

Introduction: There is an ugly thing that is in every human heart. Some of us struggle with it more than others. And some of us hide it better than others. This thing is PRIDE. Pride is all about ME and extends to MY town and MY people. We are the best, and all others are less than us. *** However, human hearts are complex. All people are also able to love and show compassion to others. This can be most true among those who have been marginalized, people who are being pushed aside and ignored by those in power. Although some become bitter, in general the less people have the more likely they are to help others in need. If powerful people have ears to hear, they would be wise to seek the company and wisdom of those who have no power. *** The account of how Naaman was cleansed of his leprosy is a specific example of how these general truths about humanity apply to the family of a mighty Syrian soldier with access to the king. Despite his position, he was afflicted with a terrible skin disease. He and his wife had appropriated a young girl who had been taken captive in a military raid in Israel. She was an orphan who was in the presence of her mistress while her master was serving the king valiantly. It was through this insignificant Israelite in a foreign land that Naaman became aware of a prophet of The God in Israel who could remove his disease from his body. *** When he met the prophet, Naaman was told to simply wash himself in the Jordan River seven times. This infuriated him because he had expected the man of God to act dramatically to bring a powerful deliverance to him. Instead, he was to wash himself in a shallow muddy river inferior to those he knew in Syria. As he turned and was leaving in his rage, his servants urged him to obey the words of the prophet. He had enough humility and faith to obey, and after coming out of the river this Syrian was cleansed of his leprosy.

God cleanses people of all nations who obey Him in faith

Then he was convinced that THE One God is The God of Israel. We will now dig into the details to learn more about humble obedient faith.

I. A Syrian war hero hears of an Israelite prophet and his king sends him for recovery from his leprosy; hearing Elisha's command, his pride objects, but after humbly obeying he is cleansed. (2 Kings 5:1-15)

A. A war hero of Syria with leprosy hears of a prophet in Israel and his king sends him to the king of Israel for recovery. (Verses 1-7)

1. Naaman, the leader of the king of Syria's army, was a great man and lifted up before the king because by him Yahweh had delivered Syria, and he was a leper. (Verse 1)

War hero: Naaman ('pleasantness') was a strong and mighty leader, respected by his king because he had heroically saved the nation in times of war.

Leprosy: His terrible disease was beyond his control. In Israel lepers were excluded from the community and left to fend for themselves as outcasts. (Leviticus 13:45; Numbers 5:1-3)

2. A young Israelite girl, taken captive in a Syrian raid was with Naaman's wife; and said to her mistress, 'O that my lord was with the prophet in Samaria, who would remove his leprosy'. (Verses 2-3)

Young girl: She may have been orphaned and Naaman adopted her out of compassion.

Love: Her words to Naaman's wife indicate she loved her master and wanted him not to be a leper.

3. Then he went and told his lord the young girl from Israel spoke according to this. (Verse 4)

Hope: The young Israelite girl gave Naaman hope that he could have his leprosy removed.

4. Then the king of Syria said, 'Go, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel'; so he went taking silver, gold, and replacement clothes, and he brought the letter which said, 'I have sent my servant Naaman that you may remove his leprosy'. (Verses 5-6)

Support from king: The king of Syria fully supported his heroic army commander and gave him a strong letter requesting the removal of his leprosy.

Gift of riches: He also sent precious minerals and clothes into which people would want to change.

Bad theology: However, human kings are not able to remove leprosy, only God can do that.

5. Then the king of Israel read the letter and tore his clothes saying, 'Am I God, to kill and bring to life, that this man is sending to remove a man of his leprosy; but only please, know and see how he seeks to challenge me'. (Verse 7)

Escalate: Ahaziah, son of Ahab, interprets the letter as threatening war if Naaman remains a leper. And he is threatened because he knows he is powerless to remove his leprosy.

B. On hearing the word from Elisha, Naaman protests due to his pride; but, heeding his servants, he humbly obeys and is cleansed. (Verses 8-15)

1. Then it was, when the man of God Elisha heard the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to him to say, 'Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel'; then, Naaman came with horses and chariots and stood at Elisha's door. (Verses 8-9)

True prophet: Elisha ('God is salvation') is a true prophet of the God of Israel, Yahweh. He knows God, His word and His will for people.

Appeal: Naaman comes to him for help but stays outside the door of his house.

2. Elisha sent to him a messenger to say to go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh shall come to you again – be clean. (Verse 10)

Word/command: The word of the prophet's messenger was to go and wash in the Jordan and your flesh will be restored to you. Then he was commanded to be clean. The cleansing will come if he will go and wash seven times.

3. Naaman went away in an angry rage, saying, 'Behold! I thought he would surely come out, stand and call on the name of Yahweh, his God, wave his hand and remove the leprosy. Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel?'; then he turned and left in a hot fury. (*Verses 11-12*)

Pagan notions: Pagans think they can manipulate their 'god' with ritualistic actions, especially if a priest of their 'god' performs the ritual. He is also angry the prophet sent a messenger.

PRIDE: Every word, every emotion of Naaman is ruled by his pride in his understanding, and in his place of origin.

4. His servants came near and said, 'If the prophet had commanded to you a great thing would you not have done it? So much then when he says to you, "Wash! Be clean!"'; then Naaman went down and dipped himself in the Jordan according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like that of a small child and he was clean. (*Verses 13-14*)

Wise servants: The servants knew more about what is right before God, and gave their master wise advice.

Humble obedience: As a result, Naaman changed his heart and mind by humbling himself to act by faith to do what the man of God commanded.

Cleansing: The cleansing can be physical and/or moral. This foreigner was physically cleansed.

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5. Then he returned to the man of God, stood before him and said, 'Behold! Now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; now take please a blessing from your servant'. (*Verse 15*)

Fruit of faith: The cleansing from leprosy, through faithful obedience to the word of God through His prophet, confirmed his tentative faith in the One and ONLY true God of Israel. Now He knows the only true God and has His life in him (*John 17:1-3*).

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Request to 'bless': As an expression of gratitude for the grace of cleansing, he offers to serve God's prophet with a blessing. Only rarely does it mean gift.

II. After Jesus addressed His disciples, many followed Him; then a leper is worshipping Him, imploring to be cleansed if Jesus is willing; He is and immediately he is cleansed. (*Matthew 8:1-3*)

- A. After He came down from the mountain large crowds followed Him. (*Verse 1*)

Many follow: This was after He gave his inaugural address as King of His Kingdom from the top of a mountain (*Matthew 5-7*). The plurality of crowds means different people groups desired to follow Him.

- B. After a leper came and humbly worshipped Him imploring to be cleansed if Jesus is willing, Jesus says He is and immediately he is cleansed. (*Verses 2-3*)

1. Behold! A leper, having come, was worshipping Him and is saying, 'Lord! If You are willing, You are able to cleanse me'. (*Verse 2*)

Leper: Just as Naaman eventually came to a man of God to be cleansed of his leprosy, some eight hundred fifty years later another leper comes to The Son of God to be cleansed of his leprosy.

Worship: We are told he spent a long time worshipping Jesus with his face to the ground.

Faith: Calling Him Lord, he expresses a humble faith that Jesus is able to cleanse Him, but only if it is according to His will. His attitude is more like Naaman's servants than like Naaman.

2. Having put forth His hand, He touched him and is saying, 'I am willing. Be thou made clean!'; and, immediately, he was cleansed of his leprosy. (*Verse 3*)

Physical touch: God in human flesh knows the importance of touch for flesh and blood humans, so He begins the cleansing by placing His hand on the leper.

Command: After saying He is willing, He demands that the leper be made clean. He knows the leper cannot cleanse himself. It is God (The Father, Jesus and The Holy Spirit) who cleanses the leper.

Immediate cleansing: The immediate cleansing to an outcast from the people of Israel is due to his humble faith based on what he knew about Jesus. He may have heard the inaugural Kingdom address on the mountain.

Cleansing comes to those humble before God

Gospel: We all suffer from the leprosy of our own sin. But, if we have humble obedient faith in Jesus based on His death for our sins on The Cross; and have the same humble dependent faith that His resurrection can give us the life God created us to live; then, we will be cleansed of the leprosy of sin which separates us from God. And, be Holy Spirit enabled to live doing God's will so He is glorified!

Conclusion: Powerful people are ignorant of God and His ways even if they respect His power to deliver. But, when they humble themselves to listen to Him through His lowly servants and obey His words to them in faith, they discover that THE One God of all will cleanse any who submit to Him and His way.

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