

**The Siege**  
**of Samaria;**

or,

**Satisfaction, Life, and Spoil.**

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THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA ;  
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SATISFACTION, LIFE, AND SPOIL.

2 KINGS vi. 24 to vii. 20.

IN the description of the siege of Samaria, we have a very striking picture of the state of man, and of the grace of God towards him as set forth in the gospel. They are things written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the age are come (1 Cor. x. 11). May each of our readers, through God's grace, reap lasting profit from this little effort to present the truth found therein.

“ And it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria : and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver ” (2 Kings vi. 24, 25).

Samaria became the capital of Israel after the ten tribes had forsaken Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. Now, God had said, that if His people kept His holy law, one of them should chase a thousand. Hence any success of their foes over them was a proof that Israel had sinned deeply against God. Their powerful enemy Ben-hadad, king of Syria, was besieging them with a mighty

host from without, and a terrible famine consequently was raging within. The population was reduced to the greatest misery, and seeking to satiate their hunger with offal and refuse which otherwise they would have shrunk from touching.

What a forcible picture of the moral state of the world at large! Man has sinned, deeply sinned against God. Satan and his demon hosts beleaguer the world, seeking the utter destruction of the souls and bodies of men. And there is a vast famine raging world-wide, not of the necessities of natural life, but of those of the soul and of the spiritual life. The misery of man, said the preacher, is great upon him. So awful is his state, that he seeks to satisfy the needs of an immortal soul by feeding on the moral refuse of his fallen nature.

In the midst of the above terrible state of things at Samaria, two poor women in the depth of their distress agreed to destroy and eat their own children, in order to satiate the pangs of hunger. One child was actually boiled and consumed, when maternal affection, their hunger being appeased for the moment, gained the ascendancy, and the woman whose child still lived, hid it. As the king passed by on the wall of the city, the other woman appealed to him for justice, crying, "Help, my lord, O king." His bitter reply, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?" (for the corn and wine were exhausted) showed how vain is the help of princes in such circumstances! Hearing the woman's pitiful tale, he rent his clothes, and as he passed

by, the people saw that he had sackcloth within upon his flesh (v. 30). Alas, like many more he rent his clothes, but failed to rend his heart. And though he wore sackcloth within upon his flesh, *his heart*, as the story goes on plainly to show, was far from the Lord, and filled with enmity against Him (chap. vi. 31-33). Sackcloth was a sign of repentance, of self-judgment before Jehovah; but of what avail if there were no reality? God looketh upon the heart.

The woman's awful tale tested this wicked king to the very core. Hear his own words! "God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day" (v. 31). "And he said, Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" (v. 33). Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. It manifested the worthlessness of his sackcloth profession of humbling himself before God. A determined rebel, not being able to wreak his vengeance upon Him, he would wreak it upon His faithful servant and prophet, Elisha. He knew sufficient of the ways of God to discern His hand in allowing the siege, but there was no true fear of Him before his eyes. He put on sackcloth as a mere form or custom, because he wanted to escape the governmental judgment of God; but there was no heart sorrow, no self-judgment, no confession of his and his people's sins. And as king he was the guiltiest of all. Murder, not repentance, was in his heart, and only the mercy of God prevented him from adding blood-guiltiness to his other sins.

How searching is the two-edged sword of God's word! What pains He takes to show us to ourselves; not to execute His judgment upon us, but that we, through His faithful chastening hand of love, may learn His ways, and become the recipients of His mercy and grace!

Thousands to-day, in this beleaguered world, maintain, so to speak, a sackcloth profession of religion! But, alas, it is upon the flesh. The conscience is uneasy. There is more or less a sense of responsibility. But how about the heart, the citadel of man? It is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Only the Lord (Jer. xvii. 9). With all our natural religiousness and professed self-judgment, our hearts are far from God, and full of enmity against Him. This was fully expressed at the cross of Christ. Man could not wreak his vengeance upon God, who is a Spirit, but he murdered His Son, who in love came in holy manhood to reveal Him. The guilt of that act lies not only at the door of the Jew, but also of the whole world. And of that world we form part. What a graphic picture God has drawn of our state! Sinners, under Satan's power, feeding on moral refuse, having a form of godliness, but our hearts far from God, and filled with enmity against Him and His Christ! Have you, dear reader, discovered your true state before Him, and set to your seal, so to speak, that God's witness is true? If so, we have glorious news for you, blessedly set forth in the following part of this instructive story.

In the midst of the king's evil words, we get a remarkable parenthesis in v. 32 and part of 33. Elisha, the prophet of God, amid all the horrors of that awful famine and siege, was sitting calmly in his house, and the elders sat with him. And the king sent a man from before him. But Elisha, taught of God, knew what was about to happen. Hence, ere the messenger arrived, he turned to the elders and said, "See ye how this son of a murderer (Ahab) hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door : is not the sound of his master's feet behind him? And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him."

Thus the king was on the very verge of carrying out a deliberate and revengeful murder, had not God intervened, both in mercy to His servant as well as to him.

And how was this crowning act of his wickedness met? One would have naturally expected that the governmental judgment of God would have been executed at that moment upon the city of Samaria, both upon the king and upon his people. But instead of this, it served for an opportunity for God to show forth His boundless grace. And the story speaks still to our hearts and consciences of the surpassing grace of our God in the gospel of His Son. Listen to the message of mercy and grace from Him which reached the guilty city through His servant Elisha : "Hear ye the word of the Lord ; 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" (chap. vii. 1).

Instead of vengeance and judgment comes a promise of deliverance and plenty. In another twenty-four hours or so, the famine with its attendant misery should cease. At the very gate where they dreaded the entry of their foes, wheat and barley should be sold to them at moderate prices. But great and wonderful as was this promise of the Lord's grace, how far the grace of the gospel of God exceeds it! That which it foreshadows goes immeasurably beyond the figure. Man deserves the judgment of God to-day. His cup of iniquity has long been full to overflowing. But mercy rejoices against it, and grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. v. 21). The grace of God brings salvation (Titus ii. 11). And God's salvation is full, free, present, and eternal. Not to-morrow, about this time, but to-day, this moment, *now*, it is offered, dear reader, to you. God presents Christ to you, the One who alone can meet the need of your famished soul. And here there is no measure. Christ is the perfect meat offering, the true fine flour. And having glorified God in His finished work, He is offered to you as a present Saviour. There is nothing to do, nothing to pay. The ransom price has been paid for our deliverance, for the satisfaction of our souls, in His own precious blood. This has been shed, and it has long been, and ever will be, precious to God. On the ground of His death and blood-shedding, God declares His righteousness in pardoning, justifying, and

satisfying poor famished sinners who deserve the execution of His judgment. This great grace is for all. His righteousness is towards all, and *upon all them that believe* (Rom. iii. 22).

“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 Elisha replied, “Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof” (v. 2). In answering thus the man of God, this wicked lord was practically answering God, whose messenger he was. And the scripture says, “Nay, but O man, *who art thou* that repliest against God?” “Behold, *if*,” etc. “If.” The grace of God was met by the evil “if” of unbelief. Are not all things possible with Him? Had any promise of His ever failed? Had not Israel proved His faithfulness a thousand times over? Was there any excuse for this man’s wickedness? None whatever. He provoked his own condemnation, and it was pronounced by the servant of God. It is a striking illustration of the infidel “if” with which men in the twentieth century reply to the prolonged testimony of God’s grace. He has spoken, and thousands doubt His word. The judgment of every such impenitent one is as sure as is the grace of God to the sinner who believes. Both the blessing and the judgment of God are *eternal*.

At this point the scene changes. We are next introduced to four leprous men sitting “at the entering in of the gate” of the city. Here we have a further instance of God’s rich grace. What

pains our God takes again and again to bring before us His great remedy, and the blessed results of realizing our true state and position before Him ! The condition of these lepers was most piteous, and their position most critical. Added to all the other miseries of this terrible siege, they were outcasts even from the city, suffering from the malignant and incurable disease of leprosy. Moreover, they were exposed to the deadly missiles of the foe at one of the most dangerous posts. As day after day, and night after night dragged wearily by, their condition grew more and more desperate and wretched, until it became unbearable. Looking at each other in the depth of their misery, they said, " 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."

How striking a picture again of man's moral condition and position after the flesh before God ! All are suffering from a malady still more deadly than that of leprosy. All are under sin, an incurable disease, and all are under death (Rom. iii. 9 ; vi. 23) ; and all are exposed to the deadly attacks of Satan and his demon hosts. The world is a vast scene of sin and death and Satan's power. Have you realized it ? Then why do you sit still without facing the momentous and eternal question which stares you in the face ? If you go into the world, man's city, spiritual famine, disease,

misery, and death are raging there. Said the wise man, "The misery of man is great upon him" (Eccles. viii. 6). If you fold your arms in indifference or carelessness, and remain where you are, sin will continue to work in you, and death, its wages, stare you in the face. And after this is the judgment (Heb. ix. 27). But if, after having considered your whole state and position, you face the matter, you will find, like the lepers, *a way of deliverance*, where you at first least expected.

Now, no sooner had the lepers decided to face the foe, than they wisely put their project into execution. "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" (v. 5). What must have been their astonishment? All the serried hosts of Syrians had disappeared! There was not a foe to be seen. This they discovered in the twilight. "Behold, there was no man there." How was it? The secret is told in the following verse. "*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" (vv. 6, 7). Yes, the Lord had intervened. He had taken up the case of His utterly undeserving people. His heart was full

of pity towards them, notwithstanding their sin. He went out against and scattered their enemies. It was not by a mighty act of power, but He made them to hear a noise of a great host. It was an invisible host. But that was enough. Fear did the rest. A panic ensued. Imagination conjured up hosts of enemies on all sides. And in the dim twilight they left the camp as it was, and fled for their life.

So also in the gospel of God's surpassing grace. So soon as we face seriously the great question of salvation, what do we discover? Light begins to dawn in the soul. It may be but dim twilight at first compared with the bright light of day which soon follows, but we find to our joy that there is naught to fear, that the blessed Lord has been before us, and that He has wrought salvation, not by a display of power, but by being crucified through weakness and death. His death in dying slew. The Son of God came to undo the works of the devil (1 John iii. 8). He met the whole power of darkness, and vanquished it completely. Through the finished work of Christ, Satan is a beaten foe. Christ has finished the work He undertook (John xvii. 4). He is the mighty Victor now. He overcame death, and life and incorruptibility have been brought to light through the gospel. The lepers needed not to strike a blow. Neither do we. All was done for them. All is done for us. There is a way of safety opened up through the death of Christ out of this poor beleaguered and perishing world. Have you trodden it?

“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" (v. 8).

First they discovered that there was no man there. They faced death, and found life. In principle they passed from death unto life. Then they began to feast. They ate and drank to their heart's desire. And they discovered raiment. And they wisely took care of it. They hid it, lest they should become dispossessed of it. And not only so, but they "came again," and in another tent found yet more.

So is it with believers on Jesus, the Son of God: He that believeth on Him hath life—yea, eternal life. We pass out of death into life (John v. 24). We have life in Him in the midst of a scene where we are surrounded with the tokens of the enemy's power. But he is overcome. No voice of Satan or man can raise an accusation against those who are in Christ (Rom. viii. 31-39). And He has said, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John vi. 35). And in Him we find raiment. God clothes us with Christ in His own blessed presence. We become clad with God's best robe, we become the righteousness of God in Christ, taken into favour in the Beloved (2 Cor. v. 21; Eph. i. 6). And shall we lose sight of that word "hid it"? If our souls enter through grace into these blessed truths, let us be deeply exercised, lest Satan with his wiles should dispossess us of

them. He will surely do his utmost to rob us of the assurance of our eternal interest in Christ.

Now, though the lepers were saved and enjoying the spoil of the foe, they still suffered from leprosy. And though sinners who believe are saved by the grace of God, passing out of death into life, and come into the enjoyment of the spoils of Calvary, yet is our sinful flesh in no way whatever bettered. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and remains flesh. But it is true, thank God, that we are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in us (Rom. viii. 9).

Satisfied and filled with spoil, the lepers again conferred together. Having themselves reaped the unexpected fruits of their first conference by the city gate, they now begin to think of others. "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" (v. 9). Their conduct and resolve are full of instruction for us. It is the great and precious privilege of all who enjoy the blessings of the gospel, to make known the glad tidings to others. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). Some mischief will befall us if we hold our peace. "Woe is me," again says the apostle, "if I preach not the gospel." "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The hearts of the lepers were full, and they were the first to make known the glad tidings to the perishing city. And

hearts full of Christ to-day will delight to make Him known. Said the lepers, "Now therefore come." There was no room for delay. To-morrow might be too late for many. "Now" is the moment to speak of Christ. Souls are perishing daily on all hands. We do not well if we hold our peace. The spoil of the enemy's camp was for all. And the salvation of God with all the riches of grace is for sinners. May the heart of every believer who reads these lines be so full, that he may delight to tell of Christ and His finished work to all around.

"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" (*vv.* 10, 11). No sooner had they resolved to make the good news known, than they put their resolve into execution. Calling the chief porter of the city, the news at once spread. Other porters took it up, and it soon reached the king's household, and the king himself. From the circumference to the centre, the whole city was stirred.

Who knows where the glad tidings of God's grace will spread, if we begin to make it known? "Go ye into all the world," said our precious Lord and Saviour, "and preach the gospel to every creature." God would have the good news made known. It is for all, the whole of man's city. Not one is excluded. It is for both high and low,

rich and poor, young and old, from the lowest citizen to the king upon his throne. Blessed are they who not only hear but receive the joyful news of the great salvation of God in a risen and glorified Christ !

“ 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 ” (v. 12).

The good news reached the king's house apparently when he was fast asleep. He arose in the night. Now, worldly kings love to appear wise, and do not like to humble themselves. Instead of thankfully receiving the message, he said to his servants, “ I will now show you.” He did not believe it, and would have them believe it was a trick of the enemy. But one of them was wiser than his lord, and answered, saying, “ 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 ” (v. 13).

How many, alas, are now fast asleep, during the darkness of the night of this poor world, whilst the gospel tidings are sounding ! And whilst others are aroused in God's grace, they, instead of believing, and receiving the news with joy and thankfulness, doubt, and reason, and seek to

explain it away. Not only kings, and those in high estate, but men of all classes, love darkness rather than light, and follow their own natural thoughts and opinions rather than the precious truth of God.

The servant's words, however, produced an effect, for we read further, "They took therefore two chariot horses, and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see" (v. 14). After the first ebullition of unbelief, as he listened to his servant's words, the thought appears to have risen in the king's mind, that it might possibly be true after all. So he resolved to follow his counsel, and to put it to the proof. Faith was utterly lacking. Moreover, though *five* horses were still at his disposal, he only sanctioned his servants taking *two*. If, after all, the news should be untrue, he had still a reserve to fall back upon.

How wonderfully in all these things God exposes, for our learning, the deceitful workings of the human heart! How slow man is to believe God! How repeatedly the worldling responds to the Christian, Can you *show* me anything? We should be off the ground of faith if we could. The report of the glad tidings is received by faith. When men, in their reasoning hearts, would put it to the proof, there is generally a reserve in the soul, which hinders them from bowing simply to God's unerring word.

"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” (v. 15).

Sent by the king, his servants started off with two chariot horses. To their surprise, they found that the reality was even much better than the message that had reached them. Not only was the camp deserted, but it was full of the necessaries of life and other spoils. And as they followed the road by which the enemy had fled, they found that it also was strewed with garments and vessels which the Syrians had cast away in their anxiety to save their lives. Now, when men are fleeing thus, one can well understand that they would hold on to the most valuable things to the last. Hence, the farther the messengers went towards the Jordan, the richer the spoil they would find.

Such also is the experience of the believer to-day. Having believed the good news, our first apprehension of the fullness of the blessing is very limited. We are thankful to find that instead of perishing, there is satisfaction and life in Christ, but as we pursue our course with exercise of heart and conscience, in dependence upon the Spirit of God, we discover richer and ever richer blessings in the wondrous revelation of Christianity. But we need spiritual energy, purpose, and faith. All the untraceable riches of the Christ are ours, and God would have us enter into them and enjoy them (Eph. iii. 8).

The messengers having returned, confirm the report to the king. The people then 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 ” (*v.* 16). A starving people, exposed to disease and death, finds satisfaction, life, and spoil. The Lord had wrought for them a wondrous salvation. He was faithful to His word. Famished souls find now, through the great salvation of God, satisfaction, life, and spoil in the risen Christ, the triumphant Saviour; and they shall spend an eternity of blessing with Him in the glory of God.

Now, “the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have 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 . . . so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died ” (*vv.* 17-20).

Little did that infidel lord anticipate the consequences of his wicked “if.” The judgment as well as the blessing was from God. The one was as sure as the other. Elisha was but the servant. Unbelief cost him his life in God’s just government. The state of his heart, and its rebellion and stubbornness had been clearly exposed at that critical moment, and he reaped the just judgment of his sin.

All this again is full of instruction for us. The gospel is full, and free, and for all. “Whosoever believeth on Him ” who is the great subject of it, reaps the full blessing of God’s great salvation. But our Lord has said, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins ” (*John* viii. 24).

Judgment, sure and eternal, is the awful penalty of unbelief. Both eternal salvation and eternal judgment are equally sure. How have you, dear reader, treated the glorious gospel message? Have you believed the testimony of God concerning His Son? If so, all the spoils of Calvary's cross are yours, and God would have you appropriate and enjoy them now. But "he that believeth not is condemned already" (John iii. 18). "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life" (John iii. 36; vi. 47).

COIMBATORE, S. INDIA,  
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