

¹ Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper. ² And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. ³ Then she said to her mistress, "If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy." ⁴ And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus said the girl who is from the land of Israel." ⁵ Then the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. ⁶ Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy. ⁷ And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me." 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."

Text: 2 Kings 5:1-15a A 1/19/25 Romans 1:8-17 Matthew 8:1-13 Psalm 27 Resp. Ps.: 40
Hymns: 126, 281, 388, 149

THE WONDROUS, LIFE-GIVING GOSPEL

- 1. Is received in humility**
- 2. Is free**
- 3. Cleanses from all sin**

Dear fellow cleansed by the blood of Christ,

There was a man in one of my classes in junior college who knew I was a Christian and asked me what the Bible says about our salvation. He thought that it was by our good works that a person is saved, but he wasn't confident that he was good enough to earn God's forgiveness. I told him some Bible verses that promise that we're saved by faith alone in Jesus Christ.

In the story of Naaman, the Lord gives us the opportunity to see someone come to faith in the Savior for the first time. It helps us to understand and appreciate more fully how wondrous the

lift-giving Gospel is! The Gospel is received in humility. The Gospel is free. And the Gospel cleanses us from all sin.

1

There was a man named Naaman, who was the top general of the king of Aramea, that is, Syria. Naaman was a great and brave soldier, but he was a leper. Someone with leprosy can become terribly disfigured, and even die. In those days there was no medical help for leprosy. Naaman had a Jewish slave girl. She believed in God and knew that God's prophet, Elisha, could heal her master. She let this be known, and soon Naaman was on his way to Israel.

Naaman went to see the king of Israel, figuring the king would have the authority and knowledge to help him. But the king of Israel was an unbeliever. He didn't think to turn to God's prophet, Elisha, for the help he needed. He thought Naaman was asking him to do something that he knew he couldn't do. When the king failed to help him, he could use it as an excuse to attack Israel.

Elisha heard about this and had Naaman sent to him. Naaman came with his horses and chariot. He waited outside in front of Elisha's house, expecting the prophet to come out to him, the mighty general. But Elisha sent out his servant instead. As if this weren't enough of a blow to Naaman's ego, Elisha told him through the servant that he would be cleansed of his leprosy if he washed in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman was furious. He had wanted an impressive show from Elisha in healing him, and what he got instead was the simple instruction to wash in the foreigner's river. Happily for Naaman, his servants spoke with him. He ended up washing in the Jordan and was miraculously cured of his leprosy. But the best thing that happened to Naaman was that the experience brought him to believe in God. When Naaman was healed he went back to Elisha and said, *"Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel."*

One of the things this story teaches us is that the Gospel is received in humility. The Bible tells us, *"You see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called"* (1 Cor. 1:26). The problem with many of the world's influential people is that they think they're too smart to believe in God.

It was a good thing that General Naaman wasn't too proud to listen to his Jewish slave girl. He wasn't too proud to seek help from her God through God's prophet. However, Naaman acted quite proud when he arrived at the prophet's house. But once he humbled himself and did what Elisha told him to do, he was cured. And he came to receive saving faith from God.

We can never come before God in a proud way. We can't let ourselves question the Word of God, as Naaman did at first. We're told in Romans 8:7 that our human mind *"is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."* It's by listening to the Gospel and believing it that we receive its blessings.

We shouldn't be too proud to listen to God's Word from a child, or anyone else. If that person is telling us what the Bible says, we need to humbly listen to God's Word and gladly accept it. Jesus tells us that when we're telling someone what the Bible says, *"He who hears you hears Me"* (Lk. 10:16). Had Naaman been too proud to listen to his slave girl, and eventually to

Elisha, he would never have received the wonderful physical, and especially spiritual healing that the Lord intended for him.

If we want God's help, we need to humbly ask Him for it. Scripture says, "*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time*" (1 Pet. 5:5-6). Naaman made a big mistake at first when he questioned God's Word through Elisha. It's not our place to question God's Word or God's will, and try to tell God the way He should do things. We simply bring our needs to God in prayer, and ask Him for the humility and faith to wait on Him to answer us in His own way and in His own time.

Naaman was afflicted with the terrible disease of leprosy, for which there was no known cure. The Bible tells us that we "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Ro. 3:23). We're all afflicted with the terrible disease of sin, for which there's no human cure. Leprosy destroys the body. Sin destroys body and soul eternally in hell. There's nothing we can do to cleanse ourselves from our disease of sin. Our only hope, and our certain hope, is Jesus. The Bible assures us, "*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" (1 Tim. 1:15).

2

When Naaman came to be cured of his leprosy, he brought seven hundred fifty pounds of silver, one hundred fifty pounds of gold, and ten sets of expensive clothing. He expected to use all that to pay for his cure. But the Lord's healing was free!

That's like the Gospel. The Gospel is absolutely free! God says in His Word, "*Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price*" (Is. 55:1, my emphasis). We sin against God, so it seems reasonable that we have to do some good things to make up for our sins so that God will forgive us and save us. But there is no payment that we can make or have to make for our sins. The Bible tells us that "*God ... saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy*" (Titus 2:4-5). Jesus lived the perfect life that we can't begin to live, and earned heaven for us. Jesus paid the price for all of our sins with His suffering and death on the cross. God forgives us and saves us as a free gift by faith in Jesus. "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*" – Ephesians 2:8-9.

3

Leprosy is a terrible disease that eats away at the body and can result in death. No wonder Naaman's king was willing to give so much to anyone who could cure him! When Naaman washed in the Jordan River, he was so completely cured by the Lord that his skin became as smooth and unblemished as a young child's.

Our leprosy of sin is an even more terrible disease that results in eternal death. But the Bible assures us that "*the blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin*" (1 Jn. 1:7), making us completely new and reborn! Praise God for **THE WONDROUS, LIFE-GIVING GOSPEL!** Amen.