Naaman's Leprosy

2 KINGS 5

I. NAAMAN'S CONDITION [vv. 1-5]

A. **Verse 1:** Naaman was the commander of the army of the king of Syria [Ben Hadad II], a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, a mighty man of valor, **BUT he was a leper.**

We do not know the medical details of his leprosy as the term can refer to a number of different skin conditions, but we can deduct from verse 7 that this particular leprosy was severe enough for the king of Israel to recognize it as a life and death situation.

Leprosy is referred to throughout Scripture as highly infectious, contagious, and damaging to the skin and nervous system, often showing up as white or red sores on the skin's surface making it very noticeable. Lepers were outcasts, seen as unclean and contagious for a certain time (Lev. 13-14). Leprosy causes pain, reduced sensation, numbness and weakness as it spreads, and at this time it was seen as incurable.

Like Naaman, we can have great success in our titles, positions, possessions and have power to do great things, **but no amount of prestige can cure the sin that we try to cover up as it secretly eats away at us.**

No matter how much we try, we cannot cover up forever that which is killing us. Even when no one else sees, we see. God sees through it all with eyes like fire in hopes that we might come to Him and be cleansed.

The worst part about leprosy is not the pain, but the numbness. I think of Jesus' rebuke of Ephesus for leaving their first love

(Rev. 2) or His rebuke of Laodicea for being unable to feel because of their lukewarmness (Rev. 3) or Paul's warning to Corinth for operating in power without love (1 Cor. 13). There is great danger when we become numb to the thing that is killing us. What are we willing to do to be able to feel again? What will it take for us to finally get honest about our numbness?

B. **Verses 2-4:** The young girl from the land of Israel was taken captive by the Syrians and served Naaman's wife as a maid, yet she was filled with compassion and faith on behalf of Naaman to see him healed, though he was her enemy.

By the mercy of God, Naaman had an intercessor and a herald of the hope that could be found in the Lord alone. The unconditional love of this young girl saw beneath Naaman's armor and touched something deep within him despite his numbness. She offered him an authentic solution to what was really eating at him. **She represents the undiluted gospel that is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believes (Rom. 1:16).**

Like this young Israelite girl, are we willing to lay down our lives not only for those who love us, but for those who have wronged us? Are we still full of the faith that knows there is a God over all the earth who has the power to not only heal our sickness, but to cleanse us of our sin?

II. NAAMAN GOES TO ISRAEL [vv. 6-12]

A. **Verse 6:** Upon heeding the young girl's message of hope, Naaman seeks permission from the king to go to Israel and seek after this prophet to be healed. Naaman goes with plenty of money on hand, fully intending to purchase his healing at any cost.

Naaman does well in responding with action to go and seek healing in Israel, but later on in this story we will see that it's not enough **that** we come, but **how** we come.

B. **Verse 7:** Rather than go directly to the prophet as the young girl told him, the king of Syria sends Naaman to the king of Israel [Jehoram, son of Ahab] to heal him of his leprosy, who interprets his letter as a taunt to fight with them.

The young girl [the gospel] never said anything about going to the king, yet because Naaman had been conditioned to trust primarily in political solutions and strength of arms, he turns to them first.

No political leader or regime will ever be able solve the deeper issues that we face as a society, unless that King is Jesus.

C. **Verse 8:** Elisha happens to hear of this and rightly interprets the reason for Naaman's visit—that he might know for himself that there is a prophet in Israel, and there is no other God in all the earth, except in Israel.

D. **Verses 9-12:** Naaman goes with expectation to Elisha's house, and Elisha intentionally does not greet him or give him what he expects, but instead sends out a messenger to give him a very unusual and humiliating request—to wash in the Jordan river seven times to restore his flesh and make him clean. Naaman is outraged and turns away.

Naaman came to the right address with the wrong approach. He came wanting healing, but only on his terms. He expected Elisha to **come out to him** and **call on his God** and **wave his hand** over the leprosy. His actions are very similarly to the man who comes to Jesus, whom we call the rich young ruler (Mk. 10:17-22)--the man who came to Jesus seeking eternal life, but was not willing to do the one thing Jesus asked of him.

We need more preachers who aren't going to open up their door to someone based on their wealth and prestige [hirelings vs. shepherds; Jn. 10]. Gehazi [Elisha's servant] would fall into

this trap of greed and covetousness, and it led to him and his descendants becoming lepers themselves (2 Kgs. 5:20-27). If our ministry revolves around serving ourselves and pleasing others, then it will eventually destroy us.

I believe Elisha sent out a messenger instead of coming out himself because he wanted Naaman to humble himself and find healing not in a man, but a river [which represents the Spirit of God].

In his arrogance, Naaman complained that the rivers of his land were far better to wash in than the murky Jordan river. He became offended because he wanted to pay for a quick healing without having to take off his armor. **Entitlement will keep us numb and critical of anything that requires us to humble ourselves**, especially by taking off that which is covering up the parts of us that we don't want anyone else to see. We cannot have breakthrough without vulnerability. Are we desperate enough to take off our cover-up and get in the river?

III. NAAMAN IS HEALED [vv. 13-19]

A. **Verses 13-14:** As Naaman turns away in anger, his servants stand in the gap to persuade him to obey the words of Elisha. He obeys and dips seven times in the Jordan, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

B. **Verses 15-19:** Naaman returns to Elisha to confess that he knows there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. He urges Elisha to receive his gift, but Elisha adamantly refuses. Naaman then asks for two mule-loads of dirt be given to him so that he may offer burnt sacrifices as worship unto the LORD, and that he may be pardoned for having to bow in the temple of their false gods in service to his master.

Read: Mark 1:40-45 [Jesus Cleanses the Leper]