

TITLE: LESSONS FROM NAAMAN THE SYRIAN

TEXT: 2 KINGS 5:1-14; LUKE 4:27

INTRO: Outside of 2 Kings 5, the only place we read of Naaman is in Lk 4:27, where Jesus referenced him as having been healed by Elisha. Why are we told the story of Naaman? Because it presents a great parallel to today, with many great lessons!

I. NAAMAN'S INTRODUCTION & PROBLEM (v. 1):

- A. His character: commander of the Syrian army; *honorable* (respected); *by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria*. We aren't given specifics, but some believe he is the unnamed soldier who killed Ahab (**1 Kings 22:34**—*drew a bow at a venture*).
- B. His illness: *but he was a leper* ("leprosy" covers any number of skin diseases, some worse than others). In Israel the leper had to cover his face, cry out "unclean", & worst of all, live alone outside the camp (no contact w/friends & family—**Lev 13:45-46**).
- C. Compare leprosy to the real "illness" of sin: Both are **1)** ugly, **2)** cause you to be unclean, **3)** affect others around you (family, etc.), **4)** are contagious, and **5)** are life-threatening – can kill you *slowly*. One is a physical death; the other is a spiritual death.

II. NAAMAN'S HOPE (v. 2-4):

- A. A young Israelite woman taken slave by the Syrians now waited on Naaman's wife. We know nothing more of this girl, other than her awareness of Elisha the prophet & his God-given ability to heal Naaman's leprosy. So she tells Naaman's wife....
- B. Naaman now has hope – *if* he chooses to believe & act up on it. As we compare the two maladies (leprosy & sin), immediately we see that action **is** required in order to receive healing. If the average religious leader of today was Naaman's advisor, he would've wholeheartedly agreed that the leprosy could be cured by Elisha, but would've said "just believe...no need to put forth any effort! Do you believe? Then you're healed!" But healing of leprosy is a little more visible than forgiveness of sins!

III. NAAMAN'S ACTIONS (v. 5-14):

- A. His initial interest (v. 5-9)
 1. Notice the urgency & extreme importance to Naaman: he first pursued this through the king of Syria, who wrote to the king of Israel to inquire about this prophet, & sent Naaman with substantial gifts of gold, silver, & clothing.
 2. Even though he knew nobody in *Syria* could heal him, it's clear that he believed in this Israelite prophet, because he **acted** upon his belief (going to the king, then to Elisha). He really had nothing to lose. Even if the girl was wrong about Elisha, it doesn't cost much for Naaman to find out. After all, there's no other option for a cure. Likewise with sin, if someone tells you the NT holds the cure, what do you have to lose in reading it? You definitely won't find a cure anywhere else!
- B. His dissatisfaction (v. 10-12)
 1. The plan presented (v. 10): *Go & wash in the Jordan 7 times, & thy flesh shall come again to thee, & thou shalt be clean*.
 - a. The plan was very **clear & simple**: Naaman didn't have to take notes! He didn't need it repeated. He understood.
 - b. The plan made sense: The Jordan didn't have healing properties any more than any other (as Naaman knew - v. 12). If this had been the case, every leper would've been there, & Naaman wouldn't have needed Elisha! Naaman understood the healing was from a higher power (the God of Israel), & his washing was a symbolic act of obedience, at which moment he would be healed by God.
 - c. The plan didn't **earn** anything. Though he knew the power was of God, not the river, Naaman also knew his obedience to the plan wouldn't **earn** his healing. This may be part of the reason why he ignored it (v. 11-12)!
 2. The plan rejected (v. 11-12): he was angry for two reasons:
 - a. (v. 11) Here is the main reason for his anger: "*Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me*.... Elisha had sent his servant to Naaman with the instructions; he hadn't even come out personally! What an insult! We aren't told *why* Elisha didn't come out, but Naaman's response seems to answer the question clearly (cf. Jesus' "one thing you lack").
 - b. (v. 12) The second reason – better rivers in Damascus – may have simply been Naaman's own personal justification for his anger at Elisha's plan. He already expressed clearly that he didn't want to wash in *any* river (v. 11)!
 - c. Naaman had to swallow his pride in order to be cured – this is part of what dipping in the Jordan was about.
 3. Sadly there will be an untold number of people on the day of judgment saying "Behold, I thought!" They may not have expected a grand display as Naaman did, but they did expect God to work according to *their own* ideas of how to forgive.
 - a. Behold I thought salvation was by "faith alone" or "grace alone." Behold I thought if I prayed this prayer...!
 - b. (In the church) Behold I thought my baptism covered every sin (even sins I refused to repent of). (cf. **Mt 7:21-23**)
- C. His encouragement & acceptance/obedience (v. 13-14): Naaman's problem was visible, so he **knew** he wasn't healed yet!
 1. His servants used logic to convince Naaman to obey. Too bad so many today won't accept such logic!
 2. There are some great lessons in the similarities between the plan for Naaman's cure & the plan for the cure of sin.
 - a. It's just as simple & makes just as much sense. If only religious folks would recognize what Naaman knew – that *God* forgives sins **when we obey His instructions** – at baptism (the waters of baptism, like the Jordan, aren't holy water)!
 - b. This plan doesn't **earn** anything! I've **never** heard this preached or taught, yet I've been accused of believing it! These same accusers logically would have to accuse Elisha of the same thing – teaching Naaman that he had to **earn** his cure. Yet even Naaman's servants recognized that baptism in the Jordan was a simple act (& that if the cure for his leprosy *had* entailed performing a difficult task, he would've done it. BUT IT DIDN'T! Why? Because it **wasn't** for the purpose of *earning* the cure! Like the Jordan water, baptismal water doesn't literally wash away sins (God does – at that very point when the sinner obeys His commands, being baptized – **Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet 3:21**).
 - c. Naaman finally recognized that Elisha's instructions were *not* difficult, & were in his best interest; so he obeyed & was cleansed. God's instructions in the NT to have your sins washed away aren't difficult either. Like Naaman, believe that there is a prophet in Israel Who can heal you. Then obey Him: repent of your sins, confess Him as Lord, be baptized in order to have your sins washed away, then live the rest of your life in faithful obedience to Him.

CONCLUSION: It was because of the Israelite servant girl that Naaman was healed of his leprosy. She saw his disease, knew that there was someone who could cure him, & then spoke up! What if she hadn't? His leprosy wasn't her fault, but how could she *not* tell him about a cure when she was aware of it?! Likewise, how can *we* not tell people about the proper cure for their sins?