

pire. No mercy certainly in the prophet's foes, princes though they were. It remains for an alien, and a black man at that, to show compassion, v. 7. The color of the skin is not necessarily the color of the heart. What a brave man was this Ebed-melech! He accuses the princes boldly, vs. 8, 9. But how tender is he (last part of v. 9)! The king's better nature shows itself again; which teaches that no one is ever altogether bad. There is some little good in the very worst of men.

The scholars will follow Ebed-melech and his "thirty men" (v. 10)—why were so many as thirty men needed?—with keen interest. What an odd search! The palace rag-bags;

what a queer procession of the thirty men with the "old cast clouts and rotten (or frayed) rags"! But at the dungeon mouth the reason is seen. The scholars will readily work out the details of vs. 12, 13. Ebed-melech not only saved Jeremiah, but he brought him out of the horrible pit tenderly: he put a loving heart into the cords and rags.

Is it straining the illustration too greatly to compare our blessed, heavenly Lord with this loving, compassionate Ethiopian? The writer of the 40th Psalm had no doubt about God's tenderness (see vs. 1-3); nor had Saul of Tarsus, whom the very Lord whose servants he was hastening to harm, took in His arms and loved, Acts, ch. 9.

ADDED HINTS AND HELPS

In this section will be found further assistance under various headings.

Lesson Points

Life is God's gift and it depends on His conditions. v. 2.

No human power can prevail against heaven's plans. v. 3.

The true patriot seeks not to please, but to profit his people. v. 4.

The king who consents to injustice proves himself unworthy to reign. v. 5.

Saints may be shut in, but the Saviour cannot be shut out. v. 6.

The flower of kindness grows in every clime. v. 7.

Sympathy is spurious unless it is practical. v. 8.

Most people are willing to help when they know the need. vs. 9, 10.

Goodness is incomplete without gentleness. vs. 11, 12.

Where there is a loving heart there will be a helping hand. v. 13.

From the Library

There was no longer any doubt that prudence dictated immediate surrender. It was the only course by which the people might be spared some of the horrors of a prolonged siege, followed by the sack of the city. But the princes who controlled the government were too deeply compromised with Egypt to

dare to hope for mercy. With Jeremiah out of the way, they were able to induce the king and people to maintain their resistance, and the siege went on.—Expositor's Bible.

The first duty of a prophet was to Jehovah, and so, for that matter, was the first duty of every Israelite. Thus in the same way, the first duty of a Christian is to Christ. He who serves Christ most completely serves his country best. In such a service the Christian may be misrepresented, miscalled, stamped even as a traitor, but that only means that he is called to pass through Jeremiah's experience here.—Pulpit Commentary.

Ebed-melech ranks with the eunuch of Queen Candace (Acts 8: 27) as one who feared God and was accepted by Him. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" (Jer. 13: 23). True; but where is whiteness of soul to be found—in Ebed-melech or in the Jewish princes? In Livingstone's tender-hearted African bearers, or in the Arab slave-merchants? Jeremiah at any rate knew who was his true "neighbor". A short prophecy is devoted to Ebed-melech, closing with the words, "because thou hast put thy trust in me," Jer. 39: 18.—Chayne.

It was an act of womanly tenderness, which makes it as fragrant as the breaking of the box over the person of the Lord. It is not enough to serve and help those who need assistance; we should do it with the