

The Little Maid

by Carl Armerding

The sermon explores the faith of a little maid who, despite her captivity, points Naaman to God's healing power through the prophet Elisha.

Duration: 33:52

Scripture: 2 Kings 5:14, Isaiah 55:6, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:28, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 14:1, 1 Corinthians 1:20

Topics: "Faith And Education", "Childlike Trust"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience from their childhood, highlighting the importance of having evidence and personal encounters with God. They talk about growing up in a Christian home and having to start working at a young age to support the family. Despite the challenges, the speaker emphasizes the value of education and how witnessing the benefits of education firsthand strengthened their faith. The sermon also references a biblical story about a young girl who was taken captive and ended up serving a general and his wife.

Transcript

I invite your attention tonight to a very well-known portion of God's Word in the Old Testament, 2nd Kings chapter 5. 2nd Kings chapter 5. Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper, and the Syrians had gone out by companies and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid, and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my Lord, who is a prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy.

And one, or rather he, I take it that is referred to Naaman himself. And he went in and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. And the king of Syria said, Go too, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel.

And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of rings. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. It came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes and said, My God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy.

Wherefore, consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me. And it was so when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be pleased. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abandoned far from the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage.

His servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he said to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God. And his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. My purpose in reading this portion of scripture tonight is not to focus attention as usual upon the outstanding character Naaman, but rather to think a little bit about this teenage girl that we have in this story.

I take it she's a teenager, because she's referred to as a little maid, and yet she must have been old enough to wait on Naaman's wife. So I take it she's a teenager brought into the picture here without any name, but evidently she came out of a godly home. Because some of the things, at least the thing that she did, would indicate that she had some knowledge of God's ways with men.

And I take it that these things were learned at home. You know it's a wonderful thing when you come to think of it, and I suppose most of us here tonight, especially in the teenage bracket, can also thank God that we came out of Christian homes. This is one thing for which I believe I have thanked the Lord for more than any other thing, except the dear one whom he gave to me as my life partner for seven forty seven and a half years.

But above that, I think the one thing for which I've thanked God more often, was to thank the thing that God gave me a Christian home. That I was welcomed into this home by Christian parents, that they brought me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This didn't always bear the right kind of fruit.

I remember when I was just a lad of about 10 or 11 years of age, I used to attend a little Presbyterian Sunday school at the time, and I learned the Westminster Shorter Catechism with its 107 questions, 40 of which had to do with the law of Moses, so that I had a wonderful grounding in Bible truth. At the same time, I would come home and I'd hear my father talking to people about law and grace, and this didn't always sound exactly like what I was getting in this Sabbath school, so forth. So I used to get into arguments with my Sabbath school teacher about law and grace, and come home quite proud of myself that I could really test them in an argument, that I could point them to those New Testament scriptures.

We're not under law, but under grace, and so on. Imagine a kid 12 years old. And I came home and reported this to my father, thinking of course that he'd put his hand on my head and say, boy, you're a great kid, you are.

But you know what he said? What do you know about grace? I didn't know a thing about it, I'd heard about it, but I'd never, I'd never touched the Lord Jesus Christ as my own personal Savior until I became 15 years of age. And then all the things that I had learned as a child came back in new force. Yes, some of the things which I learned as a matter of punishment.

My dear mother was not a very big woman, although she had 10 children, and she couldn't apply the rod like my father could, but she had a way of dealing with us when we had done something wrong. In a very sweet voice she would say, you come in here with mother, and she'd sit us down a little desk and open up the New Testament, preferably at the Gospel of Mark. I like Mark because he's short stories, 16 chapters, he's all through.

But anyhow, she'd assign us a lesson, say now I want you to copy this chapter. And all the spelling had to be correct, and the punctuation had to be correct, and the capitals had to be in the right place, and the verses properly divided. You know, when I was going through this as a lad, to me it was irksome, but the time came when I thanked God even for that.

I remember, and I may have told this here before from this platform, but I'm directing my remarks particularly at those who were in that age bracket where I was at that time. It came time to go to the university. I had never been to high school a day in my life, so I had to pass entrance examinations in order to get in to be a candidate for a degree.

And among the examinations which I had to take was one in English, which was going to give me four high school units, which were necessary, out of the 15 units that I needed to get in. When my paper, when I saw it later on after I had written it, I noticed that the professor had put at the top of it, this paper smacks of Shakespeare or the Bible. Well, I hadn't read much of Shakespeare, but my mother and father had seen to it that I was steeped in the language of the King James version of the scripture.

You know, for the life of me, I can't see why people object to this wonderful translation of the scripture, granted that it has some places that need a bit of correction and explanation, but I don't know anything more choice than the language which we find in this old King James version. And so I put myself in the same category as this young girl here, who evidently had a wonderful training at home. But then something happened in this girl's life, war came, and she was taken captive, no doubt herded together with a lot of other young people, perhaps her own age, severed from her family, and now she's out.

And one day the general who was over these forces, a man by the name of Naaman that you read about, he came and looked them all over with his wife, Mrs. Naaman, and Mrs. Naaman says, that's the one, and she points to this little girl. So this little girl goes home with them to wait on Naaman's wife. I'm just going to ask you the question tonight, what would be your reaction if you have, under similar circumstances, were thrown out of your home like this, thrown into the home of an enemy who had conquered your people, and then to add to the whole thing, to find that your new master was afflicted with one of the most loathsome diseases that is possible to imagine? I dare say that my reaction would have been a very unfavorable one.

I hate to confess this, but I think I would have said I hope the old sinner dies. But not she. No, she didn't talk this way.

She went to her mistress and she said, would God my lord, that would be her master, that's Naaman, would God my lord, or would the prophet that is in Samaria, for he will recover him of his leprosy. You know, the astonishing thing is that Mrs. Naaman never asked her for proof of the statement. She didn't

say, now how do you know, little girl, that this would happen? And if she had asked her, the girl would have had to have said, well I never saw leper cleanse in all my life.

You turn to the fourth chapter of Luke's gospel, and there the Lord Jesus says that there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha the prophet, and none of them were cleansed, so that she'd never seen anybody cleansed of leprosy. How in the world did she know then that God could do this? I suspect, dear friends, it was because she knew something of the history of her people, dating way back to the days of Moses, when Moses' sister Miriam spoke against him because of the Ethiopian woman that he had married. You see, Miriam thought she had a special care of her brother Moses, because when he was just a little baby, he was set afloat in the Nile, and she was sent out there to watch him, and she made sure that he got into the proper hands.

And when Pharaoh's daughter really picked up her little brother, she went over quickly and said, you want me to find your nurse for the baby? So she really had an interest in Moses, and doubtless she had watched him growing up. Now he married an Ethiopian woman who's not necessarily a Negro, because there were Ethiopians which were not Negroes. I don't think it was a question altogether of race, probably more because of a difference in nationality.

But in any case, there was a national pride there, as much as to say, I'm sorry my brother's taken that kind of a wife. And you know, because of this, God smacked Miriam with leprosy. You know, it's a remarkable thing that the cases of leprosy which are given to us in the Old Testament, where a reason is assigned for the disease, you'll find that it's because of some presumptuous sin that they commit it.

So that leprosy becomes not only a type of sin, but it becomes a type of sin in a very special form. I believe that probably it should be spoken of as a type of the root of sin, rather than the fruit of sin. And here was this man afflicted with this terrible disease.

And Miriam, or at least this little girl remembers the story of Miriam. I'm reading this in here because I don't know where else she'd find this out. But you know, as I said a few minutes ago, the remarkable thing was that Mrs. Miriam never said to this little girl, how do you know? But instead of that, she told her husband, this little girl that you brought in here to work in our home tells me that if you were the prophet in Samaria, he would recover you or cure your leprosy.

He doesn't say to his wife, well, how does she know? It's not a word. And then he goes and he carries the word to the king of Israel in those days. And the king never said, how does she know? You know, this is rather queer, isn't it? That a girl should make a statement like this and is never questioned.

You know, I'm just wondering if there wasn't something to the way in which she said it. You know, in the 14th chapter of the book of the Acts, we read about Paul and Silas were dicioniums, and it says they forged faith that many believe. And dear friends, when you and I give testimony to what the Lord can do, don't let there be any tone of uncertainty in what we say.

We know he does it. Let's be sure of it. We're singing tonight, Blessed Assurance.

I'm so glad that Jim Redling called attention to the fact that we don't want to sing that as if we're going to sleep. We want to sing that as those who have the Blessed Assurance that God can do it. Yes, he had never seen it done, but he was persuaded he could do it.

I remember a story told years ago by an old preacher about two atheists who lived in the days of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. And one Sunday morning, one of these atheists was walking along the street, and he saw his fellow atheist coming out of Spurgeon's tabernacle. He looked at him, he said, what? You've been over to hear Spurgeon preach this morning? He said, yes.

Ah, he says, I didn't think you believed anything he said. No, he says, I don't, but he does. And this is it.

You and I believe it, because God says so. This girl must believe it, because she read it in the word of God. But now the king of Israel, when he hears this, he says, I'll write a letter to the king of Syria.

Or rather, I should say the king of Syria, beg your pardon. I'll write a letter to the king of Israel. In other words, he decides that this thing has got to be decided, has to be settled on a political level.

One king writing to another. The king of Syria writing to the king of Israel. And isn't that like they're trying to settle things today? You take the great problems that are plaguing our nation today, and especially our young people, trying to settle these things on the political level.

They'll never be settled on the political level. Any more than this problem was settled on the political level. The king of Syria writes a letter to the king of Israel.

He's accustomed to dealing with kings. And perhaps this is also the liking of Naaman. Why should he be concerned about a little bit of a two before prophet like Elisha? We've got to do these things on a political level.

We've got to do these things according to the ways of the world. How God rebuked the whole thing, didn't he? For when the king of Israel got this letter from the king of Syria, and here was Naaman outside there with all of his fine raiment and all the money that he had with him. And the king of Israel reads this letter from the king of Syria.

He says, look how this man seeks to quarrel against me. Am I God to kill him to make alive that he should send this man to me to recover him of his leprosy? And it is then that the prophet hears about this. The very person that the little girl had talked about.

She had said, would God, my Lord, who was a prophet that is in Samaria. She had it right. She knew that if this man's problem was going to be solved, it was going to be on a spiritual level.

And thanks be to God, she knew the man who was in living touch with God who could really do these things. May I say a word to you, my dear friends, especially those of you who are younger. You're going to run up against problems in your school life.

In fact, you've already run up against them. You're no match for these great minds under whose teaching you sit there. But listen, don't let them deceive you that these things can be settled on the political or the intellectual level.

The things that bother your soul and mind, the things that plague humanity today can only be settled on the spiritual level. And it isn't until this prophet intervenes here. He hears about all this commotion.

The king has actually torn a new suit to all the pieces. He rent his clothes and Elisha says, send him to me and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. Friends, this is the thing we need to know today.

Such churches being downgraded, or ministers are being downgraded, much to say, what do they know about the problems of the world? As we were hearing so ably last night, these psychiatrists are telling us how to solve all the problems, and all the while ignoring the cheat of the whole situation and the law of sin. These things are not settled, we repeat, on the political or the intellectual level. No matter how clever their arguments may sound, how philosophical they may be, you take it from this passage of scripture tonight, you don't need to take it from me, that these things can only be solved on the spiritual level.

And while I was no match for my professors at the university, these men with their two or three degrees or PhDs and what have you, I was no match for them. But whenever they asked me about my spiritual experience, I wasn't backward about saying, I know, because God says so. I know what he's done, I know what he did for my parents, I've seen it operate, I've seen this thing work, and I know whereof I speak, and they couldn't gainsay it.

When I faced them with an experience such as I'd had as a child, born into this lovely Christian home, poor in this world, good though yet, so poor that when I was 14 years of age and had finished the eighth grade, my father said to me, son, I wish I could let you go to high school, but I need your help, I need your help in this home. And so at 14 years of age, I was sent out to work in order to help meet the expenses of the household. And my father worked long hours in those days.

He'd leave home even before the sun was up, come back after the sun was down. There was no such thing as a four or five day week in those days, it was six full days they put in. How in the world he ever had enough strength on the Lord's day even to walk to the meeting, which we did.

But he did, and I saw the thing work. Oh, how wonderful to have the evidence right there before you. And when these men come along with their clever arguments, you can give them this bit of experience and say, this is the thing I know.

And this little girl, I'm sure if they had put her in a corner, she would have said, well, I know from the story of my people that God can really do the thing that I'm claiming he can do. There is a prophet in Israel, and he would recover him of his leprosy. And so my dear young friends, don't be dismayed if you're tested by these people with their big degrees and all this.

Remember as we've been saying on a previous occasion, God has already made foolish the wisdom of this world. He has proved that the philosophies of men could not save their souls or give them peace. That's why the Lord Jesus had to stand up, as we were seeing the other day, to a weary world and say, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

As I said then, they had all the opportunity to study the philosophies of these men, as well as the great schools of religion such as Buddhism, etc. So we learn a lesson from this girl. Well, now let's talk about Naomi for a little bit.

The little girl seems to have faded out of the picture here. Nobody thinks about it. Nobody thought about even going back to see whether they'd really heard correctly what she said.

But now when the prophet comes into the picture, he says, you sent him to me. And God uses the prophet here to humble this man, for which reason I believe that he was afflicted with leprosy because of his pride. This is one of the reasons why God did afflict men with that loathsome disease in those days.

They were proud. So send him to me. And when he got there, he sent a little messenger out to him.

He said, you go down into the river Jordan and dip yourself in Jordan seven times and you'll be clean. Boy, was he ever mad. And notice, dear friends, that he makes reference here to the rivers of Damascus.

He says, are not at Dana and Phapa rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? Another illustration of what I've just now been talking about, dear friends, they claim they've got something superior to what God has given us in his holy word. Are not at Dana and Phapa rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? Well, if that was true, why hadn't it done something for him before? You know, this would have been a good question in those days. And it's a question which I'd like to direct to some of these men who claim they've got something superior to Christianity.

I say, well, show me how it works. What can they do? I find that with all that they against the gospel and what they really mean that they're, they're aiming at those who claim to be Christians and of course made a mess of their lives. But as far as the gospel is concerned, nobody can find fault with it.

It's still doing a good job. It's still the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believe as to the Jew first and also to the Greek. That's been going on for more than 1900 years.

And it's proving itself tonight, right now, in your city of Bristol. It's proving itself in the big cities of the United States. It's proving itself wherever it is preached in all its simplicity and purity that it is the power of God unto salvation.

And all these other things like the rivers of Damascus, they can't cleanse this man of his lepers. But he's got some people in his company there who have some common sense. And so they come up to him and they see him, he's quite angry.

They address him not as general, but as father. You know, I think there's something psychological about that. He likes to think maybe these are like children appealing to him and saying, my father, if the prophet of good he do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? Boy, that was right up his alley, doing great things.

This is what people expect, you know, when you preach to them about salvation and about getting eternal life, and I have a hope for eternity, blessed and true. They expect you to tell them about some very difficult, some very expensive things. And when you tell them how simple it is, that a man who is spiritually and economically bankrupt can have it, too easy, too easy.

My father, if the prophet of good he do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? Then he listens to reason. And he obeyed the word of the prophet and found the results were exactly as predicted. Thank God for a man like that.

But now a word or two about the little girl before I stop. You notice she faded out of the picture. If you read down the chapter here, you'll find that Naaman wants to reward the prophet.

He refuses it. He never thought about rewarding the little girl. He never said to these fellows, let's get on home.

Let's talk to that little girl who gave me this word that has meant so much to me. I'm going back now, a clean man with a clean skin, my skin like the flesh of a little child. How suggestive of a new birth, isn't it? But he never thought about her.

And it may be you, my friend, that where you are living is where you're working, where you go to school, where you're going to give your testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe somebody will get blessed through it, but they may never think about you. They may never even think about saying thank you for telling them about it.

Those of us who've been in the Lord's work a few years, we know something about this. It is refreshing sometimes after long years to have somebody come up and say, do you remember when you had a series of meetings in such and such a place? Yes. I was in your audience then.

God spoke to me that night. And here maybe 30 years later, they'll tell you about it. You wondered about it all.

And many a time you come home after witnessing like this to the Lord and you say, well, I wonder whether it was really worthwhile or not. And the devil wanted you to think, does that? Because you wouldn't say it again. I have a suspicion that God let this little girl have some encouragement when she saw her master coming back with his skin clean.

The leprosy gone. Oh, I can almost imagine the hugs and the kisses that he got, which he didn't get before. When Mrs. Naaman would stand off and say, now Naaman, you know, I love you, but how different now? How different now? Yes.

For the first time in many a day, I suppose. And I won't go on to describe what happened. Wonderful thing.

Dear friends, this thing happens on the spiritual realm again and again. I have known of cases, I could give you story after story here tonight, of cases where there was absolutely no fellowship between man and wife, till both came to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the personal savior, and their home became a unit. What a wonderful thing it was.

But this little girl is not going to fail of her reward. If I know anything about the scriptures, dear friends, I'm sure she already has the assurance that God was well pleased with that little statement she made one day, just out of chance. Would God, my Lord, who is a prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover Ms. Leprosy.

Do you know, my friends, it's amazing what God can do with just a simple statement like this. Just the outpouring of your heart as one who is burdened for the spiritual needs of another, and God honors it and gives you the joy, perhaps after long years of hearing about it. My prayer for you is that you too may find your place of service and have the joy of knowing that God has blessed your wish.

In closing, let's turn to hymn number 172. 172. Anywhere with Jesus, I can safely go.

Anywhere he leads me in this world below. Anywhere without him, dearest joys would fade. Anywhere with Jesus, I'm not afraid.

The first and the third stanzas, stanzas one and three of hymn number 172, let us rise. Our gracious God and our Father, we thank thee that thou dost use the weak things and the base things and the despised things of the world to confound the things of the mighty, as we've been hearing from thy word on another occasion. We thank thee for this beautiful illustration of it tonight in this well-known portion of thy word, and we trust, O Lord, that if there be those who are young in the faith here this evening who perhaps are troubled at times by the arguments which they hear from their teachers or their superiors, O grant, Lord,

that they may have all the courage of faith to stand by what they know and what they've read in the book, and grant that this little girl may be a wonderful example to them.

And so, Lord, we pray that all of us may function more readily than we do as witnesses for our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing, Lord, that thou can bless even the sigh of our hearts as the sigh of this little girl was blessed when she said, Would God, my Lord, who is a prophet, that he is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy. God, our Father, help us to say, Would God that my neighbor, would God that my schoolmate, would God that my brother, my sister, would God that my father, my mother, could know the Lord Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. To this end, bless thy word, we pray, as we now commit ourselves in thy hands and pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and thy love, our Father, and the comfort of thy Holy Spirit may abide with us till Jesus comes and forever.

Amen.

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