

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday August 10, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



THE HEALING OF NAAMAN – PART II “Portraits of How God Saves” *2 Kings 5:1-19*

We have been in our study on the life of Elisha for a while now, but with our last few week away I at least think that we should have a bit of a review just catch us up a bit. Let me give you several highlight of where we have been in our study of the Elisha...

5 More Important Background Facts About Elisha:

1. Elisha was an Old Testament prophet who lived around 800 B.C., a time when God involved Himself in a very direct way with the people and the leadership of ancient Israel - Around this period, God sent at least 30 prophets, between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, in an effort to turn their citizens away from idolatry and other sins.
2. Elisha, whose name means "God is salvation," was the successor of Elijah in the office of the prophet in Israel (1 Kings 19:16, 19–21; 2 Kings 5:8) -
3. Elijah was called to follow Elijah in 1 Kings 19:19, and he spent the next several years as the prophet's protégé, until Elijah was taken into heaven -
4. At that time, Elisha began his ministry, which lasted about 60 years, it spanned the reigns of kings Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Joash -
5. In total, Elisha performed 32 miracles compared to the 16 miracles in Elijah's ministry - Not only did he have more miracles, but Elisha also seemed to have a stronger prophetic anointing. Many of his miracles resemble the miracles of Christ, such as the multiplying of food (Matthew 16:9–10) and the healing of lepers (Luke 17:11–19). He even raised a dead person postpartum.

INTRODUCTION

The healing of Naaman, the Leper is not just a story of the healing of a man from one of the most dreaded diseases of ancient times, but it is a story of salvation, one which illustrates the spiritual salvation man finds only in Jesus Christ and how men come to find that salvation in Christ. In Naaman's healing there are a variety of people who play different parts; some good and vital to the salvation and healing of Naaman and others not so good. All illustrate the various good and evil persuasions of people that either aid or hinder bringing men to Christ.

As we step into this scene, we leave the land of Israel, a nation that was to be a light to the Gentiles and a nation of priests. We step into Syria to the north, a heathen (pagan) nation surrounded in darkness, a place of idolatry and heathen blindness.



In these verses there is an anticipation of the gospel that would go out from Israel through Messiah and then out from the church carrying the light of Jesus Christ to the Gentile nations. Naaman's healing was an illustration of God's heart/love for people and the great lengths He will go to for the redemption of fallen man... especially what God would later do in and through the ministry of the Lord Jesus and His church.

THE DESCRIPTION OF NAAMAN (2 Kings 5:1)

"Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper." 2 Kings 5:1

Your Bible may call the name of the country Aram. Note that Aram is also called Syria in the Bible (they are the same place) In this we have a picture of the sinner before he comes to God.

- Naaman comes from the Hebrew verb *"naem,"* which means to be delightful, pleasant, beautiful."
- It has the idea of "gracious" or "well formed."

- Because of the significance of names in Scripture, this tells us something about the man.
- His name suggests he had undoubtedly been a handsome man, at least before the leprosy.
- Further, the implication is that he was also a gracious and delightful man.
- But his name became a reproach and a striking contrast to his appearance and probably also to his disposition because of the disease which had attacked his body.
- **His name provides a striking picture of mankind created physically and spiritually beautiful in God's image before sin began to take its toll on both the disposition and physical body of man.**

The way Naaman is first described gives us a picture of him as he was seen by people who tend to look mostly on the outward appearance.

4 Things We Learn About Naaman in 2 Kings 5.1:

- (1) **His position** - He was *"commander (captain) of the army of the King of Syria (or Aram)."* This means he was the General... the commander of the Syrian or the Aramean Army, second in command to the King. He was a man of great authority and position, a man of power and he commanded a lot of weight and respect.
- (2) **His popularity and prestige** - This is noted in the words, *"a great and honorable (respected) man in the eyes of his master..."* Here was a popular man. He was a national hero as the general who had been victorious over the enemies of the nation of Aram. Upon his head were the laurels or wreaths of victory and upon his chest, medals of honor and valor. But would you also note... and this is interesting... the biblical perspective and truth regarding the source of victory and valor; it is the sovereign plan and power of God... *"because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria"* He was a man whom God had used as He had Pharaoh and the Kings of Assyria and Babylon.
 - *You mean God uses the unsaved to accomplish his purposes?*
 - *What does this tell us about those in power today that we may not care for, that we may look on with derision, and that we may even ridicule?*
 - *Thank deeply on this... what does this tell concerning what should be our perspective about these?*
 - *What implication does this have for us regarding these?*

Here again we see how the Lord uses the saved and unsaved alike to carry out His purposes and plans. But being so used does not save a person.

- (3) **His problem** - He was a Leper. Here it is at the end of verse 1, *"He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper."* (notice your Bible there... what did I tell you about italicized words... they are not in the original Hebrew text) *"but he was,"* italicized in the NKJV, is not in the Hebrew text. In the original Hebrew text we find only the word *"leprous,"* which highlights or emphasizes Naaman's problem... the dreaded disease of leprosy.

Leprosy is a life-threatening infection mentioned in the Bible over 45 times. Leprosy was used as a powerful illustration of the devastating power of sin in our lives.

4 Similarities Between Leprosy and Sin:

1. **Sin numbs us to our condition** - Leprosy causes damage to sensory nerves making the skin numb. As we continue to sin, we become more calloused and hardened to its affect on our lives.
2. **Sin leads to death** - As leprosy progresses, the lack of sensation leads to fatal tissue and limb damage. Likewise, sin causes people to make bad decisions often leading to disaster.

3. **We can't hide sin** - People with leprosy can't hide their disease. Likewise, the actions of people trapped in sin eventually become obvious to those around them.
4. **Sin produces outcasts** - Lepers were driven from their homes and made to live outside the city. Like lepers, afflictions like drug abuse and alcoholism can turn us into the dregs of society.

Remember in Scripture, leprosy is a portrait of sin and man's true spiritual condition without the saving grace (spiritual healing) of God's salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Regardless of how men may see us or we may see ourselves, in God's Holy eyes, we are leprous without the righteousness of Christ imputed to us through faith in the person and work of the Savior. This one word gives us God's perspective of the true condition of this man regardless of how he was seen and thought of by man. Here we see a holy God's perspective of man without Jesus Christ and the ravages of sin.

- (4) **The principle** – The principle we need to see is that “many today are perishing from the loathsome leprosy of sin. One may be great, successful, wealthy, honorable and mighty, but spiritually lost. To realize one's lost condition before God, and to desire to escape from it are the first steps toward salvation. Naaman discovered this.” But what exactly does leprosy in the Bible teach us about our sin and its effect in our lives? We've already look at a bit of this, but this story reveals more.

What can we learn from this story about man's condition in sin and what God does for man in Jesus Christ to heal him from the leprosy of sin? Before we continue, let's look at the subject of leprosy itself.

THE DECLARATION OF THE SERVANT GIRL (2 Kings 5:2-3)

² And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. ³ Then she said to her mistress, “If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.”

Here is what I want you to think about concerning this young servant girl in Naaman's household... what was she doing there? It wasn't by accident

4 Takeaways from the Young Servant Girl:

- (1) **Bad things do happen to good people** – Here is a young girl, with her whole life ahead of her, whose life was suddenly interrupted by tragedy and devastation. She is ripped away from her home and family and kidnapped into bondage and slavery... taken captive to a foreign land. You talk about scary, terrorizing, traumatizing, devastating! It reminds us that bad things do happen to good people... even godly people, believers and Christians. Sometimes we buy into the idea that as Christians bad things won't happen to us, that somehow being a Christians immunizes and inoculates us against bad things happening in our life. Nothing could be further from the truth... Remember Jesus words in John 16:33, *“These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*

There are some important reminders... things to keep in mind as clarifying statements about the bad things or problems that come in life. These are very important in clarifying both our perspective about problems as Christians and our maintaining a healthy spiritual approach in dealing with “bad things” that come on our life... the very real and certain problems we will face in this life.

4 Initial Clarify Statements About “Bad Things” Happening to Good People:

1. It is incorrect to think that because one is a Christian or a good person, he or she will never have any **bad things** happened in her or her life or that all his **problems** will be **solved**.
2. It is incorrect to say that all the bad things that can happen in life are **discussed** in the **Bible**.
3. It is incorrect to believe that having “bad things” happen in your life means one is **unspiritual**.

4. It is incorrect to assume that being exposed to Bible teaching automatically solves or resolves the problem of “bad things” happening in your life.

- (2) **Nothing is by accident with God** – Perhaps you’ve heard this quote, “God never says, ‘Oops!’ or ‘I didn’t see that coming!’” The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:18, “*But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.*” Where you are and where God has placed you... the circumstances you are in have not caught God off guard, He is not surprised, He know what you are going to through, and it may sound calloused or unfathomable to you to think that God has some purpose for the bad things going on in your life, yet a basic theological and doctrinal truth found in God’s word is that He is Sovereign, all-knowing, all-powerful. Nothing is by accident with God. God knows what He is up to in your life, and He has a purposes. We love to quote Jeremiah 29:11, where God speaks and says to His, “*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.*” I wonder if in the back of this young believing servant girl’s mind, or in her private prayers to Jehovah God she had not cried out to God and said, “How does this prosper me, how does this not harm me, in what ways is this to give me a future and hope?” When we read her story in light of the bigger picture of Naaman’s story we see... that her being there was not by accident, but by Divine design.
- (3) **God can use the bad for His glory and purposes** - We love to quote Romans 8:28 as one of our favorite verses and promises, “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to who are the called according to His purpose.*” But do we truly realize and embrace the greater truth of this verse for our lives, namely that for the life of a believer nothing is by accident with God in your life and He can and will uses the circumstances of your life, good or bad, for your good and His glory and purposes. Sometimes we can see it at the time, but if we will use trust and serves even the bad circumstances we are in He will use it for our good and His glory. This can certain be seen in the life of this young servant/slave girl from Israel that is now living in a foreign land, having been brutally and perhaps violently kidnapped from her home and family... God uses her for His purposes in the life of Naaman and his family.
- (4) **God wants to use us where we are in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in** – You heard it said before that as believers we are to “*Bloom where we are planted.*” It’s true! God has placed us where He wants us and where He desires to use us. We spend some much time bemoaning our circumstances, and looking for “greener pastures,” trying to get out of it... that often we fail to see what God may want to do in us and through us right were He has us. Again, “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to who are the called according to His purpose.*” And I think so often of Paul words in Philippians 4:11-13, “*11 ...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*”

“*14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who ⁱⁿ preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’” -Romans 10:14-15*

- Here we see a wonderful and perhaps powerful picture of how so often work and He get’s His message of salvation out to a lost and dying world... how the Lord always has His messengers of the Word.
- When there is a person whose heart has been prepared (Naaman... God was preparing his heart), God always has his messengers (the young servant girl).

- Here, God's messengers begin with a little captive slave girl in a bad situation for her personally. In fact, by His matchless grace, God worked through the unrighteous deeds of Naaman's own army to bring this little slave girl into his own home to be the instrument of God's Love... kind of interesting! Isn't it?
- Here was a small girl, humble, obedient, insignificant to men, living under dire conditions, but with a **Romans 8:28** mental attitude; she was a girl using the problems of life as opportunities or as open doors to witness for God.
- Though small, weak, and insignificant, this little girl knew the omnipotent and sovereign Lord of the universe with whom there was healing. She was willing to point others to the most significant Being of the universe, YAHWEH OF ISRAEL, who alone could cure Naaman's disease.
- ***Why do you suppose Naaman listened to her? After all what could a slave know? May I suggest that he listened because perhaps her life spoke volumes! Her life had been such a testimony that it gave credibility to her words.***

What does this say about who God uses? What does all this say to us personally?

NAAMAN'S JOURNEY TO ISRAEL (2 Kings 5:4-7)

⁴Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. ⁵'By all means, go,' the king of Aram replied. 'I will send a letter to the king of Israel.' So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents^[a] of silver, six thousand shekels^[a] of gold and ten sets of clothing. ⁶The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: 'With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy.' ⁷As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, 'Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!' -2 Kings 5:4-7

In verses 4-7, we have an excellent illustration of how salvation cannot be obtained. We can't work for, earn, or buy salvation. We can't be good enough, moral enough, or religious enough to save ourselves. Oh, how these verses reveal the natural tendencies and perspective of the carnal mind. **Here is a typical man who recognized his need to some extent, but he wanted to have a part in his healing.** He was trusting first in power, position, and riches. Instead of thinking in terms of God's grace, he naturally thought in terms of favoritism, the leverage of power, wealth, and what one can earn or buy.

READ: EPHESIANS 2:1-9

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast." – Ephesians 2:1-9

Why, according to these verses, can't we earn (work for, purchase, etc.) our own salvation? Why won't this work to save us?

4 REASONS WE CAN'T SAVE OURSELVES: (Ephesians 2:1-9)

- (1) **We're dead spiritually** (vs.1)
- (2) **We're enslaved sinners** (vs.1, 2-3)

(3) *We're deserving of wrath (v.4)*

(4) *We'd boast about it (v.9)*

Again, this story really points out not only that “God is salvation” but it first warns us of (along with Naaman) what won't save us

What Can't Save Us:

1. **Political and financial clout** - First, in verse 4, Naaman went into the king with the news and to get permission from his king to go to Israel. The king was willing to help, and that's good, but they immediately thought in terms of political and financial clout (vss. 5-6). They thought they could buy the favors of God from the prophet of Yahweh through the king of Israel. So Naaman was sent to the king of Israel rather than to the prophet of God. With him he took a large amount of silver, gold and clothes as payment. This was the typical cultural pattern of that day (and ours as well), but it is not God's pattern.
2. **Power and positions of status** - So now with verse 7 we see the response of the king of Israel. First, this was the wrong response for the king. Though he had power, position and wealth, yet unlike the little slave girl, he had no witness. Instead of immediately pointing Naaman to Elisha, the prophet of God, he was paralyzed with fear; he was paranoid. He thought that the king of Aram was seeking some cause to create an incident and reason to attack. Instead of seeing this as an opportunity to demonstrate the power of the Lord, he thought only of himself.
3. **Goodness and favor in life** - What a contrast to the little slave girl who thought of others rather than her own plight. Note that she could have thought, as many would, that he was getting just what he deserved. Or she could have tried to strike a bargain in exchange for her freedom. Like the king of Israel, how quick we are to read things into situations and expect the worst rather than take life's situations as opportunities to serve the Lord and to see Him work. Why? Because we are blinded and paralyzed by our self love.

But, now, wait a minute, maybe there is a lesson for us here... there is a contrast between the young servant girl and the King of Israel. It's the lesson of the growth potential of accountability, service, and suffering.

The servant girl - Through her accountability to her master, her service to his wife, and her own suffering being uprooted from her home and family, this little girl had learned to trust the Lord and then to think of others and their needs.

The King of Israel - The king, on the other hand, considered himself accountable to no one (a serious error). Further, he was always served by others and failed to see himself as a servant of the people. Thinking only of himself was simply a natural product of the kind of luxurious life he lived.

But from Naaman's standpoint, what did this do for him?

- ***It shattered part of his trust in his human resources.***
- ***That which he thought would buy his cure was worthless.***
- ***He was literally left holding the bag, the bag of money in his leprous hand.***
- ***He needed to learn, as all of us do, that we must never trust in the uncertainty of riches, or power, or position, but instead, to trust only in God's grace and work in His Son. Compare Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:17f; 1 Peter 1:17-21; and Revelation 3:17-18.***
- ***Money, power and wealth cannot save us, make us spiritual, effective witnesses, or deserving of responsibility or leadership in the body of Jesus Christ.***
- ***Only God's grace and his gifts and blessings in Jesus Christ can do that.***

THE INVITATION OF ELISHA (5:8)

“⁸ So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, “Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.” -2 Kings 5:8

- Does this not illustrate God’s loving concern for the sinner.
- Again, God has his messengers. Though some will fail in their responsibility and ministry, the Lord watches over the seeking soul and at just the right moment, he sends one of his own with whatever is necessary to take the seeking person another step toward the Lord and salvation (cf. Rom 2:2-8).
- Naaman represents the seeking soul, one in need of the Lord. Remember, God was using his leprosy as a means to bring him to a knowledge of the Lord.
- Elisha on the other hand represents the Lord. And Elisha, as God’s representative, said *“let him come to me,”* words which the Lord wants to speak to every unsaved person.
- For Naaman to come *“to know that there was a prophet in Israel”* was to come to know that the God of Israel was the only true God, and the only real hope in life (cf. John 7:17; Jer. 29:13; Acts 17:27; Rom. 2:2-8; 1 Pet. 3:9; Matt. 11:28; Rev. 3:20).

THE ACTIONS AND COMMAND OF THE PROPHET (5:9-12)

“⁹ Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha’s house. ¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.” ¹¹ But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, “Indeed, I said to myself, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’ ¹² Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage. “ -2 Kings 5:9-12

In these verses we have a picture of the simplicity of salvation and of the necessity of humility in finding the Lord.

NAAMAN GOES TO ELISHA (VS. 9)

This must have been an imposing picture. Naaman in his chariot with his fine horses, with his gold and silver and fine clothes standing in front of the prophet’s house which was probably very unimposing by Naaman’s standards. Naaman was a proud man. He was proud of his accomplishments, talents, power, position, and wealth. He rode up arrogantly and thought, surely this lowly prophet of Israel will come out to me, Naaman the great warrior; and he will wave his hand over the area of my leprosy and I will be cured.

We see his pride expressing itself in verses 9, 11 and 12, but especially in his anger at being told to go and wash seven times in the Jordan.

But who was Naaman? He was a sinner and a mere creature of God, who drew his breath from two small slits in his face (Isa. 2:22). Even the power, the victories he had enjoyed, and his accomplishments were given him by the Lord of the universe (so the importance of verse 1).

What does the Scripture teach about the pride of man?

- (1) God hates **“haughty eyes, or the proud look”** (Prov. 6:17) *“(The Lord hates...) A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood.”*
- (2) **“When pride comes, then comes dishonor . . .”** (Prov. 11:2) *“When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom.”*

- (3) “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling” (Prov. 16:18) *“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.”*
- (4) “A man’s pride will bring him low . . .” (Prov. 29:23) *“A man’s pride bring him low, but the humble in spirit will retain honor.”*

Naaman had to be brought low; he had to be knocked off his high horse! (cf. Obadiah 3 and 4). God cannot and will not bless us as long as we are full of pride.

Why will a man’s pride bring him low? James gives us part of the answer. After telling us about the grace which God gives, he also reminds us that *“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”* Who can experience God’s grace? The humble! Then from whom does God withhold his grace? The proud! Who are the proud? Those who are indifferent to God’s plan, who refuse to commit themselves to God’s plan, who attempt to handle life by their own abilities or strategies.

THE ACTIONS AND COMMANDS OF ELISHA (VS. 10)

¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.”

That which the prophet does in this passage may seem rude; in fact, he would be severely criticized by many church members today and our politically correct society. His actions would be viewed as unloving, rude, and arrogant. But what Elisha did was really an act of love. It was a means of showing Naaman his pride so he could receive God’s grace and begin to count for God himself.

Sure Naaman reacted and snorted off. But note that Elisha didn’t run after him; it appears he simply turned it over to the sovereignty of God who then worked through the life of another to bring Naaman to his senses. As long as Naaman was proud, he would never obey the Lord in humble belief or faith.

Self conceit and the various ego trips of men are typical of the unregenerate heart and even of the carnal mind of the regenerate. It is so hard to realize just who we are, mere creatures, and to submit to God’s plan. We must let God be God!

THE REACTIONS OF NAAMAN (VSS. 11-12)

¹¹ But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, “Indeed, I said to myself, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’ ¹² Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage.

First, let’s note what Naaman said as he went away in his fury in verse 11, “Behold I thought.” ***What verse of Scripture comes to your mind here?*** *“There is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the ways thereof are the ways of death”* (Prov. 14:12).

Irving Jensen says of this, “This leprous, dying man had actually the presumption to devise in his own mind exactly the plan by which he wanted his cure to be affected.”⁵⁰

But that’s not all. Naaman had contempt for God’s solution and plan. To him it was base and foolish. He was thinking, why should I go wash in the muddy Jordan River in Israel when I have clear streams of water in Damascus? Of all the absurd ideas! Note the human reasoning here. The implication is: If a cure comes through bathing in a stream, then I have better streams in which to bathe myself.

But read Paul's comments about man's wisdom and solutions versus God's wisdom and plan of salvation in the cross of Christ in 1 Corinthians 1:20-31, (I read this for Trey's ordination... I think these are important words) *"²⁰ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the ¹⁰disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. ²² For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a ¹⁰stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— ³¹ that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."*

The world's standards and ideas of salvation seem so much more logical in comparison to God's which seems foolish and so simplistic. *"Go wash in the Jordan seven times . . . and you shall be clean."* A very simple thing to do, surely, but Naaman objected. And so the Bible teaches, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31).

But simple faith is not so simple; men object. Ironically, Naaman "was willing to pay any price, willing to do any great deed of prowess, to make any fatiguing pilgrimage, but he was unwilling to obey a simple command 'wash and be clean.'" **51**

What was the issue here? The washing? No. Would that cure him? No. It was the obedience of faith. It was personal faith in the command of the prophet and not the evidence of his faith, washing, which cured him. It was his simple faith in the word of God, the root. Washing was simply the fruit, the result.

★ *So today, men are saved simply and solely by the obedience of faith, by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior.* The obedience God asks is the obedience of faith in Christ. So Acts 6:7; Romans 1:5 and 16:26; **52** 1 John 3:23 (here "believe" is the root and "love" is the fruit).

Man is so self willed. By his ego, his reason, by his own experience and desires, he wants things his own way; he wants to be saved his way; he wants to be spiritual his own way; he wants the church to operate his way, and on the list goes. But man must submit humbly to the wise plans of God or there can be no salvation, no real joy and fruitfulness, no deliverance.

Verse 12 shows that in Naaman's heart a struggle was going on between faith on the one hand and unbelief on the other. It was the crucial moment for Naaman, and Satan was trying hard to get the victory, as he does with every person on the point of making the great decision. Satan first appealed to Naaman's *reason*: "See how unreasonable this remedy is! If bathing is the cure for leprosy, there are far better streams than this Jordan in which to wash." He argued, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?"

Satan also played on Naaman's *pride*, and pointed to the way in which he had been treated. Naaman, a great personage, had come to make a request of a king and pay handsomely for services rendered. First he was sent to the lowly dwelling of a prophet, who did not even come out to meet him, and then he was sent off

in this way, without any display or notice, to wash in the muddy Jordan River! So he turned away in a rage, and it seemed as though Satan had won.53

APPLICATION

Key lessons we can glean from this story?

- (1) **God is constantly at work to lead people to Himself, no matter how dark their condition -**
- (2) **God uses any committed believer, no matter how ordinary or insignificant he may be -** How? Because of the mighty God who indwells us. This makes us significant as His instruments of light.
- (3) **The grace of God cannot be bought with silver and gold or power or position -** We must come to God in faith and believe His revelation in the Scripture.
- (4) **Power and position, silver and gold, can be a hindrance and an impediment to coming to Christ, as well as to effective service -**
- (5) **Two of the greatest hindrances to experiencing God's blessing for believers and unbelievers alike are (a) our pride, and (b) our opinions -** (a) *our pride*--Naaman almost lost out because of his pride, and (b) *our opinions*--Naaman almost lost out because his thinking was contrary to Scripture.

All appeared to be lost, it appeared Satan had won and that Naaman would go away without healing and without the saving knowledge of the Lord. But something happened. In the following, another part of the picture of how God saves comes into focus.