**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Factors That Led To The Cleansing of Naaman**

In 2 Kings 5 we read the story of Naaman. The story begins on a sad note. Naaman was a great man in Syria. Verse 1 says, he was *“commander of the army of the king of Syria;”* he *“was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria;”* It says, *“he was also a mighty man of valor.”* But the verse also says, *“but he was a leper.”* Leprosy was a dreaded disease for which there was no cure.

Naaman was a great man in Syria, but these five words “but he was a leper” negates all that is said about his greatness. I would think that Naaman would have been willing to give up his money, his fame, and his position in order to erase those five words, “but he was a leper.”

 In the same way, here is a man today who is a good citizen; good morally; he takes care of his family; he has an important position in the community, but he is a sinner. To add “he is a sinner,” meaning he is in his sins, guilty of sin negates everything else that could be said about him.

But in the story of Naaman, what begins on a sad note ends on a happy note. V**erse 14** says, *“So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”* Can you imagine Naaman’s joy when he was cleansed of his leprosy?

 Today on our program I want to look at some factors that led to the cleansing of Naaman and apply them to one today who is in need of the cleansing of sin.

You may be good morally, a good citizen, a good parent and a good husband or wife. You may be prominent in the community with a good reputation. But the fact is you have sinned. Paul says, *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (Rom. 3:23). No matter how good we are and what good we have done, we are all in need of cleansing, cleansing of our sins. There is only one way that cleansing can take place, and that is by the grace and power of God. If you have not found cleansing of your sins I hope some things we say today will help you to make the decision to be cleansed by the power of God.

Now, Naaman was a leper. He was in need of cleansing, but he didn’t know that cleansing was available. But he found out. How? Look beginning with verse 2 of 2 Kings 5, *“And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. Then she said to her mistress, ‘If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.’ And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, ‘Thus and thus said the girl who is from the land of Israel.’ Then the king of Syria said, ‘Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.’”* Notice, a captive girl from Israel was the initial contact. She knew of a prophet of God in Israel who could heal him of his leprosy. She spoke up. If she had not said anything, Naaman may have never been cleansed of his leprosy. But she evidently cared enough for her master to tell him about where he could find cleansing. And Naaman was willing to listen and respond. There are people today you may think have very little to offer, but they are the very ones who will lead you to the truth if you will let them. They are ones who care enough about you to speak up and tell you where you can learn about cleansing. It may be your child who saying, “Dad, you need to come and hear about Jesus.” It may be the cleaning lady at work who invites you to a gospel meeting so you can hear the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. It may be a friend who invites you to a Bible study. Remember, if Naaman had not listened to this one captive girl, he probably would have never been cleansed of his leprosy.

Now, Naaman was sent to Elisha the prophet. Look at verses 8-10, *“So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, ‘Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.’ Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.’”* Elisha is the one who gives the instruction of what to do to be cleansed.

Elisha is a prophet of God and so what he speaks are the very words of God. The prophets were spokesmen for God. And that is what we have in the Bible. The Bible was written by prophets of God. They were moved by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote. Paul said in 1 Cor. 2:13, *“These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”* The Bible is our teacher. It tells us that salvation from sin is in Jesus Christ. It tells us what we must do to be saved by Jesus Christ.

Now, Elisha as God’s prophet is Naaman’s teacher. And Elisha as the teacher did not appeal to Naaman’s pride. As a matter of fact he does the opposite. Here comes Naaman, a high official in the Syrian government, with his horses and chariot and stands at the door of Elisha’s house, but Elisha doesn’t even go out to him. He sends a messenger to him. He tells him to dip seven times in the Jordan River, nothing great and elaborate. In the same way, the gospel of Christ does not appeal to the pride of people. The goal of the gospel is not to get someone to come down the isle with his head high thinking he can do the church a favor. The goal of the gospel is to bring people to see their sinful state, and to bring them to a penitent and contrite heart, longing for forgiveness and salvation. In the story of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15, how did the son return to his father? He did not come back saying, “Father, I know you are glad that I am home, so here I am.” He didn’t say “Father, if you had done some things differently I would not have left.” NO. He came back with a humble, contrite heart, and said, *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to* *be called your son.”* (Luke 15:21) If ever we are to be cleansed of our sins we must come with that penitent, contrite heart, not with pride, thinking we can do God a favor.

Also Elisha told Naaman what he needed to hear, not what he wanted to hear. We know what Naaman wanted to hear. After Elisha told him to go and wash in the Jordan seven times the text says, *“But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, ‘Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.' ‘Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?’ So he turned and went away in a rage.”* (vs. 11,12) Naaman had his preconceived ideas of what the prophet should say and do. But this is not what he needed to hear. He needed to hear the steps that God commanded him to take to be cleansed of his leprosy. And that is what Elisha told him.

For anyone to be saved today, he must hear the words of God, the Bible. The gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation (Rom. 1:16). The word of God is able to save our souls (James 1:21). It may not be what I want to hear, but if I am to be cleansed of my sins, I must hear it and obey it.

But Naaman has another need. Remember, he went away angry. He did not want to do what the prophet said. He is going to go home a leper and die a leper just because the word of God is not what he wanted to hear. What does he need? He needs somebody to persuade him to do what the prophet said. This is where is servants come in. Verse 13 says, *“And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, ‘My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"*

Some servants would have sympathized with their master. “You are right master. The prophetshould

have come out and waved his hand over the place, and the rivers Abanah and Pharparare better than the waters of Israel. I understand what you are saying and I don’t blame yougoing away angry.”But if they had done that they would have done Naaman a great disservice. But they didn’t dothat. They tried to persuade Naaman to do what the prophet said.

You may not like what the word of God tells you to do to be saved. The Bible tells you to believe in Jesus, repent of your sins, confess your belief in Jesus and be baptized, immersed in water for the remission of sins. It may be you know what the Bible teaches you must do, but you don’t want to do it. You don’t want to put away sin in your life. You don’t want to be baptized. If there are those in your life who are trying to persuade you to do what you know you ought to do, they are rendering a wonderful service in your life. Don’t push them aside. Do what Naaman did. Respond and obey.

A captive girl could tell Naaman about a prophet, a prophet could tell Naaman what to do, the servants could persuade him to do it, but only God could heal a man of leprosy. In verses 14 and 15 we read, *“So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, ‘Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel…’”* Naaman knew who healed him. It was God, by His grace that he was healed. Was there anyone then, or is there anyone now who would think that Naaman earned his

healing of leprosy? Did Naaman’s going to the Jordan River and dipping seven times in the river somehow merit his healing and negate the grace of God? There’s not a person who would say that Naaman earned or merited his cleansing. But there are those today who will say that if there is anything man must do to be saved from sin, that obedience negates salvation by grace. This case of Naaman teaches us some things about the grace of God: (1) The grace of God does not rule out instruction. Was Naaman given instructions? Yes. If Naaman was going to be healed by the grace of God he had to listen to instruction. (2) The grace of God does not rule out obedience. Naaman heard the instruction, and he obeyed the instructions to be healed. (3) The grace of God does not rule out strict obedience. What would have happened if Naaman had gone back home and dipped seven times in the river Pharpar? What would have happened if Naaman had only dipped five times in the Jordan River? Do you think he would have been healed? When Naaman heard the instructions, when he obeyed, and when he did exactly what God commanded he was healed by the grace of God.

If Naaman’s healing of leprosy by the grace of God was linked to instructions to be obeyed, and to be obeyed strictly, why should we think that our salvation from sin by God’s grace would not also be linked with instructions to be obeyed and obeyed strictly? Jesus said in Mark 16:16, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”* Note the parallel: 2 Kings 5:10 says, “Go…..wash…..and your flesh shall be restored” by the grace of God. Mark 16:16 says “He who believes….baptized…..will be saved” by the grace of God. Being saved by the grace of God does not rule out believing and being baptized. God does not save by His grace until we obey.

Naaman is a high official in the Syrian government, and yet he will listen to a captive girl, he will go to a prophet in Israel, he will listen to his servants, and he will change his mind. He obeyed and was cleansed. If you are in your sins, don’t delay to obey the Lord’s instructions so that you may be cleansed of your sins.

Our time is gone for today. If you have a Bible question you would like for us to address on this program, or if you would like a free audio CD copy of today’s program or a transcript, we would like to hear from you. There are three ways you may send us your questions, or to make your requests.

You may email it in: Our email address is sjchurch@sjchurchofchrist.com.

You may call it in: Our phone number is 573-265-8628.

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