

Naaman is healed



Colour me!



2 Kings 5:1b-14

Naaman was the commander of the Syrian army. The Lord had helped him and his troops defeat their enemies, so the king of Syria respected Naaman very much. Naaman was a brave soldier, but he had leprosy. One day while the Syrian troops were raiding Israel, they captured a girl, and she became a servant of Naaman's wife. Some time later the girl said, "If your husband Naaman would go to the prophet in Samaria, he would be cured of his leprosy." When Naaman told the king what the girl had said, the king replied, "Go ahead! I will give you a letter to take to the king of Israel."

Naaman left and took along thirty thousand pieces of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten new outfits. He also carried the letter to the king of Israel. It said, "I am sending my servant Naaman to you. Would you cure him of his leprosy?" When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes in fear and shouted, "That Syrian king believes I can cure this man of leprosy! Does he think I'm God with power over life and death? He must be trying to pick a fight with me." As soon as Elisha the prophet heard what had happened, he sent the Israelite king this message: "Why are you so afraid? Send the man to me, so that he will know there is a prophet in Israel."

Naaman left with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent someone outside to say to him, "Go and wash seven times in the River Jordan. Then you'll be completely cured." But Naaman stormed off, grumbling, "Why couldn't he come out and talk to me? I thought he would be sure to stand in front of me and pray to the Lord his God, then wave his hand over my skin and cure me. What about the River Abana or the River Pharpar? Those rivers in Damascus are just as good as any river in Israel. I could have washed in them and been cured." His servants went over to him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something difficult, you would have done it. So why don't you do what he said? Go and wash and be cured." Naaman walked down to the Jordan; he waded out into the water and stooped down in it seven times, just as Elisha had told him. Straight away, he was cured, and his skin became as smooth as a child's.

Commentary

Interestingly, it is the young servant girl who truly understands what God is like. She knows that God is with the prophet Elisha and that God can do miracles. She must have learned this when she was very small, and she had held on to her faith even as a slave in a foreign country.

Naaman and the king of Syria both imagine that God's power can be bought for the right price, or that some sort of trickery must be involved. For example, Naaman takes a huge amount of money and presents with him to buy healing for his skin disease. But the king of Israel is no better. Clearly he didn't believe God could help, and instead saw the whole episode as some sort of provocation to war. Even when Naaman is instructed to wash in the River Jordan, he doesn't think much of Elisha's methods. He expects a 'magic wand' sort of God, not a healing that involves his being humbled. However, that was the only way he could be made well. God's ways are different and involve starting all over again, just like little children. It took a child to see this at the beginning, and eventually Naaman, like a child, learned it at the end.

Questions

- ▶ What do you think of the servant girl's courage in speaking up about faith in God to her foreign employer?
- ▶ Why do you think Naaman chose to listen to her?
- ▶ Why was Naaman so offended by Elisha's instructions?
- ▶ Why do you think Naaman finally agreed to wash in the river?



Visual aid

Use a bar of soap as a focus for this story. Naaman wanted to be really clean in a way that even the best soap could not provide.



Activity idea

Each of you take a different character in the story—for example, the servant girl, Naaman’s wife, Naaman, the Syrian king, the Israelite king, Elisha or his servant. Now invite each character in turn to retell the story from his or her own point of view. What more can you learn about the story by exploring it in this way?



Prayer idea

For your prayer time, imagine each part of you in turn coming under the shower of God’s special washing—for example, your head (washing away unhelpful thoughts); your heart (washing away selfishness); your hands (washing away any bad activities you’ve been involved in); your feet (washing away the memory of unhelpful places where you have been). Christians believe that because of what Jesus did, the Holy Spirit can wash us clean on the inside like this.

Key verse

Straight away, he was cured, and his skin became as smooth as a child’s (2 Kings 5:14).

New Testament story link

Luke 4:20-29: Jesus mentions the story of Naaman in his talk in his local synagogue. Even people in his own town had wrong ideas about God.



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