

“Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper.” - 2 Kings 5:1

Overview:

At this time, the nation Israel was divided. Ten of the twelve tribes made up the northern kingdom of Israel. The two remaining tribes made up the southern kingdom of Judea. The northern kingdom never had one good king, while the southern kingdom had a mixture of both good and bad kings. God sent His prophets to both kingdoms, calling them back from their sins.

Naaman is the commander of the Army of Syria. He is described as being both great and honorable and he had gained many victories over the other nations including Israel. By all outward appearances, he was a very successful man. But God's view was a bit different. While it is true that he was great and honorable, it was God who had given Naaman the victories and not Naaman's great war fighting skills. God also sees Naaman as a leper. When God wants to get someone's attention, He brings that person to a crisis of hopelessness. A crisis comes into our lives and through that pain and shame, God wants to reveal His love and grace. C.S. Lewis in the “Problem of Pain” - “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

The story of Naaman is put on hold while we are introduced to a young slave girl. Naaman had taken her while conducting raids on Israel. Her hopes and dreams were shattered and now she finds herself a slave in a foreign country. But she doesn't let this tragedy to define her life. She wasn't bitter towards Naaman or God. In fact, she told Mrs. Naaman about the prophet in Samaria and that he would heal Naaman of the leprosy. “When facing trials, don't give up what you know about God for what you don't know.” - Chuck Smith

It is easy while going through difficulties to question God and even put blame on God for what you are currently going through. But we need to remember what the Bible tells us is true about God. God is good, loving, merciful, sovereign, and holy. God's word says that God will never leave you and God has good plans for you. If God “who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” - Romans 8:31-32

If you are a child of God, God has placed you where you are so you can tell your family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors about God when they are experiencing a time of leprosy. Just like Naaman, God has placed you in their lives long before their crises of hopelessness, so you can tell them of God and provide hope in their hopelessness. It was not this girl's responsibility to make Naaman go to Israel but just to speak what she knew to be true.

Naaman now has hope. God does not use our hopelessness, our shame, and our desperation to crush us but to bring us to God. We hate being hopeless, we despise shame but God loves these things because He uses them to bring us into a relationship with Him. Naaman believed his biggest issue was leprosy but God wanted to do so much more in his life. Naaman suffered from pride and God needed to expose that and bring His cleansing for that sin. Naaman believed the prophet should come out to him. He expected the prophet to call on God, wave his hand over the area, heal the leprosy and when that didn't happen, he became angry and left. When we become angry, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the pride that is in our life. And like Naaman, we need people in our lives that we will listen to when they speak truth to us.

Naaman obeys and standing at the bank of the Jordan river, he removed his armor and his royal clothes. In front of his men, he wades out into the Jordan river. Six times Naaman dips himself into the waters and nothing happens. At anytime he could have left but he stayed and on the seventh time, not only was his leprosy healed but his skin was restored to that like the flesh of a little child. God not only wants us to be desperate for Him but He wants humility to be a main characteristic of our lives. 1 Peter 5:6-7 And God will bring complete healing to our lives.

References:

2 Kings 5:1 – A leper (Leviticus 13-14)

2 Kings 5:1 – Man's judgment vs. God's judgment (1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 139:23-24)

2 Kings 5:14 – Flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child (Isaiah 1:18)

Questions:

- * How do you view the trials and difficulties when they happen to you? When they happen to others?
- * Do hardships bring you closer to God or drive you away from God?
- * How do you react when people who have caused problems for you experience hardships?
- * Do you expect God to work in a certain way? Can you receive God's truth from any of His servants no matter their position in the church?