

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

By Dr. Tom Wallace

Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. 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? 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were. And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within. (2 Kings 7:1-11)

The Bible is filled with some very interesting, but almost unbelievable stories. When I read this account of the intervention of the Lord and the abundant provision of food for the lepers and the starving people of the city of Samaria, I think of the words of the old country preacher who said, “I declare, if that wasn’t in the Bible, I wouldn’t believe that.” Well, it is in the Bible and it did happen just as the scriptures say it did. I like what another man said, “God said it, I believe it and that settles it.”

This episode like all the stories and accounts in the Bible can teach us some valuable lessons. Our Bible says, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

The people in the city of Samaria were in a desperate plight. The army of Benhadad, the king of Syria had surrounded the city and cut off their food supply. The people were starving. Except for just a few horses, they had eaten everything. A woman came crying to the king with her heart-breaking story. She and her friend had agreed that they would kill their sons and eat them. They had killed and eaten the first boy, but the second woman backed out and would not go along with her bargain. The king was furious when he heard this and blamed

the prophet Elisha for their troubles. He sent a messenger to bring Elisha so that he might have him killed.

Elisha gave a bold message of hope. “Tomorrow,” he said, “at this time, there will be an abundance of food, God will meet this need.” Some of the Kings officials mocked and laughed at Elisha’s prophesy. He paid dearly for his lack of faith and respect. He was trampled by a mob of people running to get the food that had suddenly become available.

Another drama was unfolding just outside the city gate. Four lepers were also starving. Their food supply had also been cut off. As they discussed their options, they reasoned, we could go into the city, but there is no food there; we can sit here until we die, or we could go to the enemy camp and beg for food. Maybe they would have mercy on us. They decided to chance it with the enemy. They hobbled over to the camp and were amazed to find it totally deserted. Not a soldier was to be found. However, what they did find was stores of food, clothing, animals, silver, and gold in abundance. They ate their fill and then gathered all they could carry for the days ahead. This was too good to be true. It was a day of good tidings and great joy. There was exceeding, abundantly, above all they could ask or even think.

The Lord had caused the Syrians to hear the sounds of chariots, horses, and a host of soldiers coming upon them. They reasoned that the Israelites had somehow been able to hire the great army of the Hittites and the Egyptians. They quickly arose in the twilight and fled for their lives, leaving all their provisions, their animals, and their tents.

The windows of heaven had opened just as the prophet had said it would. As the manna fell in the morning in the wilderness, and the quail had come in the evening, and the water had gushed out of the rock, God had once again shown his might arm.

Suddenly one of them suggested that they ought to get word to their families and friends in the city. “*We do not well,*” said one, “*We hold our peace.*”

This account always makes me think of the two men who were diagnosed with similar terminal cancer. One of them said that he was going to go to a place in Mexico known for a high rate of success in the treatment of cancer. The other decided to go to a place in Washington state where there was a similar clinic. One of the men was cured and returned to his life. The other man suffered on and on and finally died. The fortunate man never bothered to seek out his friend and tell him the good news. We would all agree that he was not much of a friend. To find a cure and not share it would not only be very selfish but even wicked.

The four lepers realized the great need to go and share the good new with their starving family and friends, that God had provided.

Would not this be the same for those of us who have found the Saviour and been spared the awful judgment of hell, if we should not bother to share the good news? This Old Testament account has a wealth of truth and application for all of us who know the Lord.

First, notice that we are very privileged people. It is too good to be true. We have heard the joyful sound, Jesus saves. While the majority are still groping in darkness and do not know of the provision the Lord has made for them, we poor lepers, (sinners) have found God's grace and provision enough to meet our need. We not only have life but we have it abundantly. *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10)

We live in the day of grace. *"For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."* (2 Corinthians 6:2) We are adopted into the family. *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."* (1 John 3:2) We have been told to come and help ourselves. *"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."* (Revelation 22:17) He has come into our hearts to live. *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."* (Revelation 3:20) *Our names are written in the book of life. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.* (Luke 10:20)

What more could we ask. Our cup is running over. Now, the question is, shall we go and tell the others who are perishing all around us?

Second, we sin when we keep it to ourselves. "We do not well," declared the lepers, "We hold our peace." We talk and do a lot of preaching about the sins of adultery, murder, lying, stealing, gossip, and such, but what about the sin of silence? We Christians go to our churches on Sunday and sing of God's great salvation, and talk of the blessings of heaven, then during the week we hold our peace.

Our Bible says that God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. *"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."* (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) John tells us that Jesus not only paid for our sin but for every person on the earth. *"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."* (1 John 2:2) Most of them are still in the starving city and have not gotten the word yet.

Third, notice the devastating results. If we do not get the word to them they will die in their sins and their blood will be on our hands. *"When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."* (Ezekiel 33:8-9) The lepers said, "if we tarry," it will be bad for us. They would have been responsible for the death of everyone in the city. Without the good news people will be lost in hell for ever and ever. The food was just down the road, but they did not know. The people had not heard and they did not believe there was any hope for

them. Only the prophet believed. He said tomorrow things will be different. It sounded too good to be true.

We must remember that we are going to give an account for our actions in this matter. *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”* (2 Corinthians 5:10) When David confessed his sin to the Lord in the matter of adultery and causing the death of Uriah, he realized that there were other areas of concern. He said, *“Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.”* (Psalms 51:14-15)

Finally, let's get to it. The lepers said, “now therefore come that we may go and tell the king's household, (II Kings 7:9) so they came.” They stopped talking about it and went into action. The song writer said it right, “go tell it on the mountain.”

Someone suggested that we have forgotten how to spell “go”. Some spell it a-t-t-e-n-d. They feel that by attending all the church services they have fulfilled their responsibility. Others spell it p-r-a-y. Still others spell it g-i-v-e. Then there are those who spell it, t-e-a-c-h. And some who spell it, s-i-n-g. We can do all those things and still not be obedient to the great commission by going into the highways and hedges with the good news, that Jesus is the bread of life for starving people.

The whole city was saved, from the awful plight. If one Christian won ten people to the Lord this year and discipled them so that each of them won ten the next year, and the one hundred now won ten each, in just ten years ten thousand million, or just about double the population of the earth would be won. These lepers decided to do the right thing. We must make up our minds, that we will get to it, too.

In closing, I noted also that they were all in agreement. They said, “let us go that we may tell the king's household.” There is strength in unity. The Bible says, *“one shall chase a thousand, two shall put ten thousand to flight.”* (Deut. 32:30) In the account of the man sick of the palsy in Mark's gospel, we see four men working together to bring a man to Jesus. Bus workers visiting in the homes and bringing them to church, teachers preparing and teaching lessons, choir members practicing and presenting music, people giving offerings, and preachers delivering sermons are all a part of getting the message out to those who need it. The lepers told a porter. That porter told other porters. Those porters told the king. Then the king told the people.

Some argue for life-style evangelism or to live it before the sinner is all that is expected. There's just one thing wrong with that, it is not what the Bible says. The lepers in our story could have shown up at the city gate with their bellies full and a satisfied look on their faces and let the people try to figure why they looked so content. Instead they said, “let us go and tell.” The word of Jesus says it all. *“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”* (John 9:4) The clock is ticking away. The Lord is coming. The harvest is come.

