

The Wonderful Ways Of God With Naaman.

Text: 2 Kings 5:8-19a

Suggested Hymns:

395, 101, 414, 289, 543 ALHB

- 1) God Puts a Bitter Drop into Naaman's Cup of Happiness
- 2) God Sends a Little Slave Girl into His Home to Be a Preacher
- 3) God Crushes His Proud Spirit and Gives Him the Spirit of Trust
- 4) God Again Removes the Bitter Drop
- 5) God Makes Him His Grateful and Conscientious Servant

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 2 Kings 5:8-19a, ⁸ *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."*

⁹ *Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house.* 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."*

¹¹ *But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, '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 heal the leprosy.' "* ¹² *Are not the Abanah and the 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.*

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'?"*

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.*

¹⁵ *And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, "Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all*

the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant.”
¹⁶ *But he said, “As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing.”*
And he urged him to take it, but he refused.

¹⁷ *So Naaman said, “Then, if not, please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth; for your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD.*

¹⁸ *Yet in this thing may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon — when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD please pardon your servant in this thing.”* ¹⁹ *Then he said to him, “Go in peace.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Scripture says in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God *desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*. For that purpose God gave to the first world the Gospel of the Seed of the Woman. For that purpose He spared Noah in the Flood, that after its subsidence he might continue as a preacher of righteousness.

For that purpose He called Abram and made him the father of a nation that was His chosen people, a people to whom He entrusted His oracles, His promises of the Messiah.

For that purpose He sent forth, in the fullness of time, His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who suffered and died on the cross for the redemption of all people.

For that purpose He established His New Testament Church and gave her the great command to preach the Gospel to every creature.

For that purpose God often uses wonderful ways with the individuals, as shown in Naaman, of whom our text treats.

Let us consider *The Wonderful Ways of God with Naaman*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. God Puts A Bitter Drop Into Naaman's Cup Of Happiness.

In order to understand our text, we must page back in the life history of Naaman. Naaman was the commander of the army of Syria. He was the commander-in-chief of his king's mighty army. He had won many a battle. He was great, mighty, exalted, rich, and a favourite of his mighty king. He was happy. But into his cup of happiness the Lord put a bitter drop, for Naaman was a leper.

In the eyes of the people that was a dreadful calamity; it spelled Naaman's doom. But in the gracious providence of God it was to serve for the healing of his soul. If Naaman had not become leprous, he would never, as far as we can see, have come to the knowledge of, and faith in, the true God.

Naaman clearly had come in contact with Israel in more than one conflict on the field of battle. He must have learned something of Israel's religion; but he did not pay the slightest attention to it. He was perfectly satisfied to be as he was, until God laid His heavy, yet merciful, hand upon him.

So many an individual today, although coming in contact with the religion of Jesus Christ in many ways, does not react to it in the smallest degree. He is enjoying life and is satisfied. But then God in His grace and mercy puts a bitter drop into his cup of life. It may be sickness, grief, or some other misfortune.

Now he is dissatisfied; now he realises his own helplessness; now he is groping for deliverance. He does not see it, but God has devised ways and means for his rescue.

Remember what Joseph's brothers said, as we read in Genesis 42:21, ²¹ *Then they said to one another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."*

2. God Sends A Little Slave Girl Into His Home To Be A Preacher.

While Naaman was tasting that bitter drop in his cup of life, having no hope of ever ridding himself of it, God sends His messenger to him. And who is this messenger? Is it some celebrated and mighty prophet, who, in a way, may be said to be on an equal footing with this great and mighty Naaman? Not at all. It

is a little Jewish slave girl who was taken captive in war and was made an attendant of Naaman's wife.

Pitying her master and ardently desiring his recovery, she said in the hearing of her mistress, as written in 2 Kings 5:3, ***“If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.”***

Naaman grasps at this last straw of hope, and with a letter from his king, and carrying with him much gold and silver, he departs for Samaria.

In a similar manner God has since that day sent some seemingly insignificant messenger of hope to many an individual. It may have been only a humble Christian who visited him in his misfortune; it may have been only a Christian girl nursing him in a hospital that spoke a few words about the Great Physician; it may have been only a little, humble tract which spoke of the crimson remedy that cleanses us from all the leprosy of sin, that put him on the road leading to the true God.¹

3. God Crushes His Proud Spirit And Gives Him The Spirit Of Trust.

Naaman came to Samaria, but he came with a proud and haughty spirit. God, however, crushes that proud spirit and gives him the spirit of humility and trust.

When Jehoram, the king of Israel, read the request of the Syrian king in behalf of his great captain, he thought it was a clever pretext to start a war, since every man knew that no mere human being, even though he was a king, could cure any one of leprosy.

But while the king of Israel was at a loss as to what he might do in this case, God's prophet Elisha sent him a message; ***“Let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.”***²

So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariots and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. He expected the prophet to come out and give him all the honour due to his rank and position.

Instead, however, Elisha sends a servant out to him, who tells him: ***“Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.”***

Now Naaman was furious; his pride was deeply wounded by such treatment. He left in a huff and said, ***“Indeed, I said to myself, ‘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 heal the leprosy.’¹² Are not the Abanah and the 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.

So it is with many people today. When he hears from a humble prophet or preacher of the Lord that all he is to do is to repent of his sins and believe in Christ, who suffered and died for him in order that he might be saved, he will take offence at it; it is all too simple.

That is what offends some in the Sacraments — water in Baptism and bread and wine in Holy Communion.

Such a person has his own ideas as to the way he might be saved, for example through his own righteousness, good works, sufferings, and sacrifices. And so, in the carnal pride of his heart, he often turns away from God’s saving hand just as did Naaman.

But while Naaman turned away from the prophet and the prophet’s God, God did not turn away from him. He had Naaman’s servants talk to him. They reminded him that it was the prophet, the prophet of God, who told him what to do.

We read, ***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’?***

Now Naaman becomes humble, He goes down and dips himself in the Jordan seven times according to the direction of the man of God. God had given him the spirit of trust and faith.

Thus God still operates with proud and obstinate people. He does not change His way of salvation to meet the approval of human reason, but by means of His almighty Word He changes the proud heart of man.

God opens his eyes to see that, if He is to save, He must save in His own way, that this is the only way. Thus man finally yields and accepts God’s gracious offer of free salvation through Christ; he penitently acknowledges that

the leprosy of sin has made him entirely helpless, and in childlike faith and trust he plunges into the crimson flood of the Saviour's precious blood. And the result?

4. God Again Removes The Bitter Drop.

After Naaman, trusting in the promise of God given to him by the prophet, dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, "*and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.*" The bitter drop that had fallen into his cup of happiness was miraculously removed.

It is even so with the individual sinner. Having dipped himself in true faith in the crimson flood of Jesus' blood, he becomes clean of the leprosy of sin; for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.

That bitter drop of his absolute guiltiness and damnability in the sight of God, that bitter drop of terror in view of the holiness and righteousness of God, that bitter drop of the fear of death and eternal damnation, all this is removed from his heart, and the joyful assurance that for the sake of Christ God is his gracious, merciful, forgiving, and loving Father now fills his cup of life.

5. God Makes Him His Grateful And Conscientious Servant.

Finally God does one thing more — He makes of him whom he has brought to faith in Christ a grateful and conscientious servant.

Naaman, seeing what God had wrought, returns to Elisha. He now stands humbly before him, openly confesses God by saying: "*Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel*" and offers the prophet a gift, a rich donation of gold and silver, as a reward.

Knowing the weak state of Naaman's faith, Elisha does not accept any gift. Naaman is to know that the grace and mercy of God are free; they cannot be bought or paid for. Elisha is satisfied with the evidence of Naaman's gratitude.

But now Naaman begs for two loads of earth from which he desires to build an altar in his home country and upon which he intends to bring burnt offerings and sacrifices, no longer to other gods, but to the Lord.

The fact that his altar was to be built from Israel's soil was to be an external proof that he had definitely and absolutely broken with the idols and the worship of his people.

But there is one thing that still worries him. He remembers that, as his king's personal attendant, he must go to the temple of the god ***Rimmon***, where his king worships, and as the king bows down, he must also lower his body to support the king, not indeed to worship ***Rimmon***, but to serve his royal master.

Will that be wrong? Elisha says, ***“Go in peace.”*** Although Naaman would still accompany the King to the heathen temple, his bowing down would no longer be an act of worship.³

If you make yourself clear on that point, if everybody will know that you have forsaken the idols, and are a true worshiper of the true God, then this service which you are giving to the king will be properly understood. Thus God made Naaman His grateful and conscientious servant.

God does so with every one whom He has cleansed by the blood of Jesus from the leprosy of sin. He brings about a realisation in such a man's heart that he owes his eternal healing solely to God's grace and mercy, and for that he is grateful.

Like Naaman he is willing to give liberally to the cause of God's kingdom, to show in every way, also externally, that he is serving the true God only, and he conscientiously avoids any compromising situations. — Am I, are you, such a servant? God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Compare to 2 Kings 7:3–16

² 2 Kings 5:8

³ The Peoples' Bible, Kings, p 193