

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JEHOVAH'S CHALLENGE.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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“Is there any thing too hard for me?”—Jeremiah xxxii. 27.

A TRUTH may be sincerely believed by us, and yet it may do us good to have it put in the form of a question. As I read the chapter, I called your attention to Jeremiah's confident declaration to God, “There is nothing too hard for thee.” Yet in our text, which is only a few verses further on in the chapter, the Lord says to this same prophet, “Is there any thing too hard for me?” I think the explanation of this mystery is that we do not always thoroughly believe even all that we do truly believe. We may believe it so as to have no doubt upon it, but not so believe it as to be prepared to put it into practice. Jeremiah might say to the Lord, “There is nothing too hard for thee,” and he might be confident of the truth of his words; yet there might be, in the background, so much of mistrust, possibly imperceptible to himself, that it might be necessary for God to put the matter to him in the form of a question, and to say, even to believing Jeremiah, “Is there any thing too hard for me?” Ah! we little know what unbelievers we really are. The most of us are scarcely aware of what an awful amount of scepticism still lies lurking within our breasts, only waiting for the opportunity to show itself.

Besides, dear friends, you must always remember that it is one thing to believe a general doctrine, but it is quite another thing to make a particular and personal application of it. Jeremiah believes that God can drive away the Chaldeans, and leave the land free for the use of its owners; but can he believe that the little plot of ground at Anathoth, for which he has just paid seventeen shekels of silver, will ever be worth the money it has cost him? I expect the devil began to inject doubts into his mind concerning that transaction by saying to him, “Can you trust God about that purchase of land?” So the Lord does not at once accept Jeremiah's declaration

when the prophet says, "There is nothing too hard for thee;" but he puts to him a direct question relating to that very point, "Is there any thing too hard for me?" Some of you think you could believe concerning the conversion of a nation; but do you never have doubts concerning the conversion of a perverse child? You believe in the peacefulness that is to reign during the millenium; but have you never had a doubt about the peace of your own domestic circle? You could trust God, you say, in a storm at sea; but can you trust him about that bad debt on your books? You could depend upon him, you say, in death and throughout eternity; but can you depend upon him about that trifling matter which just now is bothering you, and giving you so much vexation? Is there anything, great or small, that is too hard for God? That is the question I am going to try to answer. I throw down the challenge, in the name of the glorious God who said to Jeremiah, "Is there any thing too hard for me?" Now is your opportunity to bring up your hard things, your difficult things, your apparently impossible things, and to see how they are affected by this challenge of the Most High: "Is there any thing too hard for me?"

In calling attention to this challenge of Jehovah, I ask you to remember, first, that *the hardest conceivable things have already been done by God*. Next, I will mention *some of the hard things which remain to be done*; and, lastly, since nothing is too hard for the Lord, I will try to answer the short and simple question, "*What then?*"

I. First, then, I want you to remember that **THE HARDEST CONCEIVABLE THINGS HAVE ALREADY BEEN DONE BY GOD**.

Let us begin at the beginning, with *God's work of creation*, as Jeremiah does in this very chapter; and we shall then say, with him, that Jehovah "made the heaven and the earth." There was a time when there was nothing that had been created, and God dwelt alone. There was no raw material out of which to construct the universe; yet, when it pleased him to do so, everything was formed and fashioned by God out of nothing. What, then, can he not do after having done that? I ask you also to think what God afterwards did. At first, when he made the world, he left it for ages in an unfinished state, for "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void;" but, long afterwards, when he came to put it in order, and make it fit for man's abode, and then to create man to have dominion over all the earth, who was with him to help him? "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him?" With his own hand, he piled up the mountains, and digged the foundations of the great deep. His unaided power achieved it all. Everything was in darkness even after he had made it; but he spake, and said, "Light, be;" "and there was light." Everything was in confusion and chaos, the earth and the waters were mingled together; but again he spake, and divided the land from the sea, and the clouds uprose to paint the sky, the rivers sought their bed, and old Ocean was girt about with his belt of sand. God did it all; but, even then, the world was dead, no life was anywhere to be seen.

But again God spake; and, straightway, the earth was green with grass, and herbs, and trees; the waters teemed with fish; all kinds of birds began to fly in the open firmament of heaven; and multitudes of beasts ranged the plain. Then, last of all, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Now, whenever we doubt the power of God to do anything, let us read again the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, and then say, with Jeremiah, "Ah, Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee!" There is nothing which the Lord did not make, and he made it all unaided, and did it all alone, by his own unguided wisdom and skill. Therefore, one of the hardest things that ever could be done, was done by God when he accomplished his great work of creation.

Now let us think of his work under a different aspect; that is, *his work of destruction*; and let any who doubt the power of God tremble as they hear or read how he has displayed it. Again and again has the Lord shown how easily he can rid himself of his adversaries, and shake them off, as Paul shook off the viper into the fire. Go far back in the history of the world, and note how all mankind had become corrupt; they who ought to have been holy, and separate from sinners, had mixed themselves with the ungodly; and on a certain day, when God's patience had at last reached its limit, he spake, and down came torrents of rain, descending with tremendous power, and, at the same time, the sluices of the great deep were unlocked, and up leaped the fountains that till then had been sealed; and, very soon, over the whole earth there was one great sheet of water, for God had determined that he would destroy all flesh from off the face of the earth, save a "few, that is, eight souls," whom he had housed within the ark. Terrible as the work of destruction must have been, it was done as God determined; and, after that, let none ever think that God cannot overcome his enemies. Let no one ever imagine that a warfare can be successfully waged against him. When he bares his arm for battle, his foes shall all flee before him like chaff before the wind, or they shall fall before him like the wheat falls before the reaper. He can create and he can destroy; in looking back upon what he has already done, we can see that he has accomplished inconceivably great and difficult things both in making and in unmaking. "Ah!" say you, perhaps, "these are sublime things, on an enormous scale." Yes; but God is great on any scale, and almighty wherever you perceive the signs and tokens of his working.

Think, next, of *his work for the defence and deliverance of his chosen people*. Read the Book of Exodus; you cannot too often read the wondrous story of how, when the children of Israel were few in Egypt, God nevertheless preserved them; and how, when they multiplied, and the cruel Pharaoh arose, and tried first to curb

and then to crush them, God remembered his people, and determined to bring them out of the land of bondage. Moses and Aaron said to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go." How that proud monarch bridled up when he heard those words! "Who is the Lord," said he, "that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" He soon knew who Jehovah was, for plague followed plague, till everything that Egypt had was smitten; and, last of all, God "smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham." Then the oppressors opened wide their gates, and Egypt was glad when Israel departed. With a high hand, and an outstretched arm, the Lord brought forth his people; and when they came to the Red Sea, and the Egyptians pursued them, and the tyrant thought that he should surely destroy them, for the wilderness had shut them in, then the Lord divided the sea, and led his people through the depths in safety, "but the sea overwhelmed their enemies;" and on the farther shore, Miriam and the women joined in the jubilant refrain to the triumphant song of Moses and the Israelitish host, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

Brethren, after this mighty act of Jehovah, you need never imagine that he cannot deliver his people. You need not suppose that a little church, or a little island, or a little nation, shall be domineered over by the proud ones of the earth. If God shall but repeat that ancient command, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," it will be a case of "Hands off" for the oppressors, however mighty they may be, and they will have to learn that they must not touch the elect of the Most High to do them harm.

If you want another instance of God's wonderful working, I remind you that harder things than we need to have done for us by God have been done by him in *the work of his providence*. Think how he led his people through the wilderness, and fed them for forty years, though all that time they never stirred a plough in the furrow, or gathered fruit from fig tree or from olive. A pathless desert was the highway of the millions who were his people. Heaven dropped with daily manna for them, and the smitten rock yielded a perennial stream to quench their thirst. When they craved flesh to eat, the Lord sent them feathered fowl innumerable. Their garments waxed not old upon them, neither did their feet swell for forty years in that great and terrible wilderness. When you think of all this, my poor brother, you may well say, "If God could do that great work, surely he can provide for my little family." Of course, he can; the God who could, for forty years, feed three millions of people, who marched or halted with nothing but bare sand beneath them, can much more feed thee, O thou of little faith!

All these are great things that God hath done; but I am going to take you into much greater depths than we have traversed yet, for all this is as nothing compared with what God has done in *his great work of redemption*. Creation is shorn of its glory; the

terrors of God at the deluge may almost be forgotten; the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea may take quite a secondary place; and the leading of the people through the wilderness may be put quite in the background when I begin to tell the story of our redemption. This is the hardest thing, the most wonderful thing, God has ever done. His Son came down to live among men; he took on him a human form, and was born of the Virgin Mary, sheltered in a stable, cradled in a manger. This is such a miracle that all the other miracles I ever heard of seem commonplace affairs compared with this wonder of wonders,—that God should take upon himself the nature of man, and then,—more marvellous still,—take upon himself the sin of his people, and bear the awful load of their transgression, and all the burden of their punishment, and endure it even to the last pang, drinking up the cup of infinite justice to its dregs. Never was God so Godlike as when Jesus died upon the cross. Never was omnipotence so potent as when he died that men might live, crushing the old dragon as he bled, leading captivity captive while he was himself bound to the accursed tree, casting death into an eternal grave when he himself was laid in the sepulchre. I cannot adequately tell you the story of all these marvels; the very angels in heaven have been set a-wondering ever since that day, and they have been continually telling to one another, over and over again, the story of the God that loved and died, and by his love, and death, and living again, defeated Satan, conquered death, and led captivity captive for all his people. I feel more inclined to burst out with "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" than to say even a single syllable more concerning this greatest of all God's works.

Certainly, in what I have said, I have fully proved that the hardest conceivable things have already been done by God; and therefore, he may well ring out the challenge of our text, "Is there any thing too hard for me?"

II. Now, secondly, I am going to mention SOME OF THE HARD THINGS WHICH REMAIN TO BE DONE.

The hardest things have been done by God; what remains to be done? Look within you, look around you, find out all the difficult things that you need to have done for you, and then see how easy it is for the Lord to meet your every need. *Some of the hard things relate to temporal matters.* "It would be a great thing for God to deliver me out of all my troubles," says one; "for I am sorely afflicted and tried." But, really, my dear friend, after all that God has done, will you, can you, dare you think to yourself that he cannot deliver you? Are you his child? Do you love him? Do you trust him? Then, surely, you will not say that he will leave you,—that he will forsake you,—or that he cannot help you! I am certain that you would be ashamed to lead anybody to think that God could not deliver you; yet you have, perhaps, allowed the thought to creep into your own mind. Then drive it out at once; do not let it remain there a moment longer. God can help you, and in very simple ways, too.

I have known him deliver his people in very extraordinary and

unexpected ways. There was a poor man, not long ago, who had no bread for his family, and they were almost starving. One of his children said to him, "Father, God sent bread to Elijah by ravens." "Ah, yes!" he replied; "but God does not use birds in that way now." He was a cobbler; and a short time after he spoke those words, there flew into his workshop a bird, which he saw was a rare one, so he caught it, and put it in a cage. A little later, a servant came in, and said to him, "Have you seen such-and-such a bird?" "Yes," he answered, "it flew into my shop, so I caught it, and put it into a cage." "It belongs to my mistress," said the maid. "Well, then, take it," he replied, and away she went. Perhaps you think that there was not anything very remarkable in that incident; but when the girl took the bird to her mistress, the lady sent her back to thank the cobbler for his care of her pet, and to give him half a sovereign; so, if the bird did not actually bring the bread and meat in its mouth, it was made the medium of feeding the hungry family although the father had doubted whether such a thing could happen. God has blessed ways of delivering his people if they will but trust him. I do not doubt, if this were the time for such testimony to be given, that every Christian here could tell some story of the way in which God has delivered in time past. "Oh, yes!" says one, "I could, I know." What, you? Yet you are the very one who doubts God's power to deliver you. Cover your face for shame, and cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, forgive my unbelief, and help thy poor child to trust thy fatherly care, and to know that thou wilt provide for me."

But, next, *some of the hard things relate to spiritual matters.* I fancy that I hear someone say, "I have a trouble which causes me more anxiety than the things you have just mentioned. I know that God can provide for me in temporal matters, but I have a very hard fight of it spiritually. I am tempted, first in one way, and then in another, till I sometimes fear that I shall not be able to hold out. Satan appears to know just where I am weakest, he shoots at the joints of my harness, and all his fiery darts seem to make an impression upon me, and sorely wound me. I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy." David said something very much like that; yet he did not perish by the hand of his enemy, King Saul; but he died in his bed, rejoicing in his God. And very likely it will be the same with you; at any rate, if you are trusting in Christ, you shall not be overcome, for greater is he that is for you than all that can be against you.

Do you believe that you, a child of God, cannot be so helped by him that you shall be able to overcome any kind of sin? Surely you cannot believe anything so dishonouring to your Heavenly Father? If you do, I do not; I cannot tell how God's mind comes into contact with man's mind, but I know that it does,—that his Spirit comes into most intimate connection with our spirit, and so influences our spirit that the sin, which once seemed to fascinate and charm us, loses all its attractions and delights; and the doubts and fears, which for a while depress us, have by-and-by no depressing power whatever. You remember how Eliphaz said to Job, "At

destruction and famine thou shalt laugh ;" and God often helps his servants to laugh at those very things which before seemed great burdens to them. There is nothing in your spiritual case that is too hard for the Lord ; so bring it before him in faith and prayer this very hour.

I fancy that I can hear someone else saying, "*But I am not God's child ; oh, how I wish that I could be ! Alas ! I am a great sinner.*" What has been your sin, my friend ? I do not want you to tell me ; I only ask you what it was that you may tell it to yourself, and then answer the Lord's question, "Is there any thing too hard for me ?" If Christ had not died, it would have been useless to ask you that question ; but since Jesus died, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," and since it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," can there be any thing conceivable that is too hard for the Lord ? There is no sin, which thou hast committed, which the blood of Christ cannot wash out if thou believest in him. Though thou wert even red with murder, and black with blasphemy, and covered from head to foot with the filthiness of lust, yet, on thy believing in Jesus, thou wilt be made, there and then, as white as snow. Free pardon for every kind of sin is proclaimed to every soul that will believe in Jesus Christ. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," if they will only trust in Christ. So, in this sense, there is nothing too hard for the Lord, there is no sinner too guilty for the Lord to forgive when he trusts the Saviour's sacrifice on Calvary.

"Yes," says another friend ; "I can understand that I can have forgiveness ; but this is a greater difficulty to me, I have been so long a transgressor of God's law that *I do not think I ever could conquer my sin.*" No, I know that you could not, and I want you to be fully persuaded that you could not ; and then, when you are perfectly convinced upon that point, let me ask you this question, "Is even this thing—this power of overcoming sin—too hard for the Lord ? Your successful resistance is out of the question ; you cannot accomplish anything in this great conflict, for you are nobody and nothing ; but is the struggle too hard for the Lord ?" It often happens that a man says, "Well, I know that I have been a great drunkard ; drinking has been my besetting sin, but I can leave it off when I like, and become a sober man at once." So he does, and he signs the pledge, and wears his blue ribbon ; but, by-and-by, the colour of that ribbon ought to be ruby rather than blue, for the man has given way to strong drink again. The reason of his fall is that he cured himself, and so the disease came back again. But the drunkard who says, "I am afraid to trust myself, for this intemperance has got such a hold on me that I never can get out of its clutches by my own power ; O God, deliver me ! I trust thee to save me, I look to Jesus Christ to save me,"—he is the man who *shall* be helped, and he shall be more than a conqueror through the might of God. Let me assure you, my dear friend, that there is no form of sin from which you cannot be delivered by the grace of God. After many years of vice,—prolonged, continued, inveterate, horrible vice,—men have not only

been reformed and reclaimed, but they have been renewed, sanctified, and made pure and holy.

I wonder how you would have felt, if you had been visiting in certain of the South Sea Islands, and you had been sitting at the Lord's table with some good old deacon, and then, after you had been eating and drinking with him at the communion, and had heard him pray and preach, somebody had whispered in your ear, "That man used to be a cannibal. He has murdered many." "Oh!" you would say, "and has the grace of God changed such a lion as that into a lamb?" It would have struck you as a very remarkable illustration of the power of divine grace; yet there are, even in this Tabernacle to-night, cases that are quite as striking as that; if you could know all about them, you would agree with me that it is so. God's grace can do marvellous things; it can change lions into lambs, ravens into doves, and sinners into saints; in fact, the proof of Christianity is the moral change which it is continually working in the minds and lives of men and women. Above all other miracles stands this one,—the miracle by which the dishonest are made just, the impure are made clean, and the disobedient are brought to the obedience of faith.

Truly, there is no case that is too hard for the Lord. I suppose a good many of you never heard that "Satan" came into this place, one Sabbath, and was converted.* "No," you say, "surely that has never happened." Yes, it has; I can vouch for the truth of the story. There was a sailor, who lived at Wivenhoe, in Essex, a man who was such a vile blasphemer, and who lived altogether such a disgraceful life, that the people called him "Old Satan." When the ship in which "Satan" sailed came to London, a godly seaman, who was on the same vessel, persuaded the man to come to hear me. He was the more willing to do so because I once lived at Colchester, which is not far from Wivenhoe. As he heard the Word, the Lord touched "Old Satan's" heart, and there was never before such a stir in Wivenhoe as when he went home, a converted man, to tell other sinners the power of the grace of God. If there is anybody here who might be called a very devil, let him come, and trust Christ, and he shall be saved straightway. Come along with you, poor slave of Satan. Leave your old master this very minute; do not give him even a moment's notice, but speed away to the great Father's house, and he will receive you, for he is expecting you; nay, more, it is he who is drawing you by his gracious Spirit, and it is his Son who has said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." God grant that many, who have been hard sinners, may come to Christ, and find in him eternal life!

Once more, Jehovah's challenge, "Is there any thing too hard for me?" *contains a lesson for you who are trying to serve the Lord.* I want you also to catch the meaning and the message of my text;—there is nothing too hard for God, so he can save the children in your Sunday-school class, he can bless the people of the

* The remarkable story of this man's conversion is related at greater length in *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography*, Vol. IV., with other similar narratives.

district where you visit, he can help you to talk to that dying person whom you went to see yesterday. There is nothing too hard for the Lord, so he can bless you, city missionary, to that dark slum which gives you so much anxiety; he can bless you, dear friend, at that street corner where you scarcely get through a dozen sentences before you are interrupted. This question of Jehovah, "Is there any thing too hard for me?" seems to be like a rallying cry from God to urge all his followers to press on, like heroes, without a doubt about the victory. "Courage, my comrades," said Mohammed to his troops, one day, when the battle was going against them; "I can hear the angels coming to our rescue." There were no angels flying to help him, but they are ever coming to aid us, when we need them, for "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" If we are truly trusting in the living God, he will surely send the heavenly principalities and powers to help us, so that, in our weakness, his strength shall be glorified, and sinners shall be saved.

I can believe in the conversion of the Jews when I hear Jehovah's challenge, "Is there any thing too hard for me?" I can believe in the spread of his gospel over the whole world when I hear him ask, "Is there any thing too hard for me?" I can believe in my Master setting up a kingdom that shall have no bounds, and no end, when I hear his royal enquiry, "Is there any thing too hard for me?" Very often, when we get among men and women, we seem to be surrounded by a lot of children playing with toys, for they bother, and hinder, and hamper us, and only increase our own helplessness; but when we get clear of them, and just look to God alone, then we seem to have elbow-room for our work. A thoroughly consecrated man can do something, by God's grace, when he has got rid of the intolerable nuisance of having too many human helpers, who are often only hindrances, and who has not any other helper but his God. Oh, it is a blessed thing to be flung back upon the bare arm of omnipotence,—to be gloriously compelled to rest on God, and on God alone! May many of us know, by happy, personal experience, how blessed it is!

III. I have done, dear friends, when I have, in the last place, very briefly answered a short and simple question. Since nothing is too hard for the Lord, WHAT THEN?

I want that we, as a people, should be true to the very core to our blessed God; and, to that end, as there is nothing that is too hard for him, *do let us trust him*, all of us, whatever our trials or our difficulties may be. Let us have no sham faith, no pretended confidence, but real trust in a real God.

Then, next, I want that we should *act as if we trusted God*. Do not let us waver, "for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed."

And, then, believing in God, *let us always do what is right*. Let us believe that, to do the right, is ever right;—that policy, that "hedging" a little, and doing what we call a slight wrong, can never be justified in the sight of God.

Finally, *let us live a life of love*, a life of forgiveness and kindness,

trusting that God will cause love to overcome human hate, and kindness to conquer all misrepresentation. Live in all respects so as to glorify God.

Beloved in the Lord, who are one with us in Christ Jesus, do be out-and-out believers; and let your faith be as evident as the colour on a healthy cheek, that all men may see that the very life-blood of your spiritual being is your faith in God and in his Christ. What made brave Oliver Cromwell, in the days gone by, so terrible an enemy to all who loved not liberty and right? It was his faith; and he had gathered about him a band of men who also believed; and so, when the Ironsides marched to the fight, you might as well have hoped to stay the stars in their courses as to keep those men back from victory. And, to-day, what England needs is men of faith, whose watchword is, "The Lord of hosts!" and whose confidence it is that "with God all things are possible," and also that "all things are possible to him that believeth." May all of us be such believers, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JEREMIAH XXXII. 1—27.

Verses 1—5. *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper.*

So you see that Jeremiah was shut up in prison at the time here mentioned. Zedekiah, the king of Judah, had treated him very harshly, because of his faithful utterance of the Word of the Lord. He was a true servant of Jehovah, yet he suffered much at the king's hand. One very remarkable event, which happened at that time, is here recorded.

6—8. *And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.*

The Lord had told him beforehand that it would be so; and, therefore, in due time, his cousin came to him with the offer of this plot of land in the country of Benjamin.

9, 10. *And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances.*

This was, in every respect, a very extraordinary transaction. Remember

that the Chaldeans were already besieging Jerusalem, and they were all over the land, carrying fire and sword into every part of it. Jerusalem was straitly shut up, so that none of the inhabitants could get out of the city; yet here is Jeremiah, himself a prisoner, buying land which was virtually worth nothing whatever; but he believed so firmly that the Chaldeans would yet permit the Jews to live unmolested in that land that he paid down the purchase money for the field, and saw to the legal execution of the deed of transfer, just as you or I might have done if we were purchasing a plot of land in our own country. This is a notable instance of the triumph of faith over unfavourable surroundings, and also of the prophet's obedience to the Word of the Lord.

11, 12. *So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open: and I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.*

Jeremiah did all this openly. What they may have thought to be an absurd action, he did not do in private; but in the presence of them all. True faith in God does not go in for hole-and-corner transactions. Faith can do its business in the light of the sun. Faith believes God under all circumstances, and believes that the truest common sense is to obey his Word. Therefore she is not ashamed of what she does; neither shall she ever have cause to be ashamed or confounded, world without end. There is a living God; and if we do what he bids us, good must come of it. No harm shall happen to the man who confidently rests in the Most High.

13—17. *And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land. Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying, Ah Lord God!*

Faith cannot live without prayer. When she has performed her most heroic deeds, she turns to God and humbly asks for renewed strength; for oh! my brethren, the best of men are but men at the best; and those who have the most faith never have any to spare.

Jeremiah says, "I prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah Lord God!" It looked, at first sight, as if the prophet was going to utter some mournful complaint, or to express some doubt or misgiving concerning the purchase of the land; but it was not so. Having allowed that exclamation to escape from him, his faith came to the rescue, and he continued:—

17. *Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:*

Is not that a grand sentence? "There is nothing too hard for thee." He that could make the heaven and the earth can do anything. Read, in the Book of Genesis, the story of the creation, and see how "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast;" and then judge as to what can ever be a difficulty to the Almighty. Surely you must say to him, as Jeremiah did, "There is nothing too hard for thee."

18. *Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them; the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name,—*

See how these godly men, in their times of trouble, delighted in the

great names and glorious attributes of God. There are, nowadays, many namby-pamby, fashionable religionists, wrapped in luxury, who have only a little god; they never seem to know "the Great, the Mighty God;" but Jeremiah, with the smell of the prison still clinging to him, talks grandly: "the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name,"—

19—21. *Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings: which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day; and hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror;*

Those ancient Jews, in the time of their trouble, always looked gratefully back to the wonders wrought by Jehovah in Egypt. That great deed of God, when he smote the might of Pharaoh, was always present to the Hebrew mind; and the people, in every season of tribulation, refreshed themselves with the remembrance of it. Well, then, dear friends, as they sang the song of Moses, shall not we sing the song of the Lamb? Will not we go back in thought to the glorious triumphs of our Redeemer, and recount again and again, for the encouragement of our faith, what Christ did for us upon the tree, even as the Jews thought often, for the strengthening of their confidence, of their wondrous deliverance from Egypt by the high hand and the stretched out arm of Jehovah?

22—24. *And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; and they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do; therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them: behold the mounts,—*

The margin renders it, "the engines of shot," which we see, by the next chapter, were powerful enough to throw down the houses in Jerusalem.

24, 25. *They are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence; and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it. And thou hast said unto me, O Lord GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.*

I suppose that, although Jeremiah, with unquestioning faith, had done as God had commanded him, yet afterwards, when he was alone in his prison cell, he began to think the whole matter over; and though he may not have had any actual doubts, yet he probably had some anxieties as to the issue of the whole affair. He could not quite understand it, so he wisely put it before the Lord. Some of you, who have truly trusted God, may yet be just now perplexed with anxiety of one kind or another. Well, then, tell it all out before the Lord; go at once into his presence, and spread the case before him, as Jeremiah did.

26, 27. *Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?*

That question we will try to answer presently.