

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday August 3, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



## THE HEALING OF NAAMAN – PART 1 “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 Important Background Facts About Elisha to Remember:

1. The name Elisha means “God is Salvation” and gives us an idea of the purpose of His ministry (v.19) –
2. Elisha was the son of a farmer named Shaphat, and was himself a farmer when God called him (v.19) –
3. Elisha was from the town of Abel-Meholah in Israel which means “Meadow of Dancing” which may reflect something of Elisha’s personality (*which was one of compassion, mercy and joy*) (v.19) – That is where Elijah found Elisha plowing the fields. Verse 16 tell us the was from Abel-Meholah, “...*And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.*” Remember that where as Elijah had been more firey and stern as a prophet, Elisha was characterized as being somewhat kinder, more joyful, full of compassion and mercy, which we shall see in our study of his life.
4. Elisha’s call to ministry was from God not man, and was issued through the Prophet Elijah (v.19) – An important note here is that Elijah didn’t call Elisha, God did. Elijah, throughout his ministry was simple the messenger of God, and no less here was Elijah the messenger to Elisha of God’s call on his life. Look up at verse 16 in 1 Kings 19, “*Also you (Elijah) shall appoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.*” God calls! If you are not called of God, but rather called by man your ministry will fail.
5. When God called Elisha he surrendered his life fully to God’s call, no turning back (v.20-21) – Listen to it again in our passage in verses 20-21, “*20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” 21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen’s equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.*”

*One more important fact about Elisha's life that might be of interest to you and that set's him apart from other prophets in the Old Testament... Elisha was incredibly blessed by God. He did more miracles in the Old Testament than anyone except Moses.*

## 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 what God would later do in the ministry of the Lord Jesus and His church.

Think of what God has called us to. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 *"<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."*

- *What is this called? The Great Commission*
- *Who is supposed to do this? All believers/the true church (not just professional clergy, preachers, teachers, theologians... all believers)*
- *Who is this for? All nations... everyone (nations that are run by dictators, nations that are communist, nations that are terrorist, nations that are anti-God, nations like our own that are quickly become irreligious)*

Here is another one in Acts 1:8. Jesus said this to his disciple, *"<sup>8</sup> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

- *What did Jesus say his follower/disciples were to be? Witnesses*
- *To who? Everyone... the whole world*
- *How are we to be able to do this? The Holy Spirit*
- *Who is at work in the world in the hearts of unbelievers before we ever get there? That's Naaman!*

Again the story of Naaman's healing in 2 Kings 5 is an illustration of what God would later do in the ministry of the Lord Jesus and His church. Namely what we just say in the his commissions of all saints to be witnesses to those like Naaman who wasn't apart of God's chosen people Israel. He was from Syria/Aram... a pagan, idolatrous nation. In this story we have a classic illustration of God's Love, of how He reaches out to a people in utter darkness and uses their afflictions to draw them to Himself if they will only respond to His pre-salvation work of grace wherein God seeks to bring men to repentance...

*Listen to Paul's words in Romans 2:4. How do these words reflect God's work in Naaman's life? How do they work in the lives of unbelievers today? Romans 2:4, "<sup>4</sup> Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance"*

### 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.

## AN EXPLANATION OF LEPROSY

The Biblical instructions for leprosy, the separation, isolation, and cleansing of the leper and thus the Biblical foundation as a picture of sin are described for us in Leviticus 13-14. We don't have time to do a deep dive into these two lengthy chapters, but just turn over there with me... I want you to see the lengthy discussion Old Testament law has concerning “leprosy”... this is significant why do you think?

- **The Hebrew word for leprosy, “tzaraat”, was actually used of a wider range of skin diseases**
- As well as what is today called leprosy or “Hansen's disease” caused by the bacillus *mycobacterium leprae*.
- The Greek word is “lepra” from “lepw” which means, “to peel off in scales.”
- Scholars are somewhat in disagreement regarding Biblical leprosy, but it appears that there were two main types. “The first, and by far the more dangerous, is called *lepromatous*; and the other, a more benign type, is designated as *tuberculoid* . . . Both start with discoloration of a patch of skin. This patch may be white or pink. It is most likely to appear on the brow, nose, ear, cheek or chin.”<sup>46</sup>

Let's explore these a little more deeply...

## 2 Main Types of Leprosy:

(1) **The Lepromatous Type** - As this form begins to spread, portions of the eyebrow may disappear, then spongy tumor like swellings appear on the face and body. The disease is systemic and involves the internal organs as well. It is deep seated in the bones, joints and marrow of the body resulting in the deterioration of the tissues between the bones. The results are deformity, loss of feeling in the appendages, and in the fingers and toes eventually falling off. This form is incurable and lasts until the victim finally dies often by the invasion of other diseases because of the weakened condition. They may live for twenty or thirty years in this miserable condition.<sup>47</sup>

(2) **The Tuberculoid Type** - This form is less severe and begins much like the lepromatous form with a change in skin color in one area and then spreading to other areas. This form is limited in its effects and often only lasts from one to three years. The person with this form, unless miraculously healed, could return



to the priest and be declared cleansed or healed after observation. Other types of skin diseases were observed and when found not to be true leprosy or they disappeared, the people with these forms were also declared clean. Other than by God's direct intervention, it appears the Hebrews had no cure for leprosy. In modern times there are very effective medicines available, and leprosy patients are usually not isolated.<sup>48</sup>

One thing is certain, the term leprosy referred to several types of skin diseases which were rooted in the blood stream. When they were the lepromatous type, they were incurable and led to horrible consequences. Because of this, specific directions were given for leprosy in Leviticus 13-14. This was done first as a protection against possible spread in case it was contagious, but there was also a ceremonial or spiritual reason. Leprosy stood as a picture of sin and all its features and effects upon man and upon his relationship with God.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LEPROSY IN THE BIBLE

### 11 Statements of Significance Concerning Leprosy in the Bible:

- (1) **The leper was considered unclean and had to be isolated from society to a certain degree** - Wherever he went he was to cry out, "unclean, unclean," and he had to wear black with a hood covering his face and live outside the city walls.
- (2) **Whenever the Lord Jesus healed a leper he always pronounced the person, not healed, but cleansed – *Why do you think this might be? What might this be pointing to? (just your thoughts)***
- (3) **True leprosy was incurable by man in Bible times just as sin is incurable for man –**
  - Jeremiah 17:9, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"* "desperately sick" "beyond cure" or "incurably sick"
  - Isaiah 1:5-6, *"<sup>5</sup> Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints.<sup>6</sup> From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment."* There is nothing man himself can do to deal with his sin problem. Further, his sin separates him from God and even from intimate fellowship with people (see 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).
  - When the Lord healed a leper, therefore, the picture should have been obvious. His power to cleanse a leper demonstrated He was the solution to man's sin and defilement; He alone was and is the means of reconciliation, peace with God and man.
- (4) **The rite of purification in the Old Testament did not cure, it only recognized the fact a leper was cured, he was clean of the disease, or that he never really had the incurable type of leprosy** - He could then be reconciled to society. *Why is this significant, do you think? What is this pointing to? (think priest and old sacrificial system vs. our great high priest and the cross)*
- (5) **Leprosy, like sin, begins within (with what we are) and then erupts on the outside skin (on the surface)** - As such, it clearly reminds us of the principle that men are, by an inherited nature, sinners and that it's not just what we do that is so bad, but what we are. The point is the mouth speaks and hands do as a result of what the heart is and thinks (Luke 6:43-45; Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Matt. 12:33-34; Eph. 2:1f). With this in mind, compare Leviticus 13:1-4. Even the slightest blemish in the skin, a swelling (a boil), a scab (a small tumor), or a bright spot (a red or scaly place) was to be carefully observed to see if it was the product of something deeper, i.e., some form of true leprosy.
- (6) **The priest was to examine the skin and pronounce the person clean or unclean depending upon his observation of the facts** - So today, since Christ has provided cleansing from sin, every believer as a believer priest is to detect sin in their own life and pronounce it sin when it first appears... 1 John 1:8-10 says, *"<sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."*

- (7) **The pain of leprosy, at least in certain forms, was not acute because it also killed the nerves in the affected area, but it kept the victim restless, miserable, and frustrated as they felt the stigma of the disease** - They saw portions of their bodies become numb, muscles atrophy (waste away), tendons contract making the hands like claws, and then the ulceration of the fingers and toes and hands and feet resulting in their loss bit by bit until the whole hand or foot was gone. We must not miss the picture God wants us to see from this emphasis in Scripture. Sin is like this. Because of man's separation from God, because of his spiritually dead condition and the hardness of his soul, he becomes insensitive, callused, restless and never satisfied. He often does not experience severe pain from his sin and waywardness, only insensitivity, restless misery, and futility, ever seeking some means of fulfillment running from one thing to another (cf. Isa. 57:20-21; Eph. 4:16-19). Even in apparent prosperity and happiness, not only is there a certain amount of inner peace and true happiness missing, but their ultimate plight is death, loss, and the judgment of separation (Ps. 1:4-5; 73:1-28).
- (8) **Because of the nature of the disease, the leper was often considered as dead; it was a kind of living death though physically alive** - So men without Christ are nothing more than the living dead; though walking about they are spiritual zombies (Eph. 2:1).
- (9) **Regardless of one's position, honor, power, possessions, or wealth, leprosy, like sin, is no respector of persons** - Naaman was a man of position and prestige, but he was also leprosy.
- (10) **As seen previously, in Israel, according to the Law, lepers were excluded from society as a picture of sin and its effects** - God used this to remind Israel of His holiness. Cleansing a leper meant being restored back to a normal life. The term "cure" in 2 Kings 5:3 literally meant, "to receive back." This provides us with a fitting picture of our reconciliation to God and to one another (cf. Isa. 59:2 with 2 Cor. 5:18-21).
- (11) **The leprosy of sin destroys the pleasantness and beauty God meant for mankind in His creation** - Sin deforms us, but in Christ we are made new creations and can be transformed into His glorious likeness. Remember Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:17, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* And in Romans 12:1-2 these familiar words say it this way, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* Look down in 2 Kings 5:14, *"So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."*

## CONCLUSION

Here is what we know as we head into the story of Naaman. Naaman held a high position... a very respected position, but had a very great problem. As we conclude part of our study of Naaman and especially Elisha's miracle in Naaman's life let's look at some valuable lessons from what we have seen so far.

### Valuable Takeaways from Naaman

- (1) **God uses many avenues to bring us to the end of ourselves and our need for Him** - We need to understand that God often uses the personal failures, sicknesses, and problems of men as a means to bring them to the end of themselves and to a knowledge of the Lord and His salvation. ***How might God be using this very method in what has gone on around us in the past few years... in our nation, in our cities, in our churches, in individual lives? Do you think God might be trying to get our attention?***

Listen to these verses from Psalm 119 and think about what they might be saying to us in this regard...

- **Psalm 119:67** – *"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word."*
- **Psalm 119:71** – *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Your statutes."*

- **Psalm 119:73** – “Your hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.”

*According to the Psalmist why is it good to be afflicted? What does affliction potentially do for us? How does these verses apply to Naaman’s situation?*

*What do we observe in our world today that may give us hope that is communicated in these verses?*

*When we seen bad things happening, it is likely that God will use that to bring men to the end of themselves and bring a seeking of God.*

- (2) **God desires for us to come to recognize the deeper problem in our life and His solution - What is man’s “deeper problem?”** God uses problems in life to force us to face our deeper problem, the problem of sin, and the need of God’s forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ. This chapter (2 Kings 5) really illustrates this. Naaman went from his problem to God’s solution which was more than simply the healing of his leprosy.
- (3) **God wants us to know that He alone is our hope and salvation** - As we see, Naaman came to know the true God. So, with verses 2 and following we will see how God worked in various ways, through the disease and through people to bring Naaman to the Lord. In these verses we have portraits of how God saves. He alone is our hope for salvation. Remember Elisha’s name means, “God is salvation”... the clear message of his ministry, a message he is now proclaiming out side the border of Israel and clear into Aram/Syria. This is the message of hope that we must make know through out our world today.

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## THE HEALING OF NAAMAN – PART 2

### The Little Maid in a Foreign Land (5:2-3)

#### Naaman’s Journey to Israel (5:4-7)

4 And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, “Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel.” 5 Then the king of Aram said, “Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” And he departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand *shekels* of gold and ten changes of clothes. 6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, “And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy.” 7 And it came about when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending *word* to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me.”

In verses 4-7, we have an excellent illustration of how salvation cannot be obtained. 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.

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.

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. 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 wait a minute, maybe there is a lesson for us here. It's the lesson of the growth potential of accountability, service, and suffering. 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, 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 And it happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent *word* to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

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 So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots, and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. 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 was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, '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 cure the leper.' 12 'Are not Abanah and 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. 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?

- God hates "haughty eyes, or the proud look" (Prov. 6:17).
- "When pride comes, then comes dishonor . . ." (Prov. 11:2).
- "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling" (Prov. 16:18).
- "A man's pride will bring him low . . ." (Prov. 29:23).

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)***

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)***

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. 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.’”<sup>51</sup>

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;<sup>52</sup> 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.

Jensen says:

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.<sup>53</sup>

## APPLICATION

What are some of the 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) In fact, 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*--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.

## The Persuasion of Naaman’s Servants (5:13)

Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, “My father, had the prophet told you *to do some* great thing, would you not have done *it*? How much more *then*, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?”

This verse gives us an illustration of the value of loving care and of the importance of the right words at the right time to the unsaved (cf. Prov. 15:23, 28-29, 31; 16:21, 23). First, though we need to be praying for the Lord of the harvest to thrust out laborers into the fields, these verses illustrate how God somehow finds agents for His purposes. Perhaps these servants were themselves believers in the Lord of Israel and knew

the power of the Lord, but probably not. Other than the fact they were attendants to Naaman, we know nothing about them. Still, they had wise counsel for the general.

Nevertheless, this may also illustrate the importance of wise and timely persuasion needed in personal evangelism. Notice the following points about the wisdom of their answer, an answer of the tongue as a timely word with sweetness of speech, yet honest and courageous evaluation.

(1) They were courteous. They called Naaman “my father,” showing respect and submission. They chose their words carefully that they might persuade Naaman and help him.

(2) They spoke from what they knew about Naaman. He was proud and courageous; they knew he was willing to do a great deed.

But, it was precisely this, Naaman’s pride and his personal opinion which was keeping Naaman from being healed. So, the four concerned servants tactfully sought a way to show Naaman that it was not his greatness, by which he would be healed, but by the greatness of the God of Israel. They were able to see from their more humble state and perspective that this was designed to demonstrate the power of the God of Israel. Should he not, then, heed the simple instruction of the prophet.

Finally, this simple command beautifully illustrates the simplicity of the gospel message of salvation in Jesus--that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone (Eph 2:8-10). The invitation of the gospel is “come, purchase without money and without price . . .” (Isa. 55:1). And how do you do that? By faith. The way of faith is the way of humiliation and repudiation of self worth, human ability, or religious works, which then casts us on the grace of God (Rev. 21:6; 22:1; Rom. 4:1-5; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:4-5). Faith is the one thing we can do without doing anything. Faith is the recognition of God’s ability and the repudiation of ours. Of course, there are those who read this passage and use it to promote baptismal regeneration, but the analogy of Scripture and the abundance of clear passages teach us that water baptism, as important as it is, does not save us. If that was true, then water baptism would be a part of the gospel message but the apostle Paul repudiates that idea in 1 Corinthians 1:14-17.

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 that no man should say you were baptized in my name. 16 Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. 17 *For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel*, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void (emphasis mine).

### **The Cleansing of Naaman (5:14)**

So he went down and dipped *himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

The immediate cleansing illustrates the complete and instantaneous nature of salvation. We note that he was cleansed “according to the Word.” Salvation is always and only according to the Word, and never according to our feelings or emotions or human reason (cf. Rom 16:25-26). He was cleansed instantly and completely so that his flesh became like that of a little child, but not only his flesh, but his heart also. He became a new creature by faith in the Lord of Elisha the prophet.

### **The Gratitude and Response of Naaman (5:15-16)**

When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him, he said, “Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; so please take a present from your servant now.” 16 But he said, “As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing.” And he urged him to take *it*, but he refused.

These verses provide us with an illustration of the first fruits of salvation. First, he confessed and acknowledged his faith in the Lord (vs. 15). From a grateful heart he wanted to give a present to Elisha to express his appreciation for what God had done.

However, Elisha, carefully and wisely refuses. Why? Elisha had accepted help from the Shunammite woman and her husband, and Scripture teaches it is right for those who are taught the Word to share all good things with him who teaches (Gal. 6:6) So why did he refuse to accept a gift from Naaman? Because there were other implicating issues that would be compromised by receiving a gift at this time. He wanted

Naaman and all those watching to know he was a servant of Yahweh and not like the greedy heathen priests in the service of Baal. He also wanted them to understand that salvation and all of God's blessings are free, they cannot be bought nor can they be earned (Rev. 21:6; 22:1; Rom. 4:1-5; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:4-5). Elisha refused to take anything lest he compromise the name of God and His grace (cf. 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:5; 2 Thess. 3:7-8 with Phil. 4:15-17).

### **Naaman's Concern Regarding His Master's Worship (5:17-19)**

17 And Naaman said, "If not, please let your servant at least be given two mules' load of earth; for your servant will no more offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD. 18 In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter." 19 And he said to him, "Go in peace." So he departed from him some distance.

This certainly illustrates the kind of concern God's people should have regarding their worship, their testimony and the appearance of evil. Naaman knew that he would have to return to his old environment and live in the midst of idolatry and evil. He was concerned that he might have a proper means of worship for he could no longer worship in the house of Rimmon. He would not compromise Yahweh. He needed a place and a means for worship, so he asked for permission (note the sudden change in attitude) to take two loads of soil back home. The exact reason is not specified, only implied. Some believe it was so he could erect an altar to Yahweh for a memorial or witness to the God of Israel in his own land. On this he could offer sacrifices as an evidence of his determination to forsake all other gods.

Another suggestion is, "Naaman asked Elisha whether two mule loads of Israelite soil might be taken with him back to Syria so that whenever circumstances forced him to bow ceremonially to the Aramean gods with his king, he might in reality be placing his knees in the soil of the true God of Israel."<sup>54</sup> Regardless, Naaman was concerned about what God would think about his presence in the house of Rimmon.

Elisha's only response was, "Go in peace." This implies Elisha's assurance that God understands. The issue was his attitude and heart. Perhaps this illustrates the principle of separation versus isolation. Believers are to infiltrate or penetrate the world for the Lord. As the Lord put it, we are to be in the world, but not of it (John 17:15-17).

So Naaman knew he would have to go back into the world and face the evil of that day. It was his responsibility, but he knew he needed fortification through the true worship of the true God if he was to be an effective witness.

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45 Irving L. Jensen, *II Kings With Chronicles*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1968, p. 27.

46 *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2, Merrill C. Tenney, general editor, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1975, p. 138.

47 Ibid, p. 138-139.

48 Ibid, p. 139.

49 1 John 1:8-10 deals with confession of three issues: (1) confession of the principle of sin, the fact of a sinful nature (vs. 8), (2) confession of the particular, personal sins (vs. 9), and (3) confession of the practice, we are sinners (vs. 10).

50 Jensen, p. 29.

51 Jensen, p. 28.

52 There are always those who claim that we are saved by human obedience, the obedience of water baptism and other good works. They seek to support this with passages like Acts 5:32, "... whom God has given to those who obey Him," Romans 1:5 and 16:26, "the obedience of faith." But the obedience mentioned in Acts 5:32 is obedience to the command to believe in Christ, to put one's faith in Him as an abundance of Scripture shows. Compare John 3:16-18, 36; 6:29; 1 John 3:23; and Acts 6:7, "were becoming obedient to the faith." Further, Romans 1:5 and 16:26 can mean, "the obedience produced by faith," or "the obedience which is faith." The obedience required is faith, faith defines the obedience. In the light of Paul's theology



of salvation and sanctification, probably both ideas were included in Paul's statements; his goal as an apostle was to bring men to faith in Christ, but then through their new life, to be full of good works. For the issue of water baptism, see the studies on "Assaults on the Gospel" in lesson 7, Part 3 of the ABCs Series, 53 Jensen, p. 29.

54 *NIV Bible Commentary*, electronic media.