinning Christians and on all wickedness! You see it everywhere you look - disastrous hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, tidal waves;

families inflicting wounds on each other, being brought down by divorce, drugs, adultery, shame and violence.

What is happening right now is more than simply another moral downturn, more than social disintegration. We are living in the last days, when God is having to finally deal with sin! We're facing His poured-out wrath - a time of madness when every man is a law unto himself! God is saying, "You've sinned against Me, you've thrown Me out of your schools and society. And now you've going to pay the price!"

I hear preachers saying, "God is merciful and kind - He wouldn't bring all these calamities on us. This is all just nature doing its thing - it's human nature being played out." Not so! God said,

"I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings... with drunkenness. And I will dash them one against another" verses 13-14

We must have compassion on all who are hurt - by disasters, by murder on the streets, by violence in the home. We are called to grieve with those who grieve. But at the same time we dare not forget that we are living in the last days - and God said He would pour out His wrath like wine!

The Lord Is Girding Himself For the Final Conflict!

God is not going into this final battle with any soiled, spotted servants for a girdle. Such are useless - "good for nothing!" I say to every minister, Christian worker, street preacher and everyone who calls himself a Christian: In this hour of drunken madness, you won't make it while clinging to your hidden, besetting sin!

Jesus will not go with you - and you will not have a drop of anointing! You can testify, preach, pray and work your fingers to the bone - but all to no avail, if you are not clean before the Lord! If you're hiding homosexuality, drinking, an unbridled temper, a roving eye - anything that is not right with God - then it is all in vain. You are a dirty girdle, soon to be discarded!

God is seeking holy, pure, washed workers for the battle. He is going to have a spotless, pure girdle for His work of judgement in these last days - a girdle made with golden threads. Beloved, that is the best place to be: woven into His majestic girdle, near Him - being worn as His praise. His name, His glory!

Yet I ask you: Do you say you love Him - but still cling to a secret lust? Is God pointing His finger into your heart right now?

This may be your last call - to be washed and cleansed to the depths of your soul!

Fall before Him right now - before you come to the Euphrates! Pray: "Jesus, I want Your cleansing water to go into the depths of my soul. I want nothing hidden! Remove it all. I want to be useful to You, wholly given to Your desires. Weave me into Your golden girdle!"

You will find all the mercy and grace you need; you can be truly sanctified and set free of every sin that you still cling to - if you will be honest before God. Admit it, confess it - and ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to receive by faith all the strength you need to resist the devil and all his enticements.

The Holy Spirit is waiting to help and deliver you this very moment!

David Wilkerson

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