

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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THE UNFAILING HELP.

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## A Sermon

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‘And the King said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?’—2 Kings vi. 27.

I READ in your hearing the very horrible incident connected with the siege of Samaria. I do not wonder that when the poor woman applied to the king he should have been horrified. He felt that her case, and the case of all about him was a desperate one, and he said, “If Jehovah does not interpose, what can I do?” The winepress is dry and the barnfloor is empty: there is nothing left to alleviate the horrors of famine. “If the Lord do not help thee, whence can I help thee?”

NOW THE CASE OF EVERY UNSAVED MAN IS A VERY TERRIBLE ONE. He is not in dread of *immediate* death by famine, but if he be at all awakened to know his true condition he will labour under a fear of something worse than death, and worse than the want of bread. There is many a sinner that I have met with (and I know the feeling myself) who would be glad if death could end it, and if that were all. But “there is the dread of something after death” —that wrath to come of which the Word of God speaks in such solemn accents, that fire that never shall be quenched, that worm that dieth not,—it is that which haunts the sinner’s conscience when he is once awakened to know his condition; and horrible as the story was in Samaria, it is not worse than the horrible fate that awaits every man who lives and dies unsaved.

Now it is no wonder at all, that when a man is awakened to see his great danger, standing as he does upon the edge of a precipice with a frightful gulf beneath him, he begins to appeal to anybody

and everybody and to cry for help. So, to-night, I am going to begin by saying, that in the case of the sinner it is vain to look to man, for every honest man will have to say to such an one, "*If the Lord do not help thee, whence can I help thee?*" You feel that you are in dreadful danger and you want to be saved: I beseech you do not look to any of us, or to any of your fellow-creatures for help, for we are quite powerless in the matter. God must save you: he must give you Christ or else you must die. We have no power to forgive your sins. There are some pretenders who surely ought to feel themselves out of place in this age, like owls in daylight, who still profess that they can pardon sin. It is a strange country this. If a poor woman in a red cloak passes a farm and for sixpence tells a servant girl her fortune, she is put in prison, and I will not say but what she deserves it; yet a gentleman may stand up before his thousands and pretend to turn bread and wine into the flesh and blood of God, and to have power to pardon sin, and I have never heard of any punishment for so gross an imposition. It is infinitely more gross than anything the poor ignorant witch has ever practised. It is not in us to pardon sin. If you had offended us, we might pardon your offences against ourselves, but offences against God must be forgiven by God himself.

"Does not the power which rested in the Apostles to forgive sin, rest in the Church still?" I think it does; but no apostle ever had the power to pardon an impenitent soul; no apostle ever had the power to pardon one who did not believe in Jesus. All that an apostle could do was to say that he was pardoned, when he saw that he believed and repented, and that same power belongs to us to this day—to declare in God's name, that HE THAT BELIEVETH IN HIM, IS NOT CONDEMNED, and that he that confesses his sin to God and forsakes it, *shall find mercy*—but with this exception (and it is no exception at all) all power in the matter of pardoning sin rests with the eternal God, and with him alone. It is certainly not in the power of any man to renew your nature. You cannot enter heaven except you are born again. Unconverted man, you must be made *a new creature in Christ Jesus*, but there is no man under heaven that can create in you a new heart or a right spirit. Let a man first create as much as a fly and send it winging its way in the summer's air and then let him talk about regenerating a soul. It is a stupendous work—a work to which only the Deity is equal. God alone creates or re-creates the soul of man. You look in vain then to any, even though they call themselves priests or bishops or Doctors of Divinity. Your fellow-men cannot help you in the matter; you must be born again from above, and the Spirit of God must do it, or your case is hopeless.

But it is said, "Can we not pray for sinners?" Yes, blessed be God, we can, and THE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILETH MUCH. During this week, I have had very many requests for prayers, and some of them from some of you now present. Such prayers as mine indeed have gone up to heaven for you, that you might find peace; but I charge you before God, put no superstitious confidence in my prayers or in the prayers of anybody. What could your mother's

prayers do for you? Nothing at all unless you pray for yourself. If the Apostle Paul were here and pleading to God, what would his prayers avail? Just nothing unless the Lord moved you to make a personal confession of your sin and personally to believe in Jesus and personally to pray to him.

Now there is a *great value in prayer*. I value the prayer of a little child. The poorest Christian has power with God in supplication. We do not undervalue that; but still, if the Lord do not help you in answer to those prayers and if it do not become a personal matter with yourself so that *you* pray, you will be guilty of a superstitious reliance upon the prayers of others having made a god of them, and God will be grieved with you for having so done. No prayers of all the saints on earth could save a single soul, unless that soul fled for refuge to the hope set before it in the gospel in the person of Jesus Christ.

But perhaps there may be some persons here who shall say, "Cannot you help me by giving me the ordinances of the Christian religion? Will not they help me?" Ah, beloved friends, if you are here in this place continually I am sure you are not under that delusion. There is no ordinance in the Christian religion that belongs to unconverted people. Can you not be baptized? say you. No, you have nothing to do with baptism until you are a believer in Jesus. Perhaps there is no Popish error which has done more mischief to the Christian church than that of giving baptism to unconverted persons,—to persons who have no faith in Jesus, under the notion that it does something; for if it does nothing at all of any good, why is it given? And to the extent to which it is believed that there can be any efficacy in it,—to that extent it is mere Popery and Sacramentarianism and ought to be abandoned by the true believer in Jesus Christ. I believe we should increase sin by that view, but certainly not wash it away, for you would have been guilty of having dared to take to yourself an ordinance which belongs to none except to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart. "But may we not come to the Communion Table?" No, no, no! And if we dared to permit you—if we said, "Unconverted man, you may come to the table," we should certainly be doing you no service whatever. On the contrary, we should be doing certain injury. Remember that dreadful text,—"*He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*"—"condemnation" it ought to be, for that is the real word there. The other is too forcible and I do but give the correct rendering. But I would not ask you to come and eat and drink condemnation to yourself,—"*Not discerning the Lord's body.*" Why I know unconverted people who seldom go to a place of worship all the year round and yet will go and take what they call "the Sacrament" on Good Friday,—choosing that day which they receive as the memorial of Christ's death in which especially to insult the Saviour; for he never asked them to come to his table—living in sin, living in constant neglect of all religion and then to do Christ this piece of impertinence,—to go and intrude themselves into that sacred feast to which they are not bidden and to which they have no right to come.

Oh, believe me, if you rely on Baptism and the Lord's Supper, you might as well rely upon the incantations of a witch or upon the spell of a Hottentot. There is nothing in a sacrament that can in itself save a soul. When you are saved, then these outward emblems remind you of truths and help your memory and stir your minds; but, until you are saved, hence ye profane! Ye must not touch these things. They are for the children, not for you,—for those who are saved and not for you who are unreconciled to God. We may say, therefore, when you talk to us about coming to what are called sacraments,—“We cannot help you. If the Lord do not help you, we cannot help you there.”

But there are some who will say, “But may we not join the Church of God?” I hope none of you, my brethren, are under the idea that, if you are unconverted and join a church, that will help you. Oh, how I have lost my labour here if I have led any of you to conceive that! I charge you if you are not a friend of Christ not to come among his friends or declare yourself to be one by a lying profession. It is “a superfluity of naughtiness,” for there can be NO EXCUSE FOR A MAN TO BE SERVING THE DEVIL AND THEN TO MAKE PRETENCE OF BEING A SERVANT OF CHRIST. A man may be damned fast enough without being a hypocrite. What need of that? Join yourselves to God's people when you have joined yourselves to Christ, but not till then.

I fear me there are some of you that do make a profession and ought not to have done so. We labour with all our might to keep the church pure, but what can we do? There was a Judas amongst the Master's twelve and we have Judases here and some whose lives are inconsistent, and glaringly inconsistent, I do not doubt, and yet they profess to be the people of God. O, dead professors, I would warn you. I desire to speak *most solemnly and earnestly to you*. Of all those who perish, it must go hardest with those of you who had a name to live and were dead, who said you were the servants of Christ while you were the enemies of the cross of Christ. Be what you profess to be, or else give up your profession. Don't cry unto the Lord and insult his gracious name by making professions which you afterwards by your life deny. No, we cannot help you by receiving you into the church. There is nothing we can do for you. And I venture to say this, unconverted man, if we were, all of us who love the Saviour, concerned about your soul,—if we were to summon all the saints on earth to one general conclave and they were all at once to pray for you (and God knows your soul is worth all that—for if all the church laboured but for one soul it would be well repaid by winning that one soul) yet if the Lord does not help you, all his people cannot. It is not in the angels in heaven, nor the white-robed hosts above nor the saints below to do anything for a soul unless God himself shall interpose to blot out that sinner's sin, to renew that sinner's nature, and to lead the sinner personally to pray for himself. There is the case then.

II. That leads me, secondly, to call every unconverted person's attention to the fact that he lies in the hand of God. “If the Lord do not help thee, whence can I help thee?” *You lie in the*

*hand of God.* Let me take you by the hand now and speak to you earnestly, my brother, whose conversion I anxiously desire but whose conversion I cannot work, for God alone must do it.

I remind you that you are in the hands of one whom you have offended. You have grieved God. From your youth up perhaps you have been indifferent to him. You have used his name perhaps to curse with; his day has been the one above all others which you have chosen for the pleasures of the world. You have offended God and he is angry. This is not my word: it is written here:—"He is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword. He hath bent his bow and made it ready." You are in the hands of the God whom you have offended. Just as a moth is beneath your finger and you can crush it or not as you will, so are you absolutely in the hands of God, and in the next moment he can send you into hell, and who should be able to say unto him, "What doest thou?" or who should say that he was unjust?

Remember, next, that *you have no claims whatever upon this God.* He made you, and as a creature you might claim that he should treat you justly. I would not advise you to urge that claim, however, for **JUSTICE IN YOUR CASE WILL MEAN DESTRUCTION.** There is nothing due from God to you except anger. You deserve nothing at his hands whatsoever. You are altogether in his hands then,—in the hands of an angry God and in the hands of one on whom you have no claim.

And I should like you to feel the next thing I am going to say.—Oh, if you were to feel it, it were enough to make you spring from your seat—**THAT GOD IS LOOKING AT YOU NOW, AND IS NEAR YOU NOW.** Your elbow touches the next person in your seat, but that person is not so near to you as God is. In him you live and move and have your being. It is not a case of God's coming to be with you. He is here,—reading that thought that flitted through your mind just now and knowing the thoughts that you have before they are your own,—thinking of you as if you were the only being in the world and he gave all his attention to you. Well now, such is the omniscience of God, that he does see you, as much as if you were his only creature and he had nothing else to do, but to note your follies and faults. But, oh, while I thus speak, let me remind every man who thus feels, that he is in the hands of God, that after all you could not be in better hands: for God is very merciful and full of compassion. It will be no delight to him to crush you. Sinner it will give your God no joy to curse you. "As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live." That is God's heart speaking out to you. You are in his hand, and that is a hand of mercy.

And let me remind you that he can save you though no man can. At this very moment **HE CAN FORGIVE YOUR SINS** and supply to you the new nature which you want, and everything that can make that new nature perfect and fit to dwell in heaven. You have not gone too far in sin for his power. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven

unto men." "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool." "Though they be red like crimson they shall be as snow." And everything is provided in order to this. Since God could not be unjust, it was necessary if he pardoned sin in your case, that he should somewhere or other vindicate his law, and he has done so by giving his own son to bleed and die on the cross of Calvary. Jesus has made it right with the law of God. The justice of God is magnified, and the mercy of God is now unfettered, and God can deal with sinners and blot out their sins like a cloud and their transgressions like a thick cloud.

Let me call your minds back again to Samaria. There was a poor woman whom the king could not help, but God could help her, for the very next morning after she met the king, there was such plenty in Samaria that they were selling fine flour dirt-cheap. It seemed as if God had literally pulled up the windows of heaven and rained down plenty for them to eat: there was such plenty there. And so, poor starving dying sinner, it is in God's power in a moment to fill you with the bread of heaven, to give you such abundance of mercies, such a store of grace and love, that you shall feel as if the windows of heaven were opened on your account; yea God will give you what he never gave the people of Samaria—give you his own Son, to be your soul's continuing, everlasting bread, and you shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. GOD CAN DO IT. You are in his hands I say. He can leave you to perish, but, on the other hand, he is a gracious God, and he has given his Son to die for you, and he is able to save.

Now I think if God the Spirit is blessing the Word this moment, some of you are saying, "Then I will ask him to have mercy upon me." Do so, dear friend—do so. "I will wait till I get home." No, don't! Breathe the prayer *now*. Let it drop as a liquid prayer if it will from your eye into the pew. God has a bottle for such tears. Ask him now. Say, "Lord I am in thy hands; I know I cannot save myself; my fellow-men cannot save me, but thou canst. I hear thou hast given thy dear Son to bleed for helpless, lost and ruined sinners. O, God, have pity upon me! If thou dost, I will bless thee for it as long as ever I live. It is a poor thing to say, but yet it is all I can do. I do not deserve it, Lord. If thou cast me for ever from thy presence thou wilt be clear when thou judgest and just when thou condemnest. But save me, Lord, for thy sweet mercy and let me live and not die!"

O, souls, ye shall not cry in vain. From the ends of the earth shall such a prayer be heard. You shall yet say like Jonah, "Out of the belly of hell cried I and thou heardest me." God grant you grace so to cry.

III. Now my last point will help yet more fully to open up the *way of salvation*. There is one thing—this is the last point—there is one thing alone which will prove fatal to all hope of God's saving you. There was one man in the city of Samaria that was not the better for flour being sold at so cheap a price. That poor woman who had complained to the king, went and got her share of the meal; the poorest beggars in the darkest lanes of Samaria went swarming out and satisfied their hunger, and even lepers whom

men would not touch, defiled and filthy, went into the tents and feasted to the full. There was only one man in all the city to whom that day instead of being a blessing and a festival became a funeral—one man—and that one man's story we read just now. He was a lord, so that it is not the poor who are lost always. I am afraid that there is a larger proportion of the lords lost than any other class. He was a lord, but it was not his being a lord that destroyed him, but it was his being an unbelieving lord. He mocked the promise, he said it could not be, he jeered, jested, insulted. "If Jehovah should open windows in heaven might such a thing be," but not else. I do not find that anybody else was permitted to die or starve that day except that unbelieving man, and he was trodden to death in the gates of the city.

Now I come here to-night to say, beloved, guilty as we are and deserving God's wrath, yet the MERCY OF GOD IS EVER MORE ABUNDANT THAN THE MEAL WAS IN SAMARIA'S GATE; every soul here that believeth in Jesus shall have a share in it, and the only man who shall not have a share in it is the man who will not believe; for "He that believeth not shall be damned." If ye believe not, ye shall not be established. To believe means to trust in Jesus. And none shall perish but those who refuse to trust him. As many as shall rely on the Lord Jesus shall have their wants supplied even to the full.

Now remember, I pray you, and very solemnly lay it to heart, that this man who died saw the provisions of mercy with his eyes, and yet never tasted of them. Oh, I cannot bear to contemplate it—that I should have some here who have heard for many and many a Sabbath all about the Saviour, and his wounds and griefs and death for sinners, and should never have a share in the atoning sacrifice—should hear about the Spirit of God and his regenerating and quickening influences, and should never themselves be born again—should hear about the pardon of sin and yet die unforgiven—should hear about the justifying righteousness of Christ which is the most glorious of robes and should perish in the nakedness of their sins. It is a dreadful case to *starve with bread within sight*. The punishment of Tantalus was well conceived by the old heathen poets when they wanted to describe an unbearable torture. The water came up to his lips, and, when he tried to drink, it receded. The bread was close against his mouth and fruit hung from boughs above his head, but the moment he lifted his hand to grasp it the wind swept the boughs away and he remained in perpetual hunger and thirst.

Oh, it will be a shocking thing for us to live in that state. "Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shall not eat thereof." Thou shalt hear of Jesus but not have him, because thou wouldst not believe. Thou shalt die—a Saviour's name being whispered in thy dying ear and yet no comfort shall come to thy conscience in that Saviour because thou didst reject him. Thou shalt wake up in another world and see him on his throne, but only to be condemned by him. Thou shalt look up from the bottomless pit and see the saints—only see them—but not partake of their bliss. God grant this may not be a prophetic declaration of what your future doom

will be. May you not be unbelieving. Remember this man. He kept the gate, and they rushed out, poor hungry starving souls, to get bread. They poured out like a mighty torrent till they could get food to eat, but there he stood meagre and gaunt until he was trodden down and died. And to live in a revival unmoved seems to me to be the climax of misery,—to hear, one after another, that people have come to Jesus and not to have come yourself. As I look round upon those seats, I bless God and thank him that so many of you are putting your trust in Jesus for salvation. Yet if I kept on putting my finger along I should have to stop here and there and say, "Ah, there is one that has not believed!" And there has been a rush to Christ in this church, a mighty rush to Christ of poor sinners, yet some have not come. Truly, they might well say:

"Lord, I hear of showers of blessing  
Thou art scattering full and free,  
Showers the thirsty land refreshing,  
Let some droppings fall on me!"

"Even me." I hope they will pray that prayer to-night—"Even me." It would be a sad thing to see others saved while they are lost.

One thing more and that is,—remember that *this man kept the gate*. He was nearest to the outside of the city; but it was an unfortunate honour that the king should appoint him to keep the gate. I am always thankful when pew-openers are converted and people who have to do with the management of a congregation. I am sure if they are not before they take office, they will not be afterwards. They have so much to do with thinking about other people and where to put them that they cannot so well enjoy the service, and if they have not got a grip of the gospel before they undertake such an office, I am often afraid they never will. And yet, surely, to be employed about the House of God, to be always there and to be helpful,—to keep the gate and not get food ourselves,—seems a dreadful thing. I daresay you have often thought of what became of Noah's carpenters. They helped Noah to build the ark. He paid them wages, I do not doubt, and they built it—stout and trim vessel as it was. Very likely some of them, when the rains descended and the floods came, as they were sinking in the waters, could say, "I helped to build that ark, yet I am lost myself. I helped to caulk her and to tar her; I helped, when the beasts were coming in, to take fodder into the ark, and now I am lost myself." You subscribed to the building of a house of prayer and never pray. You help to support the ministry, yet have no share in the good truth. Oh, you will die,—I am sure some of you will die with this upon your hearts, that you were made helpful outwardly; but inasmuch as you have never given your souls to Jesus and been led to trust in him you will perish as Noah's workmen did, having no part nor lot in this matter.

Oh, when I see you all gathered together here, Sunday night after Sunday night I call myself to account and ask, "HOW LONG, HOW LONG WILL THESE PEOPLE REMAIN WITHOUT CHRIST, without God,

without hope? Is there any part of the gospel I leave out? Is there any flaw in my ministry that prevents their coming to Christ? Do I consult my own repute and try to make my words fine and polished? Now I think I can say before the Lord,—if I knew any other style of preaching likely to bless you,—whether it were the most refined, if I could reach it, I would try it, and if it were the most vulgar I would not be ashamed of it though all the old reproach and rebuke should come upon me again—if I might but win your souls. Why will ye die? Young man yonder, why are you doing that in London which you would not have dared to do at home? Young woman yonder, why are you shaking off all serious thought and casting the reins on the neck of folly to run after destruction? Grey-headed man yonder, if you have not made peace with God, how can you delay? You have not many days to live, yet you are lost!

Oh, all of you, *what shall it profit you if you gain the world and lose your soul?* The sun has gone down,—let him not rise again until you have sought the Saviour. There is all you have to do,—to confess your fault into the great Father's bosom and say, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee," and then to stand and look to Jesus bleeding and dying and TRUST HIM WITH YOUR SOULS. God help you to do this for Jesus' sake. Amen and Amen.

## Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

### II. KINGS VI. 1—23.

Verse 1. *And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.*

It seems to have been a habit of the prophets to gather about them companies of young men whom they instructed in the holy Scripture and in the truths of revelation. Many of these young men became prophets themselves and were the instructors of the people. Elisha, then, was the President of a College for young men who were being trained for the sacred ministry of God. They had grown so numerous that they were cramped in their lodging and they said, "The place is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell." They were ready to work to build their own lodging; they do not appear to have gone into debt for it, and to have saddled themselves and the institution for many years afterwards, but they put their own shoulders to the wheel as good men should do when there is any work to be done for the cause of God.

2, 3. *Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye. And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.*

His presence would be an encouragement to them; his holy conversation would make their work more pleasant; they would feel also as if they were more truly working for God when they had the presence and the patronage of God's servant. He, on the other hand, was quite ready to go. God's ministers, if they are what they should be, are quite ready to help in any kind of work. We find Paul the Apostle picking up sticks to make a fire, and we find Elisha going with his dear friends to the forest when they would cut down timber to make a house. We sometimes regret that spiritual

work should so often have to come into contact with common-place things, and yet so it is. Young prophets must have a house, and when we gather a congregation we must build them a meeting-house. In this country we cannot meet every day in the open air, and we often regret this, yet I believe it is meant by God to be a discipline for His Church. If the Church cannot come into contact with common life without its spirituality being endangered, so much the worse for its spirituality. It must be flimsy stuff if it cannot bear the wear and tear of common life.

4, 5. *So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the axe-head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.*

These young men were too poor to buy tools of their own, and they therefore asked for a kindly loan of an axe-head that they might use it in the Lord's service. It was very natural, therefore, that this young man should regret that the axe which he had borrowed should fall off into the water. This made him say,—“Alas!” Be very careful about loans; be sure to repay them in due time, and be very particular that nothing happens so that you cannot. He said, “Alas, master! for it was borrowed.”

6. *And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.*

God can do all things, he can make iron swim—we cannot—and yet you see the prophet did it, and he did it by the use of a stick. He cut down a stick. Was there any connection between the stick and the iron? I can't see any, and yet God does use means, and he would have us use means. “He cut down a stick and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.” If you are in great trouble to-night, have confidence in that God who can make the iron swim. If you have some worry, and you do not know how to meet it, some work, and you do not know how to do it, look to him who made the iron swim and he can do the same for you. Trust him, rest upon him and see if he does not do it.

7, 8. *Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it. Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp.*

Of course, he wanted to keep it secret, and pounce upon Israel here and there without notice and so win an easy victory.

9—11. *And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing;*

He could not understand how all his well-laid plans were baffled.

11. *And he called his servants and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?*

“And one of his servants said, ‘None, my lord, O King.’ There is no traitor here, there is no one who blabs out the royal secrets, not anyone, but ‘Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the King of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.’”

12. *And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king, but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.*

For the Lord knows what we say in the bedchamber when no ears can hear; if we speak to ourselves he hears it, and if we whisper in all quietness into the ear of one who will never repeat, it is written in the book of the divine record “Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.”

13. *And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him.*

Not a very wise project, for if Elisha knew all about the words of the king it was not very likely that he would catch him.

13—15. *And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?*

That is a question we have often asked, "How shall we do." We shall do nothing at all. How shall we do? If that were the question we might sit down in despair. The proper question is, "How will God do? How will God deliver us? But it is only the man of faith who thinks about God at all. How many there are of you who are in trouble and you are wondering how you shall get out of it. Poor things! Poor things! Oh, if we had but faith to look to that Omnipotent arm that is moving among us, and to that great and wise heart that is thinking of us, and then trust our case with him.

16, 17. *And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. 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.*

More of these horses of fire than there were horses of flesh; more of these chariots of flame than there were chariots of iron.

18, 19. *And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. 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.*

In all which—though I grant you it seems a stratagem—Elisha spoke neither more nor less than the truth; Dothan was not his city, Samaria was the city where the man of God dwelt. He was then outside Dothan, and he said, I will bring you to the man whom ye seek, and he did lead them to him, took them to his own home, to the very place where he lived. I think I see him leading all these blind men; they had come to catch him, and he had caught them, and he led them to Samaria.

20. *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.*

In the central square of the city. They opened their eyes and found themselves caught like rats in a trap. What cannot God do!

21. *And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?*

His hand was on his sword, he would call his men to come forward with their lances. "My father shall I smite them?" See the fine spirit of the prophet, the magnanimity of the man of God!

22. *And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow?*

For if you had conquered them in fair fight, you would not think of killing them; I have captured them by God's power, I have taken them prisoners and they shall not be put to death.

22. *Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.*

This is the way of carrying on war, the best way in all the world ; to conquer by grace, to conquer by kindness.

23. *And he prepared great provision for them : and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master.*

Now mark the consequences.

23. *So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.*

No, they could not come any more to vex a people who had treated them so generously, and thus the man of God was master of the situation, his noble spirit was put to the front, and God was glorified.

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