

last king of Judah. Note the story preceding the Lesson. Why did the Chaldeans come against Jerusalem? Why did they raise the siege temporarily? (ch. 37: 5.) Why was Jeremiah made prisoner? (ch. 37: 15.) How was he released?

1. Call out the reason why he was cast into the dungeon, vs. 1-4. What was his message, and the nationalists' hope? He was a true patriot, working for the good of his people. He was regarded as the enemy of his country. He had faith in the restoration. (See his land purchase, ch. 32: 6-15.) Discuss the principle of loyalty and the seeming conflict of duties. Consider the question of duty to God and to our country. Which did Jeremiah make supreme? What light does the New Testament give on this ethical problem? Call attention to the dungeon (vs. 6-9), and condition of prisoner in Old Testament times.

2. Notice the faithful Ethiopian, vs. 7-9. What was his position? Observe his boldness and success. How much one faithful individual can do in the interests of the suffering! Why was he so urgent? (ch. 37: 21.) Was only a soldier's supply possible? Notice his manly action and Jeremiah's appreciation, ch. 39: 18.

Jeremiah's word came true. He, with others, was carried to Ramah. By the kindness of the Chaldeans he returned home, ch. 39: 1-18. The Jews soon murdered the governor and fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them much against his will. His death is unknown. Jeremiah is an illustration of the principle which should govern us in daily duty. Persecution for righteousness' sake is blessed. There are compensations. (Compare 2 Cor. 4: 16-18 for New Testament light.) Teach the necessity of loyalty to God. The temptation to go with the national party was strong. To side with majorities is common. Jeremiah stands as a man who put the will of God above party, or country, or majorities, or personal suffering, or death. He has his reward. Urge the necessity of loyalty to God as the supreme law in life. The practical problems of present day life will suggest many applications of this principle. Let the teacher study these carefully, and let the class be encouraged to present their difficulties and find their solution.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

A lesson in courage; a lesson in meanness; a lesson in mercy: this makes up the teachings of the passage.

A lesson in courage. Who said "coward"? Evidently officers very close to the king (the marginal references show this): men of high rank. But it takes more than rank to make men fair or wise. What was their accusation against Jeremiah? vs. 2, 3. Was it an accusation natural in war time? Wherein was the unfairness and unwisdom of the accusation? The scholars will talk it over freely. Bring them to discern the unfairness of wanting Jeremiah punished because the Lord had put an unpopular message in his mouth, and the unwisdom of these men's setting themselves up against God. Have them note the folly, also, of thinking that by killing God's messenger they could defeat God's plan (the scholars who are studying history can give other examples of similar folly). But what about the lesson of courage with which we started? Does it require courage to take the unpopular side, to seem unpatriotic, and in so doing to run the risk of death? The scholars will have but one answer; and Jeremiah is a shining example. For another example, see Heb. 11: 23-27. The bravest are not always those who are in the forefront of the fight. They are often those who stand still, or hold back.

A lesson in meanness. It is a king that shows meanness. V. 5 tells the tale. Zedekiah knew better. And he had done better, as the story of ch. 37: 15-21 reveals. He now goes back on his friend. Why? To save his own head; for the princes were determined to get Jeremiah out of the way. Why does all the world despise Judas, our Lord's betrayer? Zedekiah is base after the same fashion. Let the scorn for such meanness take a strong hold on the scholars. Ask them what is to be said of those who turn their backs on the Friend of friends, when His enemies assail Him?

A lesson in mercy. Some talk about prison dungeons, and then a look into the vile place into which Jeremiah was thrown; no door—let down from above by cords; therefore also deep; no water to drink; and as v. 9 tells, no food to eat; and the bottom a hog of filthy