

6pm Sunday 30 August 2026 Evening Prayer

2 Kings 6:24-25, 7:1-end, Acts 18:1-16 – God's word can be trusted

Both of this evening's readings bring us a powerful truth: that God's word can be trusted.

With Samaria besieged by the entire army of King Ben-hadad of Aram, and famine so great that people are buying the dung from the doves, Elisha's prophecy must have seemed like pie in the sky. For Elisha prophesies that ***tomorrow at this time*** (so in just 24 hours) ***a measure of choice meal shall be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.***

Perhaps it is no surprise that the cynical captain voices his scepticism: ***Even if the Lord were to make windows in the sky, could such a thing happen?*** And then comes Elisha's grim forecast: ***You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat from it.***

And the very next day, exactly as Elisha had prophesied, after the siege of Samaria is lifted in the most astonishing of circumstances, ***a measure of choice meal [is indeed] sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.***

But again, exactly as Elisha had forewarned, the king's captain does not himself get to eat of the food that is now flooding into Samaria from the deserted Aramean camp, because ***the people trampled him to death in the gate, just as the man of God (i.e. Elisha) had said.*** And we're reminded again of the captain's bitter words of disbelief: ***even if the Lord were to make windows in the sky, could such a thing happen?***

The bible is full of astonishing promises. When we begin to doubt them, it does us good to remember that God is not like us. When we make promises, however well-meaning they might be, however confident we might be that we will be able to keep them, we find that life gets in the way of our keeping our

promises. We forget to do what we said we'd do; we find ourselves having to make a choice that means that our well-intentioned promise can't be kept.

God is not like us. God is omnipotent, all-powerful, having no limits on what he can do. The angel Gabriel said to Mary ***nothing will be impossible with God.*** The king's captain could not imagine a world in which food would be plentiful within 24 hours. But ***The Lord had caused the Aramean army to hear the sound of chariots and horses, the sound of a great army,*** so that the Arameans would flee, abandoning everything.

We also see God keeping his promises in our reading from the Acts of the Apostles, directing events to protect Paul against all the odds. Paul had been told in a vision ***Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you, for there are many in this city who are my people.***

And for 18 months Paul is able to do just what he wanted to do, ***teaching the word of God among [the Corinthians] and many of [them] who heard [him] became believers and were baptised.***

And even when ***the Jews make a united attack on Paul and brought him before a tribunal,*** God keeps his word to Paul, as it turns out that Gallio is not interested in intervening and ***dismissed [the Jews] from the tribunal.*** Now, it was no accident that the Jews made their attack on Paul ***whilst Gallio was proconsul of Achaia,*** during a term of office that began in May 51AD and was cut short by Gallio's ill health in May or June 52AD. For Gallio, the brother of the Stoic philosopher Seneca who was tutor to the emperor Nero, was known for his tolerance. Gallio's analysis – that arguments about what constituted Jewish worship could not be a matter for Roman law - is as logical as you would expect from such a man.

God keeps his promises. Whenever we doubt whether we are truly forgiven our sin; whenever we doubt whether we will have eternal life; whenever we doubt whether there will be judgment on all that is evil in the world... This is when we can remember that God keeps his promises.