

THE
SCARLET LINE.



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THE SCARLET LINE.

JOSHUA ii. and vi.

THE city of Jericho was a very rich and populous city in the land of Canaan. It was inhabited by people who had forgotten God, and cared only for the riches and pleasures of this life. We are not told that they were openly filthy and immoral in their lives, like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Doubtless they were much like the rest of the world, striving how to get on in it, careless about God; and if a thought of judgment came across their minds, they put off the unpleasant thought by persuading themselves, "The world will last out our time;" "God

is merciful ;” “ We are not worse than our neighbours ;” or some such notion. Such was Jericho. All, indeed, looked fair and prosperous ; the well-watered plain was green and fertile as ever ; the river Jordan, overflowing its banks, made the meadows most productive ; the men of the city were active ; what they turned their hands to seemed to prosper ; and their city was so strongly built, and so ably defended, that it could defy any army of the enemy, and no human power could prevail against it. And yet the sentence had been passed by God upon Jericho. It hung over the city, notwithstanding its seeming prosperity. God saw that their iniquity was full, and their judgment slumbered not.

Now look around you on the world. It has been, as Jericho was, sentenced of God to destruction. Jesus, before

His crucifixion, said, "Now is the judgment of this world." True, there are no outward signs of it which your eye can see; seasons return, day follows night, all goes on as ever, and yet the sentence is passed. You are living in a world that is under judgment. Fearful thought! At any moment judgment may come; certain it is, it will come when men least expect it. "The day of the Lord will come as a *thief in the night*; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter iii. 10.)

But before Jericho was destroyed, Joshua sent "two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there." (Josh. ii. 1.)

Alarm at the judgments of God, of which they had heard, had indeed taken hold of all the inhabitants of the land, but it was a terror soon forgotten; and so far were the people of Jericho from taking warning from what they had heard, that their king wished to have the two men delivered up, that he might kill them; and had it not been for the faith and kindness of Rahab, they might have perished at his hands. And so it is now with this world: warning after warning has God been sending before the fearful destruction comes; but who believes the report? Who flees from the wrath to come? Almost all mock at it; some are angry at being disturbed by it; others exclaim, and say it is an uncharitable doctrine, and deny that men are really as bad as such preachers make them out to be. But there was one woman, even in Jericho, who believed God's word,

and received the spies with peace—Rahab, a harlot, perhaps the worst woman in the city, despised and spurned by all; yet she boldly says, “*I know* that the Lord hath given you the land.” She may not have had any better means of knowing it than others; she had heard the same reports as they had, but she believed it to be true; for she could say, “The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath.” It was this belief, this faith, that saved her. To believe is, you see, a very simple thing. Rahab had heard of the people of Israel, that God had divided for them the waters of the Red Sea; she had heard how He had destroyed their enemies on the other side of Jordan, and she believed it. When the spies came to ask a lodging at her house, they seemed but poor, wearied, way-worn men; but what she had heard had sunk

deep into her heart, she had believed that God who thus protected the Israelites was the true God, and therefore she received the spies gladly; she preserved and sheltered them at her own risk. Here was faith and its fruits—faith, so that she believed a tale of distant wonders wrought for a people of whom she knew nothing except by report, and by a God of whom before she had been ignorant—faith which, when two of these people presented themselves at her door, made her receive them joyfully, and own them as the messengers of God.

And now, dear reader, a message from God is sent to you, in the midst of this ruined world: on the one hand, telling you that judgment now hangs over this doomed earth; for “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety;

then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. v. 2, 3.) On the other hand the message is, that "he who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." No condemnation awaits such an one; he is delivered from all the wrath that shall be poured out upon this earth. Washed *clean* in the blood of Christ, he will be a partaker of the happiness and glory of God, when the heavens shall depart "as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island shall be moved out of their places." (Rev. vi. 14.)

But let us proceed with the history of Rahab. After telling the two men that she knew the Lord had given them the land, she proceeds,— "Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will

also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee." So certain is Rahab that destruction is coming on Jericho, that she must have an oath and a token from the spies for her safety before she lets them go. She will take no denial; and they are ready to give all that she desires. Upon their own lives they stake her safety: "Our life for yours." They had no need to go back and ask Joshua, their captain, whether they might spare her life; no, they can pledge themselves, knowing assured-

ly the mind of their captain; and as surely as they knew they should triumph over the city, so certain were they that Rahab and her house would be spared. Blessed confidence! Two poor spies in the midst of an enemy's city, in peril of their lives, and far from their own army, can pledge their lives to a poor harlot that she and her house shall be safe; fully assured that the land would be theirs on the one hand, and that they have power to proclaim deliverance to Rahab on the other.

And this, dear reader, is like the message and pledge of the gospel which I can now give to you. In the midst of an evil world that hates the Lord Jesus, with sin and Satan contending in every way, with every delusion, against the truth; yet in the name of Him who is the Captain of our salvation, I can pledge to you full, free, eternal deliverance from

all the guilt of sin, from *all* the condemnation of this world, from *all* the power of Satan and of death, *if you only believe* God's word about Jesus. (John v. 24.) No doubtful message, no uncertain deliverance, is this which is freely presented to you of God. Were I to put an *if* to it, were I to offer it upon conditions, were I to tell you only to hope for salvation, I should be a false messenger—a lying ambassador. No; full, free, everlasting redemption you need. Salvation, about which there cannot be a shadow of doubt, alone will satisfy the desires of your soul; and such is the gracious provision of God. "He that believeth hath *everlasting life*." (John iii. 36.) Here, you see, the gift is *everlasting*. "God justifieth the *ungodly*." (Rom. iv. 5.) Here, you see, it is the ungodly, the sinner, who believes in Christ, that is saved.

But Rahab wanted also a token. "And the men said unto her . . . Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by : and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless : and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head if any hand be upon him. And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed : *and she bound the scarlet line in the window.*" Here was the token for Rahab that she and all within her house were safe—the scarlet line of thread in the window.

And you also want a token. God has given an all-sufficient one to the poor sinner—the *blood of the Lord Jesus*. Look to it as your shelter from wrath, and you are safe: you need fear no judgment then; for the blood tells of judgment already passed upon another, and borne by Him. Do you fear the wrath of God on account of sin? Behold, the blood of Jesus tells us that wrath has been visited upon Him to the uttermost, on account of the sin of others, which He bore. Do you feel the uncleanness and pollution that sin defiles you with, making you unfit for God's holy presence? The testimony of God is, that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." (1 John i. 7.) The word of God alone is that upon which the sinner has to rest; and that word points to the blood, and tells of the blood as the token of the

entire cleansing, entire forgiveness of the sinner who believes.

But perhaps you may say, "How am I to look upon the blood? How do I know that I have any right to the precious blood of Jesus? I want to know that it is mine, that it has been shed for me." Dear reader, if such are your thoughts, there is one simple answer to them all. Do not distress yourself as to whether or not the blood has been shed for *you*; only believe that *God* looks upon it; that *God* is satisfied with it as a full answer for sin; that *God* esteems it precious; that it is the witness to *Him* of judgment passed—of holiness and righteousness and justice satisfied.

The scarlet line in the window of Rahab was to be the token, not to her only, but to the Israelites, that her house was safe. The blood of Jesus is the token, not to the sinner

only, but to God, that the sinner trusting in it is safe. God, who is the Judge of all, says, that the blood of His Son has been "shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28); and if you believe in Christ, you are saved. And as to who has a right to the precious blood, why, of course, they are welcome to it who feel their need of it. Such a Lamb needed not to have been slain, if the case of sinners had not been desperate. The Son of God did not leave the bright glory of His Father, and come down into this world of death in search of righteous people. Had He been in search of the holy, the good, or the pure, He would not have left heaven. He came to find sinners, to call sinners, to seek and save the lost; and therefore He came into this earth, where there are none but ruined, lost sinners—where there are none good,

none righteous, no, not one. (Rom. iii. 10.) Dear reader, the poor harlot Rahab had no righteousness to boast of, no goodness to depend upon. What had her life been? One of notorious profligacy; yet Jericho perished, and she was saved. What could she do? If people are to be saved because they are good, there could be no hope for her. She trusted in one that is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) Yet she felt she had no time to lose; she did not delay, but immediately she bound the scarlet line in the window. Neither have you time to spare. "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi. 7.) Now let the blood be the token of your safety. Flee for your life.

Judgment is nigh, even at your doors.
THERE IS SAFETY ONLY IN
CHRIST. (John x.)

But time rolled on; the two spies had returned to Joshua, and the people of Jericho went on again undisturbed with their business, their cares, or their pleasures, till, behold, the army of the Israelites came and encamped against Jericho. And when Rahab, from her window in the wall, looked out and saw the hosts of Israel marshalling on the plain, what must have been her thoughts? She must have shuddered, for judgment was near; but no, the scarlet line, bound firmly in the window, told her that she was safe. But her parents, her brethren, her sisters! what would become of them? She goes and entreats them to take refuge with her, where the scarlet line is the true token of safety. What! *they* enter the house of a

tainted harlot? *they* go under the roof of one who had been the cause to them of such shame—who had disgraced their family? And could she dare to talk of safety with *her*? Was it likely that God would select the house of a harlot as the only place of deliverance in the city, and pass by respectable people in it—people who had never thus disgraced themselves? Oh, how earnestly must Rahab, the poor outcast one, have pleaded, and yet with what confidence must she have pointed to her house as the only one to be spared, the only one that had the scarlet line! True, she had been an abandoned profligate; true she had no goodness to rely on; therefore she relied on God. In His mercy, not on her merits; for she had none. The token in the window, the scarlet line, told her all within its shelter were safe; and she knew, if her parents

trusted in God, the same token would preserve them also. "Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in." There was no possibility of escape, but that offered by Rahab, and humbled at being obliged to accept such a refuge, yet glad at the offered deliverance, they took shelter where the scarlet line in the window witnessed that judgment was passed.

And so, dear reader, the blood of Jesus Christ tells us sad, humbling truths as regards ourselves, though it tells us joyful news as regards God's mercy and love. It tells us that we are alike condemned as sinners before God, so that the poor degraded harlot is entitled to mercy as much as the most upright, decent, and moral. It tells us that the heart, the whole nature, the whole man—reason, understanding, all—is, in

every individual, so corrupt, so stained with sin, that nothing but the precious blood of God's own Son can enable the very best to stand guiltless before Him: yea, and even that the very best stands in as much need of it as the most openly abandoned sinner on earth; because all are dead in trespasses and sins. (Eph. ii. 1.) It brings all down to one sad level of ruin, guilt, and sin. It proves that the fairest, the most lovely, is as unfit for the Divine presence as the wretched harlot, who is abandoned and scorned by all. Do you wish to escape from judgment? Do you want deliverance? You can find it in the blood of Jesus Christ.

But to proceed. Here then was the city of Jericho closely shut up—no escape from it, and the only place of safety in it was the house that had the scarlet line in the window. And

what is the state of this world? It is like the city of Jericho, shut up for destruction. This world is but the condemned cell, in which sinners found guilty before their Judge are shut up for execution. The sentence has been already passed. Think not that there is any question with God as to whether man is guilty or not. The death of His Son long ago settled that. "We are all by nature children of wrath" (Eph. ii. 3); "All the world is guilty before God." (Rom. iii. 19.) And what, then, does the world wait for? Not for condemnation, for it is judged already, but for *execution*. But still there is one house that is safe, one house that will be preserved from the fearful ruin,—a house made of living stones. All who trust in the precious blood of Christ compose that household. Oh, flee then, and take refuge there! Soon, soon will this

world reel to and fro like a drunkard. (Isaiah xxiv. 20.) What are men about? Why, they are, like madmen, painting and decorating the walls of their condemned cell. Man so blinds his eyes to the future, that he takes pleasure in beautifying and adorning the very place that is to be his grave. And so it was with Jericho; the men of valour could look down from their lofty walls upon the army of the Israelites, and could defy their attacks. Who could scale such high walls? Who could break open such massive gates? And no doubt, as day followed day, and they found there was no attempt made on the part of the Israelites to take the city, they became more settled and firm in their confidence; they thought themselves more secure than ever against their deadly foes. And so it is with the world: "Because sentence against an evil work

is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccles. viii. 11.) Because God has been long-suffering in His dealings with the earth, and has not visited upon man at once the deserved judgment on account of his sins, therefore men take occasion to say there is no judgment coming. And what did the Israelites do with respect to Jericho? They did not attempt to batter down the walls or break open the gates. No. Quietly, at the command of God, they marched round outside the city for six days, bearing the ark of the Lord, and seven priests blowing seven trumpets of rams' horns. Thus they did once every day for six days: still all was strong and firm as ever in the city; not a stone was loosened from the walls. How must the people in the city have laughed and mocked at the

seeming folly of the Israelites! How could a few priests, blowing a hoarse blast on rams' horns, hurt the city? Was this all the God of Israel could do? Was this all the judgment that had been threatened? And probably the greater part, after the first novelty of the thing was over, heeded it no more, but, just as usual, went about their daily business; or if, perhaps, the distant sound of the rams' horns caught their ear, sneered at the foolish Israelites who could thus vainly spend their time.

Dear reader, is not this the very picture of the world? Warning after warning has been sent to it *that the Lord is coming*; but it sounds in men's ears as but a foolish report. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall

wail because of Him." (Rev. i. 7.) Men may, indeed, deride and doubt the fact. The word of the Lord says, "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.) But as the deluge, in the time of Noah, came suddenly upon the world, and all except the eight persons in the ark perished, so will the coming of the Lord overtake this world with sudden destruction, and there will be no escape; for, as it is again written, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." (2 Thess. i. 7-9.)

So it was with the city of Jericho. The six days had run their course—the seventh day came: again the priests, with rams' horns and the ark, go round the city; but that day they did so seven times. The seventh time came—the priests blew the last blast with the trumpets—Joshua said unto the people, "Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city. . . So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the

edge of the sword. . . And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein." Here was judgment the most fearful and sudden! Where was now the laugh and the scoffing at the Israelites? Where were now the walls that reached up to heaven, and the mighty men of valour? And such will be the destruction that will like lightning, come upon this world. The Lord Himself will smite the nations, and tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And when will this be? Will men see the judgment approaching? Will they be warned in time? No. *The warning they have already had.* They have heard the word of God concerning it; they have heard what to them seemed a foolish, feeble testimony about it, just as the men of Jericho heard the feeble blast of rams' horns; but they have neglected it; they have despised it; they have

disbelieved it. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven." (Matt. xxiv. 36.) "As it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke xvii. 28-30.) Each will, as usual, be about his accustomed business. The tradesman will be thinking, as usual, of his gain, the labourer of his toil, the idle man of his pleasures; the drunkard will be enjoying his glass, the profane person will have the oath upon his lips, the fornicator will be meditating on his lust: when, in a moment, each will be surprised by the appearing of the Lord. And what a calm stillness of despair will then seize the

busy, noisy thousands of those who have perhaps a name to live, being called Christians, but are dead! What would a man then give for but one hour of his former life! Yes, men may deride now; men may bury their thoughts about the future in the present cares and riches and pleasures of this world; but that day will overtake them "as a thief in the night," and that day is surely, speedily drawing nigh. Dear reader, are you ready? Are you prepared, washed, cleansed, safe from all this destruction? You hear people talk of the mercy of God, yet sinners, careless about their souls, thoughtless about Jesus, try to quiet their consciences by saying, "God is merciful; and if we do no wrong to our neighbour, and live a decent sober life, He will not punish us like the rest of the wicked." But remember Jericho. Man, woman, and child, all alike

perished at the Lord's command. The time for judgment had come, and there was no refuge but under the shelter of the scarlet line. God is indeed most merciful and gracious; He has given the blood of His own Son for guilty sinners; He points to *that* as the proof of His mercy and love. The sinner that has sought a refuge there is safe.

But where was Rahab in the destruction! Her house was upon the wall, the very wall which tottered and fell down flat. And was she buried in the ruins? No. Her house fell not, for there was the scarlet line in the window. When all reeled to and fro around, when crash after crash of the falling walls told her that the hour of vengeance was come, her house stood firm. And the same One that preserved the harlot's house from ruin has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake

not the earth only, but also heaven ; that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." (Heb. xii. 27.) Are you, dear reader, resting on that "which cannot be shaken"—the word of the Lord? Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word shall not pass away. This is the only sure foundation. Rahab bound the scarlet line in the window ; she got her family into the house, and they were safe. And when the swords of the Israelites spared neither man, woman, nor child in the city, where were Rahab and her household? Safe with the camp of the Israelites. For Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her

brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel."

Every one that trusts in the blood of Jesus is safe from judgment (1 Thess. i. 10); he is made a new creature in Christ Jesus. (2 Cor. v. 17.) And when this world and the works that are therein shall be burnt up, he will be peacefully and joyfully singing the song of glory, "Worthy is the Lamb; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Dear reader, "the time is short!" "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

May you also be there; alike freed from all condemnation; alike washed in His precious blood; alike crowned with light and joy unfading!

“JESUS STOOD AND CRIED, SAYING, IF ANY
MAN THIRST, LET HIM COME UNTO ME,
AND DRINK.”—John vii 37.

“HE THAT COMETH TO ME I WILL IN NO
WISE CAST OUT.”—John vi. 37.

But I am a great sinner, sayest thou.
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I am an old sinner, sayest thou.
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I am a hard-hearted sinner, sayest thou.
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
I have served Satan all my days, sayest thou.
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I have sinned against light, sayest thou.
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
But I have sinned against mercy, sayest thou.
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.
I have no good thing to bring, sayest thou.
I will in no wise cast out, says Christ.

Luke vii. 36-50, xxiii. 39-43; John iv.

JOHN BUNYAN.

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