

A sermon preached by the late Mr. J.E. Hazelton on October 23rd 1910 from the text "And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall; and they shall fight against thee but shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD." Jer 15. 20.

We have here a very gracious promise given by our bountiful God to His dear servant Jeremiah, and given to him in view of the special position he was to occupy, and the perils by which he was surrounded, the evils of his own heart and the foes who were on every side. But though this promise has first of all a reference to Jeremiah, in its essence it is applicable to all the people of God, and there is not one in glory today who has not proved that this promise has been fulfilled in his or her experience, and all who are going to Heaven have known, and shall know the fulfillment of this faithful word.

Someone may say, "What right have you to take a promise which was specifically given to one of the most eminent of the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and say that that promise applies to all the people of God?" I have the warrant of God's own word, and that warrant is to be found in the last chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where we have this word cited, "For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" so that the Holy Ghost gives to these Christian Jews the very same promise that He gave to Joshua after the death of Moses. The Lord said to him "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee;" though it was Joshua's promise so that it is ours as well. What a mercy! Here is a promise to Jeremiah, but it is also ours. May this great and comfortable word of our God be laid to the heart of all God's chosen people as a word from the Lord. It is certain that the Lord has a purpose to accomplish by each of His people just as He had by Jeremiah's life, the only difference being that Jeremiah's ministry was exercised publicly. But though our position is humble and circumscribed as compared with his, yet each man and woman in whose heart is the grace of God has a purpose to accomplish - God's own purpose - in this our time state. The Lord will never suffer one of His designs to be frustrated, and He who has planned the salvation of His dear people will never be disappointed in anything that pertains unto their lives.

His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies,
The Voice that rolls the stars along,
Speaks all the promises.

Let us look at our text from three points of view. First of all the character of those to whom this promise is given - their character as illustrated by that of Jeremiah. Secondly, some of the trials with which they meet, as illustrated by his trials. And thirdly, the fulfillment of the promise as illustrated by the fulfillment of the promise in his life, walk and conversation.

First of all THE CHARACTER OF THOSE TO WHOM THIS PROMISE IS GIVEN. Remember what our Lord said to Jeremiah at the very commencement of his public ministry, when He appointed him to the office of a prophet. He told Jeremiah that before he was born He had chosen him to be a prophet, and therefore in the purpose of God he was sanctified and ordained and set apart for this work. We see the same blessed and glorious truth shining in the first chapter of the Galatians where the Apostle Paul says that before he was born he was separated by his God, and in due time His Son was revealed in him // (I may say that in the 1st chapter of the Galatians you have held up the foolishness of what is called "Apostolic succession". That was broken in its first link, for the Apostle, speaking of his separation for the work of God says, "When the Lord was pleased to call me by His grace, I went not up to Jerusalem" - no apostolic hand was laid upon his head - "I conferred not with flesh and blood" - I received my apostolate not from man but from God. Now if every one of the Apostles was communicated this grace, we see that one of the earliest links in the chain was missing. But that is, perhaps, a little digression, and yet one which it well behoves us to ponder in view of the teaching on the right hand and on the left.) //

The important point in beginning is this, that Jeremiah was chosen of his God before he was born into the world, for the Lord said "I knew thee", before he had any being. He was one who was "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father", one whom God had blessed in heavenly places in Christ Jesus according as He had chosen Jeremiah in Him before the foundation of the world. This is the election of grace, the knowledge of God concerning His people, taking us back to the time when He viewed them all in Christ Jesus the Lord before they had any actual personal existence. This is indeed a source of great and unspeakable comfort if we remember, in relation to God's creation, and to Adam and to the human race as viewed in Him, that we were in Adam standing before we were in Adam fallen. The creation was before the Fall, and as descending from Adam, created in the image of God, we have a noble descent, although by nature we all have a most ignoble and sinful character; but we can rejoice that if the Lord had not begun with us we should never have begun with Him. Many have lost money over bad business and have said "If I had known that business was so bad, I would not have taken it". Men make mistakes, but when God chose poor sinners in Christ Jesus He knew what each would be by the Adam fall, and what the Church would fall into by the fall of Adam, but our great comfort is that in choosing His people God knew all the evils of which they would be the subject, as much as He does now, and not one of those sins which He saw in His Church in the Adam fall hindered or prevented His choice. Referring especially to this choice, and the love which accompanies it, under the term "predestination", the 17th Article of the Church of England

describes it as being "full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons" for, when not preached in a hard and simply dogmatic way, this doctrine gives cause for love, humility and gratitude to those who take it. But I ask you whether the solemn and glorious truth of God's predestination, His electing love, humbles, softens and melts you; brings you to the point where you have to say

Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there's room?

This is a standing test as to the light in which we regard the great foundation doctrines of our faith. If they are opened up to us by the Holy Spirit, if they come to us by a faith's view of our Lord Jesus Christ, they soften and humble. The late Dr. Duncan said concerning a Minister who was doctrinally very sound, "Yes I admit that, but he is a great deal too unbroken for me." May the doctrines be so received that they break our hearts and make our consciences tender in the fear of the Lord.

It is a distinct and definite truth that God knew each of His people, as He did Jeremiah, before they were born, that He chose them in Christ Jesus, and that He ordained them; therefore it behoves us to hold up this truth and to declare it in its definiteness and clearness in the day in which we live.

The late Daniel Smart was favoured with the most blessed manifestation he ever had of Christ to his soul at Brighton, and it was that manifestation that made his ministry what it was - a ministry for unction, savour and power most eminently blessed of God. He writes - "I went down to Brighton to preach; on Saturday night I went out to take a walk by myself in view of the Lord's Day, and my thoughts reverted to what Christ is to His people, and then my thoughts came to what Christ is to me, and things became more and more personal, and when I reached my lodging, I was thankful no one was there. I sat down upon the sofa and my heart was melted with a sweet sense of what Christ was to me, and I said again and again, "Lord, why was I thus chosen and set apart amidst the millions of creatures, and I wept tears caused by the blood of Christ applied to my conscience." Oh, this reading election under the glorious light of Christ Jesus the Lord. This is realising and making our calling and election sure, not the thundering of election in a hard doctrinal way, but the plain and definite declaration of it as one of the glorious foundations of our most holy faith, and one, the goodly consideration of which is sweet and comfortable and soul-confirming to God's dear people. Jeremiah in the midst of his ministry, when everybody seemed to be against him must have been comforted and sustained by the supporting word of his God unto him - "Jeremiah, you have told Me that you are a child, but I will

not forsake thee; I ordained thee for this work before thy birth, and I will be with thee even unto the end." Neither the unbelief or the backsliding of the heart can cause the Lord to withdraw from one of His chosen His changeless, dateless love which had its outflowings in Christ Jesus. Looking at that which is the very heart of this Book - chapters 30 to 33 one can see the consolation of the Gospel to His people, and moreover the Lord says to Jeremiah, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". O, drawn sinner, drawn from thyself and from the love of the world, drawn to the feet of a precious Christ and to the Mercy Seat with the heart breathings of desire towards Him, the Lord says to you by these drawings, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". If one says "I am waiting for that word to my heart", it is the very drawing and given desire which speaks, and is saying "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee".

But further, what does the Lord say to these His people? In the 33rd chapter of Jeremiah He makes promises - covenant blessings to a covenant people in a covenant Head - and these blessings and promises exactly meet the needs of every one, for He says, "I will cleanse, - I will pardon - I will CURE" -

"Heal us, Immanuel, here we are
Waiting to feel Thy touch".

"I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth", (ch.33.6) and, being poor in themselves, they need this abundance. What else could have given them to Christ but sovereign grace? Nothing, for if the Lord had not imputed their sins to a precious Christ they never could have done so, and if He had not put to their account the righteousness of Christ they never could have done so; thus our dear Lord said to His disciples and to us, "Rejoice not that devils are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven." In that 6th chapter of John, where our dear Lord so tenderly and at the same time so blessedly discriminates as to those who are drawn and given, and those who are not, He says "No man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" O what a mercy it is to be drawn, drawn because you are everlastingly loved, drawn because you were chosen before you had any being, except as viewed by God in His purposes of love and of mercy in Christ Jesus - drawn and set apart for His own honour and glory.

The Lord tells Jeremiah not only that He knew him before he was born, but He says "I have sanctified thee", or set thee apart for a holy purpose; so also are all the elect sanctified in Christ Jesus our Lord by whose blood and righteousness they are justified, and in union with whom they stand justified for evermore.

Now the Lord speaks of His people in the 17th chapter of John as being sanctified by the Truth, and through that Truth, and then He goes on to say "Thy Word is truth" showing to us the instrument of sanctification which God the Holy Spirit uses in setting us apart for gracious and holy purposes. Jeremiah very beautifully, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit expresses the will and word of God in this matter - "I will put My law in their inward parts" - the law of faith and love - "and I will write it in their hearts" - which is sanctification "through the truth". If the Word is Truth, that putting of the Law into the heart is one of the covenant blessings to the covenant people who stand before God complete and accepted in Christ Jesus their covenant Head. How remarkable it is that right through the Old Testament prophets from Isaiah onwards, and the prophets who lived before them, it is said repeatedly "The Word of the Lord came to him", and "The Word of the Lord said to him"! Who was that Word? He who afterwards was made flesh - The Word who was the Son of God - The Word to the Old Testament Church before He became flesh, and thus came to the prophets as the words and promises of Him who afterwards was to be manifested by incarnate love. "He was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

What does Jeremiah say again concerning God's dealings with His people under the title of Ephraim. "Surely after that I was turned I repented", and then they were, and are, led by the Word, led by their God. In what way? "With supplications will I lead them". Jeremiah 31.9.

Then again, the prophet had this message given to him by God. Not only that he was chosen and sanctified, but that he was ordained (or "given", as the margin has it) to his people as a prophet of the Lord. What did he say in relation to the will and purpose of the Lord concerning him? He said, "I cannot speak, I am a child", but the Lord showed to him what was His will for him, and then as in our text adds "I will make thee - all this by the gracious moulding and strengthening hand of God. None have a grain of true religion unless made new creatures in Christ Jesus, and all need the moulding hands of our God right along the way. There are people who change their religion many times without themselves being changed once, but where God is pleased to commence the work, there is stability. May the Lord be pleased so to deal with all His people that they may know that He who has made them new creatures in Christ Jesus has made them as "fenced brasen walls seeing that they are surrounded with the fence of God's electing love, with the fence of the precious blood of Jesus Christ and with the fence of the work of the Spirit, for the work which He commences in the heart He will perform, or complete, until the day of Jesus Christ."

Secondly, the trials which Jeremiah met with (as indicative of some of the trials which the Lord's people have to meet by the way. In the 20th chapter of this prophecy Jeremiah tells us of one of them, "For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side." There was one of his trials - the defaming of many. They gave him a bad name as they give the people of God today, saying he was a traitor: he encouraged the Babylonians; he was a pessimist; he depressed the spirits of the people rather than lifted them up and encouraged them. They listened and laid wait for him, saying to him "Report and we will report". How it comes home to present day trials, does it not? "My familiars waited for my halting" - those that called themselves my friends. Oh, they said, we shall see; presently he will make shipwreck, and fall to rise no more. Nevertheless in the 11th verse of this 20th chapter Jeremiah says "But the Lord is with me", and if He is with us, if we have the answer of an honest conscience towards God, all these things may rise up, but "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Jeremiah was a strange mixture like all mankind. He had just said "But the Lord is with me". Now listen to him in the 14th verse - "Cursed be the day wherein I was born." Is not that just like ourselves? In the same man there are sometimes two absolutely contrary states of mind, the flesh warring against the spirit. Jeremiah felt so depressed, worried and dejected that he said I wish I had never been born, and for a moment he lost sight of his faithful covenant-keeping God. Oh, there is that in the experience of God's servants, as recorded in His Word, that touches our experience.

Now what a mercy it is that the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah and that the Word of the Lord, God's own dear Son, understands all His people, and understands these contrary experiences which are in the heart often at the same time. He knows every quiver of life, and that was a quiver of life when Jeremiah said "But the Lord is with me." He knows every fear, and whilst Jeremiah spoke inadvisedly with his lips through his old nature, yet the Lord knew that the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak. "He will save", our text says, "and He will deliver", and though our familiars may watch for our halting, the sympathy of our Lord melts our hearts, and His promise has been given that we shall be kept in safety, and through being brought to rest upon our God, shall know the perfect peace which comes to those whose minds are stayed on Him.

Once more. Jeremiah through his faithfulness to his God is cast into prison. They said of him virtually, there is not such a bad man in all the land as he. The prison, the stocks, the dungeon his enemies inflicted upon him - something painful to him, something that would mortify him before others - but, when his familiars watched for his halting, God raised up a black man, Ebedmelech, to stand by Jeremiah, so

that Jeremiah gains rather than loses, and the Lord proves that He is his Saviour and Deliverer. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world". What a mercy it is to have these truths wrought into the heart by the power of God the Holy Spirit, to have a measure of assurance that the Lord who has chosen us has also chosen our way, and that notwithstanding all our trials, whether those like Jeremiah's or of a totally different kind, He has said "They shall fight against thee, and shall not prevail, for I have made thee as a fenced brasen wall, and I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee!"

In the parable of the Talents, the man who had received two said, "Lord, the two talents which Thou gavest me have gained other two", and many of God's people can testify that by their trials they have gained profit in the way of knowledge, experience and trust in God's faithfulness.

"They shall not prevail against thee" said the Lord to Jeremiah to destroy and falsify thy predictions, nor can we be beaten as long as we hold fast God's own truth through Divine teaching; that is our shield and buckler, and if that were given up all would be over with many of the unbelieving believers, were it not for the faithfulness of God. Shall we give up this Bible? Never! Shall we give up the promises of God? Why, a promise sealed upon the heart with Divine power can never be given up; Shall we give up "the covenant ordered in all things and sure?" Never. Though doubts and fears and the Adversary fight against us, they shall not prevail.

Considering perhaps a mountain of impending calamity that overhangs all, a disaster that we fear might crush us, though we do not know anything concerning God's will and purpose, by God-given faith we know it won't crush us. "They shall fight against thee but shall not prevail".

Thirdly, and lastly, look at the fulfilment of this promise in relation to the people of God. "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation", and no promise of the Scripture is of any private interpretation; no Scripture is to be taken thus, and no part of God's Word has spent itself upon the person who first received it. "Every word of God is good", every word is divine, and this word did not spend itself on Jeremiah, neither did the promise given to Joshua exhaust itself upon him. Oh, the words of our God are wonderful as applied by the Spirit; they come in our need with sweetness, power, joy, life and love sucked in by the lips of faith from that which is given to us. Then the same word comes to another one in need and it is just as full to him or her, so that one after another is comforted by the same promise. God's words spend themselves upon none, but afford a rich and unfailling supply like wells, for no one can drain them dry.

we bring our empty waterpots to the wells of salvation, and by faith fill them day by day.

Consider in relation to the fulfilment of the promise, at the sad unbelief with which it is often first received. Jeremiah, when the Lord first spoke to him about the work given him to do said, "I am a child, don't appoint me to that, I shall dismally fail". That is what we feel in relation to the future in connection with our plain duty in profession or business, home and family matters, changes in circumstances, and we'll say certainly it seems as if I shall have to go in that direction but I dare not, I have nothing, I am not competent. When the Lord by the plain indications of His providence and leading calls you to a difficult place in your home or office, it is not your competency, but it is God's. We talk of providing, and our inability to work, and we forget the great Provider. We forget that it is God "that worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." This however does not mean that we shall meet with no discouragements by the way, that we shall not suffer disappointment temporally, which may sometimes deepen into dismay, but it means that all that befalls us here are the orderings of our God, and are a part of heavenly tests by which God will try His own work and prove it to be of pure gold.

Then there are waiting times. An eminent German when he had his great orphanage at Haarle a hundred or more years ago said "I thought, when I had committed the work to God, I had only to pray and supplies would come, but I have had to learn that I have often had to pray for a very long time"; but the orphanage was never shut up; the supplies came; and that is the case with all the people of the living God. I can see too with regard to the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil that every spoonful of meal was scraped from the bottom of the barrel, but it did not fail, and in this way our great and glorious Lord fulfils a promise which He has given to His dear people. Every drop of oil looked as if it was the last, but it continued. We are not to suppose that we are to go through life without suffering, for by suffering the Lord is pleased to take and to sanctify as one of His great instruments for refining the character. Let us not look first of all for happiness in this life, but BLESSEDNESS, that the Lord would bless us and give unto us to know more and more of His strength and unfailing tenderness and supply. Some poor soul may say, Oh that I had a share in these promises, in this grace and love and mercy! Now if there is appetite, the food is for you, as Jeremiah says in this chapter, "Thy words were found and I did eat them". If we have an appetite for God's words, they are free to us, and they will be brought home to our heart with power by God the Holy Spirit. There is no appetite for God's Word unless there is life, and there is no life unless there is first the quickening of God the Holy Ghost, and there is no quickening by God the Holy Ghost unless there is eternal life in Christ Jesus the

Lord; therefore the poor sinner who longs to feed upon the promises, and desires that they may be the joy and rejoicing of his or her heart, is a partaker of eternal life; the life is evidenced by the need, and means union, which ensures that where Christ is there shall also His people one day be.