

## 1 **Leprosy and Your Heart**

2 Kings 6

## 2 **Elisha**

- Elisha is a prophet of God and the former servant and successor to Elijah.
- God has thus far made His spirit known in Elisha through a number of miracles:
  - Parting the Jordan river
  - Miraculous rainstorm defeats the Moabites
  - The miracle of the Widow's oil
  - The Shunnamite given a son
  - The Shunnamite's son restored to life
  - "Poison in the pot"

## 3 **Aram-Damascus**

- The Biblical Syrians are the same culture as the historical kingdom of Aram-Damascus.
- They were an Aramean state centered around the city of Damascus (many later civilizations would go on to build upon Damascus).
- Culturally, they were very similar to Northern Israel.
- They were a warlike culture whose dominion stretched to the modern day Golan Heights.

## 4 **2 Kings 5:1-5**

- *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. 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."*

## 5 **Naaman**

- Naaman is the commander of the army of Ben-Hadad II, the king of Syria.
- Throughout Ben-Hadad's reign, Syria and Israel exist in a state of quasi-war, with the more powerful Syria making frequent and highly-profitable raids into Northern Israel on a regular basis.

## 6 **Naaman**

- During one of these raids, a young Israelite girl had been taken as a slave. Later, she found her way into the household of Naaman, commander of the Syrian army.
- We are not told much about this girl, but it is implied that, rather than being angry or despondent about her lot, she was in fact deeply concerned for Naaman's well-being.

## 7 **Leprosy**

- Leprosy as it is described in the Bible was not exclusively what is referred to as Leprosy (or "Hansen's Disease") in modern times.
  - Hansen's Disease is a disease that causes the body to reject and seal off nerve endings, as well as the upper respiratory system. Hansen's disease is actually rarely contagious, as 95% of humans have a natural immunity to the disease.
  - Most of the isolation for Hansen's Disease has to do with social stigma.

## 8 **Leprosy**

- The biblical definition of *Tzaraath* (found in Leviticus 13:2) corresponds to a dangerous, painful skin-eating fungus called *Trichophyton violaceum* that continues to be a problem in the middle east to this day.
- This fungus is highly-contagious and is spread by contact, necessitating the stringent Levitical laws for the isolation and purification of lepers.

9 **Tzaraath**

- *Tzaraath* is also used in Scripture to refer to other kinds of fungal infections, including mold and mildew.
- A fungus is an organism that grows and feeds where there is death or decay.
- This is exactly what leprosy indicates in Scripture: that there is death and decay – that there is an unfitness to come to God.

10 **Leprosy**

- Other skin conditions, such as Hansen’s Disease and even Syphilis would have likely fallen under the Levitical law for leprosy as well.
- Whatever Naaman’s malady, it was something from which he suffered constantly, yet it did not disable him or keep him from being a valiant warrior.

11 **Leprosy**

- Any of these diseases would have made a person unclean and, under the Old Testament law, unfit to participate in public worship.
- If a garment is found to have “leprosy” (a spreading fungi), it was to be washed and/or burned, to prevent the fungi from spreading further.
- In each case, the unfitness is caused by deadness or decay.

12 **Spiritual leprosy**

- Humans in our natural state are “dead men walking.” Our spirits are dead to God, and our flesh is in a state of moral decay.
- Most world religions are an attempt to cure us of our spiritual leprosy – either by covering it over or pretending it isn’t there.
  - This is essentially what Naaman has done with his physical leprosy.

13 **Spiritual leprosy**

- But even believers can contract a form of “spiritual leprosy.”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:19 – “*Do not quench the Spirit.*”
- Spiritual deadness in a believer’s life happens when we deny the promptings of the holy spirit in our life.
- It is in this deadness and decay that sin grows, cutting us off even further from the Spirit.

14 **Spiritual leprosy**

- When we disobey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we cut ourselves off from the enabling grace of God (the “desire and power to do God’s will”).
- The more we do this, the harder it becomes to feel the Holy Spirit’s promptings.
- Hansen’s Disease (modern-day leprosy) involves, among other things, the deadening of nerve endings, making it impossible for the patient to feel pain in the affected areas.

15 **2 Kings 5:6-7**


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

16 **Joram Panics**

- When Naaman arrives with Ben-Hadad’s letter, the king of Israel (Joram) panics. The letter seems to charge him with the responsibility for healing Naaman’s leprosy.
- In the middle east, lepers were considered to be walking dead men – thus this request is akin in Joram’s mind to being commanded to raise the dead.

17 **2 Kings 5:8-10**


- *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."*

18  **Elisha's Solution**


- Elisha's solution to the problem is simple: God is powerful enough to heal Naaman of his leprosy. His instructions are simple, if not enigmatic:
  - Naaman is to travel to the Jordan river and wash himself in it seven times.

19  **1) To be healed, you must be washed**

- To be healed of his leprosy, Naaman was required to be washed in water.
- No spiritual renewal can take place without the water of the Word of God.
- Ephesians 5:27 – *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

20  **1) To be healed, you must be washed**

- This is what Christ does for us: He cleanses us through the *rhema* – specific applications found within the general revelation (*logos*) of Scripture.
- The purpose is that He be able to present His bride *holy and without blemish* – these are words used to describe leprosy.
- Part of Christ's role as a loving husband is to cleanse His bride of her spiritual leprosy by washing her in His Word.

21  **1) To be healed, you must be washed**

- For the unbeliever, no healing from sin and deadness into faith and life can ever come without the Word of God:
- Romans 10:17 - *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

22  **2 Kings 5:11-12**

- *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 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.*

23  **Naaman is Angry**

- Essentially, Naaman is angry for two reasons:
  - That Elisha will not heal him the way he had been expecting
  - That Elisha's method of healing him is essentially humbling and demeaning – and not at all what Naaman had come for.

24  **2) Healing is not on your terms**

- Naaman doesn't want to submit to dunking in the muddy stream that is the Jordan River. If washing in a river were all that is required, he reasons, he could have done those things just as well on his own.
- He's here in Israel because he's expecting a miracle – he's expecting to see something great from this prophet he's heard so much about.
- Doesn't his position demand more respect than this?

25  **2) Healing is not on your terms**

- The biggest obstacle in man's coming to God has always been man's own pride – His desire to somehow have a part in the effecting of his own redemption.

- All other religions offer this – the opportunity to earn your way to heaven.
- This kind of theology ultimately gives man, and not God, the glory.

26  **2) Healing is not on your terms**

- For the Christian, sin will be purged and deadness will be healed and revived *only* when we stop trying to take the credit for our spiritual state.
- This is because grace (the desire and ability to do God's will) is only given to the humble (James 4:6).

27  **2 Kings 5:13-14**

- *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.*

28  **3) Healing must always follow obedience**

- When we are humbled, we open ourselves up to the grace of God.
- This grace enables faith which enables obedience (Ephesians 2, Hebrews 11).
- The irony is that it was disobedience which caused our spiritual leprosy – and thus it is ultimately by obedience that the disease will be healed.

29  **3) Healing must always follow obedience**

- It is important to understand that this obedience is a by-product of the humility and grace we have received – we should not make the mistake of trying to separate these things in our mind.
- In Naaman's healing, while it was Naaman who had to wash himself in the waters of the Jordan, the end result was too miraculous for man to take the credit.

30  **Taking it home**

- Are there areas of deadness that you can identify in your life?
- Are you not hearing the promptings of the Holy Spirit on a daily basis?
- Are you harboring secret sin that is causing rot and decay in your life and pulling you farther away from Christ?