

# Naaman the Leper

by Denis Lyle

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*The sermon highlights the story of Naaman the leper, who was cleansed of his spiritual disease through faith in Jesus Christ, and emphasizes the importance of humility, obedience, and gratitude in the Christian life.*

**Scripture:** Leviticus 13:45, 2 Kings 5:1, Mark 7:21, John 14:15, Ephesians 2:8

**Topics:** "Spiritual Cleansing", "Sin And Redemption"

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## Description

Denis Lyle preaches about the story of Naaman from 2 Kings 5:1-19, drawing parallels between Naaman's physical cleansing from leprosy and the spiritual cleansing from sin that believers experience through God's remedy. Naaman, a successful and respected man, had a hidden tragedy of leprosy, symbolizing how many people hide their spiritual disease of sin beneath worldly success. The sermon emphasizes the commonality of sin in all people and the need for true cleansing through God's prescribed remedy, not through human theories or efforts.

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## Transcript

2 Kings 5: 1-19 FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR LIFE FEEL REALLY CLEAN Several years ago the giant soap company Proctor and Gamble launched a new bar of soap into an already competitive market. It was called "ZEST". Within weeks it was a top-selling brand because something about the advertising slogan used to promote it really caught the public imagination. The slogan said, "For the first time in your life feel really clean". Naaman found that the gospel strikes that same deep chord in all of us.

Have you found it to be so My, the moment we take the plunge into God's remedy for sin, we experience the truth of that attractive slogan! "For the first time in our lives we feel really clean." Now the story of Naaman is probably the most familiar story in the life and times of Elisha the prophet! I wonder if I were to ask you this... what were the stories that appealed most to you in your childhood days, how would you answer Would you not say those that began by building up a wonderful picture in your imagination, then came a note of tragedy, then a ray of hope, and finally they lived happily ever after.

Well, the story of Naaman runs just like that. First, we have a graphic word picture of Naaman himself, (5:1) then the tragic announcement that he was a leper, then a ray of hope and finally we see the tragedy removed! Indeed, the first thing we notice in this story is: (1) A TRAGEDY THAT IS SO COMMON " Naaman was a great man... but he was a leper". (5:1) Do you know anyone like that Success Yes, but beneath it all tragedy and sorrow! Most men and women come into this world, labour and toil, live and die without ever achieving anything of great importance (humanly speaking) They never hear their name on

the lips of their fellow-man.

They never read about themselves in the newspaper. They remain for ever ordinary and obscure folk. But there are others who rise to fame, quickly make a name for themselves, drink deeply of the cup of success! Their names are household names, and their achievements are known by all. Now Naaman was such a person. You see wherever he went he was acclaimed and cheered. He was a hero in the land of Syria! The opening verse describes him like that! (5:1) Do you see: (a) THE SUCCESS THAT MARKED HIM: Naaman was a five star general.

He was the Kings right hand counsellor. Naaman was an honourable man. He could be depended upon and trusted. Still again, he was "a mighty man of valour". (5:1) His success was due to no accident of birth. It was not attained through the influence of friends, rather at some critical juncture in the history of his country, Naaman had come to the rescue and turned the tide of battle. (1 Kings 22:34) The world today loves FAME! Naaman had it. The world today loves A FORTUNE! Naaman had it.

The world today loves A FUTURE! Naaman had it. But My, money: fame: and power are notoriously dissatisfying... they are incapable of meeting the deepest needs of men! Ills: The American Billionaire Howard Hughes lived like a hermit because of his deep paranoia. Ex Beatle John Lennon was unable to enjoy his wealth because of his many fears. Joseph Stalin took elaborate precautions to elude possible assassins. You see money, fame, and power all proved inadequate for these men!

My, what about you Have you come to see that the things of this old world will never meet the deepest needs of your soul Have you come to see your need of the Lord Naaman had success, but he had his problems for notice not only (a) (b) THE SECRET THAT MARRIED HIM: " A great man BUT he was a leper". (5:1) Naaman was as great as the world could make him, yet as Bishop Hall says, "the basest slave in Syria would not change skins with him". For underneath that splendid uniform and glittering medals there was a foul, horrible leprosy.

Now leprosy in Biblical times was a dreaded skin disease. Those who had it... at least in Israel were outcasts of society. They were often banished to live in isolated colonies, ostracized by the community! (Lev 13:45-46) Now although Syrian social regulations were not as stringent as Israel's the diseased skin of a leper was a stigma that shadowed the person all through life! In the ancient world this would have been like saying of some prominent actor, financier, or politician, "But he had "Aids", for leprosy carried some of the stigma, horror and fear of contact which AIDS carries today!

" A great man, but, he was a leper." Are Some PEOPLE not just like Naaman Is there not a "but", in most lives My, in human life do we not find the "but", that turns History into Tragedy How many an aching heart there is behind a smiling face! How many a deep sorrow there is behind a prosperous business! Success! Prosperity! Fame! Prestige! But behind it all tragedy and sorrow! Are All PEOPLE not just like Naaman Like Naaman's leprosy we have a disease called sin. Unlike leprosy, though its on the inside .

My, we may deny that sin-disease and cover its symptoms, but still it exists... and it is deadly! Sin pervades the whole being: sin is loathsome in its character, and unless arrested by the grace of God "sin when it is finished bringeth forth death". (James 1:5 Rom 6:23 7:18 Hab 1:13) My, is this now how the Bible portrays us all It does not flatter us: it humbles us: it lays us in the dust: it declares us to be leprous, sinful, corrupt, defiled and depraved. Do you recall the words of the Lord Jesus "Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, all these evil things come from within and defile

the man". (Mk 7:21-22) My, do you recognise that you have a spiritual disease called sin You may occupy a good position in the world, you may be honourable in the sight of your fellow-man but how do you appear before God Do you stand before God as a spiritual leper Unclean: and unfit for His Holy Presence (Lev 13:45-46 Isa 59:1) My, here is (1) But look again and notice: (2) A THEORY THAT IS SO CURRENT How do you think a person is saved You see so many people have so many different theories and ideas as to how we are to be saved.

One person thinks he can obtain salvation through church ordinances! Another thinks the past can be atoned for by turning over a new leaf: still another thinks that its through religious deeds that he can find acceptance with God. But My, one thing is common to them all. "I thought". (5:11) And that "I thought", is put over against the Word of God! You see Elisha's message to Naaman was simple, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times". (5:10) Incidentally, will you please notice that Elisha dealt with his leprosy.

He did not get side-tracked into discussing secondary issues! Elisha did not get into an argument with him over the claims of Jehovah to be the only true God. He did not discuss the weather: religion: politics he simply kept to the point and therein has left soulwinners an example to follow. He said, "Go and wash... times". (5:10) But look at Naaman's response (5:11) My, Naaman wanted to be treated as a great man who happened to be a leper but Elisha treated him as a leper who happened to be a great man.

"I thought". You see his theory: his idea: his mistaken conceptions revolved around: (a) THE WRONG PRICE: It was an impressive trove of treasure which Naaman loaded into his caravan. (5:5) You see Naaman though that he could PAY for salvation! Many people would like to be saved, but they want to "go private", and not stand in line at the local hospital, waiting at the casualty department with all the other riffraff until the Divine Physician will see them! My, do you know what the gospel does It reduces millionaires to the same level as a pauper on the street!

God will treat the Prince of Wales in exactly the same way as he treats the Prince of Wales' chauffeur! My, do you realise that God cannot be bought Do you recognise that you can't buy salvation Salvation is "the free gift of God", (Eph 2:8) it was purchased with the most precious substance in the universe... the blood of God's Son and it is "without money and without price". (Isa 55:1) Do you think that you can buy your way into Heaven (a) (b) THE WRONG PERSON: For (5:6-7) tell me that he went to Jehoram the King of Israel!

Naaman is knocking on the Wrong Door! What a picture of multitudes today who are knocking at the wrong door for salvation! Some knock at the door of a Priest! Somehow they feel that if go regularly to a man and confess their sin they'll receive absolution. But the Bible says, "There is one mediator between God and man the man Christ Jesus". (1 Tim 2:5) On which door are you knocking this... Could it be that you're knocking on the door of some false cult Some spurious man made devil inspired religion My, there is ONE DOOR where you can find cleansing from the leprosy of sin and that door is the Lord Jesus for He Himself said, "I am the door by me... saved". (Jn 10:9) But Naaman had another mistaken conception, and that revolved around: (c) THE WRONG PROCEDURE: Can you picture this scene Can you see proud Naaman standing at Elisha's doorway with his entourage looking on Can you see him as he reads this crumpled-up note given to him by Elisha's servant And, as if it weren't bad enough for a Syrian to come to a Jews land, he was expected to do some silly, ritual, dip in the muddy Jordan!

No wonder he says "I thought". My...one of the worlds "big shots", had come to Elisha and Elisha had cut him down to size! Ills: Brownlow North a Scottish evangelist of the last century was preaching one evening

at a public rally. After the meeting a well educated, and arrogant young man came to speak with him. He said, "I've heard you preach quite often and I do not care for you or your preaching. Unless you can tell me why God permitted sin in the world, I can't even begin to give credence to what you have to say."

North sized up his cocky interrogator and then replied, " God permitted sin to enter the world because He chose to do so, and if you continue to question and criticise God's dealings, vainly puffed up in your carnal mind as you are, wanting to be wiser than what God has written, then I'll tell you something more that God will choose to do... He will some day choose to put you into hell". My, Elisha belonged to the same school of the prophets. He could see the General's inflated sense of self-importance and pride so he sent word via a messenger "Go and take a public, prolonged and very embarrassing dip in the silted waters of the Jordan.

Its so simple. You'll go in dirty and you'll come out clean. God bless you. Next please." Naaman sounds like an American. "Are not Abana... " (5:12) "Listen partner, back home we've got irrigation ditches bigger, faster, cleaner and more effective than this drainage ditch you call a river". Ills: LA and BC Now if it had been a question of Dirt Abana and Pharpar would have done the job but My, it was a question of Disease and only God's remedy could deal with that! "I thought".

Is that what you're saying "I thought the Lord would take my upbringing into account". "I thought my position would be taken into account", "I thought if I helped others and lived a good life that was all I needed", "I thought a God of love would not send souls to Hell". My, have you an idea, a theory that's keeping you back from the real remedy Are you writing out your own remedy for God's cure and Christ is not part of it My, there are plenty of "other", rivers on offer to day, plenty of religious options and spiritual experiences to be tested and tasted, but if God says, " Its the Jordan", you had better take a dip.

And if God says, " Its Jesus", you had better humble yourself and take a trip... to the Cross. For "Neither is there salvation..." My, salvation comes by complying with what God actually says and not what we think we would like Him to say! So what did Naaman do Well, look at (5:14)He was cleansed Outwardly but what about Inwardly Well notice here: (3) A TESTIMONY THAT IS SO CLEAR People don't step full-grown into the Christian life. They do not in one moment unlearn all of the foolishness acquired over a lifetime.

Nevertheless, some things stand out clearly in the life of this "new convert", to the Living God! For one thing: (a) HE WAS ENLIGHTENED IN MIND: " I thought", has given way to "I know". Naaman made a great discovery, the supreme discovery for any soul. He had found the true and living God! "I know". Are you able to say that Can you say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth". (Job 19:25) Can you say with Paul, "I know... believed". (2 Tim 1:12) (a) (b) HE WAS HUMBLER IN SPIRIT: What a contrast there is between Naaman's first appearance at Elisha's door and his second!

My, he was no longer the proud, over-bearing, self important Captain of the host of Syria! Do you see how he describes himself "Thy servant". (5:15) My, do you claim to be cleansed of spiritual leprosy Do you claim to be a new creature in Christ Then let me ask, are you walking in the steps of your Master who was " meek and lowly in heart "(Matt 11:29) (c) HE WAS THANKFUL IN HEART: Indeed Naaman wished to express his heartfelt gratitude with more than words and so he says, "take a blessing of thy servant". (5:15) Because Elisha waived this gift in order to prevent any misunderstanding about salvation, we cannot deduce that the Lord has no claims on our wealth for He does!

ills: John Wesley used to ask of new converts, "Has his pocket-book been converted yet" My, we cannot pay the Lord, but we can repay Him in some way, by laying all we have and are at His disposal! Have you said, "What shall I render... benefits toward me" (Ps 118:12) (d) HE WAS RENEWED IN WILL: For he was prepared to abandon all old rivals to the Lord! (5:17) How like the Thessalonian believers who, " turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God". (1 Thes 1:9) My, obedience is a sure mark of a saving change!

Indeed Christ Himself said, " If ye love keep my commandments". (Jn 14:15) The slogan said, "For the first time in your life feel really clean". That's how Naaman felt as he went back home to Syria! My, would you like to feel that as you go home this... Will you swallow your pride Will you come to Calvary, to the place of cleansing Will you say with the poet, "Nothing in my hand..."

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