

# *THE PULPIT*

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**A Magazine of Sermons.**

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**Volume xix.**

**January to June**

**1900.**

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**"And how can they hear without a preacher?"—ST. PAUL.**

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**PUBLISHER:  
G. HOLZAPFEL,  
• CLEONA, PA.**

## GOD'S BEAUTIFUL PROVISION FOR HIS CHILDREN.

BY REV. J. WILBUR CHAPMAN, D. D.

TEXT.—“And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.”—II Kings xxv: 30.

**T**HIS is a striking statement, but the story it introduces is more striking by far. The Bible is always true to itself and its teachings, and the man who says it is contradictory in its statements betrays an ignorance which is inexcusable. I know of no better illustration of this fact than the story of Jehoiakim the father and Jehoiachin the son. It was this Jehoiakim who was sitting in his summer house when Jehudi came to him to read the scroll containing the words of the Lord. The king became very angry, and cut it with his penknife, and cast it into the fire. He was a destructive critic of the early school, and he was like the men of to-day, who seem to think that because they cut away at the Scriptures, they shall be overthrown; but God always sustains His Word. After this scroll was destroyed, Jeremiah had only to call Baruch, the scribe, and he dictated to him the whole scroll again; and some day the very ashes of that scroll shall rise in judgment against Jehoiakim.

He was a tyrant of the worst character. Notice what Jeremiah says about him:

“Woe be unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; that saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign because thou closest thyself in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and jus-

tice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him; was not this to know me? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.”

Men cannot mock God. The reckoning time is surely coming, when the oppressor shall meet the one whom he has oppressed, and the thief shall stand before the one from whom he has stolen, and the deceiver shall be face to face with the one upon whom he has practised deception, and the books shall be opened. Line upon line, sin upon sin shall scare him in the face. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. There was something awful in the curse pronounced upon Jehoiakim:

“He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem;” and again: “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.”

In the face of all this wrath, Jehoiachin comes upon the scene, and was made king of the people of Judah. I can hear the enemies of God scoff when it seemed as if the curse was to amount to nothing. It is in vain to stand before God's providences. As well might one take his place in the way of the mountain avalanche to retard its progress as try to hinder the plan of God. In thirteen short weeks

Jehoiachin was dethroned; the time was actually too short to be counted; and now we have a picture of the dethroned king as bad as it can be. Behind him the memory of his father; he had cursed God, and had murdered Urijah, and had died a horrible death; and instead of being on the throne we find Jehoiachin in the dungeon.

II Kings xxv: 27. "And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin."

For three eighths of a century he had not seen the sun rise, neither had he seen it set. All the time he had waked and slept, bound with the clanking chain. Little children became men and women, and he still suffered. Old men passed away and were forgotten and he was in the darkness. God pity the man who has been for thirty-seven years in prison! I said to a man in the Joliet prison, who had been a prisoner for the same length of time:

"Would you like to be free?"

The tears came into his eyes as he said: "Why should I long to be free? The companions of my youth are gone, and a new generation is living. My family is scattered, I do not know where. Why should I desire to be free?"

Jehoiachin must have been like that. It was an awful picture, and yet not more terrible than may be seen upon our streets every day. There are men who walk among us who are bound with chains just as real. Sin is an awful taskmaster. Satan is a terrible tyrant. But in all this wretchedness of Jehoiachin, Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, comes upon the scene, and what he said and did is the text of this chapter.

I. II Kings xxv: 27. "Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, did lift up the head of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, out of prison."

I was at a loss to understand what that expression—"lift up the head"—meant until I read in Genesis: "Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place, and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner, when thou wast his

butler."

When Joseph referred to lifting up the head of the butler, he meant that Pharaoh restored to him his place. There must have been in the work of Evil-merodach this thought of restoration, of making up all that which had been lost; the Hebrew word "accept" means to lift up the face.

It is appalling to think of the effects of sin, and the wretched condition of the sinner; but Christ has made provision for all this. In His atonement He answers before God all the demands of the law, and makes it possible for God to be just, and the justifier of all them that believe. But He will also lift us up until we stand before God as if we never had sinned. We may in our own thoughts bear the marks of our transgressions, but we read in Jude that He presents us faultless before God.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer tells of a story, taken from Adelaide Procter of a young girl who lived centuries ago in a convent in France. She was sweet and pure and admired of all who saw her. Her work was to care for the altar of Mary, and answer the portal. Wars swept over France, and brought the soldiers to the convent, and one that was wounded was given into her care. When he recovered, he persuaded her to leave the convent. She went with him to Paris, where she lost her good name and everything that made life worth living.

Years passed, and she came back to die within the sound of the convent bell. She fell fainting upon the steps, and there came to find her, not such a one as she had been, young and fair, but such a one as she would have been, a pure and noble matron. She picked her up and carried her into the convent, and placed her on her bed. All the years she had been gone she had faithfully done her work, and none knew of her disgrace; so she glided into her old place, and until the day of her death no one ever knew her sin. All this Christ had done for me. I like to think that I was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world; that he had me in mind when He suffered and died; that He has made up before God for all that I have failed to

do, and when I stand before Him it will be as if I never had sinned in all my life.

II. II Kings xxv: 28. "And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon."

It must have been a great surprise to Jehoiachin to hear the kindly words. He had been accustomed only to the clanking of his chains and the oaths of his companions in misery. But this is the way the Master works, too. You remember the woman who was taken in adultery. The crowd hurried her into the presence of Jesus, and He said:

"Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone."

That was severe, and when they slunk away from Him and His words. He turned to her and said:

"Woman, where are thy accusers? Doth no man accuse thee?"

And she said, "No man, Lord."

And he spake kindly and said: "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." This is always His way.

Not far from my home in Indiana, just across the State line in Ohio, there lived an old woman who was the terror of all who had seen or heard of her. She was finally arrested and sent to the Columbus Penitentiary. She broke every law of the institution, and they exhausted every form of punishment upon her. Times without number they had sent her to the dungeon, and for weeks at a time she lived on bread and water. Finally an old Quaker lady from the same part of the State asked permission to see her. The prisoner was led into her presence, with the chains upon her hands and feet. With downcast eyes she sat before the messenger of Christ. The old Quaker lady simply said:

"My sister."

The old woman cursed her, and then she said:

"I love you."

With another oath she said: "No one loves me."

But she came still nearer, and taking the sin-stained face in both her hands, she lifted it up and said:

"I love you, and Christ loves you."

She kissed her face first upon one cheek and then upon the other; and she broke the woman's heart. Her tears began to flow like rain. She rose to her feet. They took the chains off, and until the day of her death they were never put on again, but like an angel of mercy she went up and down the corridors of the prison, ministering to the wants of others. The Quaker lady had spoken kindly to her.

III. II Kings xxv: 29. "And changed his prison garments; and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life."

There are several ways of understanding this expression. In the one hundred and ninth psalm we read: "As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones." This would be like our habits. We are not obliged to change our habits before we come to Christ, but we must come to Him first, and the change is part of His work. A fiery temper and an impetuous disposition may be real blessings to us, for He shall turn them into new channels and make them for His glory. Peter had in him all that would make a mean man, but when the Lord took possession of him he was all the better for his weakness.

Again in the one hundred and fourth psalm we read:

"Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment." In this case it is like the atmosphere which is about us, and Christ changes this, too. Thus we become responsible for the atmosphere of our lives. There are certain people who provoke you the moment you see them, and there are others who command a benediction upon you without opening their lips. If it is not easier for people to be Christians because they live with you, there is something the matter with either you or your religion.

But there is still another thought in the garment. After the father of the prodigal put a new robe on him, he covered over all the signs of his wandering. When David put Mephibosheth at the table, all signs of his lameness were hidden. When God

clothes us with the robe of Christ's righteousness, He covers over all the marks of our past sins and every evidence of our weakness.

IV. Many persons are perfectly sure of everything that has been said up to this point, but how about the future? God has made provision for you: if any child of His is weak or hungry, it is because he has not appropriated what God intended he should have.

A man died in a poorhouse in England the other day. He had owned a little estate, but counted it worth nothing. The one who inherited the estate is to-day many times a millionaire, for upon the estate he found a copper mine. It had all the time been there, but was not discovered before.

II Kings xxv: 30. "And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life."

It is a daily rate; that is the way God gives His help; manna for a day and light for a day. God will send you no more than you need, and will send you no more than you can bear. How many times have you said, "If I had had one more heartache, my heart would have broken; if I had had one more night of sorrow, my reason would have been dethroned." But you did not have another heartache, and the last sorrow did not come. One of my friends sent me these lines the other day; they came as a blessing:

"Build a little fence of trust  
 Around to-day.  
 Fill up the space with loving deeds,  
 And therein stay.  
 Look not through the sheltering bars

Upon to-morrow.  
 God will help thee bear what comes  
 Of joy or sorrow."

He sends an allowance of trouble perhaps but He sends an allowance of strength, too, and He will never leave and never forsake us. This strength He imparts is for every day, but it is for all the days of our lives.

It is said that some years ago the King of Abyssinia took a British subject, by the name of Campbell, prisoner. They carried him to the fortress of Magdala, and in the heights of the mountains put him in a dungeon, without cause assigned. It took six months for Great Britain to find it out, and then it demanded his instantaneous release. King Theodore refused, and in less than ten days ten thousand British soldiers were on shipboard and sailing down the coast. They disembarked and marched seven hundred miles beneath the burning sun up the mountains to the very dungeon where the prisoner was held, and there they gave battle. The gates were torn down, and presently the prisoner was lifted upon their shoulders and carried down the mountains and placed upon the white winged ship which sped him in safety to his home. And it cost the English government twenty-five millions of dollars to release that man.

I belong to a better kingdom than that; and do you suppose for a moment that earthly powers will protect their subjects and that God will leave me without help? His allowance is a continual allowance, given to me every day, and shall be all the days of my life.