

The Prophet, the Leper, and the Problem

2 Kings 5: 1-19

Elisha was a student and successor to the Prophet Elijah. He was the prophet bold enough to ask for and receive a double portion of Elijah's anointing.

The story of Naaman the Leper and the Prophet Elisha is a classic one. Many of us today are suffering from the same condition that plagued Naaman, and it is not leprosy. There was a deeper problem that plagued the heart of this mighty warrior.

Naaman was an honorable, powerful, and successful captain in the Syrian Army. But he was a leper. Leprosy was a contagious and incurable disease during biblical times. Anyone who had the disease was treated as an outcast and isolated from society. Can you imagine being separated from your family and friends for most, if not all, your life? Lepers were not permitted to enter the synagogue for worship or mingle with others. They also had to ring a bell and announce themselves as unclean when approached by anyone without the disease.

However, God used Naaman's predicament for His glory. No one in Syria was able to cure Naaman. An Israelite girl who was captured during a Syrian invasion became maid to Naaman's wife. She loved the Lord and knew of His power to heal. She suggested to Naaman's wife that the Prophet Elisha who lived in Samaria could heal her husband of his dreadful disease. The word reached Naaman, and he received permission to travel to Israel. The king of Syria sent a letter to the king of Israel concerning Naaman's condition. After reading the letter from the Syrian king the king of Israel was distressed. He tore his clothes in agony thinking that the Syrian king was scheming against him.

The prophet Elisha heard that the king had torn his clothes, and he asked why. Upon hearing the explanation, Elisha told the king to send Naaman to him so he would know that there was a prophet in Israel. When Naaman arrived at the prophet's house Elisha didn't come out to greet him but sent a messenger to instruct Naaman on the process for his healing. Naaman was instructed to go to the Jordan River and wash seven times. Naaman was enraged! It was bad enough that Elisha didn't greet him, but washing in the nasty Jordan River was even more offensive. Didn't he know that Naaman was an important man? Couldn't the prophet see that Naaman was wealthy and willing to pay any price for a simple cure?

Leprosy can represent the disease of sin that plagues mankind. Leprosy was Naaman's physical condition, but he suffered from a spiritual condition that was known only by God – the sin of pride. Pride almost caused Naaman to miss out on a lesson and a blessing. Are we as believers guilty of having too much pride to do things God's way?

After being persuaded by one of his men, Naaman eventually went to the Jordan River, washed seven times, and was healed. God washed all of Naaman's disease away, and Elisha didn't charge for telling him how to be cured. Naaman learned that there was no other God but the God of Israel. He also learned that God desires humility and obedience, and not prestige or money. If you are a Believer, God has washed your sins away, and through His blood has made you clean, just as He did for Naaman, the Leper.

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