

II Kings 5:1-14

Naaman's Path To Salvation

The healing of Naaman the Leper is not just a story of the healing of a man from one of the most dreaded diseases of ancient times, but it is a story of salvation, one which illustrates the salvation man comes to find only in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In Naaman's healing there are a variety of people who play different parts; some good and vital to the salvation and healing of Naaman and others not so good. All illustrate the various good and evil persuasions of people that either aid or hinder bringing men to Christ.

As we step into this scene, we leave the land of Israel, a nation that was to be a light to the Gentiles and a nation of priests. We step into Syria to the north, a heathen (pagan) nation surrounded in darkness, a place of idolatry and heathen blindness.

In these verses there is an anticipation of the gospel that would go out from Israel through Messiah and then out from the church carrying the light of Jesus Christ to the Gentile nations.

Naaman's healing was an example of what God would later do in the ministry of the Lord Jesus and His church. Here, then, is a classic picture of God's love, and how the Lord reaches out to sinners in utter darkness and uses their afflictions to draw them to Himself and to the work of grace wherein God seeks to bring men to repentance (Rom 2:4).

Naaman's road to salvation is a fitting illustration of how God saves every sinner who believes in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the title of my message is entitled, *Naaman's Path To Salvation*. There are four observations I would like to consider.

1. Naaman's path started with a terrible discovery.

You could say that Naaman had it all, fame and fortune. He was highly favored before his king. He was the General of the powerful Syrian army, and considered a national hero. But one day he made a terrible discovery. It might have happened on the

battle field or at home. He found blotches on his body. He watched it closely. His condition worsened. He went to his physician and his worse fears were realized. Naaman was a leper. It was his death sentence.

According to God's law, the leper was considered unclean and had to be isolated from society. Wherever he went he was to cry out, "unclean, unclean," and live outside the city walls.

True leprosy was incurable by man in Bible times just as sin is incurable for man.

We read in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" The phrase "desperately wicked" could be translated desperately sick, beyond cure or incurably sick.

We read in Isaiah 1:6, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

There is nothing man himself can do to deal with his sin problem.

Furthermore, his sin separates him from God. (1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). When the Lord healed a leper, therefore, the picture should have been obvious. His power to cleanse a leper demonstrated He was the solution to man's sin and defilement. He alone was and is the means of reconciliation, peace with God and man.

Leprosy, like sin, begins within (with what we are) and then erupts on the skin (on the surface). As such, it clearly reminds us of the principle that men are, by an inherited nature, sinners and that it's not just what we do that is so bad, but what we are. The point is the mouth speaks and hands do as a result of what the heart is and thinks.

Even the slightest blemish in the skin, a swelling (a boil), a scab (a small tumor), or a bright spot (a red or scaly place) was to be carefully observed to see if it was the product of something deeper, i.e., some form of true leprosy.

The pain of leprosy, at least in certain forms, was not acute because it also killed the nerves in the affected area, but it kept the victim restless, miserable, and frustrated as they felt the stigma of the disease.

They saw portions of their bodies become numb, muscles waste away, tendons contract making the hands like claws, and then the ulceration of the fingers and toes and hands and feet resulting in their loss bit by bit until the whole hand or foot was gone.

We must not miss the picture God wants us to see from this emphasis in Scripture. Sin is like this. Because of man's separation from God, because of his spiritually dead condition and the hardness of his soul, he becomes insensitive, callused, restless and never satisfied.

He often does not experience severe pain from his sin and waywardness, only insensitivity, restless misery, and futility, ever seeking some means of fulfillment running from one thing to another (Isa. 57:20-21; Eph. 4:16-19).

Even in apparent prosperity and happiness, not only is there a certain amount of inner peace and true happiness missing, but their ultimate plight is death, loss, and the judgment of separation (Ps. 1:4-5; 73:1-28).

We need to understand that God often uses the personal failures, sicknesses, and problems of men as a means to bring them to the end of themselves and to a knowledge of the Lord and His salvation. (Ps. 119:67, 71, 73). God uses problems in life to force us to face our deeper problem, the problem of sin, and the need of God's forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Have you discovered the ugliness and vileness of sin in your heart? Are you conscious of your sin or are you callous to sin?

The path to salvation begins with a terrible discovery. The bad news is that all men and women, boys and girls are sinners. But Naaman was encouraged with good news.

2. Naaman was encouraged with good news.

We read in II Kings 5:2-3, “And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

Naaman received a glimmer of hope from a little Jewish maiden. She told a mistress about a prophet in Israel who could heal Naaman of his leprosy. Soon, word of this traveled to Naaman himself. Ironically, it was probably Naaman who led the attack against Israel that resulted in the little girl being taken from her home, and separated from her mother and father to a strange and foreign land to be a slave. Such adverse circumstances could have left the Jewish girl bitter, sullen, silent, and hateful. “Naaman got what was coming to him,” so she could have reasoned to herself.

However, this little girl applied the words of Christ in Matthew 5:44, “But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

She had no name and we never hear from her again. But she triggered a sequence of events that led to the salvation of Naaman.

A Bible commentator observes, “Here we see how the Lord always has His messengers of the Word. When there is a person whose heart has been prepared, God always has his messengers. Here, God’s messengers begin with a little captive slave girl. In fact, by His matchless grace, God worked through the unrighteous deeds of Naaman’s own army to bring this little slave girl into his own home to be the instrument of God’s Love. But what kind of messenger does God use? He uses those who are available--those who know and love the Lord. Here was a small girl, humble, obedient, insignificant to men, living under dire conditions; she was a girl using the problems of life as opportunities or as open doors to witness for God.

Although small, weak, and insignificant, this little girl knew the omnipotent and sovereign Lord of Israel. She was willing to point her enemies to the true God of the universe who alone could cure Naaman's disease. Why do you suppose Naaman listened to her? After all what could a slave know? May I suggest that he listened because perhaps her life spoke volumes! Her life had been such a testimony that it gave credibility to her words."

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news that sinners need to hear and trust. Jesus died on the cross for sinners. His blood washes away sin. His righteousness makes the sinner perfect before God.

Naaman was encouraged with the good news that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal him of his leprosy.

3. Naaman went to the king of Israel with his problem.

We read in II Kings 5:5-7, "And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. And he brought the letter to

the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.”

The little Jewish girl told Naaman to go to the prophet of Israel. But Naaman first went to the king of Israel. When the king listened to Naaman’s request he rent his clothes because the king was in great grief and distress. The king feared that the king of Samaria was looking for a fight, and by requesting the king of Israel do the impossible and heal Naaman would have been the provocation the king of Syria was looking for to start a war with Israel. The king of Israel was powerless to help Naaman.

Sending sinners to the wrong source or person for salvation accomplishes nothing. Churches can't save sinners; Preachers can't save sinners. Only Jesus Christ saves sinners from their guilt, sin, and misery. Only Christ is the remedy from uncleanness. There is only one name under heaven whereby men can be saved and that is Jesus Christ.

Naaman was told to go to the prophet in Israel but instead he went to the king and was extremely disappointed.

4. The prophet Elisha told Naaman the remedy for his leprosy.

We read in II Kings 5:8-12, "And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, 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 strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.”

Elisha was a man who walked close with God. Therefore he had authority and confidence when he spoke to men. Elisha seemed to not acknowledge the august visitor at his house. Naaman pulled up with his impressive entourage of gold, silver, and raiment. This didn't impress the prophet. Elisha didn't even go to Naaman but sent his servant with a clear and simple message, ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times.’”

Elisha was teaching Naaman that deliverance was on specific and precise terms. Salvation is turning from sin and trusting in Jesus Christ. Not the sacraments, not reading your Bible, not prayer, not the machinery of the church. But by going down and washing in the precious blood of Christ. We must humble ourselves. There are no other terms. Sinners can't come to God on their terms. They must come to God on God's terms.

Notice Verse 11, *I thought*. Many say I thought... but what does God say regarding the truth about sin, salvation, and Jesus Christ. Many say, "I thought you could be forgiven of sin by doing good works, by going to church, by being sincere, or being nice to people. People think wrong. Sin perverts our minds and pollutes our thoughts. The Gospel of Christ changes us to think right regarding salvation. Salvation is of the Lord.

Naaman thought the prophet Elisha would do something big and dramatic to heal him. No. All that Elisha told Naaman to do was go and wash in the Jordan 7 times.

Divine salvation is all or nothing. If Naaman washed twice in Jordan he wouldn't be healed. If Naaman washed six times in the Jordan he would be closer to seven but still wouldn't be healed. Naaman had to wash seven times to be healed from his leprosy. Naaman had to come to the place of total surrender to the terms God. Sinners must follow the way God saves. God saves sinners only through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. No other way will save sinners!

And when Naaman obeyed God's way, and not his way, he was cleansed of his leprosy. God made Naaman clean and pure and this is what he does to sinners through Jesus Christ.

We read in Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

In closing, the healing of Naaman the Leper is not just a story of the healing of a man from one of the most dreaded diseases of ancient times, but it is a story of salvation, one which illustrates the salvation man comes to find only in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Here, then, is a classic picture of God's Love, and how the Lord reaches out to sinners in utter darkness. May the Lord write his word on our hearts. Let us pray!