

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Sin defiles. The Scripture describes holiness as clean, pure, without spot, unblemished. The vestment that envelopes the saints is gleaming white. But not so the vestment of the sinner. The Prophet Isaiah uses the whiteness of wool to describe holiness, the scarlet of sin is its opposite. The bright freshness of snow is the parable for sinlessness, the staining crimson of blood is the darkness of sin.

So the Prophet Jeremiah is given a sign. A piece of cloth, buried by the riverbank, filthy, rotten, worthless, profitable for nothing. It is so dirty it defiles anything it touches. The only fitting end to such a thing would be to burn it.

This is how God describes those who will not hear His Word. They are like Jeremiah's ruined sash - worthless, filthy, defiling others with false doctrine, worthy only to be burned. So fire is prepared for them to properly dispose of them, the consuming fire of the Last Day.

As God spoke through the Prophet "In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem", so will He ruin the pride of all fallen men, men intoxicated by their own delusions.

But what soils man is not riverbank mud. Would that it were – a simple washing would solve the problem. But man is soiled by his sin. And that is an indelible stain, a consuming pollution of what was once very good. And it is that sin which causes fallen man to close his ears to God's Word. Oh, fallen men will

hear of a god that is nice to them, a god that gives them things they want when they want them, a god that rewards even their most meager, half-hearted efforts.

But when the Truth is made plain, when it is clearly exposed that man is sinful and does not merit God's favor, when their true stains are revealed, self-centered men, unbelieving men, fleshly men, close their ears.

The Truth is that God's Word is not something men can pick and choose only parts from. You must receive the whole revealed Truth. And to truly receive it, you must conform your belief, and so your life, only to the Word.

But prideful men, fallen men, sinful men, abandon the Truth for the religion they themselves have fashioned. And that religion, and it is in every sense a religion, is to worship a god that fallen men have fashioned according to their distorted reason and hardened hearts. And by this religion others are wrongly taught and defiled. It is the same religion for which Israel and Judah were condemned, and God removed from them His prophets and His Word.

And it is no different today, no different two and a half millenia later. Man hasn't changed. He is the same as he was in Jeremiah's time, in Isaiah's time, in Adam's time after his casting out. The fallen world is perishing, and soon it will be altogether destroyed. And if you cling to this world, if you cling to the prophets and teachings of this perverse world, like the Prophet's sash, you will perish.

So put away your fallen ideas about what God should be and how God should act. Repent, and submit yourself to His Word alone. Hear and believe. Conform your life to His Saving Word. For there, in His Word, is the only Truth. And that Truth is Jesus Christ, Who is the Way and the Life.

Gospel invites you to find salvation and life in God. For like Jeremiah's sash, Christ Himself was cast off and buried in a hole in the rock. He was crucified and entombed.

But although like Jeremiah, the women went to the tomb to dig the Lord up, it wasn't possible. While the Prophet's sash lay ruined in the dirt, the Prophet's Lord, the True Prophet who has come into the world, emptied His own tomb. When the women arrived in the shadows of the morning, He had already risen. He died to remove your sin. He rose to win eternal life for you.

In Christ, God sees you not as you are, not as a dirty sash, but He sees you as clean, holy, without spot or blemish, your sins forgiven, white as snow, pure as white wool, completely vested in the gleaming robe of Christ's righteousness.

And God does this by washing, not in the Euphrates water, but in the water of the font, the water of the river of life. He washes you clean from sin in the Blood of Christ. He gives you saving faith, faith that clings to Him.

That faith, saving faith, hungers for His Word. Faith reads, marks, learns, and inwardly digests the Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, which feed and strengthen faith. So does God make you His people for His renown, for His praise, and for His glory.

And the same God that makes you clean feeds you. He fed His people in the wilderness. In the grassy place He gave them loaves and fish. But for you, you who trek through the desert place of this fallen world, for you He has reserved the best – at this holy altar He gives you His Body and Blood.

He feeds you miraculously, as He gives you to eat of Himself – Christ in the Bread, Christ in the Wine. He feeds you as His dear children, washed clean, vested in Christ, filled with His Spirit, and so profitable for salvation.

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