

A Most Unlikely Evangelist

by Denis Lyle

God uses people of all kinds, shapes, and colours to accomplish His purposes, and we can be used by Him if we step out in faith and trust Him.

Scripture: Genesis 18:14, Genesis 50:20, Leviticus 13:45, Deuteronomy 6:7, 1 Samuel 2:20, 1 Kings 20:1, Psalm 121:4, Isaiah 24:15, Romans 8:28, Hebrews 1:1

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches about the story of a most unlikely evangelist, a little maid in Naaman's house, who despite being a captive, displayed unwavering faith, compassion, and confidence in God, leading to the supernatural recovery of Naaman from leprosy and his conversion to the true and living God. The sermon emphasizes that God does not require a specific mold for those He uses, but rather looks at the heart and faith of individuals, showcasing His infinite variety and unique purposes for each person.

Transcript

2 Kings 5:1-14 A MOST UNLIKELY EVANGELIST In May 1855, an eighteen-year-old boy went to the deacons of a church in Boston. He had been raised in a Unitarian church, in almost total ignorance of the Gospel, but when he moved to Boston to make his fortune, he began to attend a Bible-believing church. Then, in April of 1855, his Sunday School teacher had come into the store where he was working and simply and persuasively shared the gospel and urged the young man to trust in Christ.

He had, and now he was applying to join the church. One fact quickly became obvious. This young man was almost totally ignorant of Biblical truth. One of the deacons asked him, "Son, what has Christ done for us all... for you which entitles Him to our love" His response was, "I don't know. I think Christ has done a great deal for us: but I don't think of anything in particular as I know of". Hardly an impressive start. Years later his SS teacher said of him, "I think the committee of the church seldom met an applicant for membership who seemed more unlikely ever to become a Christian of clear and decided views of Gospel truth, still less to fill any space of public or extended usefulness".

Nothing happened very quickly to change their minds. The deacons decided to put him on a yearlong instruction course to teach him basic Christian truths. Perhaps they wanted to work on some of his rough spots as well. For not only was he ignorant of spiritual truths, he was only barely literate and his spoken grammar was atrocious! At his second interview, there was only a little improvement in the quality of his answers, but since it was obvious that he was a sincere and committed Christian, they accepted him as a

church member.

Over the next years, I am sure that many people looked at that young man, convinced that God would never use a person like that, they wrote off D.L.Moody as "A Most Unlikely Evangelist", but God did not. For by God's grace D.L.Moody was transformed into one of the most effective servants of God, a man whose impact is still with us. If I were to ask this company, "what kind of Christian does God use" I believe the answer would be as varied as the people here gathered. You see we all have an image of the person God uses and invariably we see ourselves as being a long way from fitting that image.

The conclusion is inevitable: I am not what God requires, so the Lord cannot use me. But when we turn to the Word of God we discover a delightful truth. God is not stuck on one pattern. He does not have a heavenly mould into which we must fit or else we will be discarded. The world produces conformity: God produces individuality. Our God is a God of infinite variety who uses people of all kinds: shapes: and colours, and He has a wonderfully unique purpose for each of us! To prove this, we need only consider this little maid in Naaman's house.

What a priceless treasure she was! A little captive maid who not only knew God's power but a full measure of His grace stored up in her heart. What a wonderful little gospel preacher she was! Suppose she had harboured natural resentments against Naaman! Suppose she had said, "Leprosy it serves him right". Then the world would have been robbed of this wonderful story of salvation. My, this little maid is one of God's precious nobodies who have a great reward awaiting them in Heaven!

Notice the story commences with: (1) A STRANGE MYSTERY The days in which this "little maid", lived were hard and cruel. There was continual warfare between Ben-hadad the King of Syria and the King of Israel. (1 Kings 20:1 6:24) According to Jewish tradition it was from the bow of Naaman that the arrow sped which smote and killed Ahab the King of Israel (1 Kings 22:34) The war ended with that battle, but not the defeat. The army of Israel was dispersed: (1 Kings 22:36) Syria no longer encountered resistance, and the result was that marauding bands of Syrians continually invaded the borders of Israel and carried away whatever they could get their hands on.

Now it was on one of these raids that this "little maid", was kidnapped, brought to Damascus and providentially brought into Naaman's house. What A Strange Mystery! What a mysterious hardship for here "He that keepeth Israel," (Ps 121:4) allowed this "little maid", to be taken captive. (1) For notice that in this mystery: (a) A HOME WAS SHATTERED: Look at (5:2) My, that may mean little to us today, but it meant much to certain people that day! A home was rendered desolate. Can you enter into the feelings of these parents who had their young daughter ruthlessly snatched from them Can you think of the anguish of that poor mother, wondering what would become of her daughter Can you see her grief-stricken father in his helplessness, unable to rescue her How would you feel as a mother or father if your daughter was kidnapped Would you not be distressed Would you not be sorely tried by this mysterious providence Why Oh why Why had the Lord allowed this child to be taken Why had God permitted the joy of this home to be shattered Why this cruel captivity Why Why Why (a) Ills: About 19 years ago I stood in a similar home.

For one morning the peace of a small farmstead in Crosskeys Co. Antrim. Was disturbed. An IRA murder gang had come to murder a man in that home. A Christian mother was awakened from her sleep and as she peered through her window to discover what was happening, they shot her dead! A few days later I gazed around that home that was riddled with bullets, I looked upon the tear stained faces of her daughters as they cried, " Why" Is that the question on your lips this... As you think about a loved one who

has been taken are you saying why As you think about a friend who is suffering are you saying why Has some domestic circumstance, some tragedy entered into your home, that has shattered it and you're asking why (a) (b) A HAND WAS SHAPING: For this event which seemed to originate in the will of man was the start of a plan through which Naaman was physically and spiritually healed! (5:15) My, God had a purpose in this trial.

His hand was shaping things. He was working out his good and wise purpose! Does this not shed some light upon the mysterious ways of God in our lives My, we cannot always trace Gods providential dealings in our lives, but what we can be sure about is, that as His children nothing happens to us by chance. God has planned every detail in our lives and we can say with the psalmist "My times are in Thy hand". (Ps 31:15) I have a feeling that the "bad things", that stalk our lives are accomplishing purposes that we may not fully understand today.

My, we can't explain each individual case, but the total pattern seems to be clear. God is in control and is working out His purposes for our good and His glory! (Rom 8:28) Ills: As the old Puritan Thomas Watson used to say, "Where reason cannot wade, there faith must swim". My, this... in those tragic circumstances you may not be able to Trace God, but you can Trust God! For God knows the way, He holds the key, He guides us with unerring hand Sometime, with tearless eyes we'll see Yes, there, up there, we'll understand. (c) A HEART WAS SILENT: We have only to use a little imagination to sense the distress this girl would have felt as she was snatched by the fierce and warlike Syrian raiding party!

Then there was the sense of loss and grief she must have experienced as she was abducted from her family to a strange land in order to make a new home with an alien people. But My, there is not a hint that she gave way to bitterness or self-pity. On the contrary, this girl seems to have sensed instinctively in her heart the truth stated by Paul centuries later in (Rom 8:28) "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose".

Her kidnapping had been an unqualified evil, but like Joseph she knew that "God intended it for good". (Gen 50:20) (c) My, how do we react when life falls apart Do we blame God Do we blame others Do we become bitter Or like this "little maid", do we " glorify the Lord in the fires" (Isa 24:15) This story commences with a (1) but notice this story continues with: (2) A SIMPLE TESTIMONY For although this girl was small in stature she was big in heart! "And she said, unto her mistress... of his leprosy". (5:3) My, where did such faith come from Did it not come from a fathers teaching and a mothers prayers No doubt this child had often heard the story of Gods dealings with her fathers.

Often she must have listened intently as they spoke of "the prophet that was in Samaria". (5:3) And now the seeds of godliness that had been sown in earlier days are bringing forth fruit! My, are you seeking to instill the truths of Gods Word into the minds and hearts of you children (Deut 6:7) Do you see here the wonderful results of early Christian training This captive maid, because she had been taught to trust and know God, was so strong in faith that she was the means of bringing salvation to the home of her captivity, and of raising up a testimony for God which rang through the whole land of Syria!

Note: (a) HOW COURAGEOUS SHE WAS: " And she said unto her mistress... "(5:3) Now in speaking about Elisha, she was really speaking about Jehovah for he was God's representative (Heb 1:1) My, in spite of the dangers: the darkness: the depravity (5:17) that surrounded here she did not keep silent about the true and living God! Do you remember Daniel Like this "little maid", he too was snatched away from his godly home in Jerusalem and transported 1,000 miles away to Babylon. There they tried to brain wash

him.

Think of the changes he had to contend with. A new home: a new university: a new name: a new diet. My, the Babylonians could change Daniel's home: text-books: menu: name, but they could not change his heart. (Dan 1:8) What about you young folk Are you being tested at College: University: Work Are you being tempted to be disloyal to the Word of God: the People of God: the Cause of God Like this "little maid", like Daniel are you willing to stand alone My, we're either Conformers or Transformers.

A conformer is someone who is controlled by the Pressure from Without, but a transformer is someone who is controlled by the Power from Within! Which are you Are you moulded by the worlds standards Or do you set the standard for the world (a) But: (b) HOW COMPASSIONATE SHE WAS: She expressed a genuine love for people. She was an unwilling captive in Naaman's household yet she could not bear to see her master suffer. She did not return a curse but only blessing to her heartless captors!

Here was "a little maid", who saw her master as a needy soul a stranger to the God of Israel, someone who was experiencing a "living death", (Lev 13:45-46) and she was concerned! My, is there a Naaman in your life Is there someone you know who suffers from sin's leprous effects Is there someone who does not know about Christ and His ability to cleanse and forgive Have you a genuine concern for them Ills: General Booth once received a letter from one of his officers lamenting that he saw very little fruit for all his preaching and asking the General's advice.

The reply came in two words "Try tears". Does this "little maid", not put us to shame Oh, our churches are fundamental: our preaching is doctrinal and our hearts are clinical! (c) HOW CONFIDENT SHE WAS: Do you see what she says, "Would God... for he would recover him of his leprosy". (5:3) The best physicians in the land of Syria may be helpless but her God was not. My, there was not even a hint of doubt in her testimony rather this was confidence and faith in God and in His power to save!

" Faith, mighty faith the promise see's And looks to God alone, Laughs at impossibilities And cries, it shall be done." My, as you think of your Naaman this... ask yourself the question "Is anything too hard for the Lord" (Gen 18:14) So this story commences with (1) it continues with (2) and it concludes with: (3) A SUPERNATURAL RECOVERY You see Naaman was healed of his leprosy, and not only that he was brought to a knowledge of the true and living God. (5:14-15) And it all began with the testimony of "a little maid".

My ... (a) THE HELP SHE RENDERED WAS VITAL: A maid in captivity. Who would be inclined to listen to her voice Her age, her nationality, her position were all against her! But this "little maid", moved her mistress: her mistress moved a servant (5:4) the servant moved the King of Syria (5:5) the King of Syria moved the King of Israel (5:7) the King of Israel moved Elisha and the result was Naaman was delivered from leprosy and idolatry and it all began with some simple but sincere words from a "little maid".

Talk about A Most Unlikely Evangelist! She was the first link in the chain that eventually brought Naaman to the place of salvation. Ills: George Trench says "We never know when the simple, feeble words we speak for God , which seem to bear no fruit, are links that will ultimately lead to the saving of a soul". My ... 1. You are a link... therefore do not keep silent, lest you be "the missing link", and that soul be lost. 2. You are a link... therefore don't lose heart if you don't have the joy of leading that soul to Christ.

Remember there are in the chain other links which God is using. 3. You are a link... and should be the one to lead that soul to Christ, don't forget the other links. Be humble and thankful. Yes, (a) and: (b) THE

HONOUR SHE RECEIVED WAS PERSONAL: I wonder did Naaman honor her in Syria One thing is sure God honoured her, for she got a place in the Word of God and many have spoken well of her as I have been trying to do. My, does this "little maid", not illustrate the principle, "them that honour me I will honour" (1 Sam 2:20) A Most Unlikely Evangelist!

Ills: Hudson Taylor as he looked back over thirty years during which he had seen 600 missionaries respond to his vision to reach China through the China Inland Mission said this, "God chose me because I was weak enough. God does not His great works by large committees. He trains someone to be quiet enough, and little enough, and then He uses Him". My, the God who used this "little maid", can and will use YOU!

The great question is: will you step out in faith and trust God to use you

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