

A Letter — Jeremiah

J. G. Bellett.

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Beloved Brother, — I had a little scrap on Jeremiah lying by me. I do not know if it will suit the present current of your thoughts, but it may give a little communion for some half hour, and it is well to look at the growing character of those boastful and yet religious days in which we live. The Lord keep us, dear brother, and surely He will; "for His mercy endureth for ever."

There is nothing like *confidence in His love*. Service and worship are precious, but to trust Him excels all. Better to walk before Him in childlike confidence than even in a spirit of prayer and watchfulness; but all suits the liberty and the holiness of His presence.

Believe me, Ever your affectionate, J. G. Bellett.

Jeremiah.

All was *reality* with Jeremiah. The present corruption was a reality to him, for he rebuked it, and mourned over it; the approaching judgment was a reality to him, for he wept at the thoughts of it, and deprecated it; the final glory was a reality to him, for he laid out his money upon it.

He had occasional refreshings of spirit from the glory. His sleep, and the dream that accompanied it in Jeremiah 31, was "sweet to him." It was a kind of moment in "the holy mount" to him, a transfiguration in spirit; for a light from the kingdom visited his soul thus. He had revelations, too, of "the Lord our righteousness," and could speak and write of Him. But not only as thus occasionally refreshed in spirit, and thus gifted to write and speak, but he was a suffering witness against "the present world," and he laid out his money on "the world to come." And it was this that completed his character, which would have been poor and wanting without it; for we may *speak* of Christ, and *teach* about the kingdom; but to witness for Him against a rejecting world, and to be "rich towards God" in the hope of His kingdom, this is to fill out and realize our character as saints.

We may covet these elements of character. Some of us, if one may speak for others, are but half Jeremiahs. We can talk of Christ, but can we suffer for Him? We may teach about the kingdom, but can we lay out our money upon it?

The parable of the potter in Jeremiah 18 was designed to let Israel know that they were, though brought into covenant, still within the range of the Lord's judgments and visitations; and accordingly in Jeremiah 19 the judgment is typically executed. In John Baptist's time Israel is found in the same spirit of self-confidence. They said in that spirit, "We have Abraham to our father," and so under the Lord's ministry it is still the same — they still boast in the fatherhood of Abraham and of God. (John 8.) But these boasts were vain, as both John and the Lord tell them; that is, John and the Lord teach them again the lesson of Jeremiah 18 — that they were not, though in covenant bands, beyond the reach of judgment.

Now the object of the enemy in Matthew 4 was to get the Lord Jesus into the same condition with Israel; *i.e.*, to inspire Him with confidence in the spirit of disobedience. He partially quoted Psalm 91, citing the *promised security*, but omitting the *required or conditional obedience*. We know how fully the Lord triumphed over the enemy, citing Deuteronomy 6, where obedience is Israel's declared ground of security. Thus the Lord in this feature of character, as in all beside, was the moral contradiction of

man, or of Israel.

But all this has a lesson for us in this day. Christendom or Babylon has now taken this place of Israel of old. Babylon trusts in security, in spite of her moral condition. She says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." (Rev. 18: 7.) But Revelation 18 is another action like that of the prophet in the potter's house, or in the valley of the son of Hinnom, teaching the unfaithful steward that the doom of the shattered vessel awaits him.

God never sanctions disobedience. He does not go into the garden of Eden to accredit Adam's sin, but to bring relief, in the way of grace, for it; so, in the mystery of the gospel, He utterly condemns sin while delivering the sinner. That fine chapter, 1 Samuel 4, witnesses this — that God will never sanction disobedience, nor does He ever commit Himself to His stewards. He commits Himself to His own gifts and calling (see Rom. 11), but never to His stewards. They are still answerable to Him, and disobedience works forfeiture. And Christ is the only Steward that ever kept covenant, that ever stood in the conditional place. Matthew 4 shows that He kept His blessings under Psalm 91, and His Israel's blessings under Deut. 6; but all others, in their several turns, have failed, and Babylon's boast is a lie.

We live in a moment when Babylon is filling itself afresh with this boast, just previous to her overthrow, when she is to meet the doom of the potter's vessel or of the millstone. The boast of "the eternal city"* only the more distinctly marks it for the judgment of God. It is a favourite thought with her, that, while other communions tremble for their safety, she is above all such fears. This is specious; but when listened to in the teaching of the Word it only the more awfully declares what she is, and her greater ripeness for God's judgment. For this boast is defiance; it is not faith in God, but real disavowal of His claims. It is the denial of her subjection to Him, of her being in the place of the steward's wife, answerable to him, and to his judgment. It is the very characteristic that completes her identification with that Babylon which says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow;" and it leaves her ready for the judgment; as of the potter's vessel in the valley of the Son of Hinnom, so of the millstone in the hand of the angel.

*By "the eternal city" the writer, as many will understand, indicates Rome; i.e., the Papacy. — [ED.]

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THE human mind cannot see the glory of Christ in having come off the throne of God to the cross; but the believer has received "the mind of Christ," and can see something of it; and he finds that according to the measure in which he can enter into the humiliation of Christ, in that same measure he sees the beauty of it.