

NOTES ON THE PROPHECY AND LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

“The Weeping Prophet”

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CHAPTER TEN

PASHUR’S NEW NAME AND THE PROPHET’S COMPLAINT

(Chap. 20)

With callous indifference, not so much actual persecution, our prophet thus far has had to cope. He is now to experience physical suffering at the hands of one from whom, above many others, better things might have been expected. Pashur, a priest and chief governor in the house of the Lord, resents the faithful preaching of Jeremiah, and seeks to put a stop to it by forcible means. Scripture is silent elsewhere as to this man, although several other persons by the same name are mentioned in this book. Here we are only told that he was the son of Immer; that is, he belonged to the sixteenth course of the priesthood (I Chronicles 24:14).

He heard that “**Jeremiah prophesied these things,**” and he resolved to make a public example of him. We are told that he smote the prophet, “**and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord**” (vers. 1, 2). He was thus ignominiously exposed to the taunts of the vulgar multitude. For a part of a day and a night he seems to have been left in this position; then, on the morrow, his persecutor “**brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks.**”

The degradation and suffering had in no wise daunted the man of God. Naturally, as we have seen, a timid, backward man, he is now bold as a lion, in accordance with the promise made to him by the Lord when he began his ministry.

The man who has so often wept over the stony-hearted men of Judah and Jerusalem has now no fears for himself, nor yet any soft words for the renegade priest. Abruptly he declares, “**The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magormissabib**” (ver. 3).

Pashur is commonly said to mean “*prosperity.*” He should never prosper more, for he had lifted up his hand against the Lord’s anointed and rejected His Word. “**Magormissabib**” means “*terror*” (or fear) “*on every side.*” Such should be his future condition. A terror to himself and to all his friends, living in abject fear for his own life from day to day, this should be his reward till carried away in captivity to Babylon; and there he must die and be buried in the land of the uncircumcised.

We read not of any reply on the part of the false priest. The power of Jeremiah's words must have struck deep, however much he hated him; so he seems to have dismissed him from his presence.

And now we find the man who could be so bold before the despiser of the word of the Lord, in brokenness and even fear before the Lord. He was no stoic. He felt most keenly the reproach of his position.

From verse 7 to the end of the chapter we have a kind of soliloquy. He pours out first his complaints, then his praises, and again his remonstrances, into the ears of the Lord of Hosts. **“O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, everyone mocketh me.”** He did not court persecution and taunts: on the contrary, it stung him to the quick to be thus despised, and to find his messages derided. But the Lord had persuaded him. He believed; therefore had he spoken.

His preaching from the beginning had been of violence and spoil; hence the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto him, and a derision daily (ver. 8). Had he prophesied smooth things and given utterance to sentiments calculated to soothe the people in their sin, he would have been held in honor and esteem. But this could not be, for he had to proclaim the words given him by the Lord.

So painful was it to his sensitive nature to meet with reproach and rejection everywhere, that he had made up his mind not to prophesy further.

“Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name.”

This, however, was for him an impossibility. **“His word,”** he says, **“was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay”** (ver. 9). **“Woe is me,”** declared the apostle of the Gentiles, **“if I preach not the gospel.”**

Men sent forth by God with a message from Himself are unable to be at rest if that message is unproclaimed. How different this is to the perfunctory service of multitudes of modern clergymen! **“A burning fire”** must have vent, and if the Word of God be thus surging up in one's breast he simply must preach. To seek to imitate this is but folly. Any spiritual person, and many utterly godless ones, can readily detect the difference between giving forth that which has been implanted in the inmost soul by the Holy Spirit, and the mere vapourings of a wrought-up sermon. The very **“defaming of many on every side”** but served to cast Jeremiah the more on God, and nerve him, if we may so speak, in the conflict for the truth he proclaimed.

Those who professed friendship for him, his **“familiar,”** watched for his halting, and hoped he might be enticed, that they might be avenged on him. Fear was round about as he had declared to Pashur. But he could say, **“The Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper”** (the reference here is clearly to the name Pashur): **“their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten”** (ver. 11).

Therefore to the Lord of Hosts, the One that tries the righteous and sees the reins and the heart, he commits his cause, and pleads that he may see the divine vengeance upon the enemies of Judah's peace. Strong in faith, he counts the things that are not as though they had already come to pass, and cries in his exaltation of spirit: "**Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord: for He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers**" (ver. 13). It is not "He will deliver," but faith says, "**He hath delivered.**"

Who would suppose that the same man would be in this truly blessed state of soul at one moment, and perhaps immediately afterwards be plunged into the abyss of the few remaining verses?

Ah, it is an experience common to most of the children of God.

- While faith is in exercise, all is bright.
- When self is looked to, all becomes dark.

In the verses we have been considering, the Lord has been before the prophet's soul. In those to follow, it is with himself he is occupied. The result is a sudden depression of his spirit, akin to that of Job when "**he opened his mouth and cursed his day**" (Job 3:1). In fact, one can scarcely resist the conclusion that Jeremiah was quite conversant with the book that relates the ways of the Lord with the chief of the land of Uz. By comparing the entire third chapter of Job with these five verses, it will be seen how much alike are the complaints of each of these devoted men.

Our prophet curses the day of his birth and the man who bore the news to his father that a man child had been born unto him. He wishes he had been slain from the womb, or that he might never have been born. "**Wherefore,**" he asks in despair, "**came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?**"

It is the breaking down of a weak and tender heart when the eye has been turned for the time from the God of his salvation. He who knows the deepest feelings of the soul estimated all aright, and in the balances of the sanctuary weighed the grief of His stricken servant.

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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