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JEREMIAH 20: 1 Now Pashhur, the son of Immer the priest, who was chief officer in the LORD's house, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things.

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Jeremiah, on account of his prophesying evil concerning Judah and Jerusalem, is beaten and imprisoned by Pashur, chief governor of the temple, Jer 20:1, Jer 20:2. On the following day the prophet is released, who denounces the awful judgments of God which should fall upon the governor and all his house, as well as upon the whole land of Judah, in the approaching Babylonish captivity, Jer 20:3-6. Jeremiah then bitterly complains of the reproaches continually heaped upon him by his enemies; and, in his haste, resolves to speak no more in the name of Jehovah; but the word of the Lord is in his heart as a burning flame, so that he is not able to forbear, Jer 20:7-10. The prophet professes his trust in God, whom he praises for his late deliverance, Jer 20:11-13. The remaining verses, which appear to be out of their place, contain Jeremiah's regret that he was ever born to a life of so much sorrow and trouble, Jer 20:14-18. This complaint resembles that of Job; only it is milder and more dolorous. This excites our pity, that our horror. Both are highly poetical, and embellished with every circumstance that can heighten the coloring. But such circumstances are not always to be too literally understood or explained. We must often make allowances for the strong figures of eastern poetry.

#### Verse 1

Pashur - chief governor - Pashur was probably one of the chief priests of the twenty-four classes.

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JEREMIAH 20: 2 Then Pashhur struck Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper gate of Benjamin, which was in the LORD's house.

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#### Verse 2

Put him in the stocks - Probably such a place near the gate as we term the lock-up, the coal-hole; or it may mean a sort of dungeon.

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JEREMIAH 20: 3 On the next day, Pashhur released Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then Jeremiah said to him, the LORD has not called your name Pashhur, but Magormissabib.

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#### Verse 3

The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur - Security on all sides. This name thou hast had, but not by Divine appointment.

But Magor-missabib - Fear on every side. This name hath God given thee; because, in the course of his providence, thou shalt be placed in the circumstances signified by it: thou shalt be a terror to thyself.

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JEREMIAH 20: 4 For thus says the LORD, Behold, I will make you a terror to yourself, and to all your friends; and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and your eyes shall see it; and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall kill them with the sword.

JEREMIAH 20: 5 Moreover I will give all the riches of this city, and all its gains, and all the precious things of it, yes, all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies; and they shall make them captives, and take them, and carry them to Babylon.

JEREMIAH 20: 6 You, Pashur, and all who dwell in your house shall go into captivity; and you shall come to Babylon, and there you shall die, and there you shall be buried, you, and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied falsely.

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Verse 6

And thou, Pashur-shall go into captivity - Thou shalt suffer for the false prophecies which thou hast delivered, and for thy insults to my prophet.

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JEREMIAH 20: 7 LORD, you have persuaded me, and I was persuaded; you are stronger than I, and have prevailed: I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every one mocks me.

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Verse 7

O Lord, thou hast deceived me - Thou hast promised me protection; and, lo! I am now delivered into the hands of my enemies. These words were probably spoken when Pashur smote him, and put him in prison.

I think our translation of this passage is very exceptionable. My old Bible reads, Thou laddist me aside Lord; and I was lad aside. The original word is פתיתני pithithani, thou hast persuaded me, i.e., to go and prophesy to this people. I went, faithfully declared thy message, and now I am likely to perish by their cruelty. As the root פתה pathah signifies to persuade and allure as well as to deceive, the above must be its meaning in this place. Taken as in our Version it is highly irreverent. It is used in the same sense here as in Gen 9:27 : God shall enlarge (persuade, margin) Japheth; and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.

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JEREMIAH 20: 8 For as often as I speak, I cry out; I cry, Violence and destruction! because the LORD's word is made a reproach to me, and a derision, all the day.

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Verse 8

I cried violence and spoil - This was the burden of the message thou didst give me.

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JEREMIAH 20: 9 If I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I can't.

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Verse 9

I wilt not make mention of him - I will renounce the prophetic office, and return to my house.

As a burning fire shut up in my bones - He felt stings of conscience for the hasty and disobedient resolution he had formed; he felt ashamed of his own weakness, that did not confide in the promise and strength of God; and God's word was in him as a strongly raging fire, and he was obliged to deliver it, in order to get rid of the tortures which he felt from suppressing the solemn message which God had given. It is as dangerous to refuse to go when called, as it is to run without a call. On this subject, see on Jer 1:6 (note).

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JEREMIAH 20: 10 For I have heard the defaming of many, terror on every side. Denounce, and we will denounce him, say all my familiar friends, those who watch for my fall; perhaps he will be persuaded, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

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Verse 10

Report - and we will report it - Let us spread calumnies against him every where; or let us spread reports of dangers coming upon him, that we may intimidate him, and cause him to desist.

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JEREMIAH 20: 11 But the LORD is with me as an awesome mighty one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail; they shall be utterly disappointed, because they have not dealt wisely, even with an everlasting dishonour which shall never be forgotten.

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Verse 11

But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one - Thus was he, by his strong confidence in the strong God, delivered from all his fears, and enabled to go on comfortably with his work.

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JEREMIAH 20: 12 But, the LORD of Armies, who tests the righteous, who sees the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance on them; for to you have I revealed my cause.

JEREMIAH 20: 13 Sing to the LORD, praise the LORD; for he has delivered the soul of the needy from the hand of evildoers.

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Verse 13

Sing unto the Lord - He was so completely delivered from all fear, that although he remained in the same circumstances, yet he exults in the Divine protection, and does not fear the face of any adversary.

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JEREMIAH 20: 14 Cursed is the day in which I was born: don't let the day in which my mother bore me be blessed.

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#### Verse 14

Cursed be the day wherein I was born - If we take these words literally, and suppose them to be in their proper place, they are utterly inconsistent with that state of confidence in which he exulted a few minutes before. If they are the language of Jeremiah, they must have been spoken on a prior occasion, when probably he had given way to a passionate hastiness. They might well comport with the state he was in Jer 20:9. I really believe these verses have got out of their proper place, which I conjecture to be between the eighth and ninth verses. There they will come in very properly; and might have been a part of his complaint in those moments when he had purposed to flee from God as did Jonah, and prophesy no more in his name. Transpositions in this prophet are frequent; therefore place these five verses after the eighth, and let the chapter end with the thirteenth, and the whole will form a piece of exquisite poetry, where the state of despair and the hasty resolutions he had formed while under its influence, and the state of confidence to which he was raised by the succouring influence of God, will appear to be both illustrative of each other, and are touched with a delicacy and fervor which even a cold heart must admire. See Job 3:3 (note), and the notes there. The two passages are very similar.

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JEREMIAH 20: 15 Cursed is the man who brought news to my father, saying, A boy is born to you; making him very glad.

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#### Verse 15

A man child is born - Borun is to thee a knave child. - Old MS. Bible. This is the old English word for man or servant; and is so used by Wiclif, Rev 12:6.

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JEREMIAH 20: 16 Let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and didn't repent: and let him hear a cry in the morning, and shouting at noontime;

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#### Verse 16

And let him hear the cry - Let him be in continual alarms.

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JEREMIAH 20: 17 because he didn't kill me from the womb; and so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb always great.

JEREMIAH 20: 18 Why did I come out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

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Verse 18

Wherefore came I forth - It would have been well had I never been born, as I have neither comfort in my life, nor comfort in my work.