

speak. He was not one of those who are "like dumb driven cattle." He was "a hero in the strife." After his liberation from his first arrest (see Connecting Links), he had been placed "in the court of the prison" (ch. 37 : 21), a public place where he could speak *unto all the people. Thus saith the Lord.* Not because he was lacking in patriotism, but because a divine command had been laid upon him, did the prophet speak as he did. *He that remaineth*, etc. Three dangers threatened them: (1) to be cut off by the sword; (2) to be starved out; or (3) to die from disease, as often happens in a time of siege. *He that goeth forth to the Chaldeans.* Who, the princes would say, but a traitor could suggest such an action? *Shall have his life for a prey*; that is, as "something snatched up hurriedly and borne away with him." The danger is imminent. The only hope is in surrender.

Vs. 3, 4. *This city .into the hand of the king of Babylon's army.* For the sins of its rulers and people God had determined to give Jerusalem and Judah into the hands of the Chaldeans. *Let this man be put to death.* Only death, they knew, could silence such a man. As long as he lived he would speak God's message. *For .he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain*; "shewing that a good many had gone over to the Chaldeans, a fact which is implied also in v. 19." (Cambridge Bible.) Jeremiah was dispiriting them and, according to the politicians, playing into the hands of the enemy. One man, if he is sincere and zealous, can have a very great influence.

II. Jeremiah Condemned, 5-6

Vs. 5, 6. *Then Zedekiah the king.* "Zedekiah was a prince of good intentions, but weak and irresolute in character." (Davidson.) *Behold he is in your hand.* Zedekiah here confesses his own weakness. His great curse was that he had no moral backbone (compare John 12 : 43; Acts 24 : 27). He could not resist his princes, as Ahab could not stand out against Jezebel (1 Kgs. 16 : 31), or Herod against Herodias, Matt. 14 : 3, etc. *For the king*, etc. He had long since yielded to them the conduct of the war, and, though reluctant, he did not

now dare refuse them. *Then took they Jeremiah*; desiring his death, but too superstitious to strike the blow. *Cast him into the dungeon*: a subterranean cistern such as was found in every house in Jerusalem. So large were they, that when dry they served for prisons Zech. 9 : 11. (See Light from the East, and compare the story of Joseph, Gen. 37 : 20.) *Of Malchiah*; probably meaning that he was in charge of it. *In the court of the guard* (Rev. Ver.); a part of the king's palace (Neh. 3 : 25), probably where the royal guard had its quarters. *Sunk in the mire.* The long siege had exhausted the water supply.

III. Jeremiah Rescued, 7-13.

Vs. 7-9. *Ebed-melech*; a negro attendant attached to the court. *The king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin*; on the north side of the city, the place most exposed to the besiegers. The king was not wholly lacking in courage. *Spake to the king.* "Assistance, prompt, courageous, and effectual was on its way when (and whence) the prophet least thought it." *He is like to die .where he is*; literally, "he is dead by hunger on the spot." The meaning is that the prophet is already at death's door. *No more bread in the city.* "All private stores were consumed, and therefore unless Jeremiah could draw a soldier's rations as he had done hitherto, from the magazine (ch. 37 : 21), he must inevitably die of hunger." (Cook.) (Compare the siege of Samaria, 2 Kgs. 6 : 25.)

Vs. 10, 11. *Take .thirty men.* The large number of men shows that the king feared opposition from his generals, whose acts he was now reversing. *Before he die.* The king was not without tender feelings, but had no strength of character. *Into the house . . under the treasury.* The place was a room under the king's storechamber, a sort of lumber room. *Took .old cast clouts and old rotten rags*; that is, rags from torn and worn out garments. Even rags may be useful.

Vs. 12, 13. *Under thine armholes.* Otherwise, the cords might cut him; and Jeremiah's strength was so spent that he could not have supported himself by clinging to the cords. *Drew up Jeremiah.* It looked for a time as if he would be left to perish miserably in the pit, but again as in last Lesson (ch. 36 : 26)