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2 KINGS 5:1-27

Today we see a familiar story...it's the story of the healing of a man named Naaman. I think this is one of the most interesting stories of healing in the Bible...but it's also a great lesson for us in the love and sovereignty of God.

Verse 1...

Here are some very important facts that we need to remember about this man Naaman.

The first thing I want us to see is that **verse 1** tells us Naaman was captain or commander over the Syrian army. **Naaman was, in fact, over the entire army of Syria.**

The second thing we see here is that Naaman was a great man with his master. Now, his master was Benhadad, king of Syria. Benhadad was a very powerful and ruthless man...**but he had great respect and admiration for Naaman.**

The third thing we see here is that Naaman was an honorable man. **He was a man of character.**

The fourth thing I want us to see is that Naaman was **a valiant warrior**, and that ties in with the **most interesting** thing we see about Naaman. **Verse 1** tells us that **it was by Naaman that the LORD had given Syria victory.**

Now, wait a minute...

Isn't Syria a heathen nation?

Isn't Syria's king a heathen king?

Isn't Naaman a heathen soldier?

YES! Then, why would God give them victory over anybody? Because many times God uses heathen nations as a rod to do His will. We're going to see later on in this book that He used **Assyria as His rod against Israel** and that He used **Babylon as His rod against Judah.**

Remember when Habakkuk came to God and said, "Lord, when are You going to do something for Your people? Can't you see the mess we're in?" And remember what God said to Habakkuk?

He said, "Oh, Habakkuk, I'm doing something in your day that you wouldn't believe even if you knew. I'm bringing the Chaldeans against My people. I'm at work, Habakkuk."

And Habakkuk couldn't believe that God was going to use the enemies of Judah...the Babylonians...to accomplish His judgment upon them.

I want to tell you...God can and does do anything He wants to among the hosts of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth and no one can ward off His hand...and no one can say to Him, **"What hast Thou done?"**

If God decides to use America's enemies against America...He will. And we can ask all the questions Habakkuk asked and the answer will be the same. **God knows what He's about. God knows the beginning. God knows the end. And God knows everything in between.**

Well, we've seen that Naaman was the great and honorable and valiant and respected and successful captain of the Syrian army...but there's one last thing **verse 1** tells us about Naaman. **"...but he was a leper."**

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Here was a man who seemed to have it all. He was a man of valor. He had risen to the top of his chosen field. He was held in high esteem by the ruler of his country. He had achieved just about all he hoped to achieve...but **he was a leper**.

Verses 2-7...

Now, this passage tells us of a little maid who had been kidnapped and taken captive. This was a little Jewish girl and can't you just see the scene? Can't you just hear the cries of her and her family as the Syrians came and took her captive.

And she served in the household of this man Naaman.

She knew the condition of Naaman. And she told Naaman's wife that there was a prophet in Israel who could cure Naaman. And I believe this tells us something else about Naaman.

It tells us that Naaman must have been a kind man. It would be understandable if this little girl had not said **anything**, wouldn't it?

I mean, here's a little girl taken away from her mother and father and family and homeland. And it would so understandable and even justifiable if she had said, "Well, I know Mr. Naaman has leprosy. And I also know Mr. Elisha could cure him, but I'm not going to tell anybody. I hope the leprosy gets worse. It would serve him right for invading our land and killing our people and taking me captive!"

No. This little girl wanted Naaman to be helped. She knew who could help him and she shared this with Naaman's wife... "I know a man who can heal diseases. Oh, I wish Mr. Naaman could get in touch with him."

I believe this tells us that Naaman was a good and kind man and had a good and kind wife...and I also believe this tells us that this little girl was willing to be used by the God of Israel, because we're going to see an even greater miracle than healing in the life of Naaman before we're through today.

See, God is using this little girl to get her master, Naaman, together with Elisha so that Elisha can get Naaman in touch with God! So, let's see how this plays out.

Well, the first thing that happens is that Naaman's wife tells Naaman what the little servant girl has told her and Naaman goes and tells his boss, the king. And the king of Syria writes the king of Israel a letter.

Who was the king of Israel at that time? Well, we know whoever he was he wasn't a good king because Israel didn't have any good kings...but we happen to know that the king of Israel at that time was Jehoram, the same fellow we saw last week.

We can understand his concern when he got this letter from the king of Syria, can't we? I mean, the Syrians had already come against Israel and had taken captives away.

King Jehoram must have thought, "What in the world's going to happen to us if the King Benhadad expects me to heal his captain? Oh, I know what he's doing...he's just trying to justify coming against us again!"

We've seen a lot of characters in this play, haven't we?

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We've seen **Naaman**. We've seen the **little servant girl**. We've seen **Naaman's wife**. We've seen the **king of Syria**. We've seen the **king of Israel**...

But, God has one purpose in this chapter, and that is to get Naaman, the man in need, in touch with **Elisha**, the man with the remedy.

Verses 8-10...

So, Naaman finally gets the message to come to Elisha and what does Elisha do? He doesn't even come to the door to meet Naaman. He sends a messenger out to him.

Now, get the picture. Here is the captain of the Syrian army.

Naaman is probably dressed in his "dress blues." He probably has all his ribbons on and his medals on and he probably has all his aides and enlisted men with him...probably quite an entourage.

Here is the man in charge of the army that has come against Israel and been victorious. And he comes all the way from Syria to Samaria to see Elisha and Elisha doesn't even come out to meet with him. He sends him a message. **He tells Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan seven times and he will be healed.**

But, it's a message Naaman doesn't like at all.

Verses 11-12...

What's going on here? Well, we said earlier that God has a purpose to accomplish in Naaman's life. And I want to tell you that many times God chooses not to accomplish His purposes in our lives **until we are humbled and willing for it to be done!**

And Naaman was saying that Syria had better rivers than Israel. And if you've ever been to Israel, you know that the Jordan isn't a great and mighty river. It's narrow and sometimes very muddy.

But, Naaman had most likely been in the rivers of Syria before, and they hadn't done him any good, had they? So the Syrian rivers really weren't so hot, were they? **But, in Naaman's mind they were better than the Jordan.**

Although Naaman was a valiant, well respected, honorable, kind and good man, Naaman was also a **very proud** man. And God knew that pride must be put down...**God knew Naaman must be humbled before he could see his need for salvation.**

How many folks do you know like that? Maybe you've been that kind of person before. We all certainly know folks who have so much pride that they don't see their extreme need of salvation. They're just trusting in their **honor**, and in their **goodness** and in their **kindness** and their **achievements** to get them to heaven.

Cain did that. Cain said, **"I'll not come to God with an offering of blood. I'll bring him an offering of vegetables. I'll come to God my own way."**

And God said, **"Oh now you won't. You don't come your way. You come My way!"** And God's way in this case was to go wash in the Jordan River.

Verses 13-14...

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These men must have cared a lot about Naaman. Naaman must have been a good man to work for. They put their concern for Naaman over the concern for their own well-being. Naaman could easily have had them punished for their remarks...

"My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, if he had told you to go the Mediterranean Sea and wash, wouldn't you have done it? If he had said go climb a mountain, wouldn't you have done it?"

All he said was to go and wash in the Jordan and you'll be clean. Why don't you go ahead and do it?"

And I can just see old Naaman standing there pondering this and thinking, "Well, what have I got to lose, except my pride?"

So, he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, just as Elisha had sent word for him to do. We see obedience and faith operating here. We see Naaman, the mighty man of valor and the captain of the army of Syria, doing what Elisha, the simple prophet of God had told him to do.

And what happened? **He was healed. He was restored.**

Verse 15-19...

Were there wonderful magical healing powers in the Jordan River? No. If there were, every sick person in Israel would have flocked to that river and been healed. **The healing of Naaman came from God Himself.**

God had performed a wonderful miracle healing in Naaman's **body**, but He had also performed a wonderful miracle healing in Naaman's **heart**.

Verse 15a... "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel..."

There are several ways we can "**know**" something. For example...

We can know something by **observation**. We can look outside on a rainy day and say, "Well, I know it's raining." You don't have to go outside and get wet, you can just look out the window and **see** the rain coming down. That's knowing something by observation.

You can also know something by **instinct**. Much of what we do is not learned behavior. We do many things by instinct. We instinctively know when we get tired we need rest. Even little babies know that.

You can also know something by **experience**. You can be baking a cake or have a roast in the oven. And you know the oven is hot. But, you can let your hand slip onto one of the oven shelves, and you know by experience that the oven is hot!

And when Naaman said, "I know that there's no other God except the God of Israel," he's not saying, "I know by observation." He's not even saying, "I know by instinct." He's saying, "**I know by experience.**"

It's not something he's read in a book. It's not something he's heard someone talk about. **It's something he's come to experience in his own life.**

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And not only did he experience this in his own life, but he told somebody about it! He said, “**I know God! I know God! And that’s something I never knew before!**”

I think there are **three things** about Naaman’s testimony that we should see.

The first thing is that it was a **prompt** testimony. How much time passed between **verse 14** when he went to the Jordan, and **verse 15** when he came back to Elisha? I don’t believe it took any more time than it took for him to get from one place to the other.

And when **you** got saved, wasn’t it an urgent thing for you to tell someone? I mean, aren’t we always eager to share great things with those around us?
Naaman was!

Another thing...Naaman’s testimony was **personal**. For the past several years, we’ve had the ladies of our class who were willing to give a personal testimony of their salvation and some things God has done in their life.

No one can give your testimony like you! Sometimes we try. Sometimes we tell someone about what God has done in the life of someone else, but it’s always much more meaningful to hear it first hand, isn’t it? And Naaman wasn’t ashamed to tell what God had done for him!

Another thing...Naaman’s testimony was **public**. **Verse 15** tells us that all his company was with him. These men had no doubt been with him for years. They had witnessed first hand the ravages of the disease of leprosy. Maybe they had heard Naaman mock or even curse the God of Israel as he came against Jewish towns and villages.

But, now they hear Naaman boldly proclaiming, “Listen. The God of Israel did what no other god ever did for me. He cleansed me of leprosy, and He saved me by His grace. And I want everybody to know, because what He did for me, He can do for you.”

God had done a wonderful thing for Naaman and Naaman wanted to do something for the man of God who had led him to God.

Verses 15-16...

Naaman offered Elisha a gift out of a heart of gratefulness. But, Elisha said, “No.”

It wouldn’t have been wrong for Elisha to accept a gift from Naaman, but Elisha cared more about the things of God than most men do.

Elisha didn’t want the Lord God of Israel to get a bad reputation. And Elisha didn’t want his own reputation to be sullied. Salvation is a grace gift. And Elisha didn’t want any of those soldiers standing there watching all this to misunderstand what had happened that day.

Elisha hadn’t healed Naaman. The **Jordan River** hadn’t healed Naaman. Naaman’s life had been changed, yes. Naaman had experienced grace, yes. Naaman wants to give, yes.

And it would have been perfectly fine for Elisha to receive his gift. But Elisha knew all those soldiers would go back and say, “Well, we saw the man of God with his hand out.”

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Then, Naaman said a very interesting thing...

Verse 17...

There are **some** things that you just **know** when you get saved. You just know some things in your life have to change. Maybe it's the way you dress. I remember hearing Kay Arthur say many years ago that when she came to know the Lord as her Savior she had to go through her closet and throw most of her clothes away.

Maybe it's **the way you talk**. Maybe it's **the way you worship**.

Naaman wanted to take the amount of dirt that two mules could carry back with him to Syria. Why? Well, I wondered that myself! I believe John MacArthur has the best explanation of this verse in his study Bible.

"In the ancient Near East it was thought that a god could be worshipped only on the soil of the nation to which he was bound.

Therefore, Naaman wanted a load of Israelite soil on which to make burnt offerings and sacrifices to the Lord when he returned to Damascus. This request confirmed how Naaman had changed – whereas he had previously disparaged Israel's river, now he wanted to take a pile of Israel's soil to Damascus."

Not only that, but Naaman was also thinking ahead. He knew that as an aide to the king and as the captain of the army of Syria, there would be times when he must accompany the king...and this meant he would be expected to accompany him to the temple of Rimmon in Damascus. And Naaman is concerned about this.

And he requested that the Lord forgive this apparent compromise and commitment to the Lord of Israel.

This is a hard verse. We look at this verse and we wonder why Naaman couldn't have been as brave and true as Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. But, we need to remember that Naaman was a brand new believer and he hadn't had the time to grow spiritually.

Naaman is saying, "I know in my heart that there is no other god.

The God of Israel is the only God! But I also know I'm still a man under the authority of the king.

And I know when I get back home, I'm going to have to go with him. He always makes me go, and when he touches my hand I'm supposed to bow. And before this day, I've always considered this an honor and a joy. **But now I don't.**"

And you know what I find very interesting? I don't see Elisha coming down on Naaman and saying, "**Why, Naaman, you can't do that!**"

Elisha was content to allow **God** to bring conviction and commitment and to allow the **Holy Spirit of God** to bring to completion the work He's begun in Naaman's life.

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How many times do we want to jump on a new believer (or an old believer, for that matter) when we see him doing something he shouldn't or not doing something he should? Ever done that? Ever done that with your kids? **When will we learn that the conviction the Holy Spirit brings is far more effective than the conviction you and I try to bring?**

We've seen Naaman come from being a filthy sinner to being a cleansed witness to being a joyful worshiper. And if we're saved, that's exactly what happened to you and me, isn't it? And just like I'm certain that God kept teaching and maturing Naaman, He's doing the same with us.

We're not going to take the time to read the rest of this chapter, but let me just summarize it for you.

Remember that Naaman offered Elisha a gift. Elisha **refused** that gift. But, Elisha's servant, Gehazi, **wanted** that gift. He **coveted** that gift so much that after Naaman had left, he went after Naaman and told him that Elisha had sent him after him to get the gift from him after all. He lied!

He told Naaman that two prophets had just come to Elisha and they were in need of a talent of silver and two changes of clothes. Well, Naaman gave Gehazi two talents of silver and two changes of clothes.

When Gehazi got back with his silver and clothes, he hid them in the house and then went in and stood before Elisha. And Elisha said, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" Gehazi said, "Oh, nowhere in particular."

Then, look what happened...

Verses 26-27...

In Naaman we see the **grateful** man. In Elisha we see the **God-fearing** man. And in Gehazi we see the **greedy** man.

Let me just tell you what our pastor said when he preached this passage of Scripture.

He said first of all that Gehazi had a **disregard for the will of God**. Elisha did the will of God, and Elisha didn't take the gift Naaman offered. But, Gehazi said, "I don't care what the will of God is, I want the money!"

He also said that Gehazi had a **disobedience to the will of God**. Well, it follows, doesn't it? If you don't have regard for the will of God, you certainly don't have the urge to obey the will of God.

Gehazi also had **disrespect for the name of God**. **Verse 20**: "As the LORD lives I will run after him, and take something from him." Don't bring God's name into something you're doing that's against His will.

A real drama has been played out before us today, hasn't it?

We've seen a **pagan man be healed in body and in soul**.

We've seen **God's man refuse payment for doing God's work**.

And we've seen a **man who should have known better bring dishonor to God**.

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God wanted to save Naaman. God set things up ahead of time for Naaman to be saved before Naaman even was aware of what was going on. This part of the story reminds me of Peter and Cornelius. Peter was sent to Cornelius...to share the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with him.

But, God had been preparing Cornelius long before Peter ever came to him, hadn't He?

There is an old hymn that says,

"He called me long before I heard,
Before my sinful heart was stirred,
But when I took Him at His word,
Forgiven, He lifted me.

From sinking sand, He lifted me.
With tender hand, He lifted me.
From shades of night to plains of light,
O praise His name, He lifted me!"

And we need to remember that Naaman was a Gentile. Naaman was a heathen Gentile...but God still reached down and lifted him from shades of night to plains of light.

Has He ever lifted you? My prayer is that there was a time in your life when your sins were washed as white as snow just as Naaman's were.