

- *now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.....* The healing brought Naaman to the point of faith in the Lord of Israel. As a result, he wanted to reward Elisha with his earthly treasures (Lk 17:11-19).
- However, Elisha steadfastly insisted that he would receive nothing from Naaman. The prophets were not adverse to receiving gifts from those who consulted them (cf 4:42). But in this instance, it would be very improper for Elisha to do so.
 - Elisha wanted Naaman to leave Israel knowing that he was the beneficiary of God's free gift. God's gifts cannot be bought (Eph 2:8-9).
 - It was also important that Naaman should not suppose that the prophet of the true God acted from motives of self-interest (Acts 8:18-20). Those who serve God must not do so for financial gain but out of love and simple obedience to the Lord.

(iii) *Naaman's Nascent Faith, 5:17-19*

- As Naaman left to return to Syria, he asked the prophet Elisha for 2 mule-loads of earth to make an altar of earth to the Lord (Ex 20:24), for he would in the future offer sacrifices to the Lord. This isn't quite according to the Mosaic Law but the important thing is that in his heart, Naaman was putting away all other gods to serve only the Lord. Naaman had certainly grasped the main point: there is but one living and true God and He is Yahweh. To worship another so-called god, therefore, would be very foolish, very ungrateful, and very wrong. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we must worship only the One true God (1 Thess 1:9).
- Naaman is now in a sticky situation. He was the head of the army of Syria. This carried some uncomfortable responsibilities, including paying homage to Rimmon, the Syrian god (Zech 12:11), with the king. The king would literally be leaning on Naaman's arm as he bowed down to his god, and this would require Naaman to bow down too. But in his heart Naaman would no longer bow to this god. So he wondered how God would look upon this outward act. Elisha neither forbade him to go into the temple of Rimmon, nor encouraged him to do so. Instead, Elisha said, "*Go in peace*" (v19).
- This matter was left to Naaman's own faith and conscience. Elisha isn't condoning the worship of Rimmon, or the act of bowing before Rimmon. His attitude towards Naaman was one of grace. Naaman's faith was yet untaught. When Naaman grows up a little more in the Lord, he'll hopefully know better (John 16:12). Perhaps Elisha trusted that the Lord would personally convict Naaman of this and give him the integrity and strength to avoid idolatry. Elisha had to trust the God of Israel who had saved this pagan general to also guide him in his new relationship with God. God would solve this difficulty in His time & in His way. Naaman could go on his way rejoicing in his new-found salvation & nobody could take from Naaman the peace that he had found.

2 Kings 5 – The Healing of Naaman

- 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 also a story of salvation which man finds only in Jesus Christ.

1. Naaman's Leprosy (5:1-8)

- Naaman was a "great man" and "honourable", highly regarded by his master, the king of Syria. He was the chief military commander of Syria and had been successful in leading the Syrian army, including in their battles with Israel. Syria was Israel's chief enemy during this period. Personally Naaman was also a valiant soldier. But Naaman's stature and success are specifically attributed to the Lord "*because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria*" (v1). Naaman's success in his battles with Israel was God's judgment on Israel because of the sins of His people. God governs not only His own people, but also the nations of the earth (cf 8:7-10).
- As great as he is, Naaman was a leper. In biblical times, leprosy was one of the most feared & dreaded diseases of all, and it was incurable (Lev 13 & 14). Worse, lepers were considered "unclean" and therefore cast out from society (Lk 17:12-13). In Scripture, leprosy is a picture of sin and man's true spiritual condition without Christ. Just as only God can heal this dreaded disease, so only God can heal and cleanse the human heart from the awful disease of sin.
- More devastating, Naaman had no knowledge of the one true God. His only possible contact with the source of healing of his disease was through an Israelite girl who was taken captive in a raid. When she heard about her master's disease, the servant girl said to her mistress, "*would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy*" (v3). This young girl is an outstanding example of a faithful witness in her current circumstance. She cared enough to speak up, and she had faith enough to believe that God through Elisha would be able to heal her master of his leprosy. She knew what her God could do (Lk 1:37). God put her in the right place at the right time in Naaman's household. Naaman's healing and salvation was directly attributed to the faithfulness of this young girl.
- Naaman obtained the king of Syria's permission and assistance to pursue healing in Israel. The king of Syria wrote a letter to the king of Israel, politely demanding that he see to it that Naaman be healed of his leprosy. And if the letter would not intimidate the king of Israel into arranging for Naaman's healing, there was also the incentive provided by the offer of the money which Naaman had brought with him. Naaman brought with him 10 talents of silver, 6000 pieces of gold and lots of raiment as gifts for the king of Israel. But all the money in the world cannot cure Naaman of his leprosy or a man with the spiritual leprosy of sin (1 Pet 1:18-19; Tit 3:5).

- When the king of Israel (Jehoram?) read the letter from the king of Syria, he was understandably upset. First, it was obviously out of the king's power to heal Naaman's leprosy. Only God could heal a leper. Second, the king of Israel had no relationship with the prophet of God who did have the power to heal. Because the king of Israel had ceased to seek divine guidance, it never entered this king's mind to turn to Elisha for help when he was in trouble. So the king of Israel thought the king of Syria sought a quarrel to justify another war.
- When Elisha got word of what was going on, he rebuked the king of Israel for there was no need for the king to tear his garments in frustration and alarm. This was a crisis because the king had no relationship with God. All that the king needed to do was to send Naaman to Elisha to be healed. Note the contrast between the faith of the young servant girl, who knew of Elisha and believed in his (God's) power; and the distress of Israel's king, who did not even think of Elisha and fretted over his own lack of power.

2. Naaman's Healing (5:9-19)

(i) Elisha's Instructions, 5:9-13

- Naaman arrived at Elisha's house with his whole retinue of attendants and expected a VIP treatment. Naaman even had his own preconceived ideas about how his healing should take place (v11). But Naaman was wrong! Elisha casually sent his servant to meet Naaman with his instructions: *Go and wash in the Jordan seven times...*(v10; Lev 14:7). This was so humbling to Naaman who was accustomed to being honoured. This was Elisha's way of letting Naaman know from the beginning that (i) Elisha served a greater King than the Naaman; (ii) God was in charge of the miracle & would do it His way.
- When Naaman heard these instructions, communicated to him by a mere servant, he became furious. He was insulted that he had not been treated in a manner worthy of his position. In his great need, he anticipated a way God would work, and he was offended when God didn't work the way he expected. Worse, he was greatly angered when he was told to immerse himself in the waters of the Jordan. Back in Damascus, he had cleaner and more impressive rivers. Naaman was offended both with the message and with the manner in which it was delivered. He'd misunderstood Elisha. Elisha was asking him to take a step of faith. It wasn't about the Jordan being "better"; it was about faith and obedience to God. These were simple, uncomplicated instructions. Yet as Naaman's reactions demonstrate, these were humbling instructions. Naaman wanted to be cured in his own way, and not in God's way.
- Naaman's servants had great insight and were bold enough to give him very sound advice. If Naaman had been commissioned to do something difficult, he would have done so. He would have employed every possible means to become healthy again. Now, however, the prophet had given a simple order: "wash, and be clean". Why not then listen to these simple words of the man of God?

- Naaman is a picture of many unbelievers who do not believe in the simplicity of the gospel of the grace of God. Some people think it's too simple to just "believe" in Jesus. But the "simple plan" of God is for sinners to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and receive by faith the eternal life He offers.
- God's promises always require real faith. The gospel and many of God's promises may seem absurd or even offensive. What is foolish to men has proved countless times to be the power and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:18,23). The gospel is a test of faith.

Fortunately for Naaman, his servants reasoned with him and prevailed. God used various means to humble, heal and save Naaman.

(ii) Naaman's Healing, 5:14-16

- Naaman was convinced and he went and dipped in the Jordan seven times. He did exactly what Elisha told him to do. As he came up for the seventh time, to his amazement, his flesh was clean like that of a child (Mt 18:3)! His leprosy was completely healed. Not only was his flesh like that of a little child, but his attitude was changed to that of a little child.
 - Humility - Naaman "went down". His pride had to go – and in front of all his officers and servants (1 Pet 5:5-6).
 - Obedience - Naaman dipped himself beneath the water 7X. Only when he obeyed fully by dipping the seventh time did the miracle take place (1 Kings 18:43; Josh 6:3-20).
 - Healing - God answered Naaman's faith with complete and miraculous healing. The simple method of this miracle, performed without the prophet's presence, gave God the credit.
- Naaman had to humble himself and obey God to be healed. His healing is a reminder of how all men can be saved (Lk 23:33; 1 Jn 1:7; Rom 10:9-10). Men must see themselves to be spiritually as unclean and wretched as Naaman was physically (and spiritually) and humbly submit to that salvation which God has provided through His Son, Jesus. Jesus used the story of Naaman and Elisha as an illustration of Israel's problem of unbelief in Luke 4:27. The healing of Naaman was authenticated by Jesus.
- After his healing, Naaman returned to Israel and offered to reward Elisha but the prophet refused. Naaman wished to express his deep gratitude and appreciation to God.
 - Before Naaman expected the prophet to come to him. Now he returned to the man of God and stood before him.
 - *Behold, now I know that there is no God in all earth, but in Israel:* Now Naaman understood that Jehovah in Israel was not just another God; He is the one and only living God of the whole world. Naaman has become a follower of God.