

BIBLE LESSON XXXIII.

Jeremiah 32

JUSTICE OF JEHOVAH

This lesson suggests two points that have been brought up again and again, but are ever good to be brought to mind. The first is that, so far as our own self is concerned, in this training process we must take the position of non-resistance to both good and evil. The second is that in dealing with the great problem of the world, the sending forth of true words from the heart is more efficient than all the personal hand-to-hand efforts we can make.

Then, too, the lesson brings up the old, old question as to why it is that those who love God best and give life and time and heart and all things to the service of God after the highest dictates of their convictions have always been the persecuted and abused and tormented of the world.

Here it is over again, rehearsed in the imprisonment of Jeremiah on an unjust charge, made by the princes against him through spite. The siege of Babylon against Jerusalem is now raging. Zedekiah is now king over Judah. Jeremiah had foreseen it when nobody else did and warned them of the only safe course, but, being disregarded, the siege is now on.

Zedekiah means "Justice of Jehovah." There is a sure working of cause and effect on the side of human experience that has been called the justice of Jehovah. It is the way the good looks to those who believe in evil. The good does not look at all that way to those who do not believe in the reality or power of evil. This justice or logic of events is shown by the downfall of Israel and Judah.

Israel refused to lean upon spirit, and turned to Egypt for assistance. Egypt failed her. Egypt stands for materiality. The most sentimental minister must not lean upon material things to brace up his work with. Neither must the most formal one. Judah was now looking to Egypt for aid and Egypt was failing him. The minister who goes from Methodism to Congregationalism, from Congregationalism to Presbyterianism, etc., to comply with the salaries offered, is a preacher of the letter of the law and has no noble principle which will keep him from extreme poverty of health and purse and brain one of these days.

He depends on Egypt's materiality. He must look at Zedekiah's fate. He represents the minister of God who preaches the letter even though very ably and his heart is not in principle.

Jeremiah told them to yield to Chaldea, which as a lesson to ministers means, go into some work besides preaching and meditate upon what you do believe before you attempt to publicly preach God.

Of course a still higher way is to call halt and cry mightily unto principle till you are united therewith demonstrably enough to be cured and well provided for by the grace of spirit.

But Israel and Judah do not do that.

The ministers of God who preach that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," must be careful not to give the world over to Satan in their preaching, because it shows letter and not consistent principle. We must be careful not to remark that the reward of St. Stephen for serving God was paid by the world with stones, without adding that Stephen believed in stones, else he would not be stoned. We must know that what we believe in is what we are serving. We might believe that there is a satan and that would be quite service enough to get satanic dealings. Guyon loved God and asked particularly that the usual torments and hardships and martyrdoms of God's people be given to her. She got them. But God did not send them. It is blasphemy of Divine goodness to say that Divine goodness ever sent evil. Can a sweet fountain send forth bitterness?

They who have washed their robes white are those who have spoken high, clean truth unmingled with error.

The high clean truth of God is that all evil experiences are just beliefs and not realities. He who believes in limitations will be finding limitations constantly. He who believes there is an open door as Jesus taught will find limitations broken down more and more.

People often notice that Christian scientists* are limited in powers and abilities like other people. If so then they believe in limitations just as they were taught in youth and pay little heed to the actual teachings of Jesus about unlimited good. By repeated instructions we may be sure to feel all that we say and thus drop our palsied hands, lame feet, rheumatic limbs, and poor eyesight. It is our privilege. It is not by leaning on Egypt that we get our health, strength and happiness, for that has been a demonstrable failure after ages upon ages of trial thereof.

In the management of those things that seem so bad in what is called the eternal world we see by this lesson that more good can be wrought by thinking and speaking unadulterated truth than by physical efforts. For illustration, think of Peter in prison under Herod under strong guards and behind stone walls, with heavy chains on his hands. Could the Christians of his time hope by pounding the walls or cajoling the jailors to get Peter out?

That is exactly where millions of people are now placed by the Herod belief in poverty and trouble. By going down in the alleys and carrying flowers and salves do you touch poverty so as to cajole it out of the notion of hedging millions behind its bars? Do you pound the walls built by trouble so that they shake a bit by all that you have done with your missions? Well, that is because you do not understand the principle that leads captivity captive.

Peter kept speaking truth; so did Mary and the rest of the Christian church at home. By and by one of them spoke the very truth that had the setting-free power. This truth appeared as an angel and touching Peter the chains fell off his hands and the prison doors opened.

Truth is mighty. Elisha spoke so many noble words of truth that many angels appeared to him. Jesus had angels come and minister unto Him. Angels are true words. About two hundred years ago a priest who loved truth found that he could heal the sick by speaking certain words. Thousands whom pills and poultices and surgery and other material methods would not cure were cured by these words of truth. Maxwell, a Scotch physician, cared a great deal about healing people, and while he was thinking over the need of healing by some other way than the failing methods of materiality, he suddenly saw that the universe is filled with bright, fleet, etherial light.

All things are radiant with this light. But not unless we get into a certain state of mind can we see this light. He said we could store up a fullness of this light and pass it along over the fleet light that spins through all space, and wherever our light should shine those people would be healed no matter how far away they might be.

All things seem to be so dependent upon states of mind that it is a mystery why there has not been more notice of the effects of

states of mind and the process by which to attain correct states of mind.

When you are cold clear to your marrow bone all of a sudden you feel warm. Do you know what made you warm? It was a thought you thought last week just got ready to work while you were cold. Sometimes you are tired and discouraged and suddenly are cheerful and rested. It was a sudden thought that flashed through your mind that rested you. Maybe a line of a loving old hymn. One may be hungry and suddenly not hungry. A loving word spoken to somebody else who did not appreciate it went over and lodged in the mind of the hungry one and he felt fed. "Thy words were found and I did eat them."

Now and then people wonder why the Christian scientists* wear warm clothes and eat and sleep like other people if they believe there is a mental state equal to warmth, food, and rest. Christ, their teacher, told them to take no thought about eating, drinking and sleeping, but take such things as should be provided naturally according to their time and station, but to be sure to preach all the time the good word, heal the sick by their word, cast out tempers by their true words, raise the dead by their true words and then that all the rest would come to them. So they obey His orders, and they do indeed have things right and good.

You remember that He and His yoke were so easy and His burden so light that people would have one hundred fold more in this sphere of experience than before obeying Him,

and that in the next higher state of mind they would not have to consult or confer about death at all.

According to this it is in no sense pleasing to Him, to have anybody shutting himself up within a cell or starving or freezing himself. Such things show foolish misunderstandings of Him and His doctrines. This lesson teaches that success in your own state of mind is best secured by an attitude of non-resistance to both good and evil.

When Jesus Christ felt the touch of the Holy Spirit and heard the voice say, "This is My beloved Son." He answered never a word. When they accused Him of being a glutton and a wine-bibber He answered nothing. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb so He opened not His mouth."

But when the voice gave a noble message to Moses he shrank muttering, "What will people think of me?" When Jeremiah heard the voice giving him the great honor, he shrank murmuring, "I can't, I'm too young."

These both resisted the good. But when evil shows its intentions Jeremiah resisted nothing but stood back a helpless spectator of the panorama. He thought if Judah had sinned Judah's punishment was unavertible. This was natural effect, he said. Jesus Christ told us that that idea of eye for eye and tooth for tooth was entirely wrong, for we should not meet evil by fighting it with its own weapons. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." When He said, "Resist the devil

and he will flee from you," He knew how everything that claims to be bad also claims to have its own way of proceeding and thus claims its own amount and kind of intelligence. Rheumatism claims a way of its own. So does softening of the brain. So does poverty. So do all so-called bad things.

When Martin Luther threw a material inkstand at a phantom Satan he showed he did not understand scientific handling of phantoms, for this phantom was much with him afterwards. Two men were suddenly set upon by an enormous bear in a field. They were both unarmed, and when the bear began hugging one of them the other man, by that sudden flashing of the weapon of defense which every creature carries, began to talk to the bear somewhat like this, "I'm ashamed and astonished to see a great, noble bear like you spring out in this way on two men who just now have nothing to fight you with. You ought to be ashamed of such a mean action and get down at once from my friend and get you gone to your lair where you belong." That bear actually got down in a shamed way and slunk back to the forest where he came from.

A man hurt his hand between two stones, and as he felt he must support his family and could not take time to nurse a mangled hand back to health, he held the hand up and said to the pain and blood, "Now I cannot spare my hand. You must not stay with me hanging on to my hand and keeping me from doing my work. You must get right away at once."

Within a few minutes the hand was hardy enough to use.

A woman had inflammatory rheumatism coming on. She was a good Catholic, so she made the sign of the cross on her limbs several times, wetting her finger as so many of the good Catholics of the past used to do. When the pain did not stop she suddenly spoke to it as if it was a live thing saying, "Look here, now; I have done my part. I have crossed myself as many times as ought to satisfy a decent pain that it was time for it to go away. Now you do your part and get away from me to where you belong." Sure enough the pain left her at once.

Any position you take of mastery is your self-empowering to victory. In Christian science* people use a reason for the hope that is in them when they name a pain or trouble to unname it by saying that its name is all there is to it.

Jeremiah had a wonderfully executive mind. He might have faced up all the horrors of Chaldean warfare and stopped them. But to him they were real, and Zedekiah's weak character was so in need of punishment that he focused to the teachings he had formally received about eye for eye and tooth for tooth. There is one thing that a strong mind generally does if it does not look well to its own independent reasoning, and that is to cohere to a prejudice. Then it speaks forth from that when its mighty possibilities are to gather a store of truth and heal all things. Poverty, trouble, warfare, injustice, may all be

met by a reasonable argument, and reasoned out of the universe, as the bear was reasoned away from the man. Jeremiah saved himself from death at this siege by believing one passage of Jewish teachings, viz., "I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." Almost all good "Christians believe in a God who crowds them down into the most dreadful straits and then picks them out at the last minute. They keep forgetting that if they make up such an idol it will do so by them according to their faith.

We had better not take any preconceived teachings or strange notions to the Bible when we study it, for those preconceptions act like smoked glass before the eyes of the mind.

Jonathan Edwards got from his father a notion that the universe is nowhere save in Divine Mind, and in this mind God is holding His children over lakes of fire by threads.

A great thinker got a prejudice whereby he felt that Jesus Christ taught a lower system of morals than Juvenal, the Roman poet, who lived about 40 A.D., inasmuch as Jesus taught behaving one's self for fear of hellfire and the council, while Juvenal taught that good men love virtue for its own sake, while bad men act virtuously for fear of punishment.

Eckart, the Vicar of the Dominicans about the year 1300, got out of his study of scriptures that his greatest prayer must be to get rid of God. Maitland got out of his study of the Bible that "God is the bogie of the nurseries." Tyndall, who in 1526 distributed

150,000 Bibles over England, got the idea that he must be burned for doing good.

The Christian scientist* gets out of the Scriptures that this is the day when the sun shall be darkened and the moon refuse her light for the Lord God and the Lamb are the only light we need.

Reading carefully we find that all the lights of the past fade under the glory of truth believed untrammelled by prejudices. We see that all the nations are stepping their feet into that country where there no more pain, neither sorrow nor crying. This country where "there is no evil at all" is in the mind that looks unto truth as its light and its salvation, its defiance and its provision.

And out of the Scriptures we read that whatsoever the mind believes is true and real, that the body shall experience. Out of the Scriptures we read that when we believe what is absolutely true then indeed is the Kingdom of Heaven come and the prisoners of human experience are set free.

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