

Elisha, the Prophet of Grace

7) Wash, And Be Clean

'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. 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. 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"'

(2 Kings 5:1-3)

- ✓ **Naaman was the chief military commander of Syria, who led his army to many victories. His success made him a great and honorable man. But though he was the king's favourite and the people's hero...yet he was a leper**
- ✓ **Ancient leprosy was a horrible, incurable disease that would slowly result in his death**
- ✓ **In Luke 4:27, Jesus did not say there were many 'great' men in the days of Naaman, but that there were many lepers**
- ✓ **What good were his medals, decorations and honours when he was sentenced to a slow, cruel and certain death?**

- ✓ **Leprosy represents sin in the Bible**
- ✓ **The leper was cut off from the tabernacle and was banished outside the camp**
- ✓ **It was not a doctor, but the high priest who was appointed to deal with the leper**
- ✓ **The first individual miracle of Christ's recorded in the NT is His healing of the leper (Matt.8:2-4)**
- ✓ **A young Israelite girl was taken captive and served as a maid in the house of Naaman. She said that if Naaman went to Elisha he could be healed**

'And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus said the girl who is from the land of Israel." 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. 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." And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes 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"'

(2 Kings 5:4-7)

- ✓ **The king of Syria sent him to the king of Israel with a huge amount of money, in the hope that Naaman would be miraculously healed**
- ✓ **It is estimated that by the values of his own day that Naaman took more than \$1.5 million with him to Israel. This shows how desperate his condition was, and how much the king of Syria wanted to see him healed**
- ✓ **When the king of Israel read the letter, he was upset. He thought the king of Syria sought a quarrel with him**

'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." Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. 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." 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.' 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'

(2 Kings 5:8-12)

✓ **When Elisha heard about it he gave the king a gentle rebuke and told him to send Naaman to him. *'Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel''***

✓ **When he came to Elisha's house, the prophet wouldn't even come out to him. He sent a messenger to tell him to go and wash seven times in the River Jordan**

✓ **Naaman was offended because: 1) He thought he could be treated differently on account of his status: *'...there is no difference: For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'* (Rom.3:22-23). God used weak things to deal with his pride and humble him so that he could receive healing**

- ✓ **2) He thought, 'if I must be washed, surely any river would do - why Jordan?'**
- ✓ **Jesus spoke of His death as a 'baptism', and He was baptized in the River Jordan, which means 'judgment'**
- ✓ **At the River Jordan, Jesus presented Himself as the representative of sinners, indicating that He would take our judgment upon Himself at the Cross**
- ✓ **And all those who have put their trust in Jesus are baptized into Him**

'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'?" 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. 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." 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'

(2 Kings 5:13-16)

***The servants asked if he was asked him to do something big he would have done it. Yet because his request was *easy* and *humbling*, Naaman refused. Why not just follow the instructions?**

So Naaman did exactly what Elisha told him to do and his flesh became like the flesh of a little child, i.e. like one who was born again. *'Unless you become as a little child...'

***And he was clean - *'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin'* (1 John 1:7). *'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood'* (Rev.1:5)**

***Naaman returned to Elisha and confessed before him, *'Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel.'* He didn't listen to a debate on the evidence of God's existence or creation, he responded to the word of God by faith, and experienced salvation**

***Naaman offered the gift of money to Elisha, but he refused it**

***He would have Naaman return to Syria with this testimony, that the God of Israel had taken nothing from him, except his leprosy!**

The 'Gehazi sequel'

'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." 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?" 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...

'...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. 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. 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." 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? 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'

(2 Kings 5:20-27)

***Gehazi didn't want to miss this opportunity to make money from this. He ran after Naaman and took the money by stealth for himself**

***Then he hid the money from Elisha. But God revealed the whole incident to him**

***It was not Gehazi's lies that Elisha rebuked. Elisha had been careful to ensure that Naaman knew that the gift of God cannot be purchased with money or anything. It was a free gift of God's grace. But Gehazi distorted this truth**

***Gehazi wanted what Naaman had...and he got it. He ended up with leprosy and was banished outside the camp!**