

God's Salvation and the Scorer's Doom

W.T.P.Wolston.

"Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now, therefore, come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now, therefore, come, that we may go and tell the king's household. So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were. And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within. And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now show you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city. And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city (behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed), and let us send and see. They took, therefore, two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see. And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king. And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord. And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him. And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: and that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold thou shalt see it

with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died." — 2 Kings 7: 1-20.

"Salvation is of the Lord." This is a word uttered by Jonah before the hand of God delivered him from the belly of the great fish, but *after* Jonah had learned the lesson which the Lord meant to teach him. "Salvation is of the Lord," i.e., it is entirely of God's grace. It may meet my need, and thanks be to God, it does meet it; but the condition I am in, whether rather higher or rather lower, in no way affects the grace of God; in fact the worse a man is, the fitter he is for salvation, for then he has nothing of his own to rest upon, and cannot deceive himself with the thought that he is better than his neighbours. The king, in this chapter, is a picture of man in his pride and his religion, and the lepers are a picture of man in his filthiness without religion, and God meets both cases. Elisha is a picture of Christ, full of grace and truth; the One who meets man in his guilt, however great that guilt may be.

Samaria — Israel — had departed from God, and as the result of that departure God had brought up the King of Syria and his armies against them, and they thoroughly beleaguered the city of Samaria till the state of famine and destitution passed all description. You can imagine nothing worse than a woman boiling her own son. When God draws a picture, He draws a true picture. Man likes to draw a bright picture and to throw a veil over the dark side; God describes faith. fully what man is.

In the king we see a certain measure of looking to God — he wore sackcloth next to his flesh. Sackcloth is in Scripture a well-known symbol of repentance; too proud to let the people know he thought the finger of God was upon him, he put the sackcloth within, not without. He was like many an one now, who has a certain amount of seriousness, but would not like his neighbours to know. He did not like to own his sin, and would willingly have blamed God or His servant, for this state, which was the result of Israel's sin. Though there might have been religion and formalism, there was evidently no turning of heart to God, in the king, for had there been real repentance, the sackcloth, I believe, would have been worn outside, not in. Moreover, he blames the prophet, and is determined to wreak his vengeance upon him. Man has done worse than that, man has wreaked his vengeance on the One who came to bless, who went about doing good, who healed their sick and raised their dead; Him in their bitter hatred they crucified and slew.

Elisha was a type of Jesus in being a blesser of Israel, and the king in his pride would have taken the prophet's life, and man in his sin did take the life of Jesus. Did it ever strike you what part you have had in the death of Jesus? I own your voice did not swell those awful cries, "Away with Him, His blood be on us;" but you have a heart that is in sympathy with those who did thus cry; for if you are not yet a child of God you are an enemy of God, for there are but two classes, children of God, and enemies of God. Do you say, I am not an enemy? Are you a friend then? Are you a child? Have you been born again? Have you been quickened by the Spirit? Have you eternal life?

"Oh, no one can know," you reply. Pardon me, my friend, you are wrong in that, the believer is entitled to know with absolute certainty that he is a child of God: "these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may *know* that ye have

eternal life." Another thing we know on divine authority. that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. It is impossible to be a friend of the world and a friend of God. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," John says. God declares we were His enemies, "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Do you own you have been an enemy? "No." Ah, you little know your own history; look back at it, have you loved Him? "Not as much as I ought." What an evasive answer! The fact is, people do not like to be brought to this point. For this very reason, BECAUSE we were *enemies*, the gospel is preached: it comes out as a message from God to those who are away from God; "we pray you," Paul says, "in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5: 20).

The king, in this chapter, I have said is the picture of an unconverted religious man; there was the external religiousness, but within there was hatred, he wanted the life of Elisha, Elisha who had done only good to Israel, whom the moment before he had called "my father." Look on farther in man's history and see; one moment the people are hanging on the lips of Jesus, and the next they take Him to the brow of the hill to cast Him down, and why? Because He had made them know their state, and they could not bear it (Luke 4). People do not like their consciences reached. The king was angry, and I am not very sorry when I see people angry at the gospel preaching, it shows that conscience has been touched. But are you an enemy of Christ's, and do not know it? Has Satan given you some sweet lullaby, whereby you are lulled into false security? Oh! wake up, wake up; be roused in time; be warned of the terrible danger of remaining one night longer an enemy of God!

Look, I beseech you, at the grace of God. A messenger goes down to Elisha, and the king follows. Why was not the messenger dealt with? Because grace comes in. It is a picture of man in his sin, man in his guilt; man in his hatred, confronted by grace. Now that your evil has reached its full height, now that you have shown your religion is false, and your enmity at its height, now that your sin has reached its culminating point, now God will come in and save you. Grace comes in to meet the desperate need of man's utter ruin.

Where are you if you are not a child of God? You are a sinner. You may be religious, so was the king, you are a religious sinner. You may be moral, you are a moral sinner. You may be educated, you are an educated sinner. God says to you, "There is nothing in your heart but enmity against me; I know what you are, now let me tell you what I am." Thus saith the Lord, "Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria." Grace seizes the moment when hatred has done its very worst, and says, "Now this is the moment of Salvation." It was at the cross, when man had done his very worst in putting Jesus there, when man's sin and man's hatred had reached their height, that was the very moment God chose to reverse everything, God took that moment to reveal His love, and put away man's guilt. The cross was the place where good and evil, love and hatred, met in mortal combat, and love conquered - love gushes from His pierced side, love for God and His glory, love to the poor sinner in his sinful state, for nothing but His blood could meet. that sinful state and put away his guilt. There love triumphed over sin, and hatred, and all the dark enmity of man's heart.

"Tomorrow." Those words to the starving in. habitants of Samaria meant salvation, meant a thorough deliverance from their pitiable state. But unbelief always rejects the glad tidings of

God. Dire, dark unbelief always throws cold water on the gospel of God; "if the Lord would make windows in heaven might this thing be?" says the nobleman. "Salvation tomorrow? I do not believe it," says the lord; "you tell me there is full deliverance coming tomorrow, it cannot be; if it were rained down from heaven it might be, in no other way could it be "in the gate of Samaria." But that is just the point, the whole truth, salvation comes to the very place where you are. And, dear reader, I have better tidings for you than there were that day in Samaria. I preach, not salvation tomorrow, for a shekel of silver, but salvation today, this moment for you, where you now are, salvation without money and without price. "Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the remission of sins," for "*now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.*" Salvation through Jesus' blood is proclaimed to you now, on the ground that you are a sinner and are *lost*. *He* knows your true state, and *He* offers you salvation now, without money and without price, salvation *today, salvation TODAY*. From the heart of God comes down the message to you as you are in your sins today, that the sin, the guilt, the debt, and the judgment due to man have been taken by another, paid by another — all the deep debt, and God the Holy Ghost is ready to take possession of the heart that believes God's message.

But what about the unbeliever? "Behold thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." These are close dealings, mark them well. Oh, careless, scoffing soul, you who do not know Christ, do not want Christ, do not want to be converted, you may laugh now, you will not laugh in hell, depend upon this there are no scoffers in the lake of fire. It is all very well for you to laugh and have your sport when the evangelist proclaims the gospel, but remember, "thou shalt see it with thine eyes," when too late for thee to accept of it. "Son, remember," oh remember, you, even you shall *know* it is all true, when you can never have it. Thou shalt hear those sounds of heavenly music inside the gates where thou mayest *never* enter: music that thou mightest have joined in, but now *never* may. Thou shalt behold *afar off* that scene of holy divine joy and bliss of the redeemed, thou shalt see every eye fixed with ineffable joy on Christ, "thou shalt *see* it," but *afar off*, thou thyself being cast out and degraded: cast out *for ever*, "thou shalt *see it*," yes, *see it*, but shall *not taste* thereof. What a withering sentence! what a terrible sentence!

He who said, "Tomorrow shall a measure of fine flour he sold for a shekel," *i.e.*, tomorrow shall salvation come to you, also said, "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." Each word came true; as the first, so the second. And He who spake as never man spake says, "He that believeth on me shall never hunger," "He that believeth shall be saved," says also, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

I believe the fine flour is typical of Christ, the Bread of life, the Bread of heaven, given for man, Christ given for man's need. Oh, despise not His grace, slight not His love, risk not the unbeliever's doom. Oh, risk it not another day, another moment: go to Him, trust Him; let the lepers show you the way. They went out to throw themselves on unknown pity, you have only to throw yourself on the mercy of God, on the compassion of God; they came to the camp of the Syrians, and found everything they needed, and nothing to hinder their taking all they needed. And if you take the place of the lepers, of an empty one, and go to God, though you may have thought God your enemy (as they thought the Syrians their enemies, yet found all they needed, and found none to hinder their taking it too), you will find nothing to hinder your taking salvation and the ample provision God has supplied. You have nothing to do but to take it, and

then to turn round and tell others, "there is plenty for you, too," enough and to spare; there is everything I need, and that others need too.

There is nothing that God keeps back from those who trust Him, from those who come forth to His dear Son. Oh, trust Him now, thou shalt find in Him a Saviour and a Friend, a helper and a succourer, thou shalt find in Him thine all, for time and for eternity, thou shalt find with me that "salvation is of the Lord." But oh, if thou art lost through thine unbelief, thou shalt find it is all thine own folly, thou shalt have none to blame for it but thyself. "And so it fell out unto him, for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died." He saw it, the food, the salvation for Samaria, but *too late*; there it was, the unmistakable evidence of the truth of the prophet's words, but *not for him*. And so with you, like the poor rich man in Luke 16, you shall be able to see *afar* off what you despised; I do not say how long or how often you shall see it, but once I say, you will have one long, one fixed look at the salvation of God, that might have been yours but for your own unbelief, "thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not taste thereof." Oh, my friend, you have despised mercy long enough, despise it no longer; you have turned *from* Christ long enough, turn to Him now, and receive from His hands the salvation He is so willing to bestow, that He may get the glory, and your soul eternal joy!