


The Besieged City  
AND THE WAY OUT OF IT

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A GOSPEL ADDRESS  
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# The Besieged City.

2 Kings vi. 24-29, vii. 1-20.

(Read the whole Scripture) ·

**M**y purpose is to speak on the great famine in Samaria. There is a well known saying that Scripture has only one interpretation, though it may have many applications. I do not propose to interpret this Scripture. Interpreted, it doubtless refers to a people in relationship with God, in the place of privilege, but under the power of the enemy. My thought is rather to apply it.

Two scenes are brought before us. In the one, you get a fearful struggle for existence; in the other, the administration of abundance. These two scenes are found very close together, and for the moment at least, they exist concurrently. They represent, to my mind, two spheres, which can easily be seen and taken account of by those who have eyes to see them. They are both found in this world. On the one hand, Satan has set up his kingdom, and it is marked by famine and death. On

the other hand, God has brought to pass His kingdom, and it is marked by abundance and life.

The people of Israel were in a sad plight and they present a sorry and a solemn spectacle. Benhadad, the king of Syria, had come against Samaria with *all his host*, and had besieged it, and shut up that city to death. What a picture it is of that which Satan has brought to pass in this world. You remember that Scripture in Ecclesiastes: "There was a little city, and few men within it." The "little city" represents this world. You may say "This world is a very big city." O yes, but it was a little city when Satan besieged it, —only two people in it. "And there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it." Why did the devil build great bulwarks against this world city? If an enemy builds bulwarks against a city, his purpose is to cut off all communication between those within and those without.

We get a glimpse of the state of things resulting from the siege. There was famine in that city. God never intended His creature to be in famine. He delights that man should be in moral abundance. When God created man at the outset, He gave him affections and desires and He meant to satisfy them, but He intended

that *He Himself* should be the satisfaction. When Satan got man's ear and led him into sin, he knew that, consequent on that, God must pass sentence of death on His creature, and Satan used that with tremendous force to instill into man's heart, fear and dread and distrust of God. These are the mighty bulwarks that the enemy built against this world city, thinking to cut off all communication between the creature and the Creator. For the moment it looked as though he had succeeded, for communication was cut off between the creature and God. But Satan could not shut God out. He could not destroy communication between the Friend outside and the besieged inside.

Now man is a moral being, and he must be kept going with something. What were these poor people in that city doing? They were eating asses' heads. Think of that! Unwholesome, unnatural, unsatisfying food. And they were paying famine prices for it. Ten dollars for an ass's head in that besieged city. And they were eating dove's dung and paying half a dollar for a cupful of it. And such was the straightness of the siege, that women were eating their offspring. What a blighting of all those finer sensibilities which God established in connection with man. What an awful contrast to Eden, that fair scene

of plenty and beauty and love. And yet, that is a picture of what is going on all around us: of what Satan has brought to pass in this world city which he has besieged.

Did you ever stop and think what this world offers a man for his heart? He is a moral being and Satan knows it and seeks to keep him going, otherwise out of sheer desperation, he might break away and turn to God.

I think the great mass are being fed on what appeals to their pride and ambition and self-will. What is there in that for man's heart? Look at the various walks of life, that in which men are engaged in this world. They all present opportunities for man's ambition to be fed and his pride and self-will to be gratified. Look at the world of letters and learning, or the world of finance, or war, or politics or religion. They all present fields in which Satan energises man to gratify his ambition and feed his pride. Draw near to men who have risen to the top in these various spheres of life,—presidents, great generals, writers, millionaires—draw near and ask them: What have you got of it for your heart? NOTHING. Their heart is empty. No more food in that than on an ass's head—and there is very poor picking on that—and yet what a price they pay to

get there, the surrender of every moral principle; famine prices, such as they paid in that famine stricken city in Samaria.

Then there were those kept going on something far worse than that. There were some who were feeding on dove's dung. Loathsome, disgusting, vile. None but a man with a vitiated appetite could be induced to feed on that. And yet, there are thousands in this world city kept going on that which answers morally to dove's dung. Look at the printing press to day, pouring out its tons of vile literature, and people are swallowing it. They are living on it. You pass down the streets of your city. Note the places of amusement and see what they are dealing out for the hearts of man. It is being swallowed wholesale. People are living on dove's dung and they are paying a fearful price for it. Think of the cost—depraved minds, shattered bodies, damned souls. That is what they are doing in the besieged city.

And then the fearful struggle for prominence in this world, whether social, or financially, with all the jealousy and bitterness and hatred and greed—men l the throats of their fellow, with no regard for those relationships which God established among men—there is what answers

I think, to the women eating their offspring during the siege.

That is a picture of what Satan's world is, the besieged city, around which the mighty bulwarks of the enemy have been built. It is man *without God*, dependent on Satan to minister to his need. Anything morally beautiful about that? You shrink from it. It is horrible. The breath of hell is on the whole scene dominated by Satan.

And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, "Help, my Lord, O king." It was the cry of a woman, and I think that cry represents a characteristic state in that city: things were unbearable. Satan goes too far: he draws the reins too tightly sometimes. Her cry was not intelligent, but it was a cry. "Help, my Lord, O king." She cried to the wrong man, but that cry went further than the ears of the king. It went right up to the ears of God and sank into His heart. The king said "If *the Lord* do not help thee, whence shall I help thee; out of the barn floor, or out of the winepress?" A wise answer that: what can man do in the presence of such an enemy? NOTHING. The king was no better off than the woman. He was besieged too. And it is true to-day as then You draw near to thinking men, and they will tell you that things are very un-

satisfactory. They try to better the social and economic conditions; philosophers philosophize and statesmen legislate, hoping to bring about a happier state of affairs. But they leave God out, and the city is still besieged, and if men were honest, they would say to the cry that ascends from this famine stricken world "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?"

Friend, there is nothing in this world for your poor heart. The barn floor and the winepress are both empty. There is neither food nor joy in them. There is only famine, and woe, and misery on the barn floor and in the winepress of this world's besieged city.

I said a moment ago, that that woman's cry went right up to the heart of God. **AND HE ANSWERED IT.** The impotency of man has only furnished an opportunity for the display of His power and His love. That scripture I quoted from Ecclesiastes continues "Now there was found in it (the little city) a poor wise man, and He by His wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man."

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I pass on now to another scene. The Syrians are in flight, terror stricken, so filled with fear that they do not even



'unloose their horses nor asses, nor take down their tents, and all the way is strewn with garments and vessels which they have cast away in their haste. What is the meaning of that? It spells out "utter defeat" for the enemy. The Syrians had invaded divine territory, just as Satan, in capturing man, had invaded God's land. They had come with a great host and besieged Samaria, but the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear the noise of the chariots, even the noise of a *great host*. The host of God had invaded the Syrian camp and the voice of God had sounded in that domain.

Here we get a striking figure of what has come to pass through JESUS the Blessed Son of God. He came into this world as the poor wise man, and by His wisdom delivered the city. He was poor; He had none of this world's resources. Satan offered them all to Him, but He would not touch them. Its glory and its pride in no way appealed to HIM. They had no place in His heart. The whole thing was under the dominion of the enemy. He, on Whom death had no claim, died in this world. Think of that; He died rather than recognize Satan; indeed He died to annul Satan, and His wisdom was displayed in His death. He had resources—infinite resources outside of human ken,

and they came to light when He died. The resources of the heart of God were all at His disposal. He had ever found His joy in connection with them; and He has brought those resources near to man.

He has invaded Satan's territory. He has shattered the bulwarks of the enemy—darkness and death—for He has brought into the scene of death. the light of the love of God. O Friend, have you heard that mighty voice, the voice of Jesus, God's Blessed Son? telling out at Calvary—where Satan's power was at its height—the heart of God? Has the light of that reached your heart? If so, *God has got into the besieged city.* One bulwark is gone, the bulwark of darkness. And I will tell you something else. If the light of God's love has reached your heart, If you can say, "I know *His* heart, and His love has won my heart," then the siege is over. There is no more famine. Your soul hunger is gone and in finding your joy and satisfaction in God, you have begun to live. The second bulwark, the bulwark of death has been demolished and *you have got out of the city.* You can say "God loves me, and I love Him." The bulwarks are gone. And the "poor wise Man" has done it. I wonder if you know Him, and if not, would you like to know Him? He is not in death now. He is risen from the dead. He sits

at God's right hand, a PRINCE and a SAVIOUR. If there is one that does not know Him, let me say, He is well worthy of your confidence; and the windows of heaven have been opened and the Holy Ghost has come down into this world to bring near to you as food, all that has been brought to light through that Blessed Man. You do not need to ascend into heaven to bring Him down, nor into the deep to bring Him up again from the dead. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth . . . . that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, *thou shalt be saved.*" The kingdom is near to you, as near as Satan's kingdom was near to you. It is right here for you. Won't you step to-night out of Satan's besieged city into a sphere where salvation and abundance and life may be enjoyed in the power of the Holy Ghost?

Now the first to avail themselves of what had come to pass, were four leprous men. I understand the number four represents "experience," and these four men had certainly had that. Leprosy is a figure of sin. But it does not merely illustrate a man who says he has done things he ought not to have done and left undone things he ought to have done.

It illustrates a man who knows he is bad as bad can be, inside and out. Like a man who once went to hear C. H. M. preach and returning he said, I have learned three things from that preaching; first, that I never did a good thing in my life; second, that I never could do a good thing in my life; and third, that Christ has done everything for me. He had learned that he was only sin from centre to circumference; that is leprosy. When a man comes to that he says, there is only one thing for me, and that is DEATH. Good it would be, if that truth got hold of you to-night.

“And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate.” Their case was desperate. Even had things been normal, their position was bad enough, but in the time of famine, their case was hopeless. “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.” I can see those men coming. It was *twilight*. And they came just like a sinner comes to God. What brought them? Confidence? No. What

brought the prodigal from the far country? The Father's love for him? No. He had never known his Father's heart. Sheer desperation brought him—a mighty famine—and it was twilight for him too; the full light of a Father's heart had not yet reached him. What brought any man in this room to Christ? It was sheer desperation. That is just the way a sinner comes to God. He does not fully take in how he will be received. When these men came to the uttermost part of the camp of the Syrians, there was no man there. The enemy was gone and instead of an enemy they found a Friend, for the best friend a poor hungry man could find would be food and drink, and they went from tent to tent, eating and drinking. God had turned the enemy's stronghold into a house of feasting and He has done the same thing spiritually. As a sinner, death was on me as the judgment of God. The thought of it rightly filled my heart with dread. But the poor wise Man has delivered the city. He has used death—man's enemy too—as a means of revealing God and of winning man's heart. In death I have found God, and God has found me. There is feasting.

They found raiment too. Everything to satisfy within and to clothe them without; silver and gold. Then what do

they do? They begin to evangelize. Think of those four leprous men, who but a moment before had been the most miserable in Samaria? They become earnest evangelists; they say "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." There is a lesson in that for us. "The morning light" will soon break. The Lord will soon be here. If we miss the opportunity of witnessing to this world's besieged city in the night of His rejection, some mischief will befall us; we shall suffer eternal loss.

At first the king was sceptical, but he sent and soon proved the truth of the glad tidings. But the lord on whose hand he leaned, when he heard on the previous day the Prophet speaking of plenty on the morrow, scoffed at the thought. I trust there is no man in this room to-night who would scoff at divine things. Within twenty-four hours, that lord was dead in the midst of abundance. They trode upon him in the gate and he died. The blessing of life was all around him when judgment overtook him. O friend, how solemn for you, if, in this moment of privilege, with those around you partaking

of the divine bounty, you despise it and perish for ever.

One word more and I am done. You notice what the Prophet said in Samaria; "*To-morrow* 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." Yet these four men came into their blessing for nothing. How was that? They came that night, and what they came in for, mark you, they had not to pay for. They got it all for nothing. To-morrow you will pay for all you get, but to-night, you may have, so to speak, all there is in the heart of God for you, for nothing. There was meat and drink, and silver and gold, and there was raiment, all for nothing. I think it speaks of a sinner when first he comes to God. He gets everything for nothing. These are the terms. Come to Christ to-night and get everything for nothing. To-morrow you will pay for all you get. If you turn to God to-night, He will meet you just where you are. He will fill your heart like those lepers were filled up.

And I will tell you what more He will do. He will give you silver and gold. What is that? He will give you the SPIRIT and the SPIRIT'S appreciation of Christ—unsearchable riches. You can come and be satisfied to-night, but to-

morrow you will want more of Christ. You will say, what I have had was very good, but I am hungry again; I want more. And you can have all you want. "A measure of fine flour for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel." You have to pay more for the fine flour than for the barley. What is the barley? People who are a barley eating people, who live on barley bread, are a strong, robust, vigorous people. I think it represents Christ in that character. He will build you up spiritually, that you may be vigorous and strong, in contrast to those poor emaciated, miserable people in that besieged city. But you have to pay for it. And how? In the way of self surrender. But you can afford to pay, because in the power of the Spirit, you have such an appreciation of Christ, that you prefer Him to yourself, and every taste you get makes you want more.

And there is fine flour. "A measure of fine flour for a shekel." You have to pay twice as much for that as for the barley. It is more precious: but you can afford it. It speaks, I think, of all the moral beauty of JESUS. It reminds you of the meat offering, the Blessed Son of God Who was down here in Manhood, in this world, in perfect grace and meekness and in all the moral loveliness of One come



down from heaven. Wouldn't you like to be like THAT MAN? Well, you can. The grace of that Man is brought within your reach and can be put upon you if you are prepared to pay the price for it. So that, instead of all the horrible kind of thing which you find in the besieged city, the cruel jealousy and the malice and hatred that you find in Satan's world, you get an order of man down here, taking character from the food he eats and coming out in all the moral grace and loveliness of the Blessed Lord Himself.

I ask, Is this not worth going in for? That is what God has brought to pass in connection with His kingdom. There is a scene of life there, and of blessedness and perfect satisfaction.

Is there a soul here to-night that will step out of Satan's kingdom into the kingdom of God; out of a scene of darkness and death into a scene of light and perfect satisfaction.

May God bless His word and give us to appreciate in deeper measure what He has brought to pass.

H. G.