The Healing of Naaman

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Introduction

The story of the healing of Naaman contains many great lessons. Each of the main characters reveals a different truth. Giving due consideration to the inspired text, let us make relevant application to our daily lives.

The Commander

2 Kings 5:1 ... 1 Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper. (NASB95)

Here we see an example of great accomplishment tainted by tragic misfortune (2 Kings 5:1). Naaman was successful, valiant, and highly esteemed. The very meaning of his name ("delight, pleasant, or agreeable") is suggestive of his beloved character: Yet, despite his skill and bravery, position and prestige, Naaman was a leper. What an awful shadow this disease must have cast on his path!

Life is full of unexpected and unappreciated surprises. Disaster often strikes at the most inopportune times. Just when happiness and success seem within our grasp, it is suddenly snatched away! Everything seems to be going right, and the disaster strikes. Let us recognize the inherent uncertainty of life (Proverbs 27:1; Ecclesiastes 9:11).

Proverbs 27:1 ... 1 Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth. (NASB95)

Ecclesiastes 9:11 ... 11 I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all. (NASB95)

The Servant Girl

2 Kings 5:2-3 ... 2 Now the Arameans had gone out in bands and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel; and she waited on Naaman’s wife. 3 She said to her mistress, “I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy.” (NASB95)

Here we see an example of faithfulness in adversity (2 Kings 5:2-3). Naaman’s wife was attended by a maiden from Israel who had been captured and sold as a slave. Instead of
becoming embittered by her unfortunate and unfair lot in life, she loved her master, and was genuinely distressed over his terrible disease. She made the best of her circumstances. Let us also learn to be content and make the most of our present circumstances (Philippians 4:11-13).

Philippians 4:11-13 ... 11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (NASB95)

This maiden was not afraid to own her Lord. Thus, when her mistress bemoaned the disease and despair of her husband, the girl sang the praises of Elisha, the true God’s true prophet. Imagine how enthusiastically she related the miracles of the prophet! Since her life was consistent with her testimony, the captive girl was believed. Let us also courageously proclaim our faith in Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 1:12).

2 Timothy 1:12 ... 12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. (NASB95)

The King Of Israel

2 Kings 5:4-7 ... 4 Naaman went in and told his master, saying, “Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel.” 5 Then the king of Aram said, “Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” He departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes. 6 He brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, “And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy.” 7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me.” (NASB95)

Here we see an example of insecurity and weakness (2 Kings 5:4-7). Jehoram, the son of Ahab and Jezebel, was king over Israel. Although he was not as wicked as his infamous parents, Jehoram persisted in the idolatrous rebellion of his predecessors. Viewing the unexpected arrival of Naaman with deep suspicion, Jehoram thought the king of Syria was looking for an excuse to start a war with Israel. He demonstrated an anxiety so typical of the wicked (Psalms 73:19; Proverbs 28:1).

Psalm 73:19 ... 19 How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors! (NASB95)

Proverbs 28:1 ... 1 The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, But the righteous are bold as a lion. (NASB95)
The Prophet Elisha

2 Kings 5:8-10 ... 8 It happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent word to the king, saying, “Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.” 9 So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean.” (NASB95)

Here we see an example of a faithful prophet of Jehovah (2 Kings 5:8-10). Without drawing attention to himself, Elisha revealed the means whereby Naaman could be cleansed from his leprosy. On the surface, he appeared to rebuff the great and mighty Naaman. Etiquette and protocol demanded that Elisha greet and welcome this visiting dignitary. Instead, the prophet sent his servant to the captain, unceremoniously ordering him to “Go wash in the Jordan seven times.”

True servants of God often defy the expectations of the world. They don’t fit the mold or follow the norm. False prophets are often given over to arrogant self-promotion and feigned praise. In contrast, Elisha was trying to show that God, not man, had the power to heal disease. Let us also learn that God alone deserves the glory (Psalms 146:3-5; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

Psalm 146:3-5 ... 3 Do not trust in princes, In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. 4 His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; In that very day his thoughts perish. 5 How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the Lord his God, (NASB95)

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 ... 1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, 4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. (NASB95)

The Critical Response

2 Kings 5:11-12 ... 11 But Naaman was furious and went away and said, “Behold, I thought, ‘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 cure the leper.’ 12 “Are not Abanah and 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. (NASB95)

Here we see an example of prideful rage (2 Kings 5:11-12). Naaman went away in a rage simply because his pride had been hurt. Elisha seemed indifferent to Naaman’s honor and wealth. The prophet’s conduct was an affront to his dignity. Moreover, the entire trip now seemed a waste of time. If dipping in a river was all the Israelite prophet required, he should have stayed at home.
“Wash in the muddy Jordan? Hummpf!!! The rivers of Damascus are far cleaner than this murky creek they call a River. I’ve had enough! I’m going home!” Here we see the folly of pride (Proverbs 29:23; Luke 14:11).

Proverbs 29:23 ... 23 A man’s pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor. (NASB95)

Luke 14:11 ... 11 “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (NASB95)

2 Kings 5:13-14 ... 13 Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, “My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” 14 So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean. (NASB95)

Here we see an example of humble obedience (2 Kings 5:13-14). Naaman was blessed to be surrounded by a number of faithful servants. Like the captive maiden from Israel who waited on Naaman’s wife, this excellent servant also wanted his master cured from his dread disease. By calmly reasoning with his master, he influenced Naaman to obey the word of Elisha. As a result, the man was made whole. Our salvation from sin requires a similar expression of trustful submission (Hebrews 5:8-9; 1 Peter 3:21).

Hebrews 5:8-9 ... 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, (NASB95)

1 Peter 3:21 ... 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (NASB95)

2 Kings 5:15-19 ... 15 When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him, he said, “Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; so please take a present from your servant now.” 16 But he said, “As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing.” And he urged him to take it, but he refused. 17 Naaman said, “If not, please let your servant at least be given two mules’ load of earth; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord. 18 “In this matter may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon your servant in this matter.” 19 He said to him, “Go in peace.” So he departed from him some distance. (NASB95)

Here we see an example of generous thanksgiving (2 Kings 5:15-19). Naaman became a worshipper of God and carried two mule-loads of Israelite earth back to Syria in order to worship
Jehovah “on Israelite soil,” even though he lived in a heathen land. Naaman was generous with his wealth (Proverbs 3:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

*Proverbs 3:9-10* ... 9 Honor the Lord from your wealth And from the first of all your produce; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine. (NASB95)

*1 Timothy 6:17-19* ... 17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. (NASB95)

Before departing for Damascus, however, Naaman asked Elisha’s understanding and pardon for bowing down in the temple of Rimmon when he went there with Ben-Hadad. Elisha said to him, “Go in peace,” thus allowing Naaman to serve his master, the king of Syria. He apparently understood that Naaman would only be engaging in an act of obedience to his king and not in worship to a pagan idol. Elisha did not sanction Naaman’s compromise. Instead, he tacitly allowed his disciple’s religious convictions to expand gradually. We also should grow in faith (1 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Peter 3:18).

*1 Peter 2:1-2* ... 1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, (NASB95)

*2 Peter 3:18* ... 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (NASB95)

**The Servant Gehazi**

*2 Kings 5:20-27* ... 20 But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, “Behold, my master has spared this Naaman the Aramean, by not receiving from his hands what he brought. As the Lord lives, I will run after him and take something from him.” 21 So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw one running after him, he came down from the chariot to meet him and said, “Is all well?” 22 He said, “All is well. My master has sent me, saying, ‘Behold, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.’ ” 23 Naaman said, “Be pleased to take two talents.” And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of clothes and gave them to two of his servants; and they carried them before him. 24 When he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and deposited them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed. 25 But he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?” And he said, “Your servant went nowhere.” 26 Then he said to him, “Did not my heart go with you, when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a time to receive money and to receive
clothes and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male and female servants? 27 “Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.” So he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow. (NASB95)

Here we see an example of greed and hypocrisy (2 Kings 5:20-27). Gehazi, whose true character is revealed by his avariciousness, ran after Naaman and lied to gain two talents of silver and two changes of raiment. Supernaturally aided, Elisha uncovers his trick and justly reproves him. If Gehazi must have Naaman’s money, he must also have his leprosy, and that forever. Let us avoid the sin of covetousness (Luke 12:15; Colossians 3:5).

Luke 12:15 ... 15 Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” (NASB95)

Colossians 3:5 ... 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (NASB95)

Conclusion

Let us learn from the example of Naaman, and make proper application to our lives. Naaman was cleansed from the dreaded disease of leprosy only after he obeyed the commandment of Elisha. In like manner, we must demonstrate the same spirit of obedience to be cleansed from the defilement of sin (Acts 9:1-6; 26:9-20). Are you willing to demonstrate simple trusting faith in the Word of God?

Acts 9:1-6 ... 1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” 5 And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6 but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.” (NASB95)

Acts 26:9-20 ... 9 “So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 “And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. 11 “And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. 12 “While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13 at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. 14 “And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul,
Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ 15 ‘And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 ‘But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; 17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’ 19 ‘So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. (NASB95)