

Wash and be clean

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[0 : 00] seeking God's blessing let us turn for a little time to words in the portion we read that is second Kings the second book of Kings chapter 5 we read verses 1 to 19 we we have the story of Naaman Naaman's being sent to to Samaria for a cure for his leprosy let us read again verses 12 and 13 are not Abana and far power rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel may I not wash in them and be clean so he turned away and went away in a rage and his servants came near and spake unto him and said my father if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing would this though not have done it how much rather than when he says to you wash and be clean

Paul said all scripture is given by inspiration of God God gave to men what they should write God caused men to write what has been written and what we have got in in the Bible now you notice what the Apostle said all scripture is given by God God breathed is all scripture all scripture not some parts of scripture not some books of scripture but all and every part of scripture and we may derive profit from parts which do not appear to have any connection with the gospel a careful examination of many of these will show us how much we need Jesus Christ

Christ and will lead us to value the gospel of Christ highly to prize this gospel and we're going to look at the story of Naaman for a little and try to make some application of this to our shelves notice first Naaman's character and condition and then Naaman's visit to the prophet thirdly Naaman's reaction to the message of the prophet fourthly Naaman's repentance first Naaman's character and his condition first Naaman's character and his condition he was a great man he was the commander in chief of the Syrian army honorable and brave he was greatly distinguished distinguished because God had given the Syrian's victory through this man Naaman but he was a leper and this reminds ourselves that none are exempt from affliction from disappointment from death the same sentence is pronounced upon all dust you are and to dust you shall return it's a very humbling truth that's what's true of us all and let us learn here also that great men like others are by nature children of wrath and thus liable to eternal death ah how good it is that we can add that there are no evils attaching either to body or soul which God cannot remove he can heal the body and he can heal the soul sad to say God's remedies are very often offensive to the pride of man as we see in the case that is before us here let's look now at Naaman's visit to the prophet

Naaman must have been a man of striking personality a man beloved of those who were about him there was a little Israelite slave girl in his household who had no reason to care for her captor and yet who spoke with concern she was not scared of the terrible affliction that had struck her master she said she said to her mistress would God my Lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria for he would recover him of his leprosy oh she was she was saying that God would would enable my master to be with that prophet in Israel of whom I know and who I am persuaded would be able to to heal my master of this awful affliction she suggested then that there was this prophet in her own country who might be able to to cure her master and we see that that so highly the king of Syria think of the man who had saved his nation that he spared no expense and wasted no time in seeking to obtain the remedy that was suggested and

Naaman was sent to Samaria to seek a cure at the hand of this prophet Elisha and now the weaker side of the the character of Naaman became evident and we find here a great and important lesson for ourselves Naaman after his long journey and being the great man that he undoubtedly was felt that he was at least entitled to be to be welcomed in passion even if he did not receive extra special treatment when he arrived at the door of Elisha's house he expected the prophet to come out to him to come out to him but Naaman was angry he went away and he said behold

[9 : 42] I thought he will surely come out to me and he will stand and he will call on the name of the Lord his God and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper I thought that he would do this for me he would touch the parts affected and by doing that he would remove the leprosy he would heal me so that I would be no longer a leper no longer a sufferer in this way to me he would come out to me granted that I am a leper yet I am not an ordinary leper I am an extraordinary leper I am a general all the great armies of Syria are under me and I am here with my horses and my chariots can he possibly deal like this with me and Naaman was wroth he was angry

Elisha then did not come out to Naaman he did not come out to Naaman but he sent one of his servants out to him with the simple command that Naaman go and wash seven times in the Jordan what could be easier than this remedy that was suggested but we notice that its very simplicity was just what rendered it offensive to Naaman let's look then at Naaman's reaction to the message of the prophet Naaman had previously arranged in his own mind how the cure was to be performed here was a case of the patient dictating the plan of his own cure and because the physician

Elisha in this case prescribed a different cure the patient was indignant this spirit of dictation to God the spirit of proudly laying down the law to God directly opposed to that childlike spirit which ought to be owed as often as we contemplate the Lord that spirit has frequently led to the rejection of the plans of God himself it leads many to reject the plan of God's salvation it leads them to cast from them very often the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ now God offers a free pardon to us as sinners the pride of the human heart rejects this and brings a price with which pardon will be bought works of righteousness gifts gifts to people who are needy acts of charity tears of penitence now the price is already paid the price is already accepted and let's notice this the salvation already purchased can be received by people only as sinners who have nothing to pay nothing in my hand

I bring simply to thy cross I cling make it come to thee for dress helpless look to thee for grace foul eye to the fountain fly wash me I have nothing to pay nothing in my hand I bring nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I cling make it come to thee for dress helpless look to thee for grace fall I to the fountain fly wash me savior or I die only as sinners who have nothing to pay can we receive what we all need what we all need Naaman turned away in anger and bitter disappointment from Elisha's door if it was necessary for water to be used as a means of effecting the cure then why he thought could he not go home and wash in one of those purer streams that were to be found in his own land of Syria why are not Abana and Farpar 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 he thought that the virtue was to be in the water while in fact it lay in obedience it lay in obedience but

Naaman was prevailed upon to follow Elisha's instructions and this mainly we notice through the sound common sense of his own servants they came near and spoke to him and said my father if the prophet had bid you do some great thing would you not have done it how much rather than when he says to you wash and be clean when the remedies of God are adopted they will never fail to succeed and now we come to Naaman's repentance it was necessary for the natural pride of Naaman to be laid low before he could receive the cleansing power of God he was made to learn that he owed his cure not to any magic power from the prophet Elisha but only from the power of God working through Elisha the appointed means by which Naaman was to be cleansed was to wash seven times in the water of the Jordan in that way and in no other way was the cure to be effected

[19 : 10] Naaman was a great man popular man wealthy man he had all that that a person might desire from this world apart from that terrible affliction but greatness and popularity and char and wealth were of no avail while that remained uncured which God alone could cure and then Naaman swallowed his pride and he did as he was told he went down and dipped in Jordan seven times and he was healed and we read that his flesh became sound like the flesh of a little child smooth perfect but this happened only because

Naaman adopted a childlike attitude he was no longer the the great proud man the self-important captain captain of the the hosts of Syria thy servant he said as he addressed Elisha that's the way he described himself now your servant Elisha here am I your servant and the words are no mere empty courtesy he returned to the man of God he and all his company and came and he stood before him and he said behold now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel now therefore I pray thee take a blessing the blessing of your servant

Naaman's discovery and the experience he had had of the the goodness of God had laid low his pride and friends there is no better mark of conversion than humility and there is nothing that produces humility like the experience of the grace of God the experience of the grace of God the experience of the grace of God the experience of the grace of God now let us try to apply this a little further to ourselves today God has laid down the terms on which he is willing to cleanse mankind to cleanse mankind from a leprosy far more terrible than the leprosy of of the body the leprosy that affects man's body he has laid down the terms on which he is willing to cleanse man from the leprosy of sin which keeps man separated from God and which renders man subject to the wrath of God and the terms are simply faith faith in the sacrifice of

Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary when he paid the penalty of sins the sins when God sent his son into the world many took offense at the message which the Savior preached because it offered salvation from sin through Christ crucified on the cross and people thought how could public execution as a criminal provide salvation to the world but this is God's appointed way of salvation the way he has appointed as a remedy for sin the pride of man wants to do some great thing so the words that

Naaman's servants used when they were urging him to be obedient to the prophet Elisha and do as he had been told if the prophet had ordered you to do some great thing would you not have done it and that is just what is true of the proud heart of man it's still true this morning of the heart of every man and woman boy and girl here who has not submitted humbly to the claims of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 36] You want to do some great thing in order to obtain eternal salvation in order that you might be restored to the favor of God.

We don't need to go to those parts of the world which we call heathen lands to realize that all forms of self-denial and torture are being practiced this very day.

In all parts of the world as people seek to please God and by pleasing him to win merit to win his favor. Man in that way is longing to do some great thing that he in order that he may be cured of his spiritual leprosy.

There are many among ourselves who adhere to the false teaching that goodness, kindness, virtue, morality, the giving of what we ourselves have to those more needy than ourselves will wait for us to do some great thing.

For us eternal life. Our proud hearts reject the simple remedy of the gospel which is believe and live.

[27 : 43] If there were wonders given today from heaven. If there were orders given today from heaven. If there were orders given today from heaven. If we went on pilgrimage from Glasgow, let's say to Edinburgh, barefoot, we would be saved.

many would be on the road at once. But those many who would gladly follow such an order as that cannot conceive it possible that men will be saved simply by trusting and relying on Jesus Christ for that salvation.

That is too simple in order that their souls might be saved. And yet, not only can Christ save us, but nothing else can save us.

Only he can save us. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

Ah yes, there are many in the world today, like Naaman, who would gladly become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ if they could become his disciples on their own terms.

[29 : 34] They resent being told that God has laid down the conditions and that these are the conditions under which men must be saved and that they must accept these conditions unreservedly.

The late Alexander Stuart, in his book on Elisha, mentions an incident in the life of Brownlow North, the 19th century evangelist.

And he says that this illustrates just what we are speaking about here. And he says that it also lays down for us a way in which many people may be dealt with who are treating this most important, most vital matter of all in this way.

Still revealing pride of heart. Brownlow North was preaching in Edinburgh on one occasion. And at the close of one service, he was sitting in the vestry of the church.

The door opened and in came a young man. He said to Brownlow North, I've heard you preaching often now, and I have got to say to you that I like neither you nor your preaching, and that I will not like you nor your preaching unless you can tell me why God permitted sin in the world.

[31 : 37] And Brownlow North said immediately, yes, I can tell you. God permitted sin in the world because he chose to do so. And as Stuart says, he had, Brownlow North had seen as a good physician of souls exactly what that young man was thinking.

Exactly where he stood and he saw too how he could develop the argument to the advantage of that young man. God, he said, chose to do so.

He chose to permit sin in the world. And then he said, if you, young man, do not stop questioning God's dealings, I will tell you something else that God will choose to do.

He will choose one day to put you into hell. And Stuart says it was a drastic measure, but he knew what he was doing.

And he said, there's one other thing I want to, I want to tell you. Remember that God chose also to send Jesus.

[33 : 13] and he spoke to that young man of the way of salvation. How God in his grace and compassion had given his own dear son to be the savior of sinners like him, like them both.

And he urged the young man to embrace that salvation in Jesus Christ. The young man went away, but a few days later he returned and it was clear that he was not the same young man.

Gone was the pride and the rebelliousness. He had gone home and pleaded for mercy in Jesus Christ.

and God had mercy on him and saved him and brought him as a sinner to himself.

And he was rejoicing in his salvation. The command given to Naaman was a simple one.

[34 : 28] Go, Naaman, and wash seven times in the Jordan. That was it. Now the command that Jesus Christ gives is also very simple.

Repent and believe the gospel. And I ask you today, have you believed that he means what he says?

He's still saying that. He's still saying, repent. And by repentance he means stop turning your back upon God.

Repentance means recognizing that God is the God who is holy, all-knowing, that he is the God with whom we have to deal.

And that he shows his grace and his mercy, his holiness and his justice in laying down the conditions and ensuring that he, the just and holy God, cannot tolerate or overlook man's sin.

[36 : 02] But the glorious gospel is just this, that that self-same God in his love and in his compassion has offered us his son Jesus Christ as the one through whom we may be reconciled to God and become his children.

In Christ we have salvation. In no other is there salvation. for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

May God bless his word to us. Let us pray. We thank thee O Lord for the gospel.

we thank thee for thy willingness to receive sinners. We thank thee that thou hast taught us that whatever else we may doubt we ought never to doubt the readiness of our God to receive us as sinners and to separate us from our sins as far as east is distant from the west.

O may this be true for all of us. May any of us who have been hitherto rejecting Jesus Christ be led by thy spirit to him today.

[37 : 55] Bless us O Lord in all that we seek in thy strength to do. We pray for blessing upon all of us who have special duties later today be with us as we meet together for worship.

Be with all thy people wherever they do meet to worship thee. O may thy spirit be present. May he open hearts that the word the precious life-changing powerful word of God may lodge there.

Undertake for us and for all whom we love this day and always. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.