

Gory Means to Glorious End

November 23, 2014 ~ 2 Kings 5.1-19

Introduction & Overview

- ❖ In addition to being Biblical truth this is just a beautifully written short story
 - ❖ Concise character development – Naaman (flawed hero), trusting servant girl, Syrian king of action, Israelite king dismayed, Elisha confident and aloof
 - ❖ Especially if we go to the end of the chapter with Gehazi's greed
- ❖ All focus is on Naaman, Elisha and LORD ~ kings are irrelevant
 - ❖ Perhaps Ben-Hadad of Syria and Jehoram (Ahab's son of Israel)

v1 ~ “Naaman .. was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master”

- ❖ “Why is Naaman held in honor by the king of Syria?”
 - ❖ Because he's a winner ~ But why is he a winner?
 - ❖ Because God made it so ~ “by him the LORD had given victory to Syria”
- ❖ All of us are what God has made it possible for us to become
 - ❖ And what God has providentially directed us to become

v1 ~ “He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper”

- ❖ Naaman was a “mighty man of valor” ~ Statement of fact – not opinion
- ❖ “But a leper” ~ What a frightening but simple statement
 - ❖ He'd probably not been a leper for long
 - ❖ The king's high regard for him has allowed him to remain thus far
 - ❖ But it's doubtful he'd have held his post much longer given fear

“What is Leprosy?”

- ❖ Leprosy is an infectious disease caused by a slow growing bacteria.
 - ❖ It is contagious, but typically only after close and repeated contact to nose and mouth droplets of someone with untreated leprosy
 - ❖ Only about 5-10% of population is susceptible to infection
 - ❖ The bacteria tends to live only outside the body (likes lower temperatures)
 - ❖ 2 types – tuberculoid (pale/red) and lepromatous (scabby)
 - ❖ The incubation period is usually 3 to 5 years (up to 20)
- ❖ It causes severe disfiguring skin sores and nerve damage in the arms and legs
- ❖ Leprosy affected up to 25% of people of Northern Europe in 1,100 AD
- ❖ 75% of victims of leprosy are still to be found in India (also Brazil , Africa)
 - ❖ India still has about 1,000 leper colonies ~ The cured are still shunned

Xition: Leprosy in the Bible . . .

Leprosy is Referenced Throughout the Bible

- ❖ Exodus 4 ~ 1st occurrence / God demonstrates it as tool to Moses (not used)
- ❖ Leviticus 13 & 14 ~ Regulations concerning treatment of leprosy
- ❖ Numbers 5 ~ Lepers are to remain outside the camp
- ❖ Numbers 12 ~ Miriam made leprosy by God
- ❖ 2 Sam 3 ~ David curses Joab's house with leprosy after Abner's murder
- ❖ 2 Kings 7 ~ Four lepers find Syrian camp abandoned (besieging Samaria)
- ❖ God struck two Judean kings with leprosy (Azariah 2 Ki 15 / Uzziah 2 Chr 26)
- ❖ Jesus heals a single leper (**Luke 5**) as well as group of 10 (**Luke 17**)
- ❖ **Luke 4.27** ~ “And many lepers .. none of them was cleansed except Naaman”

Young Captive Girl

- ❖ v2 ~ “Syrians had gone out on raids .. brought back captive young girl”
 - ✧ God's providence is again demonstrated by circumstances
 - ✧ The girl was from Israel and knew of Elisha
- ❖ v3 ~ “If only .. he would heal him of his leprosy”
 - ✧ She had a simple faith uncorrupted by worldly experience

Naaman's Hope

- ❖ What the girl said is understandable .. She's a simple young girl
- ❖ But what Naaman did may be difficult to understand
 - ✧ v4 ~ He went to his king with this information
 - ✧ He risked embarrassment heeding a silly young servant girl
 - ✧ But the king also acted upon this information
 - ✧ Either they believed or they felt “nothing ventured, nothing gained”
- ❖ But this isn't hard to understand for anyone that's faced such a challenge
 - ✧ “Hope springs eternal in the human breast” – Alexander Pope

The King of Israel's Dismay & Elisha's Confidence

- ❖ v6 ~ “Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy.”
 - ✧ I love the reaction of the king of Israel...
- ❖ v7 ~ “Am I God, to kill and make alive ...?”
 - ✧ He believes this is a pretext to start a quarrel with him
- ❖ v8 ~ But Elisha hears of it and intervenes, “let him come to me”

Xition: Naaman appears to have brought the letter with him ..

v9 ~ Naaman's Arrival

- ❖ It appears that Naaman himself brought the letter (v6 – “he”)
 - ✧ v8 - Elisha learns of the matter ~ King of Israel relieved to send him to Elisha
- ❖ This was probably an impressive entourage
 - ✧ The silver and gold alone weighed about 1,000 pounds
 - ✧ Many servants / soldiers would have traveled with him...

v10 ~ Elisha's Simple Message

- ❖ Elisha didn't appear ~ He merely sent a messenger
 - ✧ Simple message ~ “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times ...”

Naaman's Fury

- ❖ v11 ~ “But Naaman became furious”
 - ✧ Anger often arises from dashed expectations
 - ✧ Naaman states his unmet expectations
 - ◇ “He will come out .. call on God .. wave his hand over the place .. heal”
 - ◇ The leprosy does not appear to have spread – contained in “the place”
- ❖ He finds Elisha's treatment of him to be disrespectful / dismissive
 - ✧ v12 ~ He complains that he could have bathed in cleaner rivers back home
 - ◇ “So he turned and went away in a rage.”

Tactful Servants and Humble Response

- ❖ His servants handle the situation tactfully
 - ✧ **Proverbs 15.1** ~ “A soft answer turns away wrath”
- ❖ Naaman responds to their soft entreaty
 - ✧ v14 ~ He obeys and “his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child”
- ❖ Each instance of healing leprosy in OT miraculous ~ Moses, Miriam, Naaman

Naaman Stands Before Elisha

- ❖ v15 ~ He returns to Elisha's home and stands before him
 - ✧ “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel”
 - ✧ Naaman returned to give thanks ~ **Read Luke 17.11-19**
 - ◇ This 10th leper (the Samaritan) was like Naaman
- ❖ v16 ~ Elisha refuses twice to accept a gift
 - ✧ God's blessing can't be bought

Xition: Naaman proclaims allegiance to God ..

Naaman Proclaims Allegiance in LORD

- ❖ v17 ~ Naaman wants Israelite earth to ensure he worships the Israelite God
- ❖ v18 ~ He begs forgiveness in advance for bowing in temple of Rimmon
 - ✧ Naaman is not converting to Judaism ~ But he has become a “**God-fearer**”
 - ✧ Some commentators criticize him for bowing in temple
 - ✧ They regard him as compromising ~ as idol worshipping
 - ✧ But he bows only in service to his king ~ not in service to idols
- ❖ v19 ~ Elisha blesses him ~ “**Go in peace**”
 - ✧ Elisha does not judge him as idolater for what he’s said

Naaman’s Experience / A Sign That God Exists and Cares

- ❖ The healing of Naaman was a miracle
 - ✧ Miracles are signs that God exists and has an interest in this world
 - ◆ People forget God ~ Prideful man thinks he can do anything he wants
 - ◆ !!!: Baseball ~ Brushing batter back (“**Who owns the plate?**”)
 - ✧ The healing of Naaman was a miracle ~ **But it was more ..**

Naaman’s Experience / A Sign That God is LORD of all Peoples

- ❖ The healing of Naaman was another sign ~ to the Israelites
 - ✧ The Israelites believed they “**owned the plate**” as it were
- ❖ **Read Luke 4.16-22** ~ Jesus reads from Isaiah in the synagogue
 - ✧ When Jesus finished reading the text the people were awed
 - ✧ He had their undivided attention ~ Then He read the rest
- ❖ **Read Luke 4.23-30** ~ Jesus offends Nazirites / He references:
 - ✧ Elijah and the widow of Sidon (**1 Kings 17**)
 - ✧ Elisha and the healing of Naaman (**2 Kings 5**)
 - ✧ “**Why were the Jews offended by this?**”
 - ◆ The widow and Naaman were not Israelites
 - ◆ In the eyes of the Jews they were not worthy ...
 - ◆ The Jews of Jerusalem looked down on those from Nazareth
 - ◆ Those from Nazareth looked down on the Samaritans & Sidonians
- ❖ The healing of Naaman was God proclaiming He owns home plate
 - ✧ The Jews believed they owned God ~ But God believed otherwise

Xition: 7 Lessons for us ...

“What are the Lessons for Us?” ~ 7 of Them

1. Earthly accomplishments and honor are not enough in life
 - ✧ Naaman had these but leprosy would have taken them all away
2. Do not despise wise counsel solely on the source
 - ✧ “If circumstances weren’t so dire, would Naaman have acted?”
3. Faith in God overcomes fear
 - ✧ Elisha could deal with letter whereas king of Israel could not
4. All honor goes to God / none to us
 - ✧ Elisha was not swept away by Naaman’s pomp & circumstance
5. “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (**Prov 16.18**)
 - ✧ Had Naaman not swallowed his pride he would not have been healed
6. Express thanks in all things ~ Even the presence of disease
 - ✧ Refrain in **Psalm 107** ~ “Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!”
 - ✧ Naaman was the 1 in 10 leper of **Luke 17** whose faith saved him
7. Let’s not judge another man’s servant (**Rom 14.4**)
 - ✧ Elisha accepted Naaman’s predicament and blessed him

- Naaman’s healing was a miracle ~ Miracles alert people to God’s interest in Earth
- Naaman’s healing also informed the Jews that God was not their property
- Jesus’ words to the people of Nazareth (~ 800 years later) affirmed this
- For millennia leprosy illustrated the destructiveness of sin
- Naaman’s skin was healed and became like that of a newborn
- Healing of his body mirrored the restoration of his soul
- Naaman was healed not only from leprosy ~ but from sin as well
- He became a devout follower of Jehovah – the God of the Israel
- God used the gory means of leprosy to bring Naaman the glory of salvation

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,

And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

To God our Savior, who alone is wise,

Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.

Amen *pause* Go in peace . . .