

- ***Read II Kings 5:1*** In this text we learn of this great military captain named Naaman. He was not an Israelite, but he was a Syrian. Though he was mighty and extremely successful as a leader of his men, he was stricken with leprosy. Leprosy or Hanson's disease as it is modernly called is a skin condition where bumps and lesions appears on the skins surface. People of ancient times were revolted by the disease and those affected were often casts out of communities. Regardless of his disease, however, Naaman lived in high standing.
- The rest of the story of Naaman is quite remarkable and very useful as a case study for obedience. Case studies are often used in education as a means of learning valuable lessons from successes and failures of others in real life or fictional situations. This story if family to most of us, but I'd like to take a refresher course on the story of Naaman and his obedience to the God of heaven.

I. Help Comes From God. (vv.2,3,6-8)

- A. In these couple of verses we find out that Naaman had raided a place in Israel and had taken a servant girl captive. She was now the maidservant for his wife. The servant girl saw the condition of Naaman and told him that there was a prophet in Israel who had the ability to cure him of his ailment.
- B. This had to be news to Naaman because as far as we know there wasn't any sort of cure known to man for leprosy during this time. He quickly goes to his king and asks to go to Israel to seek this healing. His king allows it, and Naaman takes off on his way.
- C. Naaman comes to the king of Israel, and explains why he has come. The king is quickly distressed and rips his clothes because he sees Naaman as coming simply to start a fight. The king rightly dismisses the notion that he has any power to heal. He was right he didn't have the power, but Elisha quickly sends word for him not to fret for God would be able to take care of Naaman's need.
- D. The servant girl and the king both realized that help comes from God alone. The issues of life are not cured by the hand of men, but help is always available from God. Whether old or young, the power of God was known to be his and his alone.

II. Seeking God's help demands humility. (vv.4-9)

- A. Naaman surely had spent much of his life trying anything and everything in order to heal his leprosy. The Syrians were worshippers of pagan gods, and certainly Naaman had gone through many a ritual in order to gain healing from God. Yet, nothing had cured him.
- B. It must have been strange hearing from this little girl that there was a prophet in Israel who had the power to save him. Again, they had their own gods in Syria, but Naaman was still willing to humble himself to go and seek the help of a God that was not even his own.
- C. For any individual to seek the help of another demands at least a small amount of humility. As a man, it is sometimes difficult from us to ask for help with any number of things. Believe it or not...we have this little thing called male ego and it keeps us from having humility enough to seek help from another person when we are incapable of accomplishing something on our own.
- D. Often, help from God is often never received from God because we either don't ask, or we ask out of spite and not humility. James tells us that God gives grace, but it is only to those who ask humbly.
(James 4:1-10)

III. Sometimes, God's commands don't make sense to man. (vv.10-12)

- A. So far we have found a mighty man in need. He is told that help can come from God, and he humbles himself to go to Israel and seek out help from this prophet and his God. He finds the prophet, but isn't too excited about the instructions given to him by the prophet.
- B. Elisha tells Naaman that all he has to do if he wants to be healed is go and wash in the Jordan river seven times. Seem simple enough, right? Well...that was exactly the problem with the instructions. Naaman was was astounded by the simplicity of the instructions and felt disrespected. He thought that Elisha would have done some kind of magnificent and magical spell like something in order to heal him. He even goes on to say that the quality of the water in the Jordan wasn't good enough to heal, and he'd have better luck back home in those rivers. He leaves frustrated and disappointed.
- C. The truth is that the commands and plans of God don't always make sense to the mind of man. In fact, the eternal plan of God for man's salvation in Jesus Christ wasn't something that most "wise" individuals were willing to accept because of its simplicity and "foolishness". **(I Cor. 1:26-31)**

- D. Many would like to boast in their understanding and wisdom of how things ought to be. Many a "wise" and "learned" theologian has said that baptism accompanied by faith can play no role in man's salvation, yet that is exactly what God's word teaches. **(Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21)**
- E. Many would want to question God when His instructions don't make sense in their minds, but those who seek God's help must be willing to do as He says in order to gain His favor. Naaman almost let his pride get in the way of his healing, but thankfully the story doesn't end here.

IV. Obedience to God's commands demands humility. (vv.13,14)

- A. At this point, Naaman had to be extremely disappointed with this trip. He had come to be healed, but at this point, in his mind, he had only been disrespected by the simplistic instructions of Elisha. He was just about ready to pack up and go home, when one of his servants comes to him and encourages him to reconsider. He points out that Naaman would have been willing to do anything difficult in order to be saved, so why then wouldn't he be willing to follow the simple instructions?
- B. Naaman understands the logical nature of his servant and humbles himself to the point of obeying the instructions of Elisha. And wouldn't you know it? After washing seven times in the nasty old Jordan River Naaman was healed!
- C. We've already noted that it takes humility to realize that we are in need of God and His help. Let me suggest however that humility is continually needed even beyond the initial inquiry because, again, God's solution might not make too much sense to us.
- D. The Jews in Jesus's day were looking for a mighty and strong Messiah, but when Jesus came he seemed to be anything but that in their eyes. He wasn't from the class of society. He was the son of a carpenter. He wasn't highly educated. He wasn't even above average looks wise from everything we see in Scripture. Nothing on the exterior drew people to Him, but the humble...the needy...those seeking a Savior. They were willing to come to Jesus and obey His commands in order to gain the blessings that He promised. **(Matthew 11:25-30)** May we have the humility of these people in so that we might enjoy the same blessings of Jesus.

V. We always benefit from obedience to God.

- A. At the end of the day, we learn from this story of Naaman that when we obey God, we are benefitted.
- B. In **Hebrews 11:6,7**, we learn that those who seek God in faith do so in part because they believe that they will be rewarded by a just God.
- C. Again, sometimes the commands of God don't make sense to us or we might think that they are difficult to follow, but even from early on God assures us that His commands are for our good. **(Deut. 6:24)** This same thought is continued in the New Testament in the writings of John. **(I John 5:1-3)**
- D. Jesus recognized the benefits of obedience to God, and He even recognized Naaman for his faith and obedience...especially in respect to those others who were not willing to follow the example of Naaman and benefit from faith and obedience to God. **(Luke 4:27)**

Certainly, there are numerous accounts in the Bible of individuals who benefitted from good decisions and others who suffered from poor decisions. The story of Naaman is a perfect study of someone who had the opportunity to benefit from obedience to God. He almost threw it all away because of pride, but thankfully we see that humility prevailed in the end. May we be a people who humble ourselves to obedience to God, so that we too might benefit from the goodness of our gracious Father in heaven.