



**The
Mission
and Miracles
of Elisha**

**Part
Six**

A. W. Pink



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15. Fourteenth Miracle

16. Fifteenth Miracle

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First, *its connection*. That which engaged our attention on the last occasion grew out of the determination of Benhadad to again wage war on Israel. After taking counsel with his servants, the Syrian laid an ambush for the king of Israel, but they had reckoned without Jehovah. He revealed to His servant the prophet the danger menacing his royal master, and accordingly, he went and acquainted him with the same, who, attending to the warning, was delivered from the trap set for him. The heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled at this thwarting of his design, and suspecting a traitor in his own camp made inquiry. Whereupon one of his attendants informed him that nothing could be concealed from the prophet that was in Israel, and that *he* had put the intended victim on his guard. After sending out spies to discover the whereabouts of Elisha and learning that he was in Dothan, the king of Syria sent a formidable force, consisting of “horses and chariots” and a “great host” of footmen to take him captive, determining to remove this obstacle from his path.

The miracle we are about to consider is a *double* one, and strictly speaking, comprises the fourteenth and fifteenth of the series connected with our prophet. But the record is so brief and the two miracles are so closely related that they scarcely admit of separate treatment, and therefore, instead of taking them singly we propose to consider them conjointly, viewing the second as the counterpart or complement of the former. It is a miracle which stands out from the last one which occupied our notice. That concerned the opening of eyes; this, the closing of them. There but a single person was involved; here, a great host of men were concerned. In the one, it was the prophet’s own servant who was the subject of it; here, it

was the soldiers who have been sent to take him captive. In the former, he wrought in response to an urgent appeal from his attendant; in the other, he acted without any solicitation. They both occurred at the same place. They were both wrought in answer to Elisha's prayer. They are both recorded for our learning and comfort.

In connection with the preceding miracle, Elisha had prayed to his Master for Him to open the eyes of his servant, and we are told, "And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17). That the prophet himself already saw this celestial convoy is clear: it was his own vision of them which moved him to ask that his servitor might also behold them. We may deduce the same from the immediate sequel. So far from being in a panic at the great host of Syrians, which had come to take him captive, Elisha calmly stood his ground. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1), for since God be for them, who can be against them? There was no need for him to cry unto the Lord for deliverance, for Divine protection was present to his view. Therefore, he quietly waited till the enemy actually reached him before he acted.

Ere passing on, let us offer a further remark upon this celestial guard which was round about Elisha. That it was composed of personal beings is clear from the pronoun, "*they* that be with us are more than *they* that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16). That they were angelic beings is evident from several passages: "Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire" (Psa. 104:4). At His second advent, we are told "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" (2 Thess. 1:7, 8). The ministry of angels is admittedly a mysterious subject, one about which we know nothing, save what it hath pleased God to reveal to us. Yet it is a subject which holds by no means an inconspicuous place in Holy Writ. It would be outside our present scope to explore it at large; rather, must we confine ours to that aspect of it which is here presented unto us.

Angels are not only God’s messengers sent on missions of mercy, but they are also His soldiers, commissioned both to guard His people, and execute judgment on His enemies. They are designated, “the heavenly *host*” (1 Kings 22:19; Luke 2:13)—the Greek word meaning “soldiers”—or as we would term them, “men of war,” the militia of Heaven. In full accord with that conclusion, we find the Saviour reminding His disciples that “more than twelve legions of angels” (Matt. 26:53) were at His disposal, should He but ask the Father for protection against the armed rabble that had come to arrest Him. It was a host of them, in the form of fiery horses and chariots (compare Psalm 68:17) who here encamped around Elisha, ready to fight for him. How mighty the angels are, we know: one, called “the destroyer” (Exod. 12:23, compare 2 Sam. 24:16) slew all the firstborn of the Egyptians, while another slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians in a night (2 Kings 19:35). That their operations continue in this Christian era is plain from such passages as Acts 12:7; Heb. 1:14; Rev. 7:1, 15:1; Matt. 24:31, etc.

“And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness” (2 Kings 6:18). The “they” looks back to the armed host mentioned in verse 14. Formidable as was the force sent to slay him, or at least take him captive, yet the prophet stood his ground and calmly waited their approach. And well he might. Could he say, “I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about” (Psa. 3:6), and again, “Though an host should encompass about me, my heart shall not fear” (Psa. 27:3)! And should not this confidence and courage be the Christian’s? “The clearer sight we have of sovereignty and power of heaven, the less shall we fear the calamities of earth” (Matthew Henry). Perhaps the reader says, If I were favoured with an accurate view of protecting angels round about me, I would not fear physical danger in human enemies. Ah my friend, is not that tantamount to a confession that you are walking by sight? and may we not apply to you those words, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have *believed*” (John 20:29).

Why, think you my reader, has God chronicled here that which assures the heart of His servant of old? Is this nothing more than a

registering of a remarkable incident in ancient history? Is *that* how you read and understand the sacred Scriptures? May we not adopt the language used by the apostle in connection with a yet earlier incident and say, “Now it was not written for his sake alone...But for us also” (Rom. 4:23, 24)? Most certainly we also, for later on in that very epistle, we are expressly informed, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have *hope*” (Rom. 15:4). God recorded that sight of those protecting angels for our faith to lay hold of and remember that if faith is to stand us in good stead in the hour of emergency, it must be regularly nourished by the Word; if it be not, then the terrors of earth will be real to us and the comforts of heaven unreal. Unless faith appropriates that grand truth, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” we shall neither have peace ourselves, nor be qualified to quieten the fears of others.

Second, *its means*. “And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD” (2 Kings 6:18). That needs to be pondered and interpreted in the light of the previous verse, or we are likely to miss its beauty and draw a false inference. Very lovely was the prophet’s conduct on this occasion. The presence of those horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha was virtually a sign that God had delivered these Syrians into his hands: he had only to speak the word and the angels had destroyed them. But he bore his enemies no ill will. Had our present verse stood by itself, we might have concluded that the prophet was asking in self-defence, begging the Lord to protect him from his foes, but it opens with the word, “And” and in the light of the one preceding, we are obliged to revise our thought. It is quite clear that Elisha was in no personal danger, so it could not have been out of any concern for his own personal safety that he now sought unto God. Yet, though he calmly awaited their approach, he did not meet his enemies in his own strength, for prayer is an acknowledgement of insufficiency.

“Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness” (2 Kings 6:18). At first glance, it seems strange that he is referred to here by his personal name, rather than as “the man of God,” which the Holy Spirit generally uses when he

was about to work a miracle; yet the variation in this place is neither fortuitous nor meaningless. It points a blessed lesson for *us*, showing as it does the readiness of the Lord to hearken to the requests of His people. Though we do not possess the extraordinary powers of a prophet, yet it is our privilege to ask God to confuse and confound those of our natural enemies who seek our harm, and to subdue our spiritual ones. This incident has been recorded for our instruction and comfort, and one of the things we are to learn therefrom is that prayer avails to render our enemies impotent. Another lesson we should draw from it will be evident if we link up this verse with the preceding one, wherein we see another of Elisha's requests granted: success in prayer should encourage and embolden us to ask further favours from God.

Going back again for a moment to Elisha's situation. This petition of his was neither because he felt he was in any personal danger, nor did it proceed from any spirit of malice which he bore his enemies: then *what* was it that prompted the same? Does not the miraculous healing of Naaman supply the answer to our question! When the king of Israel had rent his clothes in dismay, the man of God assured him that the king of Syria "shall know there is a prophet in Israel" (2 Kings 5:7, 8), and when Naaman was recovered of his leprosy, he sought unto the man of God, and before all his own retinue, testified "now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15). And now this heathen monarch had sent his forces to take the prophet prisoner! Very well, then, if he was not yet convinced that it was the true and living God whom Elisha served, he should receive further proof. It was *Jehovah's glory* which prompted Elisha's request. Weigh that well my reader, for everything depends upon the motive which inspires our petitions, determining whether or no we shall receive an answer. True and acceptable prayer rises above a sense of personal need, having in view the honour of God's name—keep before you 1 Corinthians 10:31.

"And he smote them with blindness, according to the word of Elisha" (2 Kings 6:18). That was an exact reversal of what took place under the foregoing miracle: there the prophet's servant was enabled to see what was invisible to others (2 Kings 6:17); but here,

the Syrian soldiers were rendered incapable of seeing what was visible to others. But let us behold in this miracle the willingness of our God to respond to the cries of His own, that He is a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. If we self-distrustfully refuse to encounter foes in our own strength, if we confidently ask God to render their efforts impotent, and if we do so with His glory in view, we may be assured of His gracious intervention. No matter what may be our need, how drastic the situation, how urgent our case, how formidable our adversary, while simple faith is exercised, and the honour of God be our aim, we may count upon His showing Himself strong on our behalf. “For I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal. 3:6): He is the same now as He was in Elisha’s day.

Third, *its mercy*. “And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria” (2 Kings 6:19). He did not abandon them to their blindness and leave them to themselves: contrast Genesis 19:11, when God was dealing in wrath. Had they not been blinded, probably they would have identified the prophet by his attire; but being strangers to him, they would be unable to recognise him by his voice. Spiritually that illustrates the fundamental difference between the goats and the sheep: the former are incapable of distinguishing between teachers of Truth and of error; not so the latter, for they “know not the voice of strangers” but “will flee from him” (John 10:5). But exactly what did Elisha signify by those statements? It is lamentable to find one commentator, in whose notes there is generally that which is sound and good, saying, “The prophet intended to deceive the Syrians, and this might lawfully be done, even if he had meant to treat them as enemies, in order to his own preservation; but he designed them no harm by such deception.”

Apart from such a view giving the worst possible interpretation to the prophet’s language, such an observation as the above is most reprehensible. It is never right to do wrong, and no matter what may be our circumstances, for us to deliberately lie is to sin both against God and our fellows. Such an explanation as the above is also absurd on the face of it. Elisha was in no personal danger at all, and now these Syrians were blinded, he could have walked away

unmolested by them had he so pleased. “This is not the way”—whitherto. He could not mean to “Dothan,” for they were already there and must have known it. “I will bring you to the man whom ye seek:” and who was that? Why, ultimately and absolutely, the king of Israel, for whom their master has laid an ambush (note verse 11!)—Elisha being merely an obstacle who had hindered him. One who had just obtained from God such an answer to prayer, and who was now showing mercy to his enemies, would scarce lie to them!

Fourth, *its counterpart*. “And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria” (2 Kings 6:20). Here was still further proof that Elisha harboured no malice against these Syrians and that he intended them no harm. Though they had hostile designs against him, yet he now uses his interest with the Lord on their behalf. Most gracious was that. What an example for every servant of God: “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves” (2 Tim. 2:25). Instead of cherishing ill will against those who are unfriendly to us, we should seek their good and pray to the Lord on their behalf. How this incident reminds us of a yet more blessed example: when the Lord of glory in the midst of His sufferings made intercession for His crucifiers (Isa. 53:12; Luke 23:34). A further miracle was now wrought in answer to Elisha’s intercession, showing us once more the mighty power of God and His willingness to employ the same in answer to the petitions of His people. Note how Elisha made good his promise: he led them to the man they really sought, for the next person mentioned is “the king of Israel!”

Fifth, *its accompaniment*. “And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?” (2 Kings 6:21). Very solemn is this and in full accord with his character: the Lord did not open *his* eyes—consequently, he was blind to the working of His goodness and incapable of appreciating the magnanimous spirit, which had been displayed by the prophet. Here we see what man is by nature: fierce, cruel, vindictive. Such are we and all of our fellows as the result of the

fall: “Living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Tit. 3:3). It is nought, but the restraining hand of God which prevents our fellows from falling upon us. Were that Hand completely withdrawn, we should be no safer in a ‘civilized country’ than if we were surrounded by savages or cast into a den of wild beasts. It is not sufficiently realised by us that God’s restraining power is upon those who hate us: “For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee” (Acts 18:10).

“And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master” (2 Kings 6:22). Observe how Elisha kept full control of the situation, even though now in the royal quarters—something which every servant of God needs to heed, exercising the authority which Christ has given him. Note too how this verse teaches that mercy is to be shown unto prisoners of war—or taking it in its wider application, how that kindness is to be extended unto our enemies. And this, mark it well, occurred under the Old Testament economy! The Divine Law commanded its subjects, “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink” (Prov. 25:21 and see also Exod. 23:4, 5), much more so under the dispensation of grace are we required to “overcome evil with good.” (Rom. 12:21).

Sixth, *its sequel*. Elisha had his way and the king, “And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master” (2 Kings 6:23a), that he might learn anew that our times, the success or failure of our plans, our health and our lives, are in the hand of the living God, and that He is not only infinite in power, but plenteous in mercy. The sequel was, “So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel” (2 Kings 6:23b). God honoured the magnanimity of His prophet and rewarded the obedience of his royal master by exempting the land from any further depredations from these savage bands.

Seventh, *its meaning*. May we not see in the above incident another lovely Gospel picture, viewing the graciousness of Elisha unto those who had gone to take him captive as a shadowing forth

of God’s mercy unto elect sinners? First, we are shown what they are by nature: at enmity with His servant. Second, we behold them as the subjects of His servant’s prayers—that they may be granted a sense of their wretched condition. Third, in answer thereto they are duly brought to realise their impotency—who so consciously helpless as the blind! Fourth, they were moved to follow the instructions and guidance of God’s servant. Fifth, in due course, their eyes were opened. Sixth, they were feasted with “great provision” at the King’s own table. Seventh, the picture is completed by our being given to behold them as *changed* creatures—coming no more on an evil errand into Israel’s land.

But is there not also an important spiritual meaning and lesson here for Christians?—one which has been pointed out in the course of our remarks; namely, How we are to deal with those who seek to injure us. Negatively, we are to harbour no malice against such, nor to take vengeance upon them even should Providence deliver them into our hands. Positively, we are to ask the Lord to nullify their efforts and render them powerless to injure us. But more, we are also to pray that God will open their eyes, and treat them kindly and generously: see Matthew 5:44.

16. Fifteenth Miracle

The passage which is now to engage our attention is much longer than usual, beginning as it does at 2 Kings 6:24 and running to the end of chapter 7. The whole of it needs to be read at a sitting, so as to perceive its connection, its unity, and its wonders. In it, there is a striking mingling of light and shade: The dark background of human depravity and the bright display of the prophet’s faith, the exercise of God’s justice in His sore judgments upon rebellious and wayward people, and the manifestation of His amazing mercy and grace. In it, we are shown how the wrath of man was made to praise the Lord, how the oath of a wicked king was made to recoil on his own head, how scepticism of his courtier was given the lie, and how the confidence of Elisha, his Master’s word was vindicated. In it, we behold how the wicked was taken in his own craftiness, or to use the language of Samson’s parable, how the eater was made to yield meat and how poor outcast lepers became the heralds of good news.

Truth is indeed stranger than fiction. Were one to invent a story after the order of the incident narrated in our present portion, critical readers would scorn it as being too far-fetched. But those who believe in the living and omnipotent God that presides over the affairs of this world, so far from finding anything here which taxes their faith, bow in adoration before Him who has only to speak and it is done, to will a thing and it is accomplished. In this case, Samaria was besieged by a powerful enemy, so that its inhabitants were completely invested [surrounded]. The situation became drastic and desperate, for there was a famine so acute that cannibalism was resorted unto. Yet under these extreme circumstances, Elisha announced that within twenty-four hours, there would be an abundance of food for everyone. His message was received with incredulity and scorn. Yet it come to pass, just as he had said, without a penny being spent, a gift being made, or a blow being struck—the investing Syrians fleeing in panic and leaving their vast stores of food to relieve the famished city.

We begin our examination of this miracle by considering, first, *its reality*. After our remarks above, it may strike the reader that it is quite an unnecessary waste of effort to labour a point which is obvious, and offer proof that a miracle *was* wrought on this occasion. The writer had thought so, too, had he not after completing his own meditations thereon, consulted several volumes on the Old Testament, only to find that this wonder is not listed among the miracles associated with Elisha. Even such a work as “The Companion Bible”—which supplies what is supposed to be a complete catalogue of the miracles of Elijah and Elisha—*omits* this one. We offer no solution to this strange oversight, but since other writers have failed to see in 2 Kings 7 one of the marvels of our prophet, we feel that we should present some of the evidence—which, in our judgment, furnishes clear proof that a supernatural event *was* wrought on this occasion, and that we are fully warranted in connecting it with him on whom Elijah’s mantle fell.

The first thing that we would take note of is that when the people were in such desperate straits, and the king was so beside himself that he rent his clothes and swore that the prophet should be slain

that very day, we are told, “But [contrastively] Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him” (2 Kings 6:32), which suggests to us that they had waited upon the Lord and had received assurance from Him of His intervention in mercy. Second, that the prophet *was* in communion with and in possession of the secret of the Lord, is borne out by the remaining words of the verse, where he tells his companions of Jehoram’s evil intention and announces the approach of his agent before he arrived. Next, we find the prophet plainly declaring that an abundant supply of food would be provided on the morrow (2 Kings 7:1), and he did so in his official character as “the man of God” (2 Kings 7:2 and repeated in 2 Kings 7:17, 19!)—which, as we have seen in previous articles, is the title that is always accorded him when God was about to work mightily through him or for him in answer to his prayers.

Consider, too, the circumstances. “And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they [the Syrians] 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 6:25). Nevertheless, the prophet declared that there should suddenly be provided sufficient food for all; and the sequel shows it came to pass just as he had predicted. Nothing short of a miracle could have furnished such an abundant supply. The manner in which that food was furnished clearly evidenced the supernatural, as an impartial reading of 2 Kings 7:6, 7 will make clear—for it was their *enemies* who were made to supply their tables! Finally, if ye give due weight to the “according to the word of the LORD” and “as the man of God had said” in 2 Kings 7:16, 17 and link with 2 Kings 4:43, 44—where another of his miracles is in view and so referred to—the demonstration is complete.

Second, *its occurrence*. This was the terrible shortage of food in the city of Samaria, due to its being invested by an enemy, so that none of its inhabitants could go forth and obtain fresh supplies. “And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria” (2 Kings 6:24). Strange as it may at first seem and sound to the reader, we see here one of the many internal evidences of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures. This will appear if we quote the last

clause of the very immediately preceding: “So the bands of Syria came *no more* into the land Israel” (2 Kings 6:23). Had an impostor written this chapter, attempting to palm off upon us a pious forgery, he surely would not have been so careless as to place in immediate juxtaposition two statements, which a casual reader can only regard as flat contradiction. No; one who was inventing a story had certainly made it read consistently and plausibly. Hence, we arrive at the conclusion that this is no fictitious narrative from the pen of a pretender to inspiration.

“So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel [of which ‘Samaria’ was a part; as verse 20 shows]. And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria” (2 Kings 6:23, 24). Now the placing of those two statements side by side is clear intimation to us that the Scriptures need to be read closely and carefully—that their terms require to be properly weighed, and that failure so to do will inevitably lead unto serious misunderstanding of their purport. It is because infidels only skim passages here and there, and are so poorly acquainted with the Word, that they charge it with being “full of contradictions.” But there is contradiction here, and if it presents any “difficulty” to us, it is entirely of our own making. The first statement has reference to the freebooting and irregular “bands”—which had, from time to time, preyed on the Samaritans (compare “companies” of 2 Kings 5:2), what we would term today, “commando raids;” where 2 Kings 6:24 speaks of organized war, a “mass invasion,” Benhadad gathering together “*all* his hosts.”

“And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria” (2 Kings 6:24). The opening clauses are far more than a historical time-mark—properly understood, it serves to bring out the character of this man. The introductory—“And”—bids us link his action here with what is recorded in the context. In the remote context (chapter 5), we saw how that God graciously healed Naaman of his leprosy. Naaman was a commander-in-chief of this man’s army and had been sent by him into Samaria to be cured of his dread disease. But so little did the Syrian monarch appreciate that signal favour, shortly after he assembled an increased force of his band and

“warred against Israel” (2 Kings 6:8). His plan was to capture Jehoram, by being foiled by Elisha, he sent his men to capture the prophet. In that too, it failed, for in answer to Elisha’s prayer, they were smitten with blindness—though instead of taking advantage of their helplessness, he later prayed for their eyes to be opened, and after having them feasted, sent them home to the master, who had returned to Syria.

“And it came to pass after *this*”—not that Benhadad repented of his former actings, nor that he was grateful for the mercy and kindness which had been shown his soldiers; but that he “gathered all his hosts and went and besieged Samaria.” Not only was this base ingratitude against his human benefactors, but it was blatant defiance against Jehovah Himself. Twice the Lord had manifested His miracle-working power, and that in grace, on his behalf; and here was his response. Yet we must look further if we are to perceive the deeper meaning of “it came to pass after this,” for we need to answer the question, Why did the Lord suffer this heathen to invade Israel’s territory? The reply is also furnished by the context. Benhadad was not the only one who had profited by God’s mercies in the immediate past—the king of Israel had also been Divinely delivered from those who sought his life. And how did *he* express his appreciation? Did he promptly institute a religious reformation in his dominions and tear down the altars which his wicked parents had set up? No, so far as we are informed, he was quite unmoved and continued in his idolatry.

It is written, “the curse causeless shall not come” (Prov. 26:2). When God afflicts a people, be it a church or a nation, it is because He has a controversy with them—if they refuse to put right what is wrong. He chastises them. God, then, was acting in judgment on Samaria when He commissioned the Syrians to now enter their land in full force. “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is *mine* indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation” (Isa. 10:5, 6). So again, at a later date, the Lord said of Nebuchadnezzar, “Thou art *my* battle axe and weapons of war: for with (or “by”) thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms” (Jer. 51:20). It is in the light of such passages as these that we should view the activities of Hitler

and Mussolini! Though God's time to completely cast off Israel had not come in the days of Jehoram, yet He employed Benhadad to grievously afflict his kingdom.

“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 6:25). Troubles seldom come singly, for God means to leave us without excuse if we fail to recognise *whose* hand it is which is dealing with us. Benhadad chose his hour to attack when Israel was in sore tribulation, which serves also to illustrate Satan's favourite method of assaulting the saints—like the fiend that he is—he strikes when they are at their lowest ebb, coming as the roaring lion when their nerves are already stretched to the utmost, seeking to render them both praiseless and prayerless while lying on a bed of sickness, or to instil into their minds doubts of God's goodness in the hour of bereavement, or to question His promises when the meal has run low in their barrel. But since “we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11), we should be on our guard against such tactics.

“And there was a great famine in Samaria” (2 Kings 6:25). It needs to be pointed out in these days of scepticism and practical atheism that the inhabitants of earth are under the government of something infinitely better than “fickle fortune”—namely, in a world which is ruled over by the living God. Goodly harvests, or the *absence* of them, are not the result of chance nor the effect of a blind fate. In Psalm 105:16, we read that God “called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.” And, my reader, when *He* calls for a “famine,” neither farmers nor scientists (so-called) can prevent or avert it. We have read in the past of “famines” in China and in India, but how faintly can we conceive of the awful horrors of one! As intimated above, the Lord called for this famine on Samaria, because the king and his subjects had not taken to heart His previous chastisements of the land for their idolatry—when a people refuse to heed the rod, then He smites more heavily.

“And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold they besieged it.” (2 Kings 6:25). Their design was not to storm but to

starve the city, by throwing a powerful military cordon around it, so that none could either go out or come in. “And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, [probably taking stock of his defences and seeking to encourage the garrison] there cried a woman unto him saying, Help, my lord, O king” (2 Kings 6:26). And well she might, for these were now deprived of the bare necessities of life, with a slow but painful death by starvation staring them in the face. Ah, my reader, how little we really value the common mercies of this life until they are taken from us! Poor was man; she turned to lean upon a broken reed, seeking relief from the apostate king, rather than making known her need unto the Lord. There is no hint anywhere in the narrative that the people betook themselves unto the Throne of grace.

“And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?” (2 Kings 6:27). That was not the language of submission and piety, but, as the sequel shows, of derision and blasphemy. His language was that of anger and despair—the Lord will not help, I cannot, so we must perish. Out of the abundance of his evil heart his mouth spake. Calming down a little, “And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman [pointing to a companion] said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.” (2 Kings 6:28, 29)—which shows the desperate conditions which then prevailed and the awful pass to which things had come. Natural affection yielded to the pangs of hunger. This too must also be regarded as a most solemn example of the Divine justice, and vengeance on idolatrous Israel.

It must be steadily borne in mind that the people of Samaria had cast off their allegiance to Jehovah and were worshipping false gods, and therefore, according to His threatenings, the Lord visited them with severe judgments. They were so blockaded by the enemy that all ordinary food supplies failed them, so that in their desperation, they were driven to devour the most abominable offals and even human flesh. Of old, the Lord had announced unto Israel, “And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary

unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. And ye shall eat the flesh of *your sons*” (Lev. 26:28, 29). And again, “The LORD shall bring a nation against thee...and he shall besiege thee...and thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness” (Deut. 28:49-53)—more completely fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. No words of God’s shall fall to the ground: His *threatenings*—equally with His promises—are infallibly certain of fulfilment!

How few there are in Great Britain today who realise that but for the infinite mercy of God, the people in these Isles had, but three years ago, been reduced to sore straits. We too were besieged—both by sea and air—and only a sovereign God prevented our merciless enemies from totally succeeding in cutting off our principal food supplies. We are not unmindful of the kindness and help of the U.S.A., and the still nobler generosity of Canada, but all their loans and gifts had been useless if they failed to cross the ocean—in that case, long before now the spectre of famine had stalked our cities. Nor are we unmindful of our intrepid Royal Navy, nor the brave men who manned our merchant ships. But *Who* was it that imparted such courage to them that—again and again after their ships had been torpedoed and themselves left to spend awful days in an open boat—as soon as they were rescued, volunteered to man other ships and went forth afresh to bring in vital supplies? There is a human side to it, and we greatly admire the same; but there is also a Divine side to it, and we have reminded ourselves of it.

Though they recognise not the hand of the Lord in deliverance, the people of Britain now breathe easier since they believe that the submarine menace has been mastered, and we now have full control of the air. But multiplied weapons, both of defence and of offence, are no security against the displeasure of Him whom we continue to defy, with our Sabbath ploughing, harvesting, pleasuring, and many other things. Agriculture may be organized here on a scale it never has been before, yet that guarantees neither crops nor weather to gather them. Of old, God said unto Israel, “*I have smitten* you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and

your fig-trees, and your olive trees *increased*, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto Me. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; your young men have I slain with the sword...yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord” (Amos 4:9, 10). The Almighty has a thousand weapons in His armoury by which He can slay us, Will our nation remain deaf to His continued warnings until His patience is exhausted? It looks very much like it.

“And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh” (2 Kings 6:30). According to the customs of those days and the ways of Oriental people, this was the assumption of the external garb of a penitent; but what was it worth while he renounced not his idols? Not a particle in the eyes of Him who cannot be imposed upon by any outward shows. It was a pose which the king adopted for the benefit of his subjects, to signify that he felt deeply for their miseries; yet he lamented not for his *own* iniquities, which were the procuring cause of the calamity. Instead of so doing, the very next verse tells us that he took an awful oath that Elisha should be promptly slain. “Rend your *heart* and not your garments” (Joel 2:13) is ever the Divine call to those under chastisement, for God desireth truth (reality) in “the inward parts” (Psa. 51:6).

As it is useless to wear sackcloth when we mourn not for our sins, so it is in vain to flock to church on a “day of prayer” and then return at once to our vanities and idols. In the past, Israel complained, “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.” And God made them answer by saying, “Behold, in the day of your fasting, ye find *pleasure* and things wherewith ye grieve others...ye fast not as this day to make your voice heard on High” (Isa. 58:3, 4). Thus, there is such a thing as not only praying, but fasting; and yet, for God to pay no attention to it. At a later date, He said to them, “When ye fasted and mourned...did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? Should ye not *hear* the words which the LORD hath cried by the former

prophets!” (Zech. 7:5, 7). While a nation tramples upon the Divine commandments, neither prayer and fasting, nor any other religious performances, are of any avail with Him who says, “Behold *to obey* is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22). There must be a turning away from sin before there can be any real turning unto God.

“Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day” (2 Kings 6:31). This was the language of hatred and fury. Refusing to own that it was his own impenitency and obduracy which was the procuring cause of the terrible straits to which his kingdom was now reduced, Jehoram turned an evil eye on the prophet and determined to make a scapegoat of him. As though the man of God was responsible for “the famine,” Israel’s apostate king took a horrible oath that he should be promptly slain. He was well acquainted with what had happened in the reign of his parents, when in answer to the words of Elijah, there had been no rain on Samaria (1 Kings 17:1), and he probably considered that his own desperate situation was due to Elisha’s prayers. Though just as Ahab declined to recognise that the protracted drought was a Divine judgment upon his own idolatry, so his son now ignored the fact that it was his personal sins that had called down the present expression of Divine wrath.

This solemn and awful incident should be viewed in the light of that Divine indictment, “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7)—and that, my reader, is true of *your* mind and of *my* mind by nature. You may not believe it, but He before whose omniscient eye your heart is open, declares it to be so. You may be quite unconscious of your awful condition, but that does not alter the fact. If you were better acquainted with the true God, made sensible of His ineffable holiness and inexorable justice, and realised that it was *His* hand that smites you when your body suffers acute pain or when your circumstances are most distressing, you might find it easier to discover how your heart really beats toward Him and the ill-will you bear Him. True, that fearful “enmity” does not always manifest itself in the same way or to the same degree—for in His mercy, God often places His restraining hand upon the wicked and prevents the full outbursts of their hostility and

madness. But when that restraining hand is removed, their case is like that described in Revelation 16:10, 11: “They gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.”

And why do we say that Jehoram’s conduct on this occasion made manifest “the enmity of the carnal mind against God?” Because, while he was unable to do Jehovah any injury directly, he determined to visit his spite upon Him indirectly, by maltreating His servant. Ah my reader, there is important—if solemn—instruction for us in that. Few people realise the *source* from which proceeds the bitterness, the opposition made against, the cruel treatment meted out to many of the ministers of the Gospel. As true representatives of the Holy One, they are a thorn in the side of the ungodly. Though they do them no harm, but instead desire and seek their highest good, yet are they detested by those who want to be left alone in their sins. Nothing recorded in human history more plainly and fearfully displays the depravity of fallen man and his alienation from God than his behaviour toward the most faithful of His servants—supremely manifested when the Lord of glory took upon Him the form of a servant and tabernacled among men. It was just because He made known and revealed the character of God as none else ever did, that man’s hatred of and enmity against Him was so inveterately and fiercely exhibited.

“But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him” (2 Kings 6:32). This verse also needs to be pondered in the light of other Scriptures. For example: “Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” (Prov. 1:33). The one who truly fears the Lord, fears not man, and his heart is preserved from those trepidations which so much disturb the rest and so often torment the wicked. No, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings”—he shall neither have alarming anticipations of such, nor be dismayed when they actually arrive. And why not? “His heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD” (Psa. 112:7). Rumours do not shake him, nor does he quake when they are authenticated. For he is assured that his “times” are in the hand of the Lord (Psa. 31:15). And therefore, is he kept in peace. In the light of all that is recorded of him, who can doubt that Elisha and his companions had been on their knees

before the Throne of grace, and now calmly awaited events. That is the holy privilege of the saints in seasons of acutest stress and distress: To “rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him” (Psa. 37:7).

“And the king sent a man from before him” (2 Kings 6:32). This man was dispatched post-haste ahead of Jehoram, either to announce his awful decision or to put it into actual execution. Had the king paused to reflect, he should have realized that it was one thing to form such a determination, but quite another to carry it out. Had not Benhadad, only a short time previously, sent a “great host” not only of footmen, but of “horses and chariots” against this servant of the Lord (2 Kings 6:14)—only for them to discover their impotency against him! But when a soul (or a people) is abandoned of the Lord, he is given up to a spirit of madness, so that not only does God have no place in his thoughts, but he is no longer capable of acting rationally—rationality and spirituality are closely connected. “But ere the messenger came to him, he [Elisha] said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer 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?” (2 Kings 6:32).

“And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?” (2 Kings 6:33). We confess we do not find it easy to ascertain the precise force of this verse, not even its grammatical meaning. The first sentence is clear, for the “while he yet talked” evidently refers to what Elisha was saying to the elders. The difficulty is to discover the antecedent of the “And *he* said:” the nearest is the “him” or Elisha; yet, certainly *he* would not say the proposed murder of himself (“this evil”) was “of the Lord” ordered by Him. The next is “the messenger”—but the prophet had given definite orders that *he* was not to be admitted, nor would this agree with what follows in 2 Kings 7:1, 2. We, therefore, regard the second sentence as recording the words of the king himself, who had followed immediately on the heels of his messenger—thus the more remote, but *principal*, antecedent of verses 30, 31: just as we understood “the man whom ye seek” as

meaning Jehoram, rather than Elisha (2 Kings 6:19).

But what did the king signify by “*this* evil is of the LORD?” (2 Kings 6:33). We certainly do not concur with Matthew Henry and Thomas Scott that he referred to the siege and famine—for not only is the grammar of the passage against such a view, but it is in direct opposition to everything else which is recorded of this son of Jezebel. He did not believe in Jehovah at all, and therefore, his language must be regarded as that of derision and blasphemy. The context shows he was in a towering rage, that he regarded Elisha as being in some way responsible for the present calamity, and that he was determined to put a sudden end to his life. Fully intending to execute his murderous design, he now burst in on the prophet and said, “This evil is of the LORD.” Those were the words of contemptuous mockery: you profess to be a servant of an all-powerful Jehovah, let’s see what He can do for you now—behold me as His executioner if you please. “What should I wait for the LORD any longer?” (2 Kings 6:33). Jehovah has no place in *my* thoughts or plan: the situation is hopeless, so I shall waste no more time, but slay you and surrender to Benhadad and take my chance.

“Then Elisha said” (2 Kings 7:1). “Then” looks back to all that has been before us in the last ten verses of 2 Kings 6. “Then:” when “all the hosts of Syria” were besieging Samaria; “then:” when there was a great famine and things had come to such an extreme pass that the people were paying immense prices for the vilest of offals, and mothers were consuming their own infants. “Then:” when the king of Israel had sworn that the prophet should be beheaded this very day; “then:” when the king in a white heat of passion entered Elisha’s abode to carry out his murderous intention. “Then”—*what?* The prophet gave way to abject despair and broke forth in bitter lamentations of murmuring rebellion? No indeed. Then what? Elisha flung himself at the king’s feet and pleaded with him to spare his life? Very far from it: such is not the way the ambassadors of the King of kings conduct themselves in a crisis. Instead, “Then Elisha said, [calmly and quietly] Hear ye the word of the LORD” (2 Kings 7:1). To what import?—that His patience is exhausted, that He will now pour out His wrath and utterly consume you? No, the very reverse; the last thing they could have expected him to say.

“Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for [as little as] a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.” (2 Kings 7:1). This brings us, third, to *the announcement* of the amazing miracle which was about to be wrought. In view of the next verse, it is quite clear that the prophet addressed himself to the king and those who had accompanied him. It was as though he said, I have listened to the derisive and insulting words which you have spoken of my Master; now hear ye what *He* has to say! And what was His message on this occasion? This: He is about to have mercy upon your kingdom. He is on the point of working a miracle within the next twenty-four hours—which will entirely reverse the present situation, so that not only will the Syrians depart, but there shall be provided an abundant supply of food, which will fully meet the needs of your people; and that, without a blow being struck or your royal coffers being any the poorer.

Admire here the remarkable *faith* of Elisha. “Then:” when things were at their lowest possible ebb, when the situation was desperate beyond words, when the outlook appeared to be utterly hopeless. Mark the implicit confidence of the prophet in that dark hour. He had received a message of good tidings from his Master, and he hesitated not to announce it. Ah, but put yourself in his place, my reader, and remember that he was a man “of like passions” with us; and therefore, liable to be cast down by an evil heart of unbelief. It is a great mistake for us to look upon the prophets as super-human characters. In this case—as in all parallel ones—God was pleased to place His treasure in an “earthen vessel,” that the glory might be *His*. Elisha was just as liable to the attacks of Satan as we are. For all we know to the contrary and reasoning from the law of analogy, it is quite likely that the Enemy of souls came to him at that time with his evil suggestions and said, May you not be mistaken in concluding that you have received such a word as this from the Lord? Nay, you *are* mistaken—your own wish is farther to the thought: you are deluded into imagining that such a thing can be.

Those who are experimentally acquainted with the conflict between faith and unbelief, who are frequently made to cry out,

“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24) will have little difficulty in following us in what has just been said. They who know something from first-hand acquaintance of the tactics of the Devil, and the methods of his assaults, will not deem our remarks above as far-fetched. Rather, will they concur that it is more than likely Elisha was hotly assailed by the Adversary at this very time. Would he not pose too as an angel of light, and preach a little sermon to the prophet, saying. A holy God is now acting in judgment righteously scourging the idolatrous Jehoram; and therefore, you must certainly be mistaken in supposing He is about to act in a way of mercy. At any rate, exercise prudence, wait a while longer lest you make a fool of yourself: it would be cruel to raise false hopes in the starving people! But if so, Elisha heeded him not, but being strong in faith, he gave glory to God. It was just such cases as this that the apostle had in mind when he mentioned the faith of “the prophets” in Hebrews 11:32.

Ah, my reader, Elisha was assured that what he had received was “the Word” of Him “that cannot lie” (Tit. 1:2), and no matter how much opposed it was to common sense and to all outward appearances, he firmly took his stand upon it. The “faith of God’s elect” (Tit. 1:1) is no fiction but a glorious reality. It is something more than a beautiful ideal to talk about and sing of. It is a Divine gift, a supernatural principle, which not only overcomes the world, but survives the “fiery trial” (1 Pet. 4:12)—yea, issues therefrom refined. Elisha was not to be put to confusion. That Divine “word”—though perhaps quite unexpected and contrary to his own anticipation—was faithfully and literally fulfilled; and remember that this is recorded for *our* learning and consolation. We, too, have in our hands the Word of Truth, but do we have it in our hearts? Are we really relying upon its promises, no matter how unlikely their accomplishment may seem to carnal reason? If so, we are resting upon a sure foundation, and we too shall have our faith vindicated and God will be glorified through and by us.

But let us look higher now than Elisha’s faith in that Divine word to the One who gave it him. It was the Lord manifesting Himself as “the God of all grace” (1 Pet. 5:10) to those who were utterly unworthy. In their dire extremity, the Lord had mercy upon them

and remembered they were the seed of Abraham; and therefore, He would not entirely destroy them. He turned an eye of pity on the starving city and promised them speedy relief from the awful famine. How truly wonderful is His mercy! He was saying, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together” (Hos. 11:8). But that mercy rested on a righteous basis, there was a handful of salt in Samaria which preserved it from destruction—the prophet and “the elders.” Rightly was Elisha styled by a later king, “the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof” (2 Kings 13:14), for his presence in their midst was a better defence than a multitude of infantry and cavalry—a queen feared the prayers of Knox far more than any arm of flesh.

And may not what has just been pointed out provide a ray of hope for us in this, spiritually speaking, dark night? Of old Israel was reminded, “For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?” (Deut. 4:7). Has not *that* been true of Britain the past four centuries as of no other people? God has shown us favours, granted us privileges—such as no other nation in the world has enjoyed. And we, like Israel of old, have evilly requited Him and abused His great benefits. For years past, His judgments have been upon us; and like Israel again, we have sadly failed to bow to His rod and turn from our sins. And now we are passing through the greatest crisis of our history, and our people after still impenitent. But thank God we have a king and queen who are radically different from Jehoram and his mother Jezebel. If God was so reluctant to abandon Israel, may He not continue to show us mercy, and for the sake of the little “salt” still left in our midst, spare us from destruction? Time will tell, but we are not left without hope.

“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?” (2 Kings 7:2). Here was the response that was made to Jehovah’s word through His prophet: instead of being received with thanksgiving and tears of gratitude, it met with a contemptuous sneer. The courtier’s language expressed the

scepticism of carnal reason. Unbelief dared to question the Divine promise—illustrative of the unregenerate’s rejection of the Gospel. This man argued from what he could *see*: as no possible relief was visible, he scorned its probability, or rather certainty. “And he [Elisha] said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof” (2 Kings 7:2). Let it be noted that the prophet wasted no breath in reasoning with this sceptic. It is not only useless, but most unbecoming for a servant of the Lord to descend to the level of such objectors. Instead, he simply affirmed that this man *should* witness the miracle but be unable to share in its benefits. God Himself will yet answer the sceptics of this age, as He did that one, with condign judgment. Such will be the doom of unbelievers: they shall *see* the redeemed feasted at the marriage supper of the Lamb, yet not partake thereof (Matt. 8:11, 12).

For the benefit of new readers and also to refresh the memories of old ones, we will briefly review our last two articles upon this miracle. First, we emphasised its *reality*, seeking to show it was indeed a miracle which took place and that it might justly be regarded as connected with our prophet. Second, we dwelt upon its *occasion*, which was the fearful shortage of food in the city of Samaria, resulting from its being so closely invested by the Syrians that none of its inhabitants could go forth and obtain fresh supplies (2 Kings 6:24, 25). So acute did conditions become that the vilest of offals were sold at exorbitant prices, and mothers had begun to consume their own babies. So far from humbling himself beneath the hand of Divine judgment and acknowledging that it was his own idolatry and impenitence which was the procuring cause of reducing his kingdom to such sore straits, Israel’s king turned an evil eye upon Elisha and determined to make a scapegoat of him, taking a horrible oath that he should be slain forthwith (2 Kings 6:31)—evidencing that he was a true son of Jezebel (1 Kings 18:4).

“But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him” (2 Kings 6:32): Quiet from fear of evil, he calmly awaited events. Announcing that “this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head,” he gave orders that the door should be shut and the royal messenger be not admitted, with Jehoram himself hastening on just behind. The prophet and the king then came face to face; and

third, the former *announced* the impending miracle. “Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD: Thus saith the LORD; To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold [as cheaply as] for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria” (2 Kings 7:1). That was tantamount to saying, God in His high sovereignty is going to show mercy on your wretched kingdom, and within a day, will work a miracle that shall entirely reverse the present situation, so that not only will the Syrians depart, but there shall be provided an abundant supply of food, which will fully meet the needs of your people; and that, without a blow being struck, or your royal coffers being any the poorer.

“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?” (2 Kings 7:2). Such a message of good news as the prophet had just proclaimed of deliverance from the enemy and food for the starving, seemed utterly incredible to carnal reason; and therefore, instead of being received with fervent thanksgiving, it met with nought but a contemptuous sneer. Unbelief presumed to call into question the Divine promise. Arguing from what he could *see*, no possible relief being visible, this wicked lord scorned the likelihood of its fulfilment. That which Elisha had announced was indeed impossible to anyone but the living God, for only by a miracle could it be made good; yet, it was the express word of Him that cannot lie and Who is endowed with omnipotence. Despite the effort of his unbelieving courtier to prevent any weakening of his resolution, the king of Israel decided to wait another day ere carrying out his murderous design, and during that interval, the prediction was accomplished.

We turn now to consider, fourth, *its heralds*, or the ones made use of by the Lord to proclaim the wonder of mercy which He had wrought. Strange indeed do the Divine methods often appear to our dim vision—yet in the light of Scripture, their significance is not lost upon those favoured with anointed eyes. It was not “the elders of Israel” who had sat with Elisha in his house, nor was it “the sons of the prophets” whom the Lord honoured on this occasion. God is sovereign and employs whom He pleases. Often He acts as He does

in order to stain the pride of man, for He is jealous of His own honour and will suffer no flesh to glory in His presence. It is true that He has called certain men to the special work of the ministry and set them apart thereto, and that He frequently works through them in the converting of His people; yet, He is by no means tied to that particular agency, and often manifests His independency by making use of the most unlikely ones to be His agents—as appears in the more extreme cases of Balaam and Judas. So it was here.

“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?” (2 Kings 7:3). More unlikely instruments could scarcely be imagined. They were pariahs, outcasts, debarred from mingling with their ordinary fellows. They were lepers, and as such, excluded by the Divine Law (Lev. 13:44-46). Yet *these* were the ones whom God was pleased to employ. How different are His thoughts and ways from man’s! But let us observe the position which they occupied and the strange anomaly which that reveals. They were sitting “at the entering in of the gate”—that is, of “Samaria” (2 Kings 7:1); namely, on the *outside* of the city’s walls—as the next verse shows. There, we have a striking sidelight on the inconsistency of perverse human nature, especially in connection with religious matters. Though an idolater and devoid of any respect for Jehovah—yet Jehoram and his officers were punctilious in carrying out the requirement of the ceremonial law as it respected the exclusion of lepers! They were diligent in tithing mint and anise, while omitting the weightier matters of the moral law (Matt. 23:23).

That to which we have called attention is frequently exemplified on the pages of Holy Writ. Instead of utterly destroying Amalek and all his possessions, as commanded, when God delivered them into his hands, Saul permitted the people to spare the best of the sheep and oxen that they might offer them in “sacrifice unto the LORD” (1 Sam. 15:15, 21). To whom Samuel declared, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). Because it was the eve of the Passover, the Jews besought Pilate that the bodies of Christ and the two thieves who had been crucified with Him “might be taken away” (John 19:31), that their solemn feast might not be defiled. What a strange mixture

human nature is! Those ceremonially unclean lepers must be shut out of Samaria, even though Jehovah Himself was treated with the utmost contempt! And do we not see the same principle illustrated in Christendom? Let the papist attend early morning mass, and he may spend the remainder of “Sunday” as he pleases. Being a stickler for a particular form of baptism, breaking bread each Lord’s Day morning, or spending five days at a “communion” is a mockery, if we love not our neighbour as ourselves.

“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?” (2 Kings 7:3). It will probably surprise many to hear that some of our readers have been taught that this is the proper attitude to assume when one has been convicted of his lost condition—appeal being made to such passages as, “Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors” (Prov. 8:34). “In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water” (John 5:3). The awakened sinner is told that he is utterly helpless to do anything for himself, entirely dependent on God’s sovereign pleasure, and that since there is a “set time” to favour Zion (Psa. 102:13), he must meekly wait for God’s appointed hour of deliverance—should He design *to* deliver him. But such counsel is an utter *misuse* of both the truth of God’s sovereignty and of man’s spiritual inability, and proof that it *is* so is found in the fact that it both clashes with the call of the Gospel and is a repudiation of human responsibility.

The truth is that the spiritual inability of the natural man is both a voluntary and a criminal one: He does not love and serve God because he hates Him, he believes not the Gospel because he prefers to cherish a lie, he will not come to the Light because he loves darkness. So far from his, “I *cannot* repent, I *cannot* believe,” expressing an honest desire so to do, it is but an avowal of the heart’s enmity against God. If the doctrine of the Cross and the glorious message of the Gospel contain nothing to overcome such enmity and attract the soul to Christ, it is not for us to invent *another* Gospel and bend the Scriptures to the inclination of man’s depravity. It is we who must bend to the Scriptures, and if we do not, it will be to our eternal undoing. The one who wrings his hands

over his inability to believe and asks, “What can I do?” is not to be soothed by something *other* than the Gospel of Christ, or encouraged to suppose that he is willing to be saved in God’s way. Yet *that* is the very delusion such souls cherish, imagining they are as willing to be saved from their sins, as the impotent man by the pool was desirous of being made whole.

Neither Christ, nor any of His apostles, ever told a convicted soul to passively wait for God’s appointed hour of deliverance. Instead, He bade the heavy laden, “come unto me” (Matt. 11:28); and so far from informing those who followed Him across the sea, that it lies not in their power to do anything to secure the Bread of life, He exhorted them to “Labour...for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (John 6:27). Rather than tell men they must sit quietly before it, Christ commanded, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24). When his hearers were pricked in their hearts and asked, “What shall we do?” instead of saying, “You can do nothing, except wait until God speaks peace unto you,” Peter bade them “Repent” (Acts 2:37, 38). Those who think they have been given a sense of their helplessness are quite content if some physician of no value will inspire them with a hope in the way they are now in and encourage them to expect that if they remain passive, God will release them by a “moving of the waters.” We do but miserably deceive souls if we give them any comfort or hold out any hope for them, while they remain impenitent and away from Christ.

It is recorded that the passengers of a ship off South America went ashore on a brief expedition, ascending one of the mountains. But ere they were aware, night came on and a very cold fog. They felt a strong inclination to sleep, but a medical man in the party remonstrated against any such indulgence, warning them that there would be the utmost danger of their never waking. As the one who chronicled this incident asks, “What had been thought of his conduct if, instead of urging his companions to escape from the mount, he had indulged them in their wishes? The Scriptures declare, ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him’ (John 3:36)—and surely, we ought not to contradict

that, either by directing to the use of means short of ‘believing’ or by encouraging those who use them to hope for a happy issue.” Paul did not offer the jailor comfort on the ground of his being in great distress, but bade him, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31). The word to exercised souls is not “sit still”—but “seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you” (Matt. 7:7; Luke 11:9).

But to return to the narrative. “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” (2 Kings 7:3, 4). How those poor lepers put to shame the “do-nothing” Fatalists! Those men rightly recognised the hopelessness of their case, perceiving that continued passivity would profit them nothing; and hence, they decided to act. And if you, my reader, are already convicted of your perishing condition, do not rest content with that conviction and persuade yourself that in due time, God will save you—but embrace the Gospel offer and receive Christ as your Lord and Saviour, for He has declared, “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

We ask the indulgence of others who have not been infected with such paralysing teaching while we add a further word, yea, we would ask them to beg God to use these paragraphs to deliver some souls from this subtle snare of the Devil. If one who reads these lines has been made to feel his lost condition, then consider, we pray you, the far happier situation facing *you* from that in which those lepers were. They decided to come unto an enemy and cast themselves upon his mercy, while you are invited to betake yourself unto the Friend of publicans and sinners! They had no invitation from the Syrians, but you *have* from the Lord: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37). They had nothing better than an “if they save us alive” to venture upon—whereas you have “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou *shalt* be saved” (Acts 16:31). They were confronted with the possible alternative of being killed; not so you: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36)—then why hesitate?

“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” (2 Kings 7:5). What was before us in verses 3 and 4 did not end in idle talk. The situation for those lepers was a desperate one, and prompted by a sense of urgency, they acted. Their sitting still had got them nowhere, so they “rose up” and proceeded at once to their proposed objective. They did not puzzle their heads about God’s secret decree and whether or not His ordained hour had arrived—for that was none of their business. Instead, they responded to the instinct of self-preservation. Again we say, how far superior is the sinner’s case: He need not wait a moment for the prompting of any instinct, but is invited “*Come*, for all things are *now* ready” (Luke 14:17). Come just as you are with all your sinfulness and unworthiness, and if you cannot come to Christ *with* a melted heart and faith, then come to Him as a desperate patient *for* them.

The Divine narrative breaks in upon the account of the heralds of this miracle to show us, fifth, *its means*—for before we see those lepers going forth to publish their good news, we are first informed how it was that they came to find the camp empty. “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” (2 Kings 7:6). This is to be regarded as the sequel to 2 Kings 6:24: Benhadad’s purpose was to starve out Samaria. But man proposes, and God opposes and disposes. “The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect” (Psa. 33:10).

The Lord accomplishes His purpose by a great variety of measures and methods: Sometimes employing the supernatural, more often using the natural. What were the means He used here? In the light of what is *not* said in verse 6, it seems strange that Thomas Scott should write, “The infatuation which seized the minds of the whole Syrian army was equal to the illusion put upon their senses, and both were from the Lord, but how produced we know not.” Little better is Matthew Henry’s “these had their hearing imposed

upon.” There was neither illusion, nor imposition. It does not say, “The Lord made them to hear a noise *like as of* chariots and horses,” but the actual thing itself—that is to say, He so attuned their auditory nerves that they registered the sound of what previously was inaudible to them. This is but another instance of how we create our own difficulties when reading the Word through failing to attend closely unto exactly what *is* said.

If we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, we should have no difficulty in ascertaining the precise means used on this occasion. On a previous one, God had employed “horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17), and as we showed, the reference there was to angelic beings. Then why not the same here! There, God “opened the eyes of the young man” in order to see them; here, He opened the ears of the Syrians to hear them. It may well be that in their original condition, our first parents were capacitated to both see and hear celestial beings, but the fall impaired those as well as all their faculties—the “clairvoyance” and “clairaudience” of Spiritist mediums being the devil’s imitation of man’s original powers. That the Syrians—unregenerate idolaters—misinterpreted what they heard, is only to be expected, as those who heard the Father speaking to His Son said, “it thundered” (John 12:29); and as those who accompanied Saul heard the Voice which spake to him (Acts 9:7), but “heard not the voice” (Acts 22:9)—distinguished not the words.

“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” (2 Kings 7:7). How true it is that “the wicked flee when no man pursueth” (Prov. 28:1)! Supposing that a more formidable force had come to the relief of the besieged Samaritans, the Syrians were filled with consternation; and at once, abandoned their well-provisioned camp. So thoroughly panic-stricken were they, that they left their “horses” which had accelerated their flight. How easily can the Lord make the heart of the stoutest to quake, and how vain and mad a thing it is for thee to defy Him! “Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it” (Ezek. 22:14). Then throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him

and make your peace with Him now.

In continuing our contemplation of this miracle, let us now pause and admire the *marvel of it*. Benhadad had become dissatisfied with the results achieved by his marauding bands and gathering together the whole of his armed forces determined to reduce Samaria to utter helplessness. Throwing a powerful force around their capital, he sought to bring its inhabitants to complete starvation by means of a protracted siege. In order to carry out his scheme, he had brought with his army large supplies of food and clothing, so that they might be in comfort while they waited for the stores of his victim to give out. How nearly his plan succeeded, we have seen: The Samaritans were reduced to the most desperate straits in an effort to keep life in their bodies. Yet as Thomas Scott pointed out, “In extreme distress, unexpected relief is often preparing; and whatever unbelievers may imagine, it is not in vain to wait for the Lord, how long soever He seems to delay His coming.”

But in the instance now before us, there is not a word to indicate that the Samaritans had been crying unto the Lord and looking to Him for relief. They had openly turned away from Him and were worshipping idols. This it is which renders the more noteworthy the act of Jehovah on this occasion: He was “found of them that sought” Him not (Isa 65:1). He showed Himself strong on the behalf of a people who had grievously despised and insulted Him. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. It was the Most High acting in His absolute sovereignty, having mercy on whom He pleased, to have mercy and to show favour unto those who not only had no claim thereto, but who deserved nought but unsparing judgment at His hands. The means which the Lord used on this occasion was as remarkable as the exercise of His distinguishing mercy. He was pleased to use the stores of the Syrians, their deadly enemies, to feed the famished Samaritans: “Out of the eater came forth meat” (Judg. 14:14). Thus were the wise taken in their own craftiness.

Four lepers outside Samaria’s gates 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” (2 Kings 7:3, 4). Observe how God wrought: It was not by an audible voice that He bade these lepers act—not such are the mysterious, but perfect, workings of Providence. It is by means of a secret and imperceptible impulse from Him, through the process of natural laws, that God usually works in men, “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Those lepers acted quite freely of their own volition, in response to simple, but obvious, thoughts on their situation; and followed the dictates of common sense and the impulse of self-preservation. Mark, we are not here attempting to philosophise or explain the conjunction between the natural and the supernatural, but merely calling attention to what lies on the surface of our narrative, and that which is recorded for our instruction.

When the four lepers arrived at the enemy’s camp, they found it to be deserted: “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” (2 Kings 7:6, 7). *That* was indeed the employment of the supernatural—something over and above the ordinary workings of Providence, for though the Syrians misinterpreted the sound, we believe (as stated in our last) that what they heard was the movement of angelic horses and chariots (compare 2 Kings 6:17)—the Lord allowing their ears to register what normally would have been inaudible to them. Yet even here, there was a blending of the supernatural with the natural: Those celestial beings did not slay the Syrians, but only terrified them by the noise which they made.

“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” (2 Kings 7:8). Solemn indeed is this, first, from the negative side. There was no recognition of the Divine hand, no awesome exclamation, “What hath God wrought!” (Num. 23:23), no bowing

before Him in thanksgiving for such a signal favour. They conducted themselves like infidels, accepting the mercies of Heaven as a mere matter of course. And remember, they were lepers: Even such an infliction had not turned their hearts unto the Lord. Be not surprised then that those whose homes are destroyed and whose bodies are injured by the bombs are not brought to repentance thereby. But positively, after satisfying their hunger, they plundered the Syrian tents. Verily, “there is no new thing under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9). There was *looting* then as there is now—though theirs was not nearly so despicable and dastardly as what is now so common in this country.

And why is it that “there is no new thing under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9)? Because “As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man” (Prov. 27:19). Whether he be a man living in centuries B.C. or A.D., whether he be civilized or uncivilized, his heart is depraved. Civilisation effects no change *within* any person—for civilisation (not to be confused with morality and common decency) is but a veneer from without. But to return to our passage. The lepers enriching themselves from the spoil of the Syrians did not contribute unto the relief of the starving Samaritans, and *that* was what Jehovah had promised. Mark then the sequel: “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” (2 Kings 7:9). The Divine design of mercy unto the starving city was not to be thwarted by the greed of these lepers, for His counsel must stand—yet note how it was now effected.

As God had wrought secretly in those lepers in verses 3 and 4, so again did He now. There, it was by an impulse upon their instinct of self-preservation; here, it was upon their *conscience*. Yet observe how conscience acts in the unregenerate, producing not horror and anguish at having offended a gracious God, but causing fear of the consequences. This is made clearer by the marginal rendering: “If we tarry till the morning light we shall find punishment.” But unless God had wrought secretly upon them, they, too, had been like our own generation—from whom His restraining hand is removed, and

who are given up to “the lusts of their own hearts” (Rom. 1:24), utterly reckless and regardless of consequences. In this instance, in order to the carrying out of His benevolent purpose, God put a measure of fear upon these lepers and caused them to realise that not only were they playing an ignoble part, but were likely to swiftly be smitten by His wrath if they failed to announce the good news to their famished fellows.

“Now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household” (2 Kings 7:9). Here, as everywhere, we need to be much on our guard against making a *misapplication* of Scripture. It is so easy to read our own thoughts into the Word; and thus, find what we are looking for. Those who are so enthusiastic in urging young believers to become evangelists by preaching the Gospel to all and sundry, would likely find in this verse what they considered was a striking passage on which to base an address on “the necessity of personal work,” yet it would be an altogether unwarranted use to make of it. This verse is very far from teaching, by typical implication, that it is the duty of every Christian to announce the “good tidings” to all they contact. Holy Writ does not contradict itself, and none other than the Lord Jesus has expressly bidden us, “*Give not* that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” (Matt. 7:6). That command is designed to bridle the restless energy of the flesh.

It was unto those who had been prepared for those “good tidings” who would *welcome* them, these lepers went forth; namely, to those who were fully conscious of their starving condition! There is a radical difference between those who are “lovers of pleasures” (2 Tim. 3:4) and satisfied with what they find therein, and the ones who have discovered the emptiness of such things and are deeply concerned about their eternal welfare; and there should be an equally radical difference in the way we deal with and speak to each of them. The Gospel would not be “good tidings” to the former, but would be trodden beneath their feet if offered to them; yet, it is likely to be welcomed by the latter, and if we unmistakably meet with the latter, it would be sinful for us to remain selfishly silent. “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” (2 Kings 7:10).

Not being permitted to enter the city, the four lepers called out to those who were keeping watch at its gate. They announced the good news in plain and simple language, and then left the issue with them. The chief porter did not receive the strange tidings with incredulity, but “he called the [subordinate] porters;” and while he remained at his post of duty, “they told it to the king’s house within” (2 Kings 7:11), middle of the night though it was. Here, too, we may perceive the continued—though secret—workings of the Lord. He it was who caused the porter to give heed to the message he had just heard. Altogether unexpected as it must have been, too good to be true as it would have sounded; yet, he was—unknown to himself—Divinely inclined to *credit* the glad tidings and promptly acquaint his royal master with the same. Yet the porter acted quite freely and discharged his personal responsibility. How wondrous are the ways of Him with whom we have to do!

“And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew 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” (2 Kings 7:12). The king’s reaction to the good news was thoroughly characteristic of him, being all of a piece with everything else recorded of him. Instead of expressing gratitude at the glad tidings, he voiced his scepticism; instead of perceiving the gracious hand of God, he suspected his enemies of laying a subtle snare. Perhaps some may be inclined to say, It was very natural for Jehoram to argue thus: The king was acting in prudence and wise caution. Natural it certainly was, but not *spiritual!* There was no thought that the Lord had now made good His Word through the prophet, but simply the reasoning of a carnal mind at enmity against Him. One of the ways in which the carnal mind expresses itself is by a reasoned attempt to *explain away* the wondrous works and acts of God.

When God has spoken—plainly and expressly—it is not for us to reason, but to set to our seal that He is true and receive with

unquestioning faith what He has said: If a promise, expecting Him to make it good. The scepticism of the king only serves to show how the tidings borne by the lepers had been lost on the porters, and the entire royal household had not God wrought secretly—but effectually—in the one and the other. Accordingly, we are next told, “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” (2 Kings 7:13). That too was “of the Lord.” He it was who gave this servant both courage and wisdom to remonstrate with his master. He knew the man he had to deal with as his “send and see” showed—reminding us at once of 2 Kings 6:10 when the king “sent” to see if Elisha’s warning was a true one.

Nothing could be lost (unless it were the horses) by pursuing the policy proposed by the servant, and much might be gained thereby. As the Divine purpose could not be thwarted by the greed of the lepers, so it should not be by the scepticism of the king. It was God who gave the servant’s counsel favour in his master’s sight; and therefore, we are told, “They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see” (2 Kings 7:14). God’s ways and works are as perfect in their execution as they are in their devising. But be it noted that though Jehoram yielded to the solicitation of his servant, it was with some unbelief he did so, as his sending them “after the host of the Syrians” rather than “unto the camp” (2 Kings 7:5) indicates. Nor was their errand in vain: “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” (2 Kings 7:15). It was no temporary spasm of fear that possessed them, but a thorough and lasting one. When God works, He works effectually.

“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” (2 Kings 7:16). Of course it was, for no word of God’s can possibly fall to the ground, since it is the Word of Him “that cannot lie” (Tit. 1:2).

Men may scoff at it, kings may not believe it, even when its definite fulfilment is declared unto them; but that affects not its infallible verity. “Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to *all* that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise” (1 Kings 8:56): Such will be the ringing testimony—individually and collectively—of the spiritual Israel when, for all eternity, they shall rest in the antitypical Canaan. It is to be noted that the prediction made through Elisha was fulfilled in no vague and mere general way, but specifically and to the letter. That, too, is recorded both for our instruction and our consolation.

Sixth, *its meaning*. After all we have sought to bring out upon this miracle, its typical significance should—in its broad outline at least—be plain to the simplest Christian reader. We say, “its broad outline,” for every detail in connection therewith is not to be regarded as a line in the picture. *First*, the starving Samaritans may surely be viewed as portraying of perishing sinners. They were not seeking unto God, nor looking to Him for relief. So far from it, they had turned their backs upon Him and given themselves up to idolatry. They were reduced to the most desperate straits, being quite unable to deliver themselves. As such, they accurately represented the condition and position of the fallen and depraved descendants of Adam. *Second*, in Benhadad and his hosts who sought the destruction of the Samaritans, we have a figure of Satan and his legions who are relentlessly attempting to destroy the souls of men—“seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). *Third*, in the Divine deliverance of the famished Israelites, by a miracle of sovereign mercy, we have a striking foreshadowment of the saving of God’s elect. The particular aspect of the Gospel here adumbrated appears in the *strange means* which God employed to bring about deliverance; namely, His causing the Syrians themselves to supply the food for those they had designed to be their victims: Compare Judges 14:14. Does not this remind us forcibly of that verse: “That *through death* he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14)! As the Saviour Himself declared, “but this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53), yet by allowing the Serpent to bruise His heel, He set free his captives.

Incredible as it seems to the proud philosopher, it is by Christ's humiliation, His people are exalted; by His poverty, they are made rich; by His death, they have life; by His being made a "curse," all blessing comes to them!

Seventh, *its sequel*. "And the king [God working secretly in him to do so] 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 [not simply "Elisha!"] 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...And so it fell out unto him" (2 Kings 7:17-20). Thus, in due course, the Divine threat was executed, fulfilled—be it noted, to the very letter. Solemn indeed was this, being the awful sequel to what was before us in verses 1, 2. In like manner, God will yet answer the scepticism and blasphemous scoffing of this degenerate age. The great of this world may laugh at the Lord's servants now; but in eternity, they shall gnash their teeth in anguish. This sequel completes the typical picture, showing as it does, the doom of the reprobate. The Gospel is a savour of death unto death, as well as of life unto life. Unbelievers will "see" the elect feasting with Christ, as "the rich man" saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, but shall not partake thereof (Luke 16:19-26).

The sixth of seven booklets.

