

2 Kings 5

In the 4th ch of the gospel of Luke you find that as Jesus is just beginning to “ramp up” His public ministry, from the very onset He begins to prophecy of the nations rejection of Him, their refusal to believe in Him. There they are having listened to Him proclaim His purpose in being there, being anointed of God to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, being sent to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord. And the people are blown away at what it is that He has to say, and the gracious words that were proceeding from His mouth. “I mean, after all” they said, “Isn’t this Joseph’s boy?” Which was kind of a subtle way of saying, “No way, we know who you are.” They were already against the notion of Him being anything more than a simple carpenter’s boy; it was a rejection. And at that point Jesus began to speak to them of how they would ultimately reject Him saying, “Physician, heal Yourself!” But that how their rejection of Him would ultimately turn out only for their own demise, and he began to rebuke them for their unbelief saying how that there were many widows in the days of Elijah but to none of them was he sent except to one Gentile widow in Zarephath. And he said, “*And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.*” Luke 4:27 and He was demonstrating a pattern of how Israel continually refused to heed those whom God had sent to them and how that the Gentiles were more open *to* and would receive the blessing *of* God more than them.

Here in 2nd Kings Ch 5 we find this particular portion of scripture to which Jesus was referring regarding Naaman the Syrian. And really this chapter serves to give us a profound picture not only of the nature of sin as found in leprosy, but also of God’s desire to *reach out* and bring *salvation to* the Gentiles as well. God’s heart is for all of mankind, we often quote the fact that God is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance. One of the things that came up at the conference I was at last week was regarding God’s election and how that the purpose of God’s election has always been for the sake of others never for ourselves. So that when God saves you, though the benefit to you is tremendous and you and I are eternally indebted to Him for His salvation that He has graced us with, His primary purpose doesn’t solely stop with you. The reason God has reached out to you is because He wants to use your life to reach out to others, and whenever we begin to think of God’s election in an introverted/self centered kind of way rather than an *others oriented* way, we’ve missed it. Because it’s God’s desire to use us to reach others, that’s why Israel was elect of God, because God wanted to use Israel to demonstrate who He was to the world, that the world might come to know Him through Israel’s reflection of Him. That’s why Paul said regarding the fall of Israel, “*Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!” Rom 11:12 Which is to say that if God can accomplish all that He has through Israel’s *failure*, just think of what would happen should they *fulfill* God’s purpose in their election. Well, all that to say that here we see just such a picture, and though Israel is overall rejecting the One True Living God, this Gentile will receive Him.*

So here we're introduced to this man Naaman, given a basic thumbnail sketch of who he is. And though we read of all these wonderful accomplishments in his life, (commander of the army of the king of Syria, a great and honorable man, a mighty man of valor) the one thing that crashes in to overshadow all of that which he was are these last 2 words, "a leper."

And as you well know "leprosy" in the scripture becomes for you and me a practically perfect picture of sin in that it is both terrible and incurable by natural means. Today they're able to arrest the disease, but there's still no cure. In his book *Unclean! Unclean!*, L.S. Huizenga describes some of the horrors of leprosy: "The disease which we today call leprosy generally begins with pain in certain areas of the body. Numbness follows. Soon the skin in such spots loses its original color. It gets to be thick, glossy and scaly... As the sickness progresses, the thickened spots become dirty sores and ulcers due to poor blood supply. The skin, especially around the eyes and ears, begins to bunch with deep furrows between the swellings, so that the face of the afflicted individual begins to resemble that of a lion. Fingers drop off... toes are affected similarly. Eyebrows and eyelashes drop out. By this time one can see the person in this pitiable condition is a leper. By a touch of the finger one can also feel it. One can even smell it, for the leper emits a very unpleasant odor. Moreover, in view of the fact that the disease-producing agent frequently also attacks the larynx, the leper's voice acquires a grating quality. His throat becomes hoarse, and you can now not only see, feel, and smell the leper, but you can hear his rasping voice. And if you stay with him for some time, you can even imagine a peculiar taste in your mouth, probably due to the odor." The impact of leprosy on their society was so atrocious that God devoted 2 chapters of the law regarding its diagnosis and how it was that they were to deal with the individual. But you can see how leprosy typifies sin, it starts out small, looks like a small spot, or rash or something on the skin, no big deal, but then it begins to desensitize you so that you're doing grave damage to yourself and you don't even realize it, you begin to lose parts of yourself as it courses through you, you begin to look hideously ugly to those who are clean and ultimately it consumes you until it finally destroys you. Or as James put it, "...and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." James 1:15

And one of the things I want you to see here in this vs is that it doesn't matter how honorable, or noble, how high a caliber of an individual you may be morally or anything else, apart from Christ we're all lepers. We've all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Naaman had done all these things, accomplished all those things, was militarily revered, politically and publicly respected, but that didn't change the fact that he was a leper. He was still infected with an incurable disease and none of those things could help him.

But something else we notice is that the understanding of the severity of the affliction of leprosy is directly related to the standards of a particular culture or society. Or to understand that another way, when a society is wicked, they perceive leprosy as less severe. In Israel when you were discovered to have been defiled by even the smallest symptom of leprosy, the Law of God said that you were to be isolated and segregated from society. But there in Syria, Naaman was able to continue to serve the King with out any ramifications, they didn't perceive it as a big of deal.

And we see that today, as our society grows more and more liberal, and we remove ourselves more and more from the principles and precepts of the word of God, the more tolerant we become of sin in our society. So that a generation ago, the Cleavers slept in separate beds on television, today that concept is comical. Homosexuality was virtually unheard of in any kind of social acceptance, today its paraded as a legitimate alternative lifestyle. Crimes that would've gotten you 20 yrs in prison get you a slap on the wrist. So behavior that was considered utterly sinful when we were a Christian nation is openly accepted and welcomed today, has the symptoms of leprosy changed? No, has the way God deals with sin changed? No, but as to where a nation governed by God knows how contagious and deadly the disease is, therefore they refuse to tolerate it, the ungodly nation isn't nearly as concerned and is far more accepting of the lepers condition.

The final thing I want you to see here is the fact that even though Naaman wasn't yet a believer, God was using his life. We read, "...by him the Lord had given victory to Syria." God is the One who is in control, and throughout scripture we see God using even the ungodly to ultimately accomplish His purposes. Be it Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, here we have Naaman and you can find others. But the point there is that God is the One who's orchestrating His ultimate purposes regardless of a particular present political persuasion.

Vs2-3

Real quick, there was something about this young girl that intrigued me. #1 That she was young, God loves to use young people, she reminds me in a round about way of a Joseph, or a Daniel, in that even though she'd been taken captive and was serving as a slave she still sought to be a blessing to her master. She could've been real bitter about the whole thing and under her breath been all, "He got what he had coming." But she didn't do that, she saw an opportunity here to be a blessing and witness to this family as to who the Living God is. Which brings me to the 2nd thing, even though she'd been taken captive and was serving presently as a slave she still trusted in the Lord, she wasn't disheartened, didn't suffer from an acute case of the "poor me's" she trusted God with her life wherever life found her. Again she could've grown bitter against God, thinking "What kind of God would allow me to be taken away from my family, placed in bondage to a pagan man amidst a pagan people, how could I serve a God like that?" But she didn't, she rested in the fact that God was in control, and she knew that despite the lot she had in life, God was able to deliver and that He could even heal Naaman of his incurable disease, and she bore witness to the power of God and His ability to save even when her life seemed to be in an unfavorable position at best. How do you represent God when circumstances don't seem to be favoring you for the moment. Do you still bear witness to His power, His love, His ability to forgive sin and restore lives, this young girl did and as a result of that Naaman will be saved. Now if she hadn't been in that position, that what seemed to be a circumstantial pitfall, Naaman would've never heard of the power of the God of Israel and would've died in his sins. You see God wants to use you in whatever circumstance you may be, good or bad to testify of His goodness and grace that people might come to know Him in a personal way.

Vs4-7

What a contrast between the King of Israel and the Israeli slave girl held captive in a foreign land. She had every confidence in the power of God, he couldn't even conceive such a thing, see he realized that Naaman was a dead man. He also realized that he was powerless to do anything about it, but as to where the slave girl knew that Elisha could intervene, the king didn't even stop to consider Elisha as an option. He just viewed this letter as an underhanded way for the King of Syria to justify himself in declaring war against Israel, "He's asked me to do something that he knows is impossible, then when I don't do it, he'll declare war."

Vs8

You might not care to know it, but Naaman will, send him to me.

Vs9-12

Naaman is offended, he can't believe the audacity of Elisha in that here he is this great general here with gifts, an entourage, in all his honor and dignity. And Elisha doesn't really even give him the time of day, he won't even step out of his house to meet him, he just sends a servant out to tell him to head down to the river and dip 7 times and he'll be cleansed. And Naaman became *furious*, "I though he'd come out with this robe with moons and stars all over it, a mystical looking hat with perhaps a wand and all, he's supposed to wave his hands in the air, start all this fog and lights show and in a dramatic presentation call on the name of his God, wave his wand over me and I'll be healed. If all I have to do is go dip in the creek, there are cleaner rivers where I come from, I'm not going to go dip in shoal creek!" 2 Things, #1 Naaman thought he was above this kind of treatment, he was a decorated war veteran, the king's personal military man, a dignitary and all. "And this guy won't even show me his face," that's called pride. You see God is dealing with Naaman on more than one level here. God hates pride, because pride will elevate itself in the presence of God.

It's what got Satan kicked out of Heaven. Pride is placing excessive self worth upon who you are. Sometimes you wish you could buy someone for what they're worth and then sell them for what they think they're worth, well the difference between what they're *worth* and what they *think* they're worth, is pride. And pride always runs counter to the purposes and plans of God, whenever pride and God's plans meet, there's always friction, never compromise, its always a head on collision. Because God refuses to place merit on us, not in the respect that He wasn't willing to give all that *He* had for us, but that He refuses to let us give anything that *we* have for Him, in other words, salvation is a free gift that we can never work hard enough for, or be important enough for. The cross levels all that stuff and we all come to Him the same, poor and beggarly, the cross is the ultimate remedy for mans pride. Paul said, "*But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.*" Phil 3:7 Which is to say that everything that made me anything in the world I flushed when I came to Christ. Because there's no part of salvation that God is going to let us boast in, its not in who *we are* its in who *He is*, it's not in what *we do*, it's in what *He's done*, not in what *we have to give*, but in what *He's already given*, so that in Christ there is neither male nor female bond or free, no social or economical differences, we're all one in Him. So in coming to Christ God will lay low man's pride, #2 The reason Naaman was infuriated was because he had it all figured out in his mind the way it

needed to go, and it didn't go that way. He thought it would be fog and lights, drama and suspense, but Elisha didn't make himself the center of attention, simply told him to dip 7 times in the Jordan by the mouth of his servant. The bible teaches us not to be wise in our own eyes, but to fear the Lord and depart from evil. In Isaiah 55 God has said, “...*My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,*’ says the LORD. *‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’*” Isa 55:8-9 How often we think that we've got something all figured out, only to get offended when it doesn't go our way. But thank God that He's not limited to our ability to reason and get things done, His ways are not our ways, and yet how we wrestle in just receiving the grace of God gracefully. (Notice)

Vs13-14

Now we need to point out that this isn't a picture of baptismal regeneration, but rather this guy is being made brand new by his believing the word of God and by faith following through on it. Nor was it the actual dipping itself that cleansed him, but the faith that prompted him to obedience is that which God honored. You've heard it over and over again its not works that save us, but the faith that saves us *does* work, it demonstrates itself in practical obedience to God's Word.

But I love the advice of his servants, “Look if he'd have sent you on a great and noble quest you'd have gladly followed through, but because he made it simple you're offended, doesn't that seem a bit out of line to you? How much more eager should you be if your cleansing consists of a simple step of faith?” Now as for why he was instructed to dip 7 times I couldn't exactly tell you other than to say that you know that 7 is the # of completeness. And the word “Jordan” means “Descender” so you begin to get the picture of the need to immerse yourself completely in the Descender and you will be made clean. And who is the descender but Jesus Christ who came down out of Heaven taking upon Himself the form of a man, who descended even lower in humbling Himself in obedience to the Father to the point of death, even the death of the cross after which He descended even lower in the lower parts of the earth, Ab's bosom leading the captivity captive. So the picture here that begins to develop for us is that as we're immersed in Christ He cleanses us of all sin, how? By faith, you don't need to do anything great to be cleansed of your sin, it's not a difficult thing, just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Vs15-17

Naaman is born again, he's convinced that Israel's God is the only true God, unfortunately the King of Israel doesn't see things the same way. And really what a slap in the face of the Syrian God anyway, he was unable to help him in anyway so the king of Syria had to send him to Israel, why would you worship a God who was unable to deliver you in your time of need? But notice the change in Naaman, both in his countenance externally and his attitude internally, he's full of gratitude, and humility. He left Elisha initially in a rage, now he returns some 25 miles just to testify of the life-changing encounter he's had with the God of Israel and to pay tribute to Him.

And again he tries to pay Elisha, but the price of your salvation was paid at the cross, it's a free gift. So Elisha says, "I'm not going to take your money, God is the One who cleansed you, not me." But again mark the characteristics of Naaman's conversion because all three are present at any true conversion. #1 He acknowledged that the Lord is God, #2 He committed to worship Him only, and #3 there was an inward transformation of his attitude that expressed itself in the outward demonstration of his actions.

Vs18-19

Notice Elisha didn't really say whether or not it was acceptable for him to bow in the temple of Rimmon. He just said, "Go in peace." I could be wrong but I'm of the persuasion that Elisha was comfortable commending this new believer over to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. He didn't have the word, he didn't know the Law of God, he confessed that he was going to worship the Lord only, but that he felt compelled to honor the king. Elisha just says, "Go in peace" "Hey, the Lord will lead you in that." Now to whom much is given much is required, and to him who knows to do what's right and doesn't do it to him it is sin. But how many of us know that the Holy Spirit is well able to convict when we've grieved Him and gone against God's desire for our lives? Believe me Naaman will be no different, but think of the testimony that he's taking back to him to the land and kind of Syria... You see this is what I was speaking about in the beginning, God has transformed this Gentile's life and now he's carrying back that message to his own country, an irrefutable witness of the grace/mercy of the God of Israel, His ability to save and transform your life.

Vs20

He's going to do some "Naaman and claimin" 1 Peter 5:2 says, "*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly*" like Demas he's forsaking Elisha having loved this present world.

Vs21-27

You see Gehazi thought, "I can't believe he's not going to take a thing, man think of the things I could have with even a portion of that, olive groves, vineyards, servants of my own and all the rest, I'm going to flag him down." And he lies to this new believe completely ruining the understanding of salvation by grace, now he's letting him pay. But then on top of that, now that he's lied to Naaman, he has to lie to Elisha to cover that, and that's the way it works, one lie, feeds the next, feeds the next. But Elisha said, "Where have you been Gehazi?" "No where really" "Did not my heart go with you with the man turned back from his chariot to meet you, is it time to receive clothing, vineyards, olive groves and servants?" In essence he tells him, you misrepresented my heart, and the heart of God, and don't you know that God knows *your* heart? You remember a couple of Sunday's ago when Peter told Simon the sorcerer "*Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!*" Acts 8:20 You see that's the problem we have here, that's the message that Gehazi is sending out to Naaman.

Now that was sin on Gehazi's part, so the leprosy that *was* upon Naaman, will now be an affliction upon Gehazi, what's the point? That regardless of who you may be, a military dignitary, or the servant of a prophet we're all susceptible to sin, and the more knowingly we commit sin the worse it engulfs us.

You see it's not that it's wrong for the one who sows into you spiritual things to receive from you material things. The bible makes that clear with scriptures like 1st Cor 9:1-14, we read in 1 Tim 5:17-18, "*Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages.'*" (honor = honorarium). And again in Rom 15:27 "*For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.*" And there are others but you get the idea. So it's not that the problem was for Elisha to be supported by the work of the ministry, the problem was in representing the gospel, or salvation as something that was for sale, or could be compensated for. You see their compensation wasn't to come that way, at that time, Elisha wasn't rebuking the Gehazi for wanting to take good care of his family. As if to say you're only spiritual if you're living a destitute life. The snare was in the inner motive of greed in his heart and in his seeking to make merchandise of the people of God, even to the point of representing his salvation as something that he could compensate for by silver or gold. But that's not how you were redeemed from your aimless conduct, you were redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ as of a lamb with out spot and with out blemish, it's impossible that you should purchase your own salvation, it's the gift of God. Gehazi fell in to that category of 1 Tim 6:9-10 of which you're no doubt familiar, "*...those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*" God help us to learn the great gain to be found in simple godliness with contentment.

Prayer points, That we be content, serving the Lord with godly fear, that God would teach us to receive grace gracefully, not be bent on seeking to somehow earn your favor through righteous or meriting works of our own, and like that young girl that we would serve You and point people to You regardless of where life's circumstances may find us.