

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ELISHA
2 Kings 5

Intro: The story of Naaman the Syrian is a rare story in the Old Testament because in it we have the account of the salvation of a Gentile.

He was a Syrian, not an Israelite. The evidence that he was saved is indicated by verses 15-17. We have a similar statement from another Gentile, Jethro, in Exodus 18:11, 12. A third illustration involving another Gentile has to do with Ruth -- in Ruth 1:16, 17.

The account is so given in 2 Kings 5 that it gives to us an understanding of what Elisha believed about the work of God -- which, in this instance, resulted in the salvation of Naaman. It is interesting to compare what Elisha did with what we usually do today when seeking to reach people with the Gospel.

Let us note first,

- I. THE PREDICAMENT THAT HE WAS IN: "but he was a leper."
See v. 1.

Whether or not this was the disease we know today as leprosy, it is generally agreed that this disease, whatever it may have been, is used in Scripture as a picture of sin!

It is interesting that this is placed along side of Naaman's character as well as his achievements. We have four good things stated about Naaman, as compared to one bad thing. And yet the bad thing outweighed in importance all of the other four put together.

This is like sin. The doctrine of the sinfulness of man, the doctrine of depravity, does not mean that you never see anything good in unregenerate people, but it does mean that that one bad thing becomes more significant than all of the good things. The good can never reverse or nullify the bad.

As far as God is concerned, our good can never be fully acceptable to Him as long as it also has to be said that he is a sinner.

But the account shows us also

- II. OTHER PROBLEMS THAT HE HAD.

The realization of the need made him and his friends

start to look for a remedy. And it was through the little Jewish house girl that Naaman and his wife had that they were encouraged to look to a prophet in Israel by the name of Elisha.

What were his problems?

- A. The first one was their attitude toward personal influence.

It is to be seen both in the letter, who wrote it, and to whom it was written.

- B. The second was their attitude toward money and material possessions.

The king of Syria felt that he would obligate the king of Israel to help Naaman.

- C. The third was Naaman's pride.

He was not used to the treatment that Elisha gave him. He was accustomed to special treatment, to ceremonies and honors. Elisha gave him none of this, and, in addition, told him to do something that outraged him, and caused further humiliation. He wanted something spectacular to be done.

Closely connected with this was another serious problem:

- D. The fourth was his aversion to and rejection of the word of the prophet, Elisha.

Remember that for Naaman, this was the Word of God.

When you put all of these together you can see some of the main obstacles which men place in their own way so that they will not be saved.

- 1) They need to know that God is no respecter of persons -- that God can only deal with us in pure grace -- not in a mixture, and not in anything else.
- 2) They need to learn that salvation is "without price" that it cannot be purchased with money.
- 3) Man does not like the way that God has chosen to save us. He wants more glory.
- 4) Finally, he will treat the Word of God like the word of man, just like something else would be just as good or even better.

All of this caused real pressure for Elisha. He had offer-to help. Failure could have meant war. Pressure was coming from two kings. And yet it is important to see what Elisha did.

III. ELISHA'S FIRM STAND.

It is not recorded that he said any more. He did not change what he said. Elisha showed real confidence in the Lord concerning his message.

This is what we must always do!

But then we see a very wonderful thing. Let us call it:

IV. THE OBEDIENCE OF NAAMAN'S FAITH.

Note how it came about in v. 13. One of "his servants" graciously rebuked him. He might get angry about what Elisha had told him to do, but this was the only hope that had been offered to him. If the prophet did not heal him, he would die! So, as a result, Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself "seven times."

And he was healed!

People feel exactly that way about believing. The healing power was not in the Jordan River; the healing power was in the God who told Naaman to get into the river. Our faith is that which gets us looking to God, and trusting Him.

Now look at . . .

V. THE RESULTS.

There are three in particular that I want to mention.

A. There was a change in him (v. 14b).

Note: "His flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17. It is impossible for people to come to the Lord without being changed, without being cleansed.

B. There was a change in his thinking (v. 15).

C. There was a change in his behavior (v. 17).

He became a worshipper of God!

Before I close I want to take up one more matter. The Word teaches us in the OT and in the NT that salvation is of the Lord, i.e., that it is the work of God, not the work of man.

Are we to give credit to Naaman that he was healed. Did he do it just because it seemed the wisest course, or is there evidence of the hand of God in all of this? Let us look for

VI. EVIDENCE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Let me turn away from leprosy just now as a type of sin, and let us just think of it as a disease. Why was Naaman the only one to get leprosy? Trace God's hand in the following things:

- A. That Naaman got sick.
- B. That he had a captive maid from Israel in his own home.
- C. That she knew about Elisha.
- D. That somebody (it does not say who) told the King.
- E. That the King was concerned enough to do something about it -- writing the letter,
 sending the fabulous gift.
- F. That the King of Israel tore his garments (which
was evidently a thing which caused great concern
whenever such a thing happened).
- G. That Elisha heard about it.
- H. That Elisha treated Naaman as he did, and told him
him what to do.
- I. That one of Naaman's servants encouraged him to
wash in the Jordan.
- J. That Naaman washed -- after all that he had said
and done before.
- K. That God healed him.
- L. That he was changed as he was.

It would take a very naive knowledge of the human heart and also of the power of God not to see that behind all of this is evidence that God was working to reach the heart of Naaman that He might magnify His grace in saving this illustrious Gentile.

Concl: How can this help but be encouraging to us, whoever we may be, or regardless of our spiritual condition. God is continually at work, accomplishing His will, and prepared to use us as He used Elisha.