

Wash, and be clean?"

ELISHA

The Great Things That

little Israelite maid was a shining witness for God in Naaman's house. Any believer can and should be a representative of the Lord wherever God puts him. Both our lives and our testimonies should reflect and expound God's truth! See

One of the great prophets and miracle-workers of the Bible was Elisha. His ministry after the translation of his master Elijah covered over fifty years, and was marked by mighty evidences of the power of faith in God. Let us let our faith grow as we study what Elisha did.

Lesson #7:
The Healing of Naaman

Scripture:
II Kings 5:1-27

Key Verse:
II Kings 5:13
"And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee,

Hath Done

Elisha's ministry was carried out during the reigns of four kings of Israel (the northern kingdom): Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Joash. The miraculous events of II Kings 4 and 5 took place under the reign of Jehoram, who is called simply "*the king of Israel*" in II Kings 5:5-7. The story in Chapter 5 is about a Syrian general named Naaman. For years the Syrians (a people associated with the ancient city of Damascus) had harrassed and attacked the Israelites. It was in a war with Syria that King Ahab had been killed (Look over I Kings 20 and 22). They were a pagan people, but we can see in the story of Naaman that God loved individual Syrians. God loves all people, and He always has. His covenant with Israel was established for certain important purposes, but the Lord did not love individual Israelites more than He loved Gentiles. Israel was to be a witness of His truth and love before the pagan people of the world. God's sovereignty arranged for a very wonderful act of grace to be bestowed upon the Gentile Naaman, as we will see.

I. A "Little" Witness (II Kings 5:1-6)

Naaman, "*the captain of the host of the king of Syria, . . . a great man. . . and honorable*" had a big problem. "*He was a leper.*" The disease of leprosy was in his body and would eventually take his life. Every life is a mixture of good and bad. Every successful person has a failure. Every strong person has a weakness. Every happy person has a heartache. Every human being has a need of some kind, a need he recognizes. In having these needs, men see their need of God! Thankfully, Naaman not only had a need, but he also had a witness for God in his life. This witness (See Acts 1:8) was not the prophet at this time. The first witness for God to Naaman was "*a little maid*" whom Syrian raiding parties "*had brought away captive out of the land of Israel.*" The girl was now the handmaiden of Naaman's wife. She was a long way from home and she probably would never go back. She was a lowly slave with little right to speak to the great captain. Her homeland was God's nation, but the people were now largely astray from God's ways. Nevertheless the

(II Kings 8:4)

Matthew 5:14-16. Speak up for the Lord, and live a life that will cause people to listen when you speak! She loved her master, and she just blurted out to her mistress these important words:

"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."
(v.3)

Elisha was not known for curing leprosy, but he was known for miracles, and the little witness knew that Elisha's God, her God, could *do anything*! As we see in vs. 4-6 these words led to a chain of events that sent Naaman down to Israel in search of the prophet. We never know how much good a few words for the Lord can do. The Holy Spirit will use our humble witness if we join in partnership with Him. See what Jesus said in John 15:26-27.

II. A Humbling Command (II Kings 5:7-13)

Jehoram was upset when he received the letter requesting that Naaman be healed. Remember that this was a wicked king (II Kings 3:1-3), not a godly one. The miracle that was to happen would serve as a testimony to him as well as to the Syrians. When Elisha heard about the letter and the king's reaction, he called for Naaman to be sent to him. Naaman already had in mind what he imagined would happen when he met the great prophet (v. 11). He thought that Elisha would come out of his house to greet him. Then he would pray long and loud over his leprous body, moving his hands over the place where the leprosy could be seen. Miraculously, the disease would be cured, the captain would reward Elisha for his help (vs. 15-16), and he would return to Syria for a joyous welcome! But this is *not* what happened. Elisha did not even come out of the house, but rather sent Gehazi out with a brief message (v. 10). The message was that Naaman should go down to the dirty Jordan River and "*wash. . . seven times.*" The promise was "*thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be*

clean.”
Immediately
Naaman was very
angry! He felt
insulted by Elisha’s
sending a
messenger out
instead of coming
out himself. He
was also boiled
that such a thing
would be asked of
him. “Are not
Abana and
Pharpar, rivers of
Damascus, better
than all the rivers
of Israel?” he said.
It doesn’t take
much

Notes:

wisdom to see that *pride* was Naaman’s stumbling block in this matter. “*So he turned and went away in a rage*” (v. 12). But, thank God, “*His servants came near, and spake unto him.*” What they said made good sense, and persuaded the captain to humble himself and obey the prophet’s orders.

“*If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?*” (v. 13)

How many blessings from God are forfeited because of pride? Nobody knows. How thankful we should be for friends who come along and encourage us to go ahead and do what the Lord said to do. The command may not seem reasonable (Proverbs 3:5), and it may involve humbling ourselves (Matthew 18:4), but we always miss out when we fail to obey God. Go ahead and do what the Lord has said!

III. A Real Miracle
(II Kings 5:14-19)

Finally persuaded to obey, Naaman went down to the Jordan “*and dipped himself three times.*” The Greeks translated this Hebrew word for “dip” with the word used in the New Testament for baptism. Baptizing is dipping. Of course, Naaman lived long before anyone received Christian baptism, but his dipping in the Jordan illustrates for us what baptism is. When he humbled himself and believed God enough to obey, a miracle took place. Actually two miracles happened that day for Naaman. He was both physically and spiritually healed. Verse 15, 17 and 18 certainly indicate that Naaman that day was converted to the worship of the true God!

“*Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. . .*”
(I Thessalonians 1:9)

What happens to those who turn to Christ for salvation happened to Naaman as he turned in his heart to Jehovah. Notice that his physical healing pictured his spiritual salvation.

“*His flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.*” (v. 14)

This cleansing pictures the new birth described by Jesus in John 3:5-8. When we put our trust in Christ for salvation, we are “*born of the Spirit*” and have a new life. Evidence of his new life is found in Naaman’s desire to worship Jehovah acceptably back home (v. 17) and his desire not to offend the Lord in his assigned duties as the Syrian king’s chief captain (v. 18).

Naaman could now “go in peace” (v. 19) because now he belonged to the Lord. Do you belong to the Lord? Let Jesus Christ give you the second birth, and you will be God’s own child (See John 1:11-13).

IV. A Corrupt Servant (II Kings 5:20-27)

Why did Elisha refuse to accept a gift from Naaman (vs. 15-16)? It is not wrong for a preacher to receive gifts. Paul said,

“Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

(I Corinthians 9:13-14)

It is proper for God’s people to give support to preachers, but it is improper for a preacher (or anyone) to receive payment for a work of God! Look at Acts 8:18-20.

“When Simon saw that through

laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.”

It was the wrong time and the wrong circumstance for the accepting of a donation (See II Kings 5:26), but Gehazi was not a man to be concerned about the honor and truth of God. He was a carnal man, not a spiritual man. I Corinthians 3 makes it clear that a person may be indwelt by the Spirit but not controlled by the Spirit (vs. 16-17; Study all of this chapter!). He is still controlled by his flesh, his sinful human nature. Such a person can be called a carnal (fleshly) Christian. He is saved, but he is not laying up treasures in Heaven (vs. 13-15). He is always in the baby stage of Christian growth (vs. 1-2). He lives in many ways like a “natural man,” an unsaved person (vs. 3-4; Also see I Corinthians 2:14-15). He sees only the visible, human side of things and never the spiritual causes behind the scenes (vs. 5-9). Gehazi was carnal. Every day every Christian is either spiritual or carnal every moment he lives. He is either walking in the flesh or walking in the Spirit (See Galatians 5:16). Often we find carnal people trying to work for the Lord under spiritual people. This was Gehazi’s situation, and it doesn’t work. Elisha’s servant was interested in the excitement, the glamor, and the money of the ministry. In this case, he lied and extorted, while using his position as prophet-in-training. As a result, God cursed him. It is dangerous to pretend to serve God while living according to the flesh.