

II Kings 7; Luke 16:19-31; Watching the LORD Open the Windows of Blessings I. The Glorious Deliverance II. Seeing and Tasting His Goodness III. Seeing Without Tasting His Goodness

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, have you ever been sitting in a booth at a restaurant as a waiter walks by carrying delicious smelling food? You can see the platter of food- hear the sizzle- and the smell is making your mouth water. But the waiter keeps on walking right by you- this is not the food that was prepared for you. You can see it- but you cannot taste it. It was prepared for someone else. Well, that little example sets the stage for us this evening. As we are going to see, it is possible to see the blessings of God without partaking of them! As we return to Samaria in the midst of this horrible famine and siege, we are being prepared for the glorious deliverance. As we found out last week, the LORD inflicts in order that He might heal! His mercies are new each morning! As Jeremiah puts it- Great is Your Faithfulness! The LORD is good to all who wait for Him! So wait for the salvation of the LORD! These Israelites have seen the consequences of idolatry- they have been forced to drink from the bitter cup of God's anger as the curse has poured upon them. Now, in the context of this desperate need, a glorious deliverance is granted. But the question before us is this- who shall see the salvation of the LORD? Who will witness the vindication of His people? We look at this theme: Jesus Christ opens the windows of heaven as God's richest blessings are poured on His broken people!

I. The Glorious Deliverance

In our first point we consider this glorious deliverance that the LORD supplies to His people. Remember that the context is one of famine and bondage. There is a general lack of anything good- and death abounds. As we saw last week- the idols who promised plenty of bread and many children are now seen as impotent- unable to provide and save! There is no rescue from Baal or Asherah! But after this crushing bondage is experienced, the LORD in His grace lifts the burden. So we find these 4 lepers in v. 3 who have come to a decision- death is in the city and we will certainly die if we stay here. Remaining in our place and going into the city with both lead to certain death. Our only hope is to cast ourselves on the pity and mercy of another.

But remarkably, when these 4 men arrive at the Syrian camp they find it empty! They approach with great fear- not knowing what to expect. And behold- in v. 5- no one is there! Now what has happened is this- as explained in v. 6- the LORD caused the Syrian army to hear the sound of horses and chariots- so they fled! They assumed that it was an Egyptian or Hittite army, so this Syrian army fled for their own lives! Perhaps you have noticed this yourself, but fear is a very strong motivator! If you are already afraid, the slightest sound can put you on edge- even the rustling of a leaf or the creaking of the floor. But usually, your mind kicks in and settles your heart- you are able to calm your irrational fear with reason. But these men were so terrified they started running and never looked back! The LORD had caused this sound to be heard – this was a divine induced panic! Our passage has similarities with 6:17- where Elisha shows his servant that there are more with them than against them. Although the Syrians had surrounded Elisha- the LORD had surrounded the Syrians with His own army of angels and their flaming horses and chariots. But now, this Syrian army hears something that fills them with great fear- the sound of a mighty army. So they flee- they run scared all the way home. Although there was no army visible- that did not matter to them! As Prov. 28:1 says, the wicked will flee even though none pursue! So there is a trail of discarded equipment- their garments and supplies- litter the road all the way down to the Jordan as v. 15 reveals. Any equipment or supplies only served to weigh them down- so they quickly discarded anything they would normally carry. And the effect was two-fold, first this army was defeated without an Israelite sword lifted! As also found in II Kings 19 where the angel of the LORD killed the Assyrian army which surrounded Jerusalem. And the second effect was the securing of provision for the Israelite people. By their hasty retreat, the people of Israel are able to plunder their camp! So there is a divine and dramatic deliverance- at the hand and by the Word of the LORD!

II. Seeing and Tasting His Goodness

Now that this divine rescue has been brought about, in our next point let's consider those who see and taste of this goodness. Those who partake of God's blessings are found in 2 main groups- the first small group is

made of 4 lepers who tentatively go into the Syrian camp in v. 8. And after eating and drinking- and taking gold and silver for themselves- they are struck by this fact! "This is a day of good news- we cannot be silent about these things!" So those who partake of God's blessings instinctively know that this good news I meant to be shared- right? So they go back to the city and share this message of deliverance. And after an initial investigation, the whole city is able to go out in v. 16 and take part of this plenty- plundering the Syrian camp. So much so, that food is bought and sold at the city gate once again. As Psalm 9:18 says, the needy shall not always be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. And the important truth to keep in mind is this- although those living in Samaria did not deserve it- God has graciously kept His word. At the Word of Elisha- Thus saith the LORD- and the LORD did as He had foretold as v. 16 concludes! God keeps His promises, and the windows of heaven are opened- and the Word of God spoken by Elisha is fulfilled. And consider these residents- after a 7-year famine and now this siege- they have gone from abject poverty and want to now having plenty and peace! There is a dramatic reversal of fortunes- as the man Lazarus in our parable experienced as well. Going from poverty to plenty- being without to now feasting on delicacies! But let us not miss the spiritual truth here contained- as is often the case in the OT- there is a spiritual truth being illustrated as well. As the people of Samaria needed to learn- we all need to be brought to an end of ourselves! We need to see our need- our own bankruptcy! How the idols of this world cannot save- how there is no help from man's hand! How we are spiritually poor and needy- in bondage- with no hope for escape. There are no blessings- only curses! But as Jesus said- blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for they will be satisfied! Those who confess their sins, who look to the LORD- who trust in His word- these will be restored, rescued, saved and provided for! These people- who are the people of God- will live to see the salvation provided by their God! By the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the windows of heaven have been opened unto us! Even now, Jesus is pouring out His grace and Spirit upon us- and one day in the future- all of His promises of restoration, feasting, plenty, protection and a lasting inheritance will be fulfilled! So we could say that the riches made evident in the rescue of Samaria remind

us of our future blessings- blessings that Lazarus was able to enjoy after a time of sickness and poverty as well. We will taste and see that the LORD is good as Psalm 34 says. The windows of heaven are a common phrase that described the work of God in the pouring out of rain. But not all would partake of these blessings poured out by God. There is another who is able to see- but never taste of God's goodness.

III. Seeing Without Tasting His Goodness

In our last point we consider the commander of King Jehoram's army. This unnamed man is found in v. 2- where he responds to the promise of blessing from the LORD with scepticism and doubt. Refusing to believe that it was possible for the LORD to grant such an immediate and complete victory, he scorned Elisha and the Word of the LORD. As we saw last week, it is always tempting for those who live in dark days to become sceptics. Cynical of God's promised blessing. Will He really do all that He has promised? Well, this captain did not think God would do it- rather he chose to reject the promise of deliverance. By not responding to this message of Elisha by faith, his heart remains cold and unmoved. Not even God could do what you have said- Elisha. Let us all remember; God's word is always true and must always be believed! If you refuse, you too will miss out on the blessed fulfillment. So this captain would see God's deliverance, but he would never taste of God's goodness! So the word of Elisha is fulfilled in v. 17- as the people were rushing out to the spoils- they trampled this captain underfoot and he died. It is not uncommon for the crowds to rush- to press forward in either fear or in desperation. A stampede to avoid fire or to secure bread during a famine- these are still testified of today. But this man dies as a consequence of his sinful rebellion. So it is possible to see the blessings of God from afar, while never actually partaking and tasting of His goodness. The rich man in our reading from Luke 16 suffered the same end- he could see Lazarus being comforted in glory- perceiving from afar- but never able to taste- never able to partake! Did you know that this is also true of the end times? When Jesus comes back, He will raise all flesh! Both the good and the evil- the just and the unjust as I Cor. 15 puts it. All people- every single person will be raised from the dead on that last day! When Jesus returns on the clouds of glory all flesh will see, both the righteous and the wicked will witness it

first hand! All will see the salvation of the LORD- but not all will taste of His glorious riches! Not all will be welcomed at the wedding supper of the Lamb! What I mean is this, on the last day, even the wicked who refused to believe God's word will be able to see- they will be forced to bow the knee and confess that Jesus is the Lord! The wicked rebels- like this captain in passage- will be forced to watch as the righteous are rewarded and their cause vindicated! The reprobate will see Jesus and His people receive their inheritance- but these rebels will not taste it! No, they will be sent away as goats. Away from me, you wicked workers of iniquity- Jesus will say. You did not believe my Word- you did not listen to my messengers- so now you will not receive my rewards. These will be cast out- trampled- in a place of darkness- forced to watch but never receive God's glorious inheritance. Just as the rich man watched as Lazarus was rewarded- if you do not listen to the words of my prophets- if you refuse to believe even when the dead are raised- you will remain in your sin and outside of my kingdom forever. So, the captain of Jehoram's army illustrates what becomes of those who refuse to believe and submit to God's word.

To conclude, our passage contains a beautiful picture of God's gracious deliverance of His people. As Heb. 12 states, see to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. To reject the Word of the LORD is to seal your own doom. How awful it would be- to be the guy who spends all day in a restaurant- watching others feast- seeing but never partaking of himself! For although everyone will see the Son of Man return on the clouds of glory, only His people will taste of the LORD's blessings at the wedding feast. Those improperly dressed will be cast out- those who doubted His ability to save and ignored His call to believe will not be welcomed in. But for those who do believe- these will receive all that God has promised! Going from famine to feast, sickness to health, slavery to liberty, death to life! That is what we have in Jesus Christ! A feast better than this reversal in our passage! Only God can bring about a salvation like this! Jesus Christ opens the windows of heaven as God's richest blessings are poured on His broken people! May we all believe God's word- and trust in Him to provide and pour out His promised blessings on His people!