

Lesson 11 13 October 2013

Naaman's Cleansing

Lesson Scope: [2 Kings 5](#)

Lesson Focus

During this dark time in Israel, a little maiden of godly heritage became an effective evangelist. Despite Israel's national weakness, the maid's knowledge of God's power through the prophet Elisha enabled a heathen military man to believe in God.

During the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram, spiritual life was at a very low ebb in Israel, as Jesus indicated in Luke 4:27. This maiden's faith however, reveals that yet some families had not bowed their knees to Baal. Leprosy is a flesh-consuming disease that brings slow death. It typifies the malady of sin and death that came upon man through Adam's Fall. God had given Israel clear instructions regarding the nature of leprosy and how it was to be handled (Leviticus 13 and 14).

Only in Israel was such hope to be found as this little maid held forth to her mistress. Likewise, only among God's people is the true nature of and cure for sin understood. Today God has commissioned us to give the Gospel to a sin-ridden world.

The need for spiritual cleansing lies within each of us. Christians grow in sanctification through "the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26). We are then called to help others to wash and be clean.

This lesson is a reminder to keep our message simple and in the context of humility. We may sense our negligence and failure, but we should purpose in our heart to fulfill "the vocation wherewith [we] are called" (see Ephesians 4:1-4). The apostle Paul pressed on to achieve what he had not yet attained (Philippians 3:12-14).

Sin in a person's life is a main cause in failing to seek cleansing for others. Suggest the possibility that youth and adults in the church can become callous to the power and work of God. The body of Christ is made up of humble, penitent believers. Make sure to get to the final section of the lesson to see the seriousness of an unwashed heart.

By nature every man is defiled with the leprosy of sin. Those who reach out by faith for God's provision are fully cleansed.

Lesson Aim: To see principles related to spiritual cleansing.

Theme Verse: **1 John 1:9.** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Lesson Text

Naaman Afflicted

2 Kings 5:1-5 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. 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. 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.

Naaman Cleansed

2 Kings 5:8-16 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. 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. 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. 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.

Gehazi Punished

2 Kings 5:20-27 ²⁰But 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 olive yards, 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.

Questions for Study

Naaman Afflicted

1. Of what value were Naaman's assets in light of his malady? What is the spiritual parallel?
2. What did the maiden's statement reveal about her past and her faith?
3. Give some present-day equivalents to the gifts and letter that Naaman brought with him.

Naaman Cleansed

4. How do Naaman's angry words in 2 Kings 5:11 and 12 reveal his deep-

est need?

5. Why did Elisha not speak to Naaman at first or receive his gifts later?

6. What principles of spiritual cleansing does verse 14 illustrate?

Gehazi Punished

7. What wrong attitudes was Gehazi harboring? Compare his latter condition with Naaman's prior condition.

8. How might we discern "Gehazi's" in our midst?

Analyzing the Passage

Naaman was a highly honored "captain of the host" (2 Kings 5:1) in the Syrian army because of victories he had won for the king (likely Benhadad). These victories included campaigns into Israel in which this young girl was taken captive.

Honourable indicates that Naaman was a man of integrity. "But he was a leper" casts a pall over all of his qualities and achievements.

The companies (2 Kings 5:2) were small regiments seeking plunder. This maiden had been through the horrors and agonies of war, losing her family and likely witnessing bloodshed and death.

By Naaman "the LORD had given" Syria victories. Because Israel served idols, God brought in the enemy to defeat them.

"Would God" (2 Kings 5:3) is an expression like "Oh, that" or "I wish."

The Syrian king sent Naaman to Israel's king, likely assuming he had a close relationship with the prophet, but he did not. "Naaman was wroth" (2 Kings 5:11) that Elisha did not receive him like a dignitary. He was, however, responsive to the wise counsel of his servants, with the result that he humbled himself and was healed.

Gehazi revealed his covetous heart and his bias against "this Syrian." Despite living with Elisha's teaching and miracles, he was callous to the power and purposes of God.

Principles and Applications

Naaman Afflicted

1. Man, regardless of earthly attainments, is under the curse of sin and death (2 Kings 5:1). Mortal man's might is fragile, and his glory is short-lived. The psalmist saw the wicked "spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and ... could not be found" (Psalm 37:35-36). Only by receiving God as Saviour can we endure when nothing but "those things which cannot be shaken" remain (Hebrews 12:27).

2. God uses His people to bring hope to dying humanity (2 Kings 5:2-3).

"How shall they believe ... and ... hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). This little maid's words carried weight because of Israel's God. The nations knew many of the marvelous things God had done through and for Israel (Joshua 2:9-11). They also knew about her distress when she disobeyed God (1 Kings 9:6-9).

Many nations of the world today are in deep distress. Ethnic conflicts, political rivalry, natural disasters, and fiscal insolvency wreak havoc. Despite the emergency efforts of governments, the situation grows worse. In these dark days, God's faithful people alone give forth a testimony of peace, hope, and true security.

3. Man tends to seek deliverance through tangible means, rather than by faith (2 Kings 5:5). Riches access the goods and services of this world, but they cannot deliver from sin or bring peace to the conscience. Spiritual cleansing comes through repentance, faith in the blood of Jesus, and full surrender to God. Man can never buy or add anything to God's provision. Elisha related to Naaman in a way that stimulated faith in God.

Naaman Cleansed

4. To be cleansed from sin, one must go to the proper source (2 Kings 5:8-9).

Some try to quiet their guilty conscience by distracting their mind with work, music, or pleasure. Others seek relief through psychiatry, positive thinking, or false religion. These are all dead-end streets for dealing with sin. "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5:21). "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me," Jesus said (John 14:6). All sin is ultimately against God, and He alone offers cleansing.

5. Pride stands in the way of a soul experiencing God's cleansing power (2 Kings 5:9-12). One must humbly swallow pride to admit moral failure, lack of peace, or fear of death. Man would much rather bluff his way through, hiding his weakness, perhaps refusing to admit even to himself that all is not well. God will not provide salvation until all egocentric expressions are laid aside.

6. The way to salvation is through humility and obedience (2 Kings 5:10, 13).

It is safe to turn our lives over to God because Jesus is "a merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:17) who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15). The giving up of self that marks true repentance opens the door to a walk of obedience.

7. Salvation can be realized only through faith in God's promises (2 Kings 5:10,

13-14). True repentance, the assurance that God has forgiven confessed sin, and the regenerating work of the Spirit are realities we cannot see; they depend on faith. God has given many promises related to every aspect of salvation. But we must believe, or those promises cannot become reality for us.

8. The cleansed soul gives irrefutable testimony to the being and power of God (2 Kings 5:15). All mankind suffer the crippling effects of the Adamic nature. Human effort and culture can, to an extent, polish a person's outward expressions. A consistent life of righteousness and obedience, however, demonstrates supernatural power at work through regeneration.

9. All praise for salvation must go to God (2 Kings 5:16). We should be as resolute as Elisha in turning back to God any commendation we receive regarding our life, our children, or our church life. He is the source of all blessing; by His grace we are what we are (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Gehazi Punished

10. Those who lightly regard "the power of God unto salvation" will fall under His condemnation (2 Kings 5:20, 25-27). Many popular preachers have acquired riches by soliciting for their public ministries. The revelation of their scandals brings scorn from unbelievers and a cynical response from the well-meaning people who were duped. The Lord will hold such preachers accountable for the damage they have done to the cause of truth.

Important Teachings

1. Man, regardless of earthly attainments, is under the curse of sin and death (5:1).

2. God uses His people to bring hope to dying humanity (5:2-3).

3. Man tends to seek deliverance through tangible means, rather than by faith (5:5).

4. To be cleansed from sin, one must go to the proper source (5:9).

5. Pride stands in the way of a soul experiencing God's cleansing power (5:9-12).

6. The way to salvation is through humility and obedience (5:10, 13).

7. Salvation can be realized only through faith in God's promises (5:10, 13-14).

8. The cleansed soul gives irrefutable testimony to the being and power of God (5:15).

9. All praise for salvation must go to God (5:16).

10. Those who lightly regard "the power of God unto salvation" will fall under His condemnation (5:20, 25-27).

Answers to Questions

1. Of what value were Naaman's assets in light of his malady? What is the spiritual parallel?

Naaman was a high-ranking, important man in the Syrian kingdom, but his achievements meant little since he was a leper.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

2. What did the maiden's statement reveal about her past and her faith?

This maid evidently had parents who conscientiously worshiped God and taught her to do the same. The true religion of Jehovah was benevolent; it sought the good of both friends and enemies. She believed that God's prophet had access to miracle-working power.

3. Give some present-day equivalents to the gifts and letter that Naaman brought with him.

Some people desire salvation if it does not require giving up position or reputation. They want Christ as Saviour but not as Lord. Some believe that liberal giving to the Lord's work will gain His favor.

4. How do Naaman's angry words in 2 Kings 5:11 and 12 reveal his deepest need?

Naaman was yet a proud man who wanted healing on his own terms. Healing was impossible until he humbled himself and obeyed Elisha's directive.

5. Why did Elisha not speak to Naaman at first or receive his gifts later?

By sending his servant with instructions, Elisha tested Naaman's attitude. His refusal of the gifts was appropriate because this healing was a gift from God and therefore without charge. Man can never repay the Lord for spiritual cleansing.

6. What principles of spiritual cleansing does verse 14 illustrate?

Sinful man must meet the Lord's conditions for cleansing. The results are exactly what the Word of God says they will be. God effects a cleansing that is complete restoration.

7. What wrong attitudes was Gehazi harboring? Compare his latter condition with Naaman's prior condition.

Gehazi seems to have begrudged healing to "this Syrian." And he coveted the riches that Naaman offered. Gehazi's condition was worse; it was irreversible and would be passed on to his posterity.

8. How might we discern "Gehazi's" in our midst?

We can discern them by their attitudes. How they speak about and relate to authority, to those who oppose them, and to material pursuits are evidences.

Summarizing the Lesson

Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;
I want Thee forever to live in my soul;
Break down ev'ry idol, cast out ev'ry foe;
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Lord Jesus, Thou seest I patiently wait;
Come now, and within me a new heart create;

To those who have sought Thee,
Thou never saidst No—Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

—*James Nicholson*

Research Guide

1. Read Leviticus 13 and 14 to see God's way of keeping leprosy from spreading in Israel.
2. Luke 4:27 records a comment of Jesus about this dark time in Israel.
3. First John 1:8-10 shows the washing that occurs when Jesus cleanses us from sin.
4. The account of Ananias and Sapphira also shows God's hatred for duplicity (Acts 5:1-11).