

Sermon 8 October Naaman

Naaman Healed of Leprosy

5 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. **2** 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. **3** She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." **4** So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." **5** 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. **6** 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." **7** 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."

8 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." **9** So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. **10** 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." **11** 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. **12** Are not Abana and 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. **13** 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'?" **14** 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.

Gehazi's Greed and Punishment

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; so accept now a present from your servant.” ¹⁶ But he said, “As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none.” And he urged him to take it, but he refused. ¹⁷ Then Naaman said, “If not, please let there be given to your servant two mule loads of earth, for from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the Lord. ¹⁸ 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.” ¹⁹ He said to him, “Go in peace.”

But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, ²⁰ 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 get something from him.” ²¹ 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?” ²² 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.’ ” ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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.” ²⁶ But he said to him, “Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants? ²⁷ 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. ¹

[Eph 2: 11-16](#)

One in Christ

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (2 Ki 5:1–27). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. ²

[Luke 4:16-30](#)

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

 He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” ²³ And he said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Eph 2:11–22). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

hometown as well.’ ” ²⁴ And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. ²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, ²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” ²⁸ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹ And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, he went away.³

¹¹ Command and teach these things. ¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Until I come, **devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture**, to exhortation, to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. ⁴

ESOL Alpha

- Mainly Chinese
- session on prayer
- answered prayer for non-Christians

God is concerned for those who are not (not yet) his people.

Jesus in sermon at Nazareth. Mentions 2 incidents from the Books of Kings.

- Elijah and the provision for the widow in Sidon
- Elisha and the healing of Naaman

People become angry at the inference that God’s grace (undeserved favour) is available to those who are not Jews – and stated here as though it is almost a preference. The examples Jesus uses imply two things

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Lk 4:16–30). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (1 Ti 4:11–16). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

1. That God is acting again in bringing those who were not part of Israel to be his people.
2. That the behaviour of those listening was not unlike that of the Israelites at the time of these incidents.
 - a. Their rejection of Jesus shows their similarity to the Israelites in the days of Elijah and Elisha.

[Back to the account.](#)

Who was Naaman and what is the context.

Jehoram is King of Israel. Although Jehoram had made some weak attempts to remove the influence of Jezebel, the worship of foreign gods remained a feature of life in Israel.

There was a history of conflict between Israel and Syria – nothing is new. A raiding party from Syria had captured a young Israelite girl who was made an attendant (slave) for the wife of the Syrian general, Naaman.

Two Stories

Only 3 characters are named.

Naaman – the Syrian commander

Elisha – the prophet

Gehazi – Elisha's servant

The other characters play an important part

[The conversion of Naaman, the foreigner](#)

[The deceit of Gehazi, the Israelite](#)

[The conversion of Naaman](#)

Name means gracious or pleasant. Obviously, a man of character. Highly regarded by his master, the King of Syria. Successful in battle – the author of 2 Kings ascribes his victories to God's enabling. Can assume this would include victories over Israel. One fault – he was a leper. Probably not the disease that we know as leprosy. Here it covers any skin condition. It's clear that he is not totally isolated.

Often, diseases such as leprosy are seen as a punishment meted out by God, or for pagans, one of the gods. Everything had to have a cause.

As in the account of the man born blind, there is no indication Naaman's leprosy was any form of punishment meted out to Naaman by God. In fact, the narrator assigns Naaman's military success to God's action.

In later story, the one about the greed and deceit of Elisha's servant Gehazi, leprosy becomes a punishment sent by God.

Interesting to note the extreme confidence of the Israelite girl. Just imagine her situation. Torn from her parents by a band of raiders. Sold in the marketplace to the highest bidder, Uncertain about her future. Fortunately, or by God's overruling, bought by Naaman's wife and is assigned to a relatively good role in the service of her mistress. Says - There is a prophet in Israel. He can cure her mistress's husband of leprosy. She even implies that he would be willing to do so. How confident are we of God acting through his representatives. Especially when our own circumstances are not good.

Naaman informs the King of Syria of this piece of information. The king, who clearly wants Naaman to be cured, does what kings do. He writes a letter to his counterpart in Israel, and sends Naaman off with the letter. Not just the letter, but an excessive amount of wealth. Naaman's total gift would then amount to approximately three hundred and forty kilograms of silver and ninety kilograms of gold.⁵ Gold is about \$100,000 a kilogram (\$9,000,000). Silver is about 1/100th of that \$1,100 (\$400,000).

[Notice the role played by unnamed persons.](#)

Notice the role played by unnamed persons – the slave girl, the servants of Naaman who persuaded him to do as the prophet said. Without these persons Naaman would never have been healed, or become a worshipper of the one true God. How often do you feel that your contribution goes unrecognized. We all influence others – not believers – by our words, by our actions and by our attitudes. There could well be people who have come to Christ, not because we have told them about Jesus, but because our words and behaviour have encouraged them to respond to the Gospel when they did eventually hear it. Are you an unnamed person, you're in good company.

In fact only two characters are named in this part of the story, Naaman and Elisha. Even the kings of Syria and Israel remain unnamed.

[The Kings reaction](#)

The King of Israel is greatly frightened by the letter, regarding it as providing a pretext for a possible invasion of Israel by Syria. Sounds familiar?? Fortunately for all, Elisha hears

⁵ Hobbs, T. R. (1985). [2 Kings](#) (Vol. 13, p. 64). Word, Incorporated.

that the king had torn his clothes and seeks to know why the king has taken this action when a solution is available. "Send him to me so that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." Naaman had taken the advice of his king (and not that of the young girl) and gone to the wrong person. Be careful whose advice you follow. It may sound good but may lead nowhere.

So Naaman arrives at the door of Elisha's house with all the splendour of a great commander.

Elisha doesn't even bother to answer the door but sends a messenger. What an insult. If an important person arrived at your door, what would you do? Well prophets are a bit unpredictable. If his failure to answer the door is not enough, Naaman is told to go and wash in the local stream, the dirty river of Jordon. Insult upon insult.

Naaman is very angry. His status has not been acknowledged and he has been treated with contempt. Why did Elisha behave this way? Well he's a prophet!

Naaman storms off in a great rage. How dare he be treated in this way. It is Naaman's unnamed servants who bring him back to his senses. If they hadn't Naaman would never have been healed and more important, never had become a worshipper of the one true God. How has anger affected your behaviour? Often making us do or say things that we later regret. Anger can affect our ability to think clearly and negatively affects our self-control.

.Phrase – cutting off your nose to spite your face. Taking actions that achieve the opposite of what you want. Actions taken in anger are often like that. DO you become angry?

The servants manage to calm Naaman enough to see the stupidity of storming off in anger, so he does what the prophet commanded and the outcome that he sought was achieved.

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Naaman, now having followed the prophets instructions and is now healed, goes back to the prophet and offers payment as an act of thanksgiving for his healing. Elisha would have none of that. What would you do if you were offered \$10,000,000 as an act of gratitude for a ministry you performed for someone? Tempting, well it proved too tempting for Elisha's servant Gehazi.

Naaman is convinced that the God of Israel is the only God. He knows that he must return to Syria but he wishes to worship only the one true God. He asks for 2 mule loads of earth from Israel to take home with him, with which he will build an altar to the Lord in his homeland. Montgomery says that transporting "holy" dirt from one place to another was a fairly common ancient custom. This practice is not unlike the modern tendency to take home significant personal souvenirs from the Holy Land.⁶

Naaman now has a conundrum. His position requires him to accompany his master, the king, when he worships in the pagan temple of the Syrian God Rimmon. He asks Elisha for permission to accompany the king on these occasions. What would you advise?

One of my staff was an priest of the Church of South India who was ordained to lead a congregation of Muslim converts. The questions arose as to how much of Islamic practice is compatible with being a Christian. There was of course a wide range of opinions. I think that people who become Christians in NZ are also being faced with what aspects of NZ culture, its belief and behaviour, are incompatible with Christianity although often we don't recognise it.

Such situations arise often when family members are converted from other religions – can we be involved in Hindu feasts, what are we to do with Ramadan when all the family is fasting.

Elisha's answer is interesting. It is a clear indication that Naaman can do so. The situation also arises when the Jews are exiled in Babylon and some are placed in the king's court. What are they to do? To what extent do they conform to the practices around them. Notice the Book of Daniel. Here there is both compromise and refusal to compromise.

⁶ House, P. R. (1995). [*1, 2 Kings*](#) (Vol. 8, p. 273). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

The situation for Naaman is different from that of the Israelites. Naaman is definitely not wanting to worship pagan gods, but is required to be involved in pagan ceremonies due to his position. On the other hand, the Israelites in Elisha's time are choosing to worship foreign gods.

The narrative now turns to the greed and deceit of Elisha's servant Gehazi.

Shocked by his master's refusal to accept Naaman's gift, he resolves to get at least a small part of it. What he wants is only 2 garments from the 10 Naaman offered and only 1/10th of the silver (\$40,000). He probably justified his actions by making it just small amount, How often do small sins lead to greater sins.

He makes up a story. He says that he's been sent by Elisha because of unexpected circumstances. Two prophets have turned up and Elisha wants to give them a gift of silver and clothing. Notice the deceit. He's not saying that Elisha has changed his mind about the gifts, but the situation has changed. Naaman is deceived and gives Gehazi what has requested, but orders two servants to go with Gehazi with the silver and clothing. Why? Perhaps for protection, or maybe he doesn't quite trust Gehazi. Gehazi hides the silver and clothes in the house and goes to see Elisha. Did he think he could get away with it. "Where have you been?" Elisha asks. Just like a naughty boy, "Nowhere. I haven't been anywhere." Notice how Gehazi adds lie to lie. If you start to practice deceit, it is inevitable that you have to continue to do so. You know, telling the truth is often much simpler. You don't have to keep making up a story.

One commentator writes.

One man goes away healed because of his obedience, while the other man, indeed the one who should have known what matters most, walks away with leprosy. Yet another Israelite has made the tragic mistake of choosing a substitute for the Lord, while a Gentile convert has discovered that what his servant girl said about the Lord's prophet is true⁷

Have you been tempted to lie about something. You know lies breed lies. Ultimately God will punish those who seek to further their own interests through the lies they tell. Unhappily, like Elisha's servant they can be worshippers of God. However, there is forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God. He has taken upon himself the punishment for our sins. Through confession, repentance and acceptance of God's grace we can be forgiven.

⁷ House, P. R. (1995). [1, 2 Kings](#) (Vol. 8, p. 274). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

