

2 Kings 5:1-27

Namaan's Leprosy Healed

2 Kings 5:1 - "Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valor, but he was a leper."

"by him the LORD had given victory to Syria" - The rabbis claim that it was Naaman whose shot the arrow that killed King Ahab (**1 Kings 22:34**) Naaman is the only Gentile that the scriptures describe as "a mighty man of valor."

Leprosy was and is a loathsome and humiliating disease, turning the skin scaly white and slowly eating away at human flesh. Leviticus 13 and 14 give instructions on how to recognize it and deal with those afflicted. It also served as an outward picture of humanity's inward sin and rebellion, which we'll talk about later.

For now, just know that Naaman, despite his glory and high standing in Syrian society, was facing a death sentence from a disease that had no cure. Apparently it was in the early stages and did not yet hinder him carrying out his duties.

The Witness of a Slave Girl

2 Kings 5:2-4 - "And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel."

i.e. Naaman told the Syrian King, probably Ben Hadad, what the girl had said.

2 Kings 5:5-6 - "And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy."

King Jehoram Thinks it's a Trick

2 Kings 5:7 - "And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

"He shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

2 Kings 5:8-9 - "And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha."

Wash Seven Times in the Jordan

2 Kings 5:10-12 - "And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, 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 strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage."

Naaman was expecting a powerful display, something dramatic. At least Elisha should have come out and greeted him personally! But this was all to tamp down Naaman's pride.

This story is about powerful kings and generals, and even a famous and high-profile prophet. But the heroes are the lowly characters - the captured slave girl who tell's Naaman's wife about Elisha, and here Naaman's servants, who convince him to listen to Elisha.

2 Kings 5:14 - "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, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

Spiritually - when we look at the hopelessness of our situation, separated from God by our sin, we imagine that God should require extreme self-exertion, have us run a gauntlet or confront a challenge that ought to mirror the weight of the tragic guilt we bear. But Jesus has already undergone the judgment and took the penalty on Himself. Instead, we are asked to simply repent and believe.

Washing seven times in the river was analogous to the instructions on the Torah:

According to the law of the cleansing the leper, he was to be sprinkled seven times, and on the seventh day his flesh was to be bathed or dipped all over in water, which is meant by washing here.

- **Leviticus 14:1-7** - "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2 This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest: 3 and the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper; 4 then shall the priest command to take for him that is to

be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop: 5 and the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water: 6 as for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water: 7 and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field."

The ceremony reflected a resurrection - one bird is killed, another bird, dipped in its blood, flies free.

2 Kings 5:15-16 - "And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant. But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused."

Unlike many televangelists and some other ministries today, Elisha refused to ask for or take payment for a healing. He knew God had done the healing, not him.

Ministers are "worthy of their hire" according to the New Testament (**Luke 10:7**). But Naaman's gift would approach \$1.2 million in today's accounting. Paul refused to take payment in some situations, instead repairing sails in order to not be beholden to patrons or be tempted to have "respect of persons" as he delivered the gospel. There is a fine line between receiving support and doing ministry as a hireling, as Jesus said. A hireling is a shepherd who doesn't care about the sheep, only his own pay (John 10:12).

Taking the Promised Land with Him

2 Kings 5:17-18 - "And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD. In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing."

This is a remarkable scene. A Gentile convert, showing the universality of God's sovereignty.

- **Isaiah 45:22** – “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”

- **Isaiah 66:23** – “From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,’ says the LORD.”

Naaman asked for forgiveness when he would be forced to bow down to a false god (Rimmon) by the king of Syria. Some put this is the past tense - pardon for his

previous idolatry.

2 Kings 5:19 - "And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way."

Gehazi's Greed

Elisha's servant (and probably disciple) sees the riches brought by Naaman and thinks it's a shame Elisha didn't take any of it. Gehazi lies to Naaman about the two other disciples. The money will be only for him.

This is remarkably similar to the "goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight" taken by Achan in the attack on Ai in **Joshua 7:21**. His action also points toward Judas, who begrudged the "waste" of expensive perfume poured over Christ's feet and sold out Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (**Matthew 26:15**). There is even an element of Ananias and Saphira lying to Peter (**Acts 5:1-11**).

2 Kings 5:24 - "And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed."

"the tower" - the Jewish translation has "a secret place"

2 Kings 5:25 - "But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither."

2 Kings 5:26-27 - "And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."

Basically, Elisha is saying, Now that you've taken the money, I guess it's time for you to go spend it. But the cost will be that the leprosy that Naaman was healed from will now cling to you and your offspring forever.

Besides greed, Gehazi is guilty of trying to **steal the concept of grace** itself away from Naaman. He causes him to consider again that something might be required to give in exchange for his healing. Gehazi becomes stumbling block to Naaman's salvation.

[Thanks to Robert Sussland for this insight]

Leprosy

Leprosy is an outbreak on the skin - the visible part of human flesh. It reveals what the true condition of our flesh is inside, from God's point of view:

- **Isaiah 1:6** - "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

The sacrifice had to be without blemish. The Bride has to have no spot.

"Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee" - (**Song of Sol. 4:7**)

"He offered Himself without blemish to God" (**Hebrews 9:14**)

When Leprosy covers the whole body, the leper is declared clean.

Leviticus 13:13 - "Then the priest shall consider: and, behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague: it is all turned white: he is clean."

This condition is symbolic of seeing our complete unrighteousness before God, which - through repentance - makes us spiritually clean.

- "In a mystical sense so is every sinner, whether sensible of it or not, even from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, full of the wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores of sin (Isaiah 1:6). The mystical or spiritual meaning of this is, that when a man sees himself to be a sinful creature, all over covered with sin, and no part free, and disclaims all righteousness of his own to justify him before God, but wholly trusts to, and depends upon the grace of God for salvation, and the righteousness of Christ for his acceptance with God; he becomes clean through the grace of God and the blood and righteousness of Christ." - *John Gill's Commentary*

Elisha's cleansing of the leprosy of Naaman is expanded in Jesus cleansing 10 lepers (**Luke 17:11-19**) but only one returned to thank Him. There again we see Jesus multiplying a miracle by 10 times.

Jesus, although without blemish and without sin, became sin for us.

- **2 Corinthians 5:21** - "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

In the same way He took our leprosy upon Himself.

"The Messiah --what is his name?...The Rabbis say, The Leper Scholar, as it is said, `surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted...'" (Sanhedrin 98b)

- **Isaiah 53:3** - "...we hid as it were our faces from him." That's how people would respond to a leper.

The Talmud also "records" a supposed discourse between the great Rabbi Joshua ben Levi and the prophet Elijah. The rabbi asks "When will the Messiah come?" And "By what sign may I recognize him?" Elijah tells the rabbi to go to the gate of the city where he will find the Messiah sitting among the poor lepers. The Messiah, says the prophet, sits bandaging his leprous sores one at a time, unlike the rest of the sufferers, who bandage them all at once. Why? Because he might be needed at any time and would not want to be delayed. Elijah says he will come "Today, if you will hear his voice." (Sanhedrin 98a)

Summary - We need to remember that we ARE Gehazi. Our self-seeking and covetousness knows no bounds. Our leprosy is incurable. Only when we see ourselves as completely leprous, with no small part of us as innocent or worthy, can we receive the cleansing, as Jesus takes our leprosy onto Himself.

Resources:

The Messiah is called "the leper"(Sanhedrin 98b)
https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/145598/jewish/Living-with-Moshiach-Tazria-Metzora.htm

8 Lepers in the Bible (and Midrash)
https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/4347485/jewish/8-Lepers-in-the-Bible-and-Midrash.htm