

**2Kings 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.**

This chapter focuses on a miracle of healing of leprosy—not of an Israeli, but of a military leader of Syria.

Naaman was captain of the host of the king of Syria, a courageous and mighty warrior. He was a man in great favor with his king and his people because the LORD had used him to give deliverance to Syria.

Though the scripture is primarily a record of the LORD's works on behalf of the people of Israel/Judah, but there is much in scripture that reminds us that the LORD is at work accomplishing His will in and through Gentile people and nations.

Key to the point of this chapter—Naaman was a leper. The IVP Commentary offers some insight: "Those studying the language have concluded that the term often translated 'leprosy' is more accurately rendered 'lesion,' or, less technically, 'scaly skin.' .... The condition discussed in the text is not presented as contagious. Descriptions would suggest that modern diagnoses would include psoriasis, eczema, favus and seborrheic dermatitis, as well as a number of fungal-type infections."

**2Kings 5:2 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. 2Kings 5:3 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. 2Kings 5:4 And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.**

It seems that a group of soldiers had invaded a town of Israel and taken as captive a young girl. She ended up as a personal servant of Naaman's wife. One day she told her mistress that there was a prophet of the LORD in Samaria that could heal her husband of his leprosy.

The wording is confusing in the King James; but other translations clarify that when Naaman was told what the girl had said, he went and told the king.

**2Kings 5:5 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. 2Kings 5:6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.**

The king told Naaman to go and take a letter from him to the king of Israel. So Naaman left, taking ten talents of silver, 6000 pieces of gold and ten changes of clothing. The letter he presented to the king asked that the king of Israel heal

Naaman of his leprosy.

Again, the IVP Commentary offers insight: “The gift accompanying Naaman is exorbitant—a king’s ransom. Ten talents equals thirty thousand shekels, about seven hundred fifty pounds of silver. The six thousand shekels of gold equals about one hundred fifty pounds (one gold shekel equaled fifteen silver shekels). Converted to today’s buying power, it would be in the vicinity of three-quarters of a *billion* dollars.”

**2Kings 5:7** And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, *Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.*

**2Kings 5:8** 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.*

The letter greatly distressed the king of Israel, causing him to tear his clothes in distress, because he certainly could not heal the man; only God could do that. He reasoned that the king of Syria must be seeking a reason to attack him.

Isn’t it interesting that he didn’t even think about consulting Elisha.

It seems that Elisha was well connected at the palace and soon heard of the king’s distress. He told the king to send the man to him, and he would soon learn that there was a prophet of the LORD in Israel, the one true God.

**2Kings 5:9** ¶ *So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.*

**2Kings 5:10** 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.*

**2Kings 5:11** 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.*

**2Kings 5:12** *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.*

The king sent Naaman to Elisha’s house. When he arrived, Elisha didn’t even go out to meet him; he sent a messenger out to give him a message. He was to go and wash in the Jordan River seven times and his flesh would become clean.

Naaman was insulted and went away angry. He had expected the prophet to come out to meet him and call on the name of the LORD “his God” and heal him by his touch. After all, he was a highly respected officer of the king of Syria. He wanted no part of immersing himself in the dirty Jordan River; there were certainly rivers with cleaner waters in Damascus. Why couldn’t he wash in them

for healing?

**2Kings 5:13 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?**

**2Kings 5:14 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.**

Naaman's servants evidently cared about their master and proceeded to urge him calm down and think. They reasoned that if the prophet had told him to do some great thing, he would certainly have done it. What he had told him to do was something quite simple, so why not do it?

Naaman was proud, but he was also evidently a reasonable man and recognized the wisdom of what his servants said. He went and dipped seven times in the Jordan and was healed of his leprosy.

**2Kings 5:15 ¶ 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.**

**2Kings 5:16 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.**

Naaman quickly headed back to Elisha's house to reward him. He and his entourage stood before Elisha and declared that he now knew that there was no God in all the earth that compared to the God of Israel. He then urged Elisha to accept his gift. Elisha adamantly refused.

I think Elisha was emphasizing to Naaman that he did nothing; it was the LORD that had healed him.

**2Kings 5:17 And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.**

**2Kings 5:18 In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, *that* when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.**

**2Kings 5:19 And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.**

Naaman then asked permission to take as much as dirt as two of his mules could carry because he would never again offer a burnt offering or sacrifice to any other god but the LORD. The indication to me is that he wanted to establish a place made of the ground of Israel upon which he could offer sacrifices and offerings to the God of Israel.

Naaman had one special request—that the LORD forgive the actions he had to perform as a servant of the king of Syria in the house of Rimmon.

Elisha basically implied that the LORD had granted his request when he told him to go in peace. So Naaman and his entourage headed back home.

This seems to give Naaman permission to compromise in his faith. I think we have to consider the time and the circumstances. Naaman is a high-placed servant to the king of Syria. He was returning home to a pagan culture with the intent to worship the LORD God of Israel to the best of his ability. I think the fact that he even thought to seek permission to continue to carry out his duties without them being construed as worship of the false god testifies to a desire to honor the LORD. At this time, God's people were living under the law, not under grace. They did not have the benefit of the permanent presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. I think if Elisha were ministering today, his answer would have been different. The New Testament is very clear that we should avoid even the appearance of evil; however, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide, strengthen and provide for our every need—especially the empowerment to overcome temptation.

*1 Thessalonians 5:22 "Abstain from all appearance of evil."*

*1 Corinthians 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."*

**2Kings 5:20 ¶ But 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.**

**2Kings 5:21 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?***

**2Kings 5:22 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.**

**2Kings 5:23 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.**

**2Kings 5:24 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.**

Gehazi evidently thought that Elisha had acted foolishly, and he determined to benefit from Naaman's gratitude.

I liked this insight from the Expositor's Bible Commentary: "As the Lord liveth!" It had been a favorite appeal of Elijah and Elisha, and the use of it by Gehazi shows how utterly meaningless and how very dangerous such solemn words

become when they are degraded into formulae. It is thus that the habit of swearing begins. The light use of holy words very soon leads to their utter degradation.”

Gehazi waited a bit before following after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward them, he got down from the chariot and asked him if everything was ok. I liked the comments from the NIV Commentary: “What a contrast can be seen in the meeting between Naaman and Gehazi! Naaman’s descent from his chariot to meet Elisha’s servant was a mark of his being a changed man. No longer a proud, arrogant person, the grateful, reverent, and humble Aramean came down from his honored place to meet a prophet’s servant. He who had been a fallen, hopeless sinner displayed the true believer’s grace.”

Gehazi answered that all was well, but his master had need of provisions for two of the sons of the prophets that had showed up unexpectedly from mount Ephraim. He then asked Naaman for a talent of silver and two changes of clothing. Naaman responded by giving him two talents of silver in two bags and two changes of clothing. He then sent two of his servants to carry the provision for Gehazi.

When they arrived at the hill near home, he took the provisions from the men and hid them in the house, sending the men back to Naaman.

**2Kings 5:25** 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. **2Kings 5:26** 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 oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? **2Kings 5:27** 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.

When Gehazi went in to serve Elisha, the prophet asked him where he had been. Gehazi declared he had been nowhere. Elisha told him that he knew that he had gone after Naaman. He knew that he had accepted money and clothing from him. He reminded him that this had not been a proper circumstance for accepting such gifts.

Clark draws an interesting conclusion from verse 26: “He gave him farther proof of this all-discerning prophetic spirit in telling him what he designed to do with the money; he intended to set up a splendid establishment, to have men-servants and maid-servants, to have oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen....”

All of Gehazi’s actions testify to the fact that he knew what he was doing was wrong—especially the lying and the fact that he tried to hide what he had taken.

Elisha then told Gehazi that he and his seed would suffer from leprosy from that day forth. And Gehazi went out of his presence with a very obvious case of leprosy.

The hardest part to understand is why Gehazi's descendants were to suffer for his sin. Ellicott states that this is a reference to the fact that leprosy is hereditary.