

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's turn our bibles to 2 Kings 5

We have been studying the ministry of the prophet, Elisha – the prophet of grace.

And one of the things that I have pointed out through our studies is how his ministry, in many ways, parallels the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The way he interacted with people, the miracles that God performed through him – all point to Jesus Christ.

And we definitely saw this last week when Elisha brought back to life the son of the Shunemite woman.

This morning, we are going to see that grace extended to a gentile by the name of Naaman.

Naaman, as we will see was a broken individual – he had a terminal illness.

And the bad thing about this terminal illness is that there was no cure and that it was contagious.

And as that terminal illness spread through his body – it would cast a dark shadow upon his life – he was destined to become an outcast. But by grace, through faith we will see how he finds deliverance from his brokenness.

Let's pray...

[2Ki 5:1-27 NKJV] 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.

So, here in verse one, we are introduced to this individual by the name of Naaman.

As we have studied Elisha's ministry, I have pointed out that he interacted with different types of people.

The anonymous widow and the Shunemmite woman in chapter four, he interacted with kings in chapter 3.

Here, Naaman is the commander of the army of Syria.

Syria and Israel were enemies.

In fact, it was Syria who defeated and killed King Ahab (1 Kings 22)

And according to Jewish tradition – the certain man that shot the arrow that struck King Ahab – was none other than Naaman.

So because of his leadership and victories – Naaman appears to have everything going for him in life.

Except for one thing – he was a leper.

Lepers were outcasts.

They were not allowed to come within 6' of another person.

If the wind was blowing, that distance was increased to 150'

If they were walking down a road and someone was approaching them – they would have to scream, “unclean”, “unclean” so that the social distancing wasn’t violated.

Lepers were not even allowed to live with their families – they were forced to live in camps outside the city gates until they died.

2 And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. 3 Then she said to her mistress, "If only my master [were] with the prophet who [is] in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy."

Imagine what life would be like being a young child taken captive as a slave during a war.

Taken from your family.

Removed from all your friends.

Living in a distant land as a slave.

But notice that instead of wondering how much longer she was going to have to endure this period of difficulty or why God had allowed this to happen – her focus in on the well-being of her master.

In other words – she could have chosen to be bitter – but instead, she chose to be a blessing.

Not only does she continue to show remarkable faith – despite her circumstances.

Notice her spiritual discernment and compassion for her fellow human being.

She believes that God's grace can extend to foreigners, even to those that oppress His people – if they place their trust in Him.

She becomes the instrument that the Lord will use to tell Naaman that there was hope.

4 And [Naaman] went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus said the girl who [is] from the land of Israel." 5 Then the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand [shekels] of gold, and ten changes of clothing. 6 Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy. 7 And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes (I guess now we know why Naaman took 10 changes of clothing with him) **and said, "[Am] I God, to kill and make alive, that this man**

sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me."

Naaman couldn't simply travel from Syria to Israel on his own.

He needed a letter from his boss (the king of Syria)

So this letter was an official request for help.

And the thing to understand is that these requests for help could not be turned down without serious ramifications.

So this is why the King of Israel reacts the way he did.

He thinks that the King of Syria is trying to trap him – he thinks that the king of Syria is trying to make an excuse to go to war with him.

Notice the contrast in discernment between the young slave girl and the King of Israel

The young slave girl discerned right away that Elisha could help her master – the King of Israel was unable to discern that Elisha could cure Naaman.

And that lack of discernment is attributed to their spiritual condition.

The young girl put her trust in God and His messenger and the King of Israel didn't.

8 So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes?

Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." 9
Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of
Elisha's house. 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."

Elisha here rebukes the king of Israel for his behavior.

So he tells the king – send Naaman to my house – and he will know that there is a prophet of the One True Living God here in Israel – but he is never going to find it here in the palace.

So Naaman shows up at Elisha's house and Elisha sends a messenger to the door with instructions to Naaman –

Now, this is something that we saw last week with the Shunemite woman as Elisha used Gehazi as the point of contact between him and the woman – we see the same thing here.

And the messenger provides the instruction to Naaman to go wash in the Jordan seven times.

11 But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, '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 heal the leprosy.'12 "[Are]

not the Abanah and the 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.

As Naaman approached Elisha's door, he had it all figured out how everything was going to go down.

After all, being the important person he was, Elisha would meet him, then with some highfalutin religious mumbo-jumbo he'd wave his hands over the leprous lesions on his body, a single shaft of sunlight would break through the clouds shining on the spot, and a chorus of angels would be heard singing in heaven, and he would be completely healed.

But that is not what happened – and now he is angry.

He felt neglected.

Does Elisha think he is better than me?

To add insult to injury, he was told to go wash seven times in the Jordan River – a muddy creek when he compared it to some of the pristine rivers that he knew were back home.

So he stormed off.

Why did he storm off?

1. Pride
2. Misunderstanding of how God works.

Church, Naaman is learning a valuable lesson here about walking with God.

Things rarely turn out the way we plan and the way we expect.

God's not concerned with our agendas nor bound to our schedules.

This is something that I have learned in my own walk.

I pray and ask for God's intervention and then my analytical little mind begins to chart a perfectly logical, solid course that God can work through to get done what needs to get done.

Here is my five year plan God – make it happen (That's the way we think)

I've come to see that God does things that way to show me His ways truly are NOT my ways & that His ways truly are past finding out.

[Rom 11:33 NKJV] 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable [are] His judgments and His ways past finding out!

It is impossible for us to understand His decisions and His ways.

I need to know that He is bigger than my problems – so He keeps showing me how wise & powerful He is by bringing His blessing in totally unforeseen ways.

And that is the lesson that Naaman is about to learn.

13 And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, [if] the prophet had told you [to do] something great, would you not have done [it]? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

Naaman was angry because he expected a show.

He wanted something big!!!!

He couldn't grasp that dipping himself in the Jordan was going to cleanse him from his illness.

[1Co 1:27 NKJV] 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

So here, his servant questions him and say – if Elisha had told you to do something great, “something big” you would have done it.

However, you refuse to do this because it seems foolish to you.

We all have loved ones who are not saved because they are incapable of grasping the truth that salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

it's too simple to just “believe” in Jesus.

But God has always asked His people to trust Him.

When God delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt, He asked them to trust Him by putting the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their houses. When the angel of death came through Egypt, the judgment would “pass over” the house if the house had the blood of the Lamb.

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.

Naaman reconsiders and dips seven times in the Jordan – just like Elisha had said through the messenger

Last week, when Elisha healed the Shunemite woman’s son, he sneezed seven times.

So we see the number seven here associated with healing once again –

But notice that before he dipped, the scriptures tell us that, he went down.

He humbled himself –

And the result – his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child.

Now, Jesus tells us in the gospel of Mark -

[Mar 10:15 NKJV] 15 "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

In order to receive deliverance, Naaman had to come to the conclusion that this was grace.

He had to humble himself, as a little child and not reject God's grace out of self-sufficient pride.

His restored flesh was an outward expression of what had occurred inside of him.

15 And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, "Indeed, now I know that [there is] no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant." 16 But he said, "[As] the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing." And he urged him to take [it], but he refused.

There was nothing in the Law of God that prohibited Elisha's acceptance of this gift but the prophet sensed it was not something God wanted him to do so he declined.

We saw Elisha receive the first fruits from the man at the end of chapter four last week, he also received the hospitality from the Shunemite woman.

However, this was different.

This is Naaman's first contact with the Lord.

He needed to understand that Yahweh is a God of grace, of unearned, unmerited favor.

His blessings cannot be bought.

They can only be received by humble faith.

17 So Naaman said, "Then, if not, please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth; for your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD. 18 "Yet in this thing may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon--when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD please pardon your servant in this thing." 19 Then he said to him, "Go in peace." So he departed from him a short distance.

Naaman is a new believer and what he does here in verse 17-19 is that he is asking for advice from Elisha.

Because of his pagan background, he still has all these superstitions.

That is why he asks if he can take back soil – many of the pagan nations believed that the gods were localized.

So by taking soil with him, he would be bringing a little bit of Israel with him and when he got back to Syria, he could set up an altar for God on top of the foundation (soil) that he took with him.

So that was the first request.

He then tells Elisha that when he gets back to Syria, because of his position, he is going to have to enter the pagan temples and participate in some of the worship.

So he is asking for advice and Elisha says, "Go in peace"

Why didn't Elisha correct Naaman?

Why didn't he say – you don't need to take soil to worship the God of Israel.

Or "Naaman, you better not go into any of the pagan temples when you get home"

Why did he tell him, Go in peace?

Again, I believe it has to do with the fact that Naaman was a new believer.

Elisha was not going to burden him with all these corrections and expectations.

I have a pastor friend up in Phoenix who had a new convert in her church – she was an older lady who would sit in the front row and every time during time of prayer – she would take out her prayer coins / medallions.

So an elder of the church questioned the pastor and asked him "Are you not going to do anything about it???"

And his response was – "I am going to let the Holy Spirit take care of it."

And after a few months of attending church, she stopped taking the coins to church.

You see church, as we walk with the Lord, He will slowly refine us, convict us, and change us over a period of time.

The tendency of some believers is to lay on a brand new believer the convictions and understandings that they have acquired during twenty years of walking in the Lord.

And that church is wrong.

The Holy Spirit is quite capable of convicting believers – He doesn't need our help.

Our job is to preach the gospel – to preach Christ crucified and allow the Holy Spirit to take care of the rest.

20 But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but [as] the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him." 21 So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw [him] running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, "[Is] all well?" 22 And he said, "All [is] well. My master has sent me, saying, 'Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.' " 23 So Naaman said, "Please, take two talents." And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed [them] to two of his servants; and they carried [them] on ahead of him. 24 When he came to the

citadel, he took [them] from their hand, and stored [them] away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed.

As Gehazi overheard the conversation between Naaman and Elisha – he could not believe that Elisha turned down the reward.

So he begins to scheme.

Elisha may not want the reward – but I do.

So he goes after Naaman and he tells him that Elisha changes his mind – that these two sons of the prophets showed up and now he wants to bless them.

He makes it believable.

And Naaman proceeds in giving Gehazi what he asked for.

25 Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, "Where [did you go], Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant did not go anywhere." 26 Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go [with you] when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? [Is it] time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? 27 "Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever." And he went out from his presence leprous, [as white] as snow.

Here we see Gehazi's downfall.

Gehazi becomes a picture or a type of Judas Iscariot.

Both looked upon the blessing and power of God as a great way to make a living instead of changing lives.

The leprosy that came on his body was simply an outward manifestation of the spiritual leprosy of greed that was consuming his soul.

We have one more contrast between last week and this week.

In chapter 4, we see the Shunemite woman's faith leads to the healing of her son's congenital disease – here we see that it was the hardening of the heart of Gehazi that will produce only misery to his descendants.

Gehazi coveted what Naaman had – and ultimately he got it.

Now, in scripture.

The bible provides us with two complete chapters on everything you wanted to know about leprosy (Lev 13, 14)

What to do with their clothes, home etc – and then it provides instruction for the priests as well as what to do when someone is cured from leprosy.

In the Old Testament – only two people are cured from leprosy

- Miriam – Moses' sister
- And Naaman

There is no account of anyone being cured of leprosy where they had to go to the priest to present themselves before the priests.

That is until Jesus Christ heals the leper in Matt 8

And as soon as He did it – he commanded the leper to present himself before the priest.

Church, I am going to finish with this.

We may not know anyone who suffers from leprosy.

But we do know many individuals who we know that suffer from a terminal condition – and that is sin.

We know the cure.

We are the slave girl in this story –

The question is whether do we have faith that God is still capable of transforming people and do we have enough compassion to tell them where they can find the cure.

God uses small things – insignificant things – He chooses to use us.

Amen

Let's pray....

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'