

TO KILL AND TO MAKE ALIVE

SECOND KINGS CHAPTER FIVE

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~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God traverses the most interesting miracle in the life of Elisha the prophet in this report. This chapter demonstrates Elisha was as sarcastic as Elijah had been; and it reveals a tremendous sense of humor on God's part. I know God has a sense of humor; and He likes to use men who have His sense of humor, too. This is a serious account concerning a man in a desperate condition – being a leper – but, because I am not a great person, I can't help but laugh when I see the way Elisha handled Naaman....

1 Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.

~ One little verse gives us extensive information concerning Naaman. He was a pagan, but he was a great man. If we believe the Bible, we have to understand a pagan man can be honorable and forthright in many ways. It's remarkable the Lord had given deliverance to Syria through Naaman! That makes Naaman the second man God has used for His purposes from outside Israel; and it also makes this verse wondrous; at least, to me it does.

The Lord has used myriad men of this world who were not Christians; and that may sound strange, but God used Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great - as we shall see in the Book of Daniel - and God uses Naaman. I'm not exactly sure where Naaman falls in terms of greatness from the list, but we know he was a great man - because the Lord just told us he was.

We're also told Naaman was a mighty man of valor; which means he was bold in the face of danger while remaining virtuous – he could be trusted to do the right thing in time of trouble. Those things count in the high court of

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Heaven, friends; what I mean is: God doesn't despise the lost man, and He takes note of what they do and don't do. Well, it says the Lord had given deliverance; so, that means God used Naaman. And those are fine things – but – he was a leper. That means he was a sinner.

There are many fine people in the world who are not Christians of whom we could say some nice things. Some men and women have made selfless and heroic contributions to society; however, the *final* verdict remains as it did with Naaman: they are a sinner. All have sinned; and no matter how lovely or nice they may be, one fact is unchanged in the sight of God Almighty. They need a Savior from sin.

We need to understand lepers were not outcasts in pagan nations as they were in Israel. God gave that law to Israel to keep leprosy from spreading and, until recently, they were colonized. God mandated a leper colony amongst His people *long* before any pagan nation ever thought of doing so. That's something to think about as we are reading in a book that contains rules concerning leprous people. Leprosy is a type for sin in Scripture, and all these things were written as an example for our learning.

Leprosy is still largely incurable by scientific means. Even so, many people *ARE* cured from the disease. Well, sin is incurable except by God. He is the only One Who can save a sinner. I think many people turn away from our Spiritual Safari because I place such an emphasis on the fact that we are all sinners. People don't like to think of themselves that way, and they erroneously believe that, once we are saved, we sin no more. Well, I have bad news for you: you're still a sinner. We have so many humanists who play man's goodness up, but it is nothing in the world but a farce. Likewise, sin isn't preached much anymore. Perhaps I do over-emphasize sin a bit; perhaps I'm just making up for the lack of proper, correct and complete Bible teaching going around today. Let's move on.

Naaman tried everything to cover up his leprosy; and he probably did a good job concealing it, but he couldn't cure it, and I am sure he had been to all the best doctors in Syria. Today, many people try to whitewash their sin, and some are masters at covering it up. What we need is to be washed; and only the Lord Jesus Christ can do that for us, friends....

2 And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

~ There are many unknown and unnamed characters in the Bible who are outstanding people in Heaven. One is the little maid taken captive, and of whom we know very little. She is equal to Queen Esther, Bathsheba, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel or Ruth the Moabitess. She's in no position to give orders; but, one day, she utters a sigh and tells this pagan family she is wrongly enslaved to about Elisha the prophet. Apparently, Elisha had developed quite a reputation by this time, and someone overheard her talking about him....

3 And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

4 And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.

5 And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

7 And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

~ The king rightly recognized he could not heal Naaman. The king didn't claim healing in the Name of God; and neither did Elisha! Elisha is never known as a healer, yet healing is, by far, his greatest miracle. Most of you know I consider those who claim to have the gift of healing tantamount to a

blasphemer. Likewise, the emphasis on the Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry was never on healing. In fact, the king here comes to the conclusion that this is all a design to start a war. Well, the king wasn't much of a king to speak of, but everyone knew there was a genuine prophet in Israel. This provides the perfect opportunity for the Lord to confirm His Name to the surrounding nations....

8 And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

9 So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

~ Syria was, at this very time, bearing down hard on Israel. They had Israel under tribute and exerted almost total control. We have already seen Syria win victories over them; and Naaman expected the red carpet would have been rolled out for him by Elisha. Well, Elisha wasn't even rolling out of bed to talk to him. God, how I love Elisha. In fact, Elisha rudely sends Naaman away *via servant*; which was a complete insult. Naaman expected Elisha to bow down and perform some spiritual magic show. Naaman expected to line up in a healing line and have some oil poured on him - or something like that. That's religion, my friend, and Naaman expected Elisha to be very pious and religious; but no – Elisha knew that when God healed, He healed by faith and faith alone. We don't go to a healer down here – we go to a Man up there; Whose Name is Christ Jesus. He is our Great Physician, and He is the only One Who can help us. As we read on, we learn Naaman's pride was seriously wounded by his encounter with Elisha. Naaman isn't about to accept this manner of treatment from some peasant. Naaman is proud, arrogant and expects much more than he should. Naaman had never been spoken to this way before....

10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, 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 in a rage.

~ This is one place I agree with Naaman; because the rivers in Lebanon are a thousand times more beautiful than any of the muddy little streams that constitute the River Jordan. If you ever go to Biblos, called the “*calling card of the great men of the earth,*” you will see stunning waters rippling over the rocks. So many people sing that tired old song that says, ‘*on Jordan’s stormy banks I stand*’ and talk about ‘*roll, Jordan, roll*’ – well, the Jordan is nowhere near as spectacular as the rivers Naaman is talking about. There was no reason Naaman would have wanted to get near the Jordan River. Naaman wanted some clean water; because that made sense. See, people reject the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ because it’s not as attractive as human psychological manipulation. The cross is a place of humiliation, shame, chagrin and injury to self respect and pride. Mankind doesn’t want anything to do with that. Man wants to do something great and heroic in return for their salvation. That was Naaman’s problem, and that problem is what God is going to work out for him....

13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

~ The Lord not only healed Naaman of leprosy – God healed Naaman of his pride! When God saves us He generally tends to take out of our lives that thing that offends. Pride just happens to be one of the things that God hates, too. We hear how God is love but God hates, also; see, you can’t love

without hating, friends – you might want to write that down! We cannot love the good without hating the evil. If you love your children you'll hate anyone that tries to harm them! Don't kid yourselves by erroneously quoting Jesus with that "love your enemy" talk – that is *NOT* the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. In no unmistakable language God declares He hates pride of heart:

Proverbs 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren ~

James 4:6 ...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up ~

Proverbs 16: 18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. 19 Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud ~

Proverbs 11:2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom. 3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them ~

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit ~

Do those passages sound as if God loves His proud enemies? I wish the love orgy crowd would get a grip on the Bible and figure out who, what and when the Lord is talking about. The definition of pride is "excessive self esteem!" That means an inordinate belief in your own goodness. It's much more than a reasonable delight in one's own position or achievements.

Man thinks way more highly of himself than he ought. Pride means to place an exorbitant price on oneself! It means we are demanding more than we are worth. Pride declares the right to a privilege. Pride is the difference between what you truly are and what you believe you are. The sin of Satan that brought him down was – *PRIDE!* When we exalt ourselves, God is going to bring us down – make no mistake.

Man's natural self-pride is in direct opposition to God's plan and purpose for any life. Pride goeth before a fall. Whenever we meet God with pride, there is a head on collision. In fact, God's huge salvation plan is the supreme answer to little man's proud nature. God lays man low, and God takes *NOTHING* from mankind. When Paul met Jesus, he said those things he counted as gain were suddenly counted as loss for Christ. Paul gave up religion – and everything else – and said he counted it as dung; and Paul flushed it, my beloved.

It is impossible to be proud and say we trust Christ as our Savior at the same time. Only when we have laid our pride in the dust can we know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Naaman's proud look is number one in God's Proverbial hate parade. The account of what happened with Naaman is the finest Biblical example of everything I just wrote. You're not going to come to Jesus and stand as a proud man – you can forget that, my beloved. You're going to come to Christ like any other sinner - or you aren't coming to Him at all. Is that offensive? God hates your pride just as much as murder or hurting little children. Pride just happens to be the total and complete undoing of mankind....

15 And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and 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 of thy servant.

16 But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.

17 And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.

18 In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

19 And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

20 But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

21 So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?

22 And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying , Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.

23 And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.

24 And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed.

25 But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

26 And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

27 The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

~ Elisha was a bit more difficult to get along with than Elijah was – even amongst friends. It was never a good idea to lie to Elisha, that’s for sure. I think Elisha knew Gehazi would go chase an offering before Naaman even offered to give it. As a Christian, you do well to figure out Scripturally when to give and receive things from others. Non-discernment in that connection is a huge problem in the Christian community. Greed is equivalent to pride – and it works both ways – in giving and receiving. Both can easily lead to leprosy of the soul. The only remedy for those sins is the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross ~