

Naaman Healed of Leprosy [Part 1]

by Bertha Smith

This sermon explores the story of Naaman's healing from leprosy, emphasizing the importance of humility and obedience to God's commands.

Duration: 31:30

Scripture: 2 Kings 5:1

Topics: "Healing"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Naaman, a general from Syria who was highly respected and successful. However, Naaman had a problem - he was a leper. Through a series of events, Naaman ends up seeking help from Elisha, a prophet of God. Elisha instructs Naaman to wash in the Jordan River seven times, and when Naaman obeys, he is miraculously healed. The preacher emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's instructions and warns against the deceitfulness of sin.

Transcript

We're all familiar with a little bit of history in the Old Testament that's recorded in the 5th chapter of 2nd Kings, where a general who stood next to the king up in Damascus, the capital of Syria, which was the neighbor country to Israel where the ten tribes lived when the kingdom of Israel was divided. They were always making raids on Israel, taking people off captive. Through that general who was a very brave man and had many, many qualifications for a general and was the pride of his king, he just conquered every country around them.

The Bible word of God describes him as being a wonderful man. But then after describing his fine qualities, there's a but that comes in, D-U-T. That's a transition.

That's something that's very different that's coming. So it describes this man. This man's name, you remember, was Naaman.

Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master. His master, of course, was a king. He stood next to the king.

An honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance under Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. He had that awful disease for which there was no cure at that time.

He was a heathen man, worshiped idols, and no nation knew about the true God at that time, or at least no one had his laws to live by except Israel, the children of Israel. And when the ten tribes pulled off, you remember their first king, Jeroboam, forbade anyone going to Jerusalem to worship the God of their forefathers. And in God's word, he commanded every man to go three times a year to worship and offer sacrifices for his family.

And that king forbade anyone going to Jerusalem anymore. And he put up an idol in the road between Samaria and Jerusalem. And then the kings of Syria not only worshiped idols themselves, but they engaged their sons to heathen women of kings of other countries who worshiped idols.

And in a few years, the northern kingdom had left the Lord complete, and the Lord raised up a mighty prophet, Elijah, to go all over the land and preach. And then following him, the Lord chose a young man named Elisha. Elisha had to leave his home and go perhaps to a more important city, and he went up near the capital.

We don't know just where he lived, but he went up near the capital. He lived on a farm, faithfully serving his father, plowing. His father had plenty of hired help for slaves.

They had 12 yokes of oxen plowing in the field, and that was so important that it was recorded. And Elijah passed his blanket upon Elisha and told him that he was an anointed king. He promised that his mantle would fall upon him if he saw him when he left.

So the Lord in that way was calling Elisha to lead the plowing with the other men and to lead his father. And if he had a wife and children, they would have been left at home anyway and follow Elisha and learn from Elisha. And he did during Elisha's lifetime.

After Elisha went up, you remember his mantle fell, and Elisha had prayed for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah to come upon him, and it surely came to pass. Elisha became a powerful prophet. He had a co-worker named Jehazi.

It was not safe for a man to travel alone in the Holy Land, in a country where people are so poor they have to steal to live. People who have to have something to feed their children are hiding in the bushes along the highways, and they rush out with one man by himself and knock him senseless and rob him. And if he resists, they just kill him.

And if he has no money, they just take his clothes, and they always take the clothes to the pawn shop and get a little money. Jesus told us about a man going down to Jerusalem to Jericho traveling alone. He never should have been traveling alone.

People knew better than that. He fell among thieves and was robbed and left half-dead. Elisha had a co-worker.

He knew better than to travel alone. And he knew the Lord had called him to walk through the land, those northern tribes, and show them their sin. He couldn't have left a woman, a young woman, at home in a house by herself.

It wouldn't have been safe. He couldn't have left with small children. So if he had a wife and children, he had to live away from them.

He and his co-worker lived together, and they walked together. And that co-worker had the highest position of any man in Israel to be associated with God's wonderful prophet. And you remember a wonderful, big-hearted woman had her husband build a little room for Elisha and his co-worker up on the wall where the dogs wouldn't be getting into the house.

In the summer they would have to open their doors to get air. And of course in the old winter you don't take people into your home without furnishing meals. And that was one of God's commands for the children of Israel in the Old Testament.

They would receive travelers into their homes because it was not safe for them to live out in the streets, camp in the streets. And you remember they always stopped there in traveling, and Elisha asked his co-worker Jehaziah one time, What shall we ask the Lord to do for this woman? We wanted a warder for taking us in like this. What shall we ask her to do? And it was Jehaziah that said she has no son.

And for a Jew not to have any sons, not to have anybody to hand down his property and his family name to, was just the greatest tragedy that could happen to them. And they all hoped that no doubt that the Messiah would come through their descendants. Well, that wonderful general up in Syria who had liberty, had taken one of those little Jewish maidens into his home that they had captured and taken away.

And when they had battles, the officers, when they had a habit of dividing out the choices, people whom they had taken to use themselves, and then they might sell the others on the market. And they would go into whatever home and bought them as slaves. Well, a little Jewish slave that Naaman had in his home expressed the desire that her master knew the prophet down in her country who could cure leprosy.

Well, when this news got to Naaman and to the king, they did something about it. If there is somebody down in Samaria who could cure leprosy, he must go and be cured. And no doubt they thought anyone who could cure leprosy would be the king of the country.

And so the king gave him a leaf of absinthe and sent him down with his war chariots and with his bodyguard and perhaps officers under him, quite a party. And they went down to the king of Samaria, and he rent his clothes when Naaman reported that he had come to have his leprosy cleaned. He thought, of course, that nobody could cure leprosy but God, and he was worshipping idols and he was distressed beyond words.

Well, God had his prophet there, and it was not a time for the prophet to be humble. It was a time for God's prophet to rise to the occasion and speak for God. And when the king, of course, thought that he would just come in and ask him to cure leprosy because he couldn't cure it, he would just make war and then nix all of Israel to Syria.

And it was enough to stir him. And Elisha just sent a message to that king and said, Send that man here, and here know God has a prophet in Israel. Elisha and his co-worker lived outside the city in a little hut.

All those houses have to have an outside wall around for protection and for privacy. And according to the customs of the old man, when somebody came to see you of repute that you wanted to honor, you went way up the road to greet them. And when you saw them, you started bowing and you always walked backwards.

You never turned your face on someone who was higher up than you were. And Elisha should have met that man and started bowing back, back, walked backwards all the way to his gate. And when he got to his

gate, according to their custom, he should have poured out a whole lot of empty talk about how honored he was, nothing but a poor dog, to have such a great man come to his humble hut.

Elisha knew that he didn't know a name, but he knew the pride of those over in Ramona. And he knew they had to be humble. And if that man expected the Lord to heal his leprosy, he'd have to humble himself.

And Elisha just sat in his house, didn't even get up and go out, just sent his servant out and said, tell him to go down to Jordan and dip seven times and he'd be healed. Well, Naaman, as we would say in our local talk up in South Carolina, he was mad as Fury. He was angry.

He said, we have rivers up in Damascus we can dip in. Why should I come down here and dip in this Jordan? Well, those officers under him who had gone with him to accompany him must have been wonderful men. And they must have greatly appreciated Naaman and his position and all of his ability.

And they reasoned with him and pleaded with him. Finally, Naaman humbled himself and went down to the River Jordan and dipped how many times? Seven times. If he had dipped six times, do you think he would have been healed? No.

Perfect obedience brings perfect results. Now, after the way that Naaman had been treated by Elisha, he could have gone up to Jordan to the first board and crossed over and gone on back to Damascus. Now, his king had sent presents galore down to the king of Israel.

It amounted, not counting just the silver and the gold that he sent, it amounted to about a third of a million dollars in our money back before inflation began when our money was money. And then ten changes of raiment. Now, that wouldn't have been ordinary suits of clothes like you men, but gorgeous old rental robes, perhaps beaded, embroidered with beads.

Precious jewels, or semi-precious jewels that one monarch would send to another. I remember, friends, that Elisha had a seminary and he had a hundred students. And just before that, they hadn't even had food to eat at times.

And one time when the men came in at the end of the day to eat, they had nothing, and they had to go out. They were sent out in the fields to find some greens to make some soup. And some of them must have been city guys that didn't know plants, edible plants, some poisonous plants, and somebody got a poisonous plant and put it in soup.

And somebody who knew it, somebody from the country, tasted it and said, Death in the pot! Well, that'll kill us if we eat it. And Elisha had to perform a miracle. He told them to put some meal in the pot, and put the meal in the pot, and threw it out, and they all ate.

Another time when they didn't have anything to eat, a benevolent neighbor, somebody from the country came in, bringing some fresh ears of corn from the field, and a few, twenty little loaves, they called them loaves, I think we'd call them rolls, loaves about two or three times the size of our wiener rolls. And the cook didn't even serve. And Elisha said, What's the matter? Why don't you serve the supper? Well, the cook said, What would twenty loaves and a few ears of corn mean for a hundred men? Well, Elisha was responsible for feeding his men.

How could he teach them to become prophets and teach them the word of God if they were hungry? And he was going to teach them by an example, the God they were preparing to serve. And so Elisha said,

Well, just serve it. And they started serving.

And everybody ate. The hundred men ate all they could hold, and then had food to gather. And you remember when the hundred men came, they didn't have dormitory space.

The cooperative program just didn't come across, and they were in bad straits. And they could build a dormitory themselves if they had equipment to build it with. Well, in those days all it took to build a dormitory was an axe, and they didn't even have the axe.

And, lo, they had to borrow a neighbor's axe and go down to the Jordan. It must have been wooded on each side at that time, and they cut down enough trees and trimmed off the limbs and had logs to build a log house, a dormitory. But one of the men got too near the Jordan when they were cutting down a tree, and the axe didn't fly off of the handle and down to the bottom of the river.

Well, now those men had on all the clothes they had. And old rentals didn't get in water and swim and do all kinds of stunts like that at that time. And they didn't get in water.

And they were not accustomed to swimming in rivers and diving and all of that. And if it had been wintertime, it's cold over there in the weather. It would have just been too bad if they had jumped down in that river to get the axe had.

But now those men were proper seminary students, friends. They were proper men to be trained to be prophets. Why? Oh, they were in distress, and the first thing they said, Alas, the axe is gone! It was not our axe, and we can't take it home.

They felt responsible for taking that axe back. They didn't feel like some people today that feel responsible for taking back a book of ours. Well, what should be done? Well, they cut a limb off of a tree and threw it down.

And the axe had floated up and hooked on to it. And they were able to pull it out. Now, wasn't that a lesson about Almighty God for those seminary students? You see, Elisha gave practical demonstrations of the kind of God they had.

He didn't have much Bible. Of course, they had the Old Testament law and a few of the prophets. But we don't know how many copies Elisha had.

But the law was taught at the temple. And they went down. Well, when Naaman was healed, he went up the hill to Elisha's little hut and unloaded all that third of a million dollars.

Now, how you and I would have rejoiced and jumped up and down and clapped our hands and said, The Lord has provided. Look how the Lord has provided. Why? The seminary would have been endowed.

They would have had money all they needed as long as Elisha lived. And then for the next man. Elisha wouldn't take a cent.

Why? He didn't want that heathen man to think that he was serving God for anything he was going to get out of it. And anyway, he hadn't healed that leprosy. Elisha's God had healed that leprosy.

And he wasn't going to steal God's glory by taking anything for what he had done. He rather his students would go on hungry and run the risk of getting poison mixed up with the food than to let that heathen man

think that they were serving God for anything they themselves could get out of it. And he wouldn't take a thing, and they urged him.

And it says, Elisha stood before his God. What did he say? As the Lord liveth before whom I stand, I will receive none of it. And he wouldn't take a thing.

Threw off Elisha. He was thinking about the man standing next to the king, taking back to Elisha, to the king, the news that Elisha, the man who had spoken the word for God and been God's instrument by whom his leprosy had been cleaned, would not take one thing for it. Well, Elisha's co-worker was standing there.

There's another butt down here. Butt Jehazi. Butt Jehazi.

Poor, poor Jehazi. Poor Jehazi. He saw all that wealth loaded up, and he decided it was a good chance to get some of it.

And first he sent it with his eyes, and he saw it, and he coveted it. He wanted some of it. Now, I've just said he had the highest position of any man in all those ten tribes, all of Israel, to be a co-worker with God's great prophet.

And he coveted some of that wealth. And then he made a decision. I will run after him and get some of it.

And he stepped down from that high place, co-worker with God's mighty man, and went running after what I call that loot. And, of course, when he gave himself to the devil, he had an ally in the devil to put in his heart exactly what to say to get what he wanted. And he went running.

And when somebody, probably one of the footmen or one of the horsemen, they went down in more chariots, looked back and saw that man coming, then he reported to Naaman and said, The man coming running looks like the man of God. And Naaman stopped his chariot and stepped down and looked back, and sure enough, it was Elisha's co-worker. And he thought something terrific had happened to Elisha.

No, not to Elisha. Elisha stood before his God, adorning his life before his God. But, oh, but it happened to Elisha's co-worker.

And he called to him and said, Is all well? And then Jehoshaphat's first sin came out of his lips. All is well. How could all be well when he told himself to the devil? All was wrong, all was wrong.

And then the next lie was, A master has sent me. And the next lie was, Oh, we have an emergency. Something just happened just since you left.

Two new seminary students have arrived. And they've come from a poorer section, the mountains of Ephraim, where they couldn't afford to send their children away to school. And, oh, they're prophets' sons.

Prophets' sons ought to be educated to be prophets. Prophets' sons. And the master wants one talent of silver and two suits of clothes.

Now, what about those old rental garments, suits of clothes sent from one king to another, for those poor seminary students? Well, grateful Naaman said, Take two talents, take two talents. One talent of silver is 410 pounds. And two talents of silver is 820 pounds.

And no, Elisha got more money than he'd expected. He couldn't even carry that much. Couldn't carry 820 pounds of silver.

But you know, the wars are carried on out west by using men to carry, barrows, they call them, to carry all of their ammunition. And they don't have roads and carts. They do carry some with mule carts or ox carts on the roads that are just wide enough for one cart.

But they fight where there are no roads at all. And their ammunition must be carried, and all their war equipment must be carried on the shoulders of men. And they start out, the men are 10 or 12 years old, they're putting burdens on them, train them to be carriers.

And they lay those burdens on them, and they lay a little bit more, and a little bit more as they grow on, and as they grow on, and they take a little bit more, and a little bit more. And those men that carry that war equipment are just, their muscles are just astounding by the time they get 18, 20 years old. And they just carry burdens that are just unimaginable.

And, well, Elisha's plan, so his plan had just worked gloriously. He got twice as much as he expected. Now, friends, isn't that just the way sin works? We can just enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, which Moses refused to do, and he received God's call.

But sin can just be more delightful than we'd ever dreamed. For a while, for a while, for a while. Well, Jehudah started on, and, no, he'd just gotten more than he was able to take.

And grateful Nehemia sat there beside the road while he sent somebody back. And all of his party sat there beside the road while he sent one of his carriers back to carry that wealth. And down at the bottom of the chapter, at the close of the chapter, we see Jehudah's thoughts, what he was thinking about.

Now, I just marvel at the Lord's goodness to Elisha here. Sin is so blinding that Jehudah didn't know that he couldn't go back and go on and work with Elisha the very same way, just so Elisha didn't know that. The saddest thing I know is for a Christian worker to have a co-worker that's not in tune with the Lord.

And the Lord saved Elisha from that experience. And, no, he revealed to Elisha everything that Jehudah had done, everything he'd said, and even the thoughts of his hardest plans for using that money as he went back. And we see down at the bottom, we see that as Jehudah went along, he saw the olive orchards over here.

And, oh, I'll have olive orchards! Oh, olives for sale! If olive oil is for sale, they'll use olive oil for everything. They traveled all the time with a little skin bottle of olive oil. And when the wind blew their faces dry, they just put some olive oil on their face.

And when their hair blew every which way, they just put some olive oil on their hair, pat it down. If they had an accident and broke the skin, they poured some olive oil on it. And they carried steam rolls in their bag to eat.

And when they got out the steam rolls to eat, they got out the bottle of olive oil and just poured some on and ate it like we'd spread on butter. Olive oil was a very wonderful thing to have for sale, to produce. Well, they used wine.

The water was not good and they couldn't drink it, and they used wine instead of water at all of their meals. And, of course, they were urged not to drink too much and not to get drunk. But there were the vineyards and the men tending to the vineyards.

And, oh, Jehezes says, Oh, I can have vineyards and vine dressers. It meant he'd have raisins and wine for sale. Perhaps the sheep were across the Jordan over there, and he sees the sheep and the shepherds.

He says, Oh, I can have sheep and shepherds. And he saw this man walking before him, obeying the orders of Naaman. He may have been a real slave.

Many of the men that were slaves that were enlisted in the army had to live as slaves. Oh, I can have servants, men's servants, maid's servants. Oh, how he enjoyed that wealth.

All those towns had a tower outside the city where the walled cities with their king. Every walled city, you remember, had its own king. And that king controlled all the towns and villages over to where the next king's domain began.

And every walled city had a tower outside the city where they kept watchmen looking for the enemy in times of war. Well, that was a time of peace, and no one was in the watchtower outside the city walls. And Jeheziah got back and hid his welfare.

And he didn't have any better sense than to go in and report for duty to Elisha. And, oh, to his amazement, the Lord had revealed everything he'd done and even taught us, I said to Elisha. Elisha said, Where did you come from, Jeheziah? My Chinese Bible says I hadn't been there.

My King James Shakespeare English says Thy servant went nowhere. Thy servant didn't go anywhere. Added another lie now to all that he'd already heaped up.

I just think how Elisha must have loved Jeheziah, living away from his family. Jeheziah was all he had. They'd walk together.

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