

“Strength Before God”  
2 Kings 5:2-3  
(Preached at Trinity, January 30, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. So far, in 2 Kings we've been spared much of the political intrigue that closed out 1 Kings. Ahab is dead and the narrator is describing the impotence of Israel. **Chapter 1** opens with a description of the Israel's inability to maintain control over the nations under their power.  
**2 Kings 1:1 NAU** - "Now Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab."  
This would lead to the war described in **Chapter 3**.
2. Little attention is placed upon the kings. Most of the attention is focused upon God's prophets. Elijah is taken up into heaven by a whirlwind and Elisha becomes his successor. **Chapters 4-5** are devoted almost exclusively to the miracles of Elisha. In our present chapter we read of God's grace in using Elisha to bring healing upon a Gentile military leader.  
We actually read of two miracles from the hand of Elisha. One is the healing of Naaman in healing him of his leprosy. The other describes God's curse upon the greed of Elisha's servant; he is smitten with leprosy.  
**2 Kings 5:27 NAU** - "Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever."
3. Last week my focus was upon this Gentile leader by the name of Naaman. He was the captain of the Aramean or Syrian army. He is described as a great man, great in military exploits, a valiant warrior. But he was a leper.
4. In this passage we find a great contrasting display of strength among the characters in our story. The world loves strength. Nations flex their proverbial muscle trying to demonstrate their strength. In everyday life we witness individuals seeking to maintain their position through the display of their strength.
5. Worldly strength is most often an illusion. The bully in grade school is usually weak and insecure. He tries to maintain his image of strength through fear and intimidation. It is also a limited strength. The most powerful on this earth are still limited in their power.
6. There is another kind of strength, however. We'll call it Godly strength. It comes from a precise source and is often displayed by the most unlikely individuals. We find both types of strength in this chapter – worldly strength and Godly strength.

I. Let's look first of all at worldly strength

A. First, there was Naaman

1. There is no doubt he was a powerful man. The writer makes this clear.
  - a. He was the captain of the Syrian army. One doesn't rise to military leadership without possessing the ability to command; without putting on the display of strength.
  - b. He was a successful leader. We read:  
**2 Kings 5:1 NAU** - "by him the LORD had given victory to Aram."  
 Other nations had been brought under subjection. We read in **Verse 2** that one of these nations was Israel.
  - c. He is referred to as a "great man" and "highly respected" by the king.
2. In spite of his earthly strength he was powerless to do anything about his leprosy.
  - a. He had probably suffered from this affliction for many years.
  - b. As powerful as he was, his leprosy would have hindered his ability to lead. Most people with leprosy were forced to maintain a distance from others.
  - c. Most serious for Naaman, there was no cure for leprosy. No matter how powerful he was, no matter how valiant he was on the battle field, he was powerless to do anything about his leprosy.
3. We should note, like most earthly people, Naaman liked to display his strength.  
**2 Kings 5:9 NAU** - "So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha."

B. The other display of earthly power was with the kings

1. The king of Aram was referred to as a master.  
**2 Kings 5:1 NAU** - "was a great man with his master"
  - a. All of those in his realm were considered his subjects. All served him. All bowed before him.
  - b. This is the nature of earthly kings. They are seated upon a throne. The greater the king, the greater his throne.  
 We read of Solomon's throne:  
**1 Kings 10:18-20 NAU** - "Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with refined gold. <sup>19</sup> *There were* six steps to the throne and a round top to the throne at its rear, and arms on each side of the seat, and two lions standing beside the arms. <sup>20</sup> Twelve lions were standing there on the six steps on the one side and on the other; nothing like *it* was made for any other kingdom."

- c. With most kings, it was unlawful to approach the throne unless you were given a specific call.

Esther was the queen, and yet she knew approaching the king without his summons would result in death.

**Esther 4:11 NAU** - "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days."

- d. As powerful as the Aramean king might have been, he didn't send Naaman to Israel without also sending a lavish gift.

2. Then we see the king of Israel. He too tried to display strength. He too had a throne and royal robes. All of Israel bowed before him. But inside he knew the limits of his strength. When he received word from the Aramean king he trembled.

**2 Kings 5:7 NAU** - "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."

3. All earthly strength is weakness in disguise.

Look at the powerful leaders of WWII. What happened to Hitler? What happened to the mighty emperor of Japan. Both were forced to surrender. What about Muammar Gaddafi, the powerful leader of Libya? Or Saddam Hussein? The list goes on and on.

## II. We also find examples of Godly strength in this passage

### A. We can see the unique strength of Elisha

1. He received Elijah's mantle. Elijah had no earthly wealth. He was described as **2 Kings 1:8 NAU** - "*He was a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins.*"
2. Likewise, Elisha was not moved by earthly riches. The king of Aram and Naaman presumed that Elisha would be motivated by gold. He arrives with silver and gold and fine clothing as a gift – over a million dollars worth. It had no value for Elisha.  
**2 Kings 5:16 NAU** - "But he said, "As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing."
3. Elisha possessed more power than anyone else in this story. It was a quiet strength, but mighty beyond imagination.  
When Naaman came with his great display of strength, Elisha didn't even go out to greet him. He merely charged Naaman to go wash in the Jordan.
4. The great man, Naaman, was humbled before the greater Elisha.

- B. What was the source of Elisha's strength?
1. Elisha's strength was in God. He doesn't even appear before Naaman until after he had been healed.
  2. This has always been the case. God takes ordinary men and makes them strong. Don't forget, when Elijah found Elisha he was plowing behind a yoke of oxen.
  3. God told Joshua:  
**Joshua 1:5-7 NAU** - "No man will *be able* to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. <sup>6</sup> "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. <sup>7</sup> "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go."
- C. Perhaps the most amazing display of strength in this passage was the strength of the slave-girl. We find her as one of the most significant figures in this story and we aren't even given her name.
1. She had been captured when Israel lost a battle with the Arameans.
  2. She would have been the epitome of weakness. She was taken away from friends and family. She was taken away from everything familiar and hauled off to a foreign land. And then she was placed in servitude in the home of the very man who led the attack.
- D. There are several important points about this servant girl
1. In spite of being forcibly removed from her home and made a slave, she served her master humbly and faithfully. We wouldn't see much of this today when most are quick to claim their rights and consider it tyranny to be asked to wear a mask.
  2. Instead of sulking in depression and despair she sought to live faithfully in the midst of her difficulty. Despite being forcibly made a servant in Naaman's household, she sincerely sought his welfare.  
**2 Kings 5:3 NAU** - "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."
  3. This was a period of great apostasy in Israel. Most were now worshipping and serving Baal. With a population probably exceeding a million, God says He had maintained a remnant of 7000. That's less than 1%. Apparently, her parents were among the remnant. She was taught to follow the one true God of Israel. In addition, she knew of Elisha, God's prophet. She also had no doubt that Naaman could be healed. She was a child of faith. Without her testimony we wouldn't find healing in this passage.
  4. So outstanding was this young lady's witness that Naaman had no doubt that her words were worth listening to.  
**2 Kings 5:4 NAU** - "Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel."

5. This young girl was able to move the agenda of the king.  
What was the source of her strength?  
Her strength was found in her meek and steadfast faith.  
She trusted in the God of Israel

### III. What about you?

- A. What is the source of your strength? From where do you find comfort?

1. Do you make your strength the medical personnel?
2. Is it the medication
3. Is it with the legal system or the politician in power?
4. Do you find strength in your bank account?

- B. For the Christian God give us strength by His Spirit.

**Ephesians 3:14-17 NAU** - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, <sup>16</sup> that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;"

**Ephesians 6:10-12 NAU** - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."

### Conclusion:

1. This strength is the treasure of all who trust in God

**Hebrews 11:33-34 NAU** - "who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of* righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight."

2. This isn't worldly strength. This is strength from the hand of God. It is given to those who are worldly weak.

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NAU** - "And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."