

# AM 2 Kings 5 & 1 Peter 1:22-2:12 The Leper who was Healed

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[ 0 : 00 ] To the Old Testament Scriptures, to the book of 2 Kings, 2 Kings chapter 5.!

You'll find it on page 372 of the Pew Bibles. Now the Syrians, on one of their raids, had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel.

And she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria, he would cure him of his leprosy.

So Naaman went in and told his lord. Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel. And the king of Syria said, Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.

So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing.

[ 1 : 39 ] And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy.

And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, Am I God to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?

Only consider and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me. But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, Why have you torn your clothes?

Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and 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, and you shall be clean.

[ 2 : 54 ] But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me, and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.

Are not Abana and Farper, 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 outrage. But his servants came near and said to him, My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you.

Will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, Wash and be clean? So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God.

And his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Then he returned to the man of God, and he came and stood before him, and he said, Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.

[ 4 : 19 ] So accept now a present from your servant. But he said, As the Lord lives before whom I stand, I will receive none.

Then Naaman said, If not, Please let there be given to your servant two mules' load of earth, for from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any God but the Lord.

In this matter may the Lord pardon your servant. When my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon.

When I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon your servant in this matter. He said to him, Go in peace. But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, the man of God, said, See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian in not accepting from his hand what he brought.

As the Lord lives, I will run after him, and he gets something from him. So Gehazi followed Naaman. And when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, Is all well?

[ 5 : 52 ] And he said, All is well. My master has sent me to say there have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets.

Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing. And Naaman said, Be pleased to accept two talents.

And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of clothing and laid them on two of his servants and they carried them before Gehazi.

And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house and he sent the men away and they departed. He went in and stood before his master and Elisha said to him, Where have you been, Gehazi?

And he said, Your servant went nowhere. But he said to him, Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you?

[ 7 : 07 ] Was it a time to accept money and garments? All of orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants. Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.

So he went out from his presence a leper like snow. Amen. And may God bless to us that reading from his word.

chapter 1. 1 Peter chapter 1. We shall read from verse 22. Peter writes, Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

[ 8 : 39 ] So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander like newborn infants long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up into salvation if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For it stands in Scripture, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

So the honour is for you who believe but for those who do not believe the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.

They stumble because they disobeyed the word as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

[ 10 : 22 ] Once you were not a people but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul. keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Amen. And may God bless to us that further reading and to his name be the praise. Back with me to the passage we read in the second book of Kings, second Kings chapter 5.

The leper who was healed. If you were arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you?

If you were arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you? That's a challenging question for all of us.

[ 11 : 54 ] We are not saved by our good works but we are saved to do good works. And part of our responsibility as Christians is as the Apostle Peter says in the passage we read to declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.

As Peter goes on to say live such good lives among the pagans that they may seek good deeds and glorify God.

As Christians we are called to live lives which honour the Lord we profess to serve. We must walk the walk as well as talk the talk.

That's what has been required of God's people in every age. Here in 2 Kings chapter 5 we see how three Israelites three members of God's covenant community came into contact with a man who was not an Israelite and who did not know Israel's God.

I'd like to look at each of these three Israelites in turn but before we do that let's think about this man Naaman under the heading a proud man a proud man.

[13:39] Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Syria. Syria of course was just over the border from Israel and at this period in history there was an uneasy relationship between Syria and its neighbour.

The two nations were frequently at war and at the time in question Syria was on top.

Naaman had been instrumental in securing Syria's success. Verse 1 tells us that by him the Lord had given victory to Syria.

Naaman was a mighty man of valour. He was a brave competent soldier and his master the king thought highly of him.

He was a great man with his master and in high favour. Naaman consequently enjoyed the material rewards of success.

[14:52] We see how he had servants in his household but his wealth is also clear from the gifts he took with him when he went to see Elisha in Israel.

So here we have a brave soldier a rich man a man who enjoyed royal patronage. He had status and success.

He was the sort of man other people would envy. Naaman had it all. Except there was one problem. He didn't have good health. He suffered from leprosy. As the final sentence of verse one puts it, he was a mighty man of valour but he was a leper.

That but speaks volumes, doesn't it? For all his success and wealth and popularity Naaman was suffering from a disfiguring and incurable disease.

[16:15] He didn't quite have it all. There was one point at which he was vulnerable. He was vulnerable but he was also proud.

When he heard about Elisha he was prepared to travel a long way to visit him in the hope of securing a cure for his leprosy.

But he wanted a cure on his own terms. He was disappointed that Elisha didn't even come out of his house to meet him.

He wanted Elisha to perform a dramatic public healing. That's what he had in mind. And he was incensed when instead Elisha asked him to go and bathe seven times in the waters of the river Jordan.

Why? What was special about the river Jordan? Are not Abana and Farper the rivers of Damascus better than any of the waters of Israel?

[17:32] Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed? Naaman wanted to be cured. But he wanted to be cured on his own terms.

He wasn't prepared to humble himself in the process. He was a proud man and no doubt he felt he had a lot to be proud of.

But his pride nearly prevented him from receiving what he most wanted. The prophet Elisha realized it was important for Naaman to know it was the power of God alone which could cure him of his leprosy.

And in order to see that Naaman had to be brought to an end of his own resources. Fortunately his servants persuaded him to think again not to reject Elisha's instructions out of hand.

They reminded him of what Elisha had actually said go and wash in the Jordan seven times and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.

[18:54] The prophet had promised that if he did what he asked Naaman's flesh would be restored he would be healed. What was an offer was complete cleaning and all that Naaman was being asked to do was really quite simple.

shouldn't he give it a try? The servant's argument made sense. Naaman was won over and he went and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan with the result that his flesh was restored and became like that of a young child.

Naaman's leprosy was cured. He received physical healing and it's clear he also experienced a spiritual miracle.

Look at verse 15. Then he returned to the man of God he and all his company and he came and stood before him and he said behold I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. Naaman's experience of God's power and kindness had driven him to the conclusion that Elisha's God the God of Israel was the only true God.

[ 20 : 34 ] He had been converted to the living and true God. Later he says that he would not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any God but the Lord.

Naaman was healed physically but he was also converted spiritually. I think Naaman gives us some insight into what all of us are like.

We're all vulnerable in some way. Some of us may be very aware of our vulnerability. Life may be very hard indeed but even if things are going well for us we are vulnerable at some point.

No one has it all. There's that problem of but. We may be wealthy we may be successful we may be popular but almost certainly there's something in our life or circumstances that we find difficult to cope with.

We are vulnerable at some point or other. At an even deeper level we all face the problem of sin.

[ 22 : 08 ] We are all by nature sinners. Not only do we sin not only do we think say and do wrong things we have a sinful nature.

By nature we rebel against God and his law. Just like Naaman we too suffer from a horrible and incurable disease.

And just like him we are proud. In fact pride is of the essence of sin. Remember how our first parents Adam and Eve committed that first sin in the garden.

God had told them that they could enjoy the fruit of all the trees in the garden except for one the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But Adam and Eve were taken in by Satan's lies when he told them that they wouldn't die if they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[ 23 : 19 ] Instead they would become like God. Adam and Eve wanted to set themselves up to be as good as God and so they chose to eat the fruit to break free from the parameters which the Lord had set.

They thought they knew best but they soon discovered the sad consequences of their proud rebellion. sin. It's only God who can deal with the problem of sin and in his mercy he has done so in the person of his son the Lord Jesus Christ.

He came into our world to pay the penalty which our sins deserved. He lived a life of perfect obedience to his heavenly father and he died the death which we deserve to die on our behalf.

He now shares his risen life with all who will put their trust in him. All we have to do is to see our sin for what it is.

To acknowledge it. To turn from it. and cast ourselves unreservedly on God's mercy in Jesus.

[ 25 : 01 ] We receive salvation on God's terms and on his terms alone. And that means we must set aside our pride.

We must come to the Lord Jesus with empty hands. God's God's grace. The sad fact is that many people reject the good news of the gospel.

Perhaps they don't accept that sin is all that serious. Perhaps they think they're good enough for God. Perhaps they think they can win God's favour in their own way.

The story is told of a famous playwright that he was once present at a meeting where the gospel was very clearly explained.

He stormed out of the meeting shouting I shall pay my own debts and he will unless he accepted salvation on God's terms.

[ 26 : 17 ] Pride lies at the heart of whatever reason you may have for rejecting the invitation of the gospel. It's all too easy to miss out on what you most need because you are unwilling to come humbly!

to the cross of Christ. Naaman was persuaded to think again. He humbled himself to do just as Elisha told him and as a result he experienced God's grace.

Won't you follow his example? And what about the three members of God's covenant community with whom Naaman interacted here in this passage.

First of all we have a sympathetic girl. A sympathetic girl. Naaman's wife had a servant who was a young Israelite girl.

She wasn't just a servant she was a slave. On a foray into Israel invaders from Syria had taken her captive and she now found herself far from home a stranger in a strange land.

[ 27 : 54 ] But she hadn't forgotten the God of her fathers. She obviously knew about Elisha and she respected him as a prophet of the Lord.

She was confident that he could heal her master of his leprosy. And she was genuinely sympathetic to Naaman in his need.

She wanted the best for him. And so one day she happened to say to her mistress would that my Lord were with a prophet who is in Samaria.

He would cure him of his leprosy. I suspect the girl didn't imagine that anything would come of what she said however sincerely meant it was.

What she said was almost a throw away comment. But what she said came to Naaman's ears and he acted on it he went to the king of Syria and told him what this girl had said and the king said well of course you must go and visit this man Elisha I'll give you a letter to take with you.

[ 29 : 19 ] You see the Lord used what this girl said in ways she couldn't have imagined. He used what she said to bring Naaman and his household untold blessing.

Let me highlight just two things we can learn from this slave girl and what she said. The first is very simple our words and attitudes matter.

our words and attitudes matter. This girl cared for Naaman and it showed in what she said.

She had every reason to feel bitter towards Syrians in general and towards Naaman and his wife in particular but she didn't harbour resentment.

She didn't repay evil with evil. Instead she wanted her master to recover his health. And the second thing is this God can use things that are quite insignificant to accomplish great good.

[ 30 : 49 ] He can use a kind word there or a generous action here to bring about things that are scarcely imaginable.

Perhaps you feel there is little you can do by way of Christian witness but the God who used the remark of a slave girl to set and train the events recorded for us in this passage is able to bless what little you feel you can do and multiply its effectiveness.

What you and I say or do may be just one link in a very long chain but the God who sees the end from the beginning is able to use it in the fulfillment of his purposes.

A sympathetic girl. Then we have a wise prophet a wise prophet when Naaman came to the king of Israel with the letter from the king of Syria the king of Israel didn't know what to do.

He thought Syria was trying to stir up strife but when Elisha heard about Naaman's visit he knew exactly what to do.

[ 32 : 25 ] He sent a message to the king let him come now to me that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel.

Elisha wasn't out to make a name for himself. That wasn't why he sent that message. He didn't want Naaman to think he was a great man.

He wanted Naaman to come to see that Elisha's God was a great God. Elisha refused to pander to Naaman's pride.

He didn't even come out to meet him when he arrived at his house. He simply sent a messenger to tell Naaman to wash seven times in the Jordan. You see Elisha saw it was important that Naaman shouldn't attribute his healing to any individual even to the prophet of the Lord.

He needed to see that it was God's power alone that could heal him. And note how Elisha reacted when Naaman returned to thank him.

[ 33 : 48 ] On that occasion he did meet him and it must have thrilled his heart to hear Naaman say that he now owed his allegiance exclusively to the God of Israel.

But when Naaman offered him a gift Elisha politely but firmly declined. Verse 16 As the Lord lives before whom I stand I will receive none.

Even when Naaman pressed him to accept something he would not change his mind. Would it have been wrong for Elisha to accept a gift from Naaman I'm not sure that it would have been wrong in and of itself but Elisha was concerned about the effect it might have on Naaman if he accepted a gift.

Naaman meant well in offering the gift but if Elisha accepted it Naaman might be tempted to think that Elisha was a prophet of the Lord for what he was getting out of it and he might think he was in some way contributing to his own cure it was the Lord who had graciously and freely cured Naaman Naaman himself had no part in it and Elisha had not been directly involved by accepting a gift Elisha might encourage Naaman to think he was in some way paying for his healing or at least making some contribution towards it nothing must obscure the fact that Naaman's healing was down to God and God alone Elisha was more concerned about Naaman than he was about himself in his selflessness he was like the Lord Jesus remember how the apostle Paul urges the Christians in Philippi each of you should look not only to your own interests but to the interests of others your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross that was the kind of attitude

[ 37 : 07 ] Elisha displayed in refusing Naaman's offer of a gift no doubt he could have put Naaman's largesse to good use but it was more important to impress on this new believer that he owed what had happened to God's grace and God's grace alone Elisha was a wise prophet he was sensitive to Naaman's situation and put his interests above his own I wonder how wise we are in what we say and do do we consider how our words and actions might affect others a sympathetic girl a wise prophet and then we have a greedy servant a greedy servant

Elisha's assistant Gehazi is the third member of the covenant community who met Naaman Gehazi was not at all pleased that his master had declined Naaman's gift as he saw it Naaman had been let off too lightly what was wrong with accepting a gift when it was freely offered and the donor could well afford it after all he had brought these things all the way from Syria why take them back again and so Gehazi decided on his own initiative to run after Naaman and solicit a gift for himself except that he didn't put it quite like that when he caught up with Naaman he fabricated a story about how Elisha had sent him how two trainee prophets had just arrived from the hill country of Ephraim and could do with some clothes and money

Naaman was only too happy to oblige Gehazi gave the impression of being unselfish he didn't ask for anything on his own account it was the needs of others he wanted Naaman to meet but it was all a lie and when Elisha asked him where he'd been he told another lie your servant went nowhere I haven't been anywhere you see when we tell one lie it often doesn't stop there we find we have to tell yet more lies to cover that first lie poor Gehazi was getting deeper and deeper into sin he had aspirations to wealth and status and decided to cash in on what was an act of

God he didn't consider what was in the best interests of Naaman Gehazi acted unwisely and he lied to get what he wanted but God knew what he had done as did Elisha and as a result of what he had done Gehazi became a leper just as Naaman had been Gehazi's punishment was severe it underlined just how serious sin is in God's sight how thankful we should be that we live in a day of gospel grace when God doesn't normally deal with us as our sins deserve

Naaman was a proud man but he humbled himself to receive the healing he needed if you aren't a Christian are you prepared to acknowledge your sin and humbly receive the salvation that is freely offered in the Lord Jesus and if you are a Christian are you kind and sympathetic like that slave girl be encouraged that the Lord can use even chance remarks in amazing ways are you wise like Elisha do you put the interests of others above your own and by

[ 42 : 43 ] God's grace are you seeking not to succumb to that sin which clings so closely shall we pray oh Lord the story we have been considering comes in light and shade we see the amazing miracle by which Naaman was cured of his leprosy and on account of which he came to recognize you as the living and true God we see the kind and wise actions of members of your covenant community and we see too the sinful actions of one who succumbed to temptation

Lord we pray that we may learn from these things and close in with the free offer of the gospel in your son for his sake we ask it Amen