

The Big Dipper

June 6, 2010

Turn to **2 Kings 5:1**. “Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria.” Naaman commanded the entire Syrian army, and he was a great leader. He was a man of influence. Everybody here influences somebody. A leader is anyone that has influence on someone else. Naaman was also a conqueror.

“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.” This is amazing. He was considered a heathen. He was outside the Jewish covenant with God, but it says he was used of God. **The Lord God had given victory to Syria through Naaman.** God used someone outside the covenant to give them victory. So, he was not only a commander, a leader, but he was also a conqueror of many battles.

Anytime there is victory, people are lifted. When there is defeat, people are down. Naaman was not only a leader but a lifter of the people; because God was using him to bring victory for Syria. All the Syrians were lifted because of Naaman.

Naaman was very brave, very courageous, and received awards because of all of his achievements, but let me tell you something. You can win everything in the world and lose your own soul. In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus said, “What does it profit a man (or a woman) if he gains the entire world and loses his soul?” I don’t know if you know this or not, but the most important things are not in your achievements but in your soul! The real YOU is inside this body, this shell, this tabernacle, this tent; and one day you are going to lay this tent down.

Verse 1 also says Naaman was “a mighty man of valor.” He was a commander of the Syrian army. He had won many battles. He was a man of valor, a man of courage, but he was a leper. We don’t really understand today what being a leper means. This man was a sick man, and I’m certain he would have exchanged every award or achievement in order to be well.

Let’s look at leprosy. In ancient times, leprosy began as a small, red spot somewhere on the skin. Later, the spot gets bigger and starts turning white with a shiny, scaly appearance. After a brief period of time, the spot spreads all over the body. The hair begins to fall out, first from the head and eyebrows. As the leprosy worsens, the fingernails and toenails become loosened, start to rot, and eventually fall off.

The joints of the fingers and toes begin to rot and fall off one piece at a time. The gums begin to shrink, and the teeth begin to fall out. Then the leprosy continues to eat away at the leper’s face, until the nose, the palate, and even the eyes rot, and the victim wastes away until death comes.

Preachers of the New Testament have always said that physical leprosy was a type or symbol of sin. Today, in church, we have become so society-oriented that it is hard to recognize the saints from the sinners.

If you would take a trip to the Holy Land and walk into one of the places they call holy places, if your shoulders were bare, they would stop you at the door. That may offend you, but you will not get in because you are not appropriately attired to enter what they consider a holy place. So they would put a shawl over you to cover you up.

People in America come to church any old way. I know I'm going to lose my amen's, but I'm going to preach anyway! I saw a church sign the other day that said, "Just come any old way." I say, nay, nay! You cannot go into where God is worshipped looking just any old way. No, no, no. We're moving into summertime, and people think they can just come to church looking any old way.

We're going to welcome everybody. We're not going to stop you at the door, but you need to start considering how you approach and come into the sanctuary where you worship the True and Living God! The Bible says we ought to be holy as HE is holy. We ought to be **holy in appearance**. We ought to be **holy in attitude**, and **holy in every aspect of walking with Jesus**. AMEN?

Naaman was a leper, and if you knew the process leprosy was going to bring to your physical body, it would bring **dread**. The moment that red spot appears, you are going to be dreading what is coming. Not only does leprosy produce **dread**, it produces **defilement**. Someone with leprosy is cut off from everyone else, and eventually leprosy **destroys**.

Naaman had no hope. Look at **Ephesians 2:12**. "When you are without Christ, you have no hope." Naaman was a good man, but he was not a Christian. When you are without God in this world, you are in trouble.

You can pull out your church membership card, but your church membership card will not get you to Heaven. There are thousands of church members who have never met Christ. **It is Christ we need!** AMEN? It's not religion. It's not traditions and rituals. It's Christ that we need! Naaman was a leper, he was without Christ, and he had no hope.

In **Verse 2** we see a **sold-out maiden**. "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." She was a slave. Have you ever had anything happen to you that you didn't think was right? If there was anyone who had every right to be upset with her captors, it was this unnamed young Israeli girl who was taken from her homeland and her family. She is now in a strange land that worships strange gods, she has to be a slave to her master, and her master has leprosy.

I marvel that **this maiden had concern** for Naaman. Look at **Verse 3**. I wish the church would have such concern that we would stop fighting, bickering and battling each other. It's the work of the devil! Does anybody know that God is moving at Maranatha? People are being saved all over this church, but the devil comes in and gets people to battle one another. This young girl had concern for her master, Naaman, when she should have had the most hatred one could have for someone else.

We should be concerned about each other. We have to be concerned for the lost. Jesus came to

seek and to save the lost. God is not willing that any should perish, but if church people are fussing and fighting, the lost will look at that and say, "I don't want any part of that." When you can find more love out in the world than you can in the church, God have mercy on us! I'm after souls, and church folk need to get their act together, because God is not going to bless you when you have a rotten attitude.

Verse 3: "Then she said to her mistress, 'If only my master were with the prophet.'" Here is a conqueror, a man of courage and bravery. Do you think he wants to go and see a preacher? He didn't when he was out winning battles and receiving medals, but now he is hopeless. I have had a whole lot of hopeless people come knocking on my door.

If the devil can get you to no longer respect the messenger, you will never hear the message. So, the work of the devil is to cause you to become offended by something so you no longer have respect for the messenger; and once you lose respect for the messenger, you can't hear the message. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word." So you become isolated, and that is when the devil steps in.

Don't be offended by this, but I read the other day where the ranking of preachers today is below used car salesmen. I have no idea where politicians were ranked, but I hope they were under me. In the last 30 years, Satan has caused people to have no respect for the men of God. They say that preachers are a dime a dozen; fire one and hire another one.

In **Verse 3**, this young girl didn't say there were 10,000 prophets in Israel. She said there was **one prophet**. "If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria." She has **confidence in her God**, and in the last part of **Verse 3** she says, "For he would heal him of his leprosy."

Had she ever met Elisha? We don't know, but maybe she heard about what he was doing. Let's talk about this man of the Lord she is talking about. **He is the protégée of Elijah**. Elisha was mentored by Elijah. It is very important who your mentor is. Some of you don't think you have a mentor, but you do. Everybody is trying to be like somebody else.

This man of God has double the anointing of his mentor, Elijah. Elijah prayed on a mountain top and fire came down. He prayed one time, and it stopped raining for 3.5 years; and the Bible says God spoke and said, "At your word, I will make it rain." That was the anointing of Elijah, but Elisha had a double anointing. You are going to get some of what is in your mentor: good, bad, or ugly. That is why it is crucial whose authority you are under.

She **boldly gave a testimony**. She **confessed** what her **convictions** were. There are times when we Christians have to stand up and confess what we believe. This young girl was in a home where her life could have been taken at any moment, but she was not afraid to give her testimony.

In **Ezekiel 2:5**, Ezekiel is spoken to by God Almighty who says, "Whether they hear or whether they don't, they will know that a prophet has been among them." This young girl found out there was one living in Samaria.

Verse 4: “And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, ‘Thus and thus said the girl who is from the land of Israel.’” **Verse 5:** “Then the king of Syria said, ‘Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.’” I don’t see where the king of Israel was mentioned. The young girl didn’t tell him to go to Israel. She told him to go to Samaria where the man of God was.

The **king had a position**, but he had **no power**. He **was appointed**, but he had **no anointing**. You don’t want to go to a person who just has the position. You want to get around someone who has **the power of God**. You want someone **God has anointed**. So, Naaman goes to the wrong place, and he goes to the wrong person. He goes down to Jerusalem to see the king, and look at what the king of Israel does.

Verse 7: “And it happened when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, ‘Am I God?’” He thought it was a trick. In **Verse 8**, Elisha gets the news about what the king is doing. “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.’”

I don’t know if you know this or not, but the Bible says God whispers His secrets to His prophets. Elisha knew who had given him the authority and the anointing, but he is relating to this heathen in terms that he would understand. He wants him to know that the **true and living prophets are the prophets of God, the God of Israel**.

Not only did Naaman go to the wrong place and the wrong person, but he brought the wrong price. He brought 750 pounds of silver and 150 pounds of gold. He brought 10 changes of the finest clothing that money could buy.

One man said that just the gold and the silver that Naaman brought was worth over \$1,200,000. Do you know that you can’t buy a miracle? You’re not hearing me! **You cannot buy a miracle**. Putting all the money you can in the offering plate will not buy you favor with God. Naaman made a mistake when he thought he could buy a miracle. That’s why, when he got healed, the prophet Elisha rejected everything that Naaman wanted to give him, because Elisha did not want Naaman to go back to Syria thinking he had bought a miracle.

Elisha rejected over a million dollars. You didn’t hear me. Elisha turned down over a million dollars. You can’t buy a miracle. Salvation is free! When Naaman got to Elisha’s house, he comes in with horses and chariots, with pomp and ceremony. When he got there, he had his own perception of what was going to happen, but man’s thoughts are not God’s thoughts. Man’s plans are not God’s plans.

So, while he is outside with all his horses and chariots and all his pomp and ceremony, look at what Elisha does in **Verse 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.’” This enrages Naaman. He is furious. He turns his entire entourage around and heads back to Syria.

As he is riding home in a rage, look at what some of his servants say to him in **Verse 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?'" They tell him he has nothing to lose. Go down to the water. So, in a rage he submits. If you don't do it God's way, it won't be done. "Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No man can come to the Father unless you go through Jesus."

Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." There is only one way, and His name is Jesus! There is no other way. It's God's way or no way. So Naaman goes into the water. Remember, seven is key; because Leviticus tells us that if a leper is to be healed, he has to go through a process.

First of all, he had to have blood dipped on him seven times by the priest. After that, he had to wait seven days and then he takes a complete bath. After that bath, the priest comes over and anoints him with holy oil seven times.

So when Elisha tells Naaman to go into the water seven times, seven is the number of completion. **Verse 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," and all of his men saw it. Then he and his entire entourage go back to Elisha's house. **Verse 15** says, "He returned to the man of God." Remember, when he was at Elisha's house the first time, the man of God didn't even come out.

"He returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and they came and stood before Elisha," and this is what he said to Elisha. He said, "Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth except the God of Israel." **He not only had been cleansed, but he had been changed.**

The Apostle Paul said in **2 Timothy 1:12**, "For I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." **Romans 10:9** says, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved." What Naaman is doing here is confessing that the only God there is is the God of Israel. Then he offered Elisha over \$1,000,000, and Elisha said no.

So Naaman rides off, Elisha goes back in his house, and Gehazi, one of his preacher boys, decides to go after Naaman. In **Verses 21-22**, Gehazi runs after Naaman and says, "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 money and clothing.'" Naaman is thrilled. So Gehazi takes some of the gold and silver and two changes of clothes, and Naaman rides off thinking that Elisha has taken some of the money.

Gehazi goes back and hides the money, comes to meet the man of God, and in **Verse 25** Elisha says, "Where did you go, Gehazi?" Gehazi said, "Your servant did not go anywhere." Look at what Elisha says in **Verses 26-27**. "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? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever."

Why would Elisha punish this young man so severely? Let me tell you why. When Naaman went back to Syria, he thought he had bought a miracle, and the man of God was looked down upon because of what one of his servants did.

When you leave this building, I don't know if you know this or not, but everything you do, everywhere you go, everything you say, every time you react a certain way, someone is going to think either good, bad, or ugly about: **(1) Jesus, (2) this church, and (3) the preacher that is in this pulpit.**

When we leave the house of God, it is crucial to be aware of how we act, how we react, where we go, and what we do. It will either **shed light or darkness** on those we come in contact with.