

The Way To Healing
2 Kings 5:1-19
Englewood Baptist Church
Sunday morning, July 4, 2010

This morning we begin a sermon series on the subject of healing. And I want to be completely transparent and up-front with you about this. The Bible is chocked full of miraculous stories, true accounts of moments when God intervened in human history in some uncommon, unusual way. Whether it was raining fire down from heaven for Elijah, Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding, or Peter curing people of disease with a handkerchief...the Bible is clear that our God is a miracle making God.

However, I also want to be clear that this book was written over thousands of years of time, so even though it appear that miracles were close together, reality is that these events took place sometimes 500 years a part. We have all seen that sticker on our car mirrors that says: "Objects in this mirror may appear closer than they are." That is true of rear view mirrors but it is also true of Scripture.

If we're not careful, we read the Bible and we think that God wipes away skin disease, or chronic bleeding, or heart problems in one fell swoop each and every day. That's not true. What makes a miracle a miracle is that it inspires the awe of God among people and the reason that people's jaws drop is because this doesn't happen but maybe once in a lifetime.

So I've counseled people before who are angry at God. They say, "If God can heal Jairus' daughter, then why won't he heal mine?" And that same discouraged daddy is up late one night because he can't sleep and surfs the channels and finds some misguided man standing over a pulpit with a cross on it and saying, "If you will just sow a seed of \$50 to our ministry at the address below, then the Lord will honor your faith and you will see miracles." And I wish I could tell you that church going people know better than this, but desperate people do desperate things.

They want to know how to be healed. Don't we all? Don't we all wish that life was pain-free, lonely-free, discouraged-free, bitter-free, disease-free, death-free? Of course, we do. At some point in our life, we all become desperate for healing. I want to talk about this matter over the next few weeks.

In the passage that I have turned us to, we are going to meet a man named Naaman. He is one of the most obscure characters in the Old Testament. He is a well-kept secret but his story of healing teaches us much about this subject and God's working in our lives.

Let me read to you 2 Kings 5:1-19.

Before we launch into this story of healing, I want to set the stage by introducing the main character. Elisha was a prophet who followed the ministry of Elijah. Now, Elijah is more well-known today for his courage on Mt. Carmel and the chariot of fire that carried him away. Elijah was transported straight to heaven as Elisha watched from below. **[Show Figure 1]**

But not only was Elijah taken to heaven, but he dropped his cloak, or his mantle and Elisha picked it up. That cloak represented the power of God and it had fallen upon Elisha. He received a double portion of Spirit power and he went on to perform even more miracles than Elijah himself.

In 2 Kings 5, Elisha has now established himself as the man of God in Israel. He is the leading prophet who speaks and acts on behalf of God. And in this passage, his life mysteriously intersects with a man named Naaman.

Now, who was Naaman? **[Show figure 2]** Naaman was a Syrian general. He was an outsider, a Gentile, a man that really has no business being in the Bible. By the end of the story, he becomes another grace trophy in God's case. He is saved and healed by the power of God, and his story is woven into Scripture as example of God's mysterious love for all people.

Now, let's begin with the passage and see where this takes us and what we can learn.

V.1 tells us that Naaman was a big name in his country. He was famous. He was somebody known to be somebody and his track record for military conquest was highly revered. "He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because the Lord had given victory to Aram."

Now, a little rabbit worth chasing here. Notice that God gives victory to nations. You and I love to think that the players at the big table are politicians, kings, and presidents, but the picture of Scripture shows something else. It is God who controls the board, who grants victory in battle, who allows one nation to fall and the next one to rise. With today being July 4th, let us be especially grateful for our nation, but let us also understand that there is a kingdom that will stand forever, and that kingdom is the kingdom of God. Earthly wars and shifts of power are all part of God's ultimate plan. The reason America was born, the reason America continues to live is because God has blessed our country. So "God bless America" is more than a good baseball song; it is the only hope that this land has for safety and security.

For whatever reason, God blessed Aram, just like he had blessed our country. And God had given victory to Naaman. V.1, *"He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy."*

Notice the contrast in that statement. It was written to evoke sympathy in the heart of the reader. This man had everything going for him, but it's just too bad, that he this pain plaguing his life.

Now right there. All of us can insert ourselves in the story here. You can put your legs in Naaman's pants, your feet in his shoes. No matter how great your life is going, there is always some measure of pain, sorrow, and grief that is carried along. You might say, "My business is better than ever, but my parents are a mess." Or, "My kids are making me so proud, but my finances make me so embarrassed." Or, "My wife and I are really clicking. We are on the same page, but my physical body gives me so much pain and I hurt."

This man's life was going so well in so many areas, but he had a skin disease. You almost get the impression that he would trade all his fame if he could just be free of the pain. He became desperate. So desperate that v.2 says he even listened to a lowly servant girl who said she once knew a man of God with power. At this point, Naaman was willing to try any home remedy or faith healer, so v.4 says he went to the king and asked for permission. The king said, "Of course." In fact, I will pull some strings for you, Naaman, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel so that you get first-class treatment.

Now this letter actually sends the king of Israel into stress mode. The king says, "I can't heal leprosy. Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life?" And he is suspicious that the king of Aram is just looking for a fight and this letter is soaked with an agenda.

V.8 says that Elijah somehow discovers this problem and he tells the king to put this problem on his plate. "Let me handle this," he says to the king. "Don't ruin any more robes. Just send this General to my house."

And look at v.9, I LOVE this. "So Naaman went with his horses and his chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha." Today it would say, "So Naaman brought his entourage and his high class Hummers and a row of \$100,000 sports cars." Naaman rolled up in there with style. This was a sight to see in small town Israel.

And v.10, "Elisha didn't even go to the door." He sends a little man to the door, and that little man says, "Are you the guy from Syria?" Naaman says, "Yes I am." Good. Elisha told me to tell you to go on down to that muddy river and get in it, and dunk yourself once, and then do it again, and then do it again, and then do it again, and then do it again, and then do it again." 7 times you should dunk yourself, and you'll get better.

And v.11 says, that Naaman was ticked. In his mind, he was somebody, and this Elisha had just treated him like a common traveler. His pride gets in the way, and he goes off in a rage. And he refuses to follow the instructions given by the man of God.

In a sense, he says to his servants, "Get in the car. We're going home!" And his servants talk some sense to him, and he reluctantly listens. V.14 says this...

He was healed! And the faith of this man is born out of the work of God in his body. V.15...

Now, you've been waiting patiently for me to get to a point. Every passage of Scripture is preserved in this Bible for you and I to be equipped. If you leave here today with just head knowledge about a Elisha and Naaman and 2 Kings 5, then no life change has happened. But preachers are called to preach for life-change and here are some life-changing truths that emerge from this healing story.

Life Changing Truths From This Story

1. If you want to be healed, you must acknowledge that you need help.

Despite all of Naaman's pride and self-aggrandizement, he did do the right thing in seeking out help. This story would never be told, this man would not be in heaven today, if he had not responded to that little maid who said, "You should go see Elisha." And he swallowed his pride, and he went to the king, and he said, "I need to go away for a while, and I need to get myself right." And the king clearly loved him, so he supported him, and sent him away on his blessing.

Listen to me, some of you in this room are not tithing your dollars to the LORD right now, and it's not because you don't want to. You are in debt. You've got credit card bills that have slowly multiplied, you are upside-down on your car, you are living in a house that you shouldn't have bought and you are feeling the pressure, the pain of heavy debt. I love that commercial where that guy says, "How did I pay for all this? I'm in debt up to my eyeballs." Listen, I'm not judging you today. I have been there, and I have made bad financial decisions in my life, but God has delivered me from all that, and has put people in my life who have shown me how to get healthy and free.

Financial Peace University is not a class reserved for financial failures. Many people who take that course are financially free and healthy, they just want to receive good training and teaching on money management. But, it is also a class where wounded people are welcome to go and to find out how they can stop the cycle, and wash away the bills that are coming in rapid fire.

But I have to tell you, most people are too proud to attend that class. Most marriages that fail could have been saved by counseling, but they were too proud to ask for help. Most people would rather go on with the "show" and save face, than to humble themselves and seek help.

Naaman had come to the point that he was ready to risk his reputation. He was ready to walk away from his military post. He could no longer act happy; he had to seek out help.

And let me elevate this to a new level. Let's talk about salvation. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God." You can never be saved, you will not die and go to heaven UNLESS you get low before the LORD and you cry out for mercy and healing and help. Unless you become like a little child, you will not be enter the kingdom of God. What's going to hold you back from walking this aisle and asking Jesus to heal your heart today? Do you think you are too highly regarded, that your reputation is at stake?

Naaman didn't make that error. He knew he needed help and went after it.

2. If you want to be healed, you must do what God says.

Now notice what Naaman does when he reads the prescription on the side of the bottle. V.11 says, "Naaman went away angry and he said, 'I thought that...' this guy was going to do something dramatic for me. Wave his hand, scream to the skies, and 'BANG', deliver me. And now he's telling me that I have to go get down in that dirty old river. Why can't I do it my way, and go to my favorite river in Damascus? Why can't he do this according to my desires? This is not the way that I would do it!

Let me tell you something, when you come to the Lord, you come to him on his terms, not on your terms. That big ball of healing is in his court, and the Scriptures suggest how we can be healthy.

And let me just tell you how we take on the attitude of Naaman. People say things like this:

- An engaged woman walks into her pastor's office and says, "I want to have butterflies in my stomach on my wedding day! Is that possible?" And their pastor says, "You need to move out of his house, and get right before the Lord, and this is still possible." And that couple goes away sad because they want the blessing, but they don't want to pay the price required for the payoff.
- A woman goes to see a Christian counselor and she says, "I am addicted to alcohol and every night, I put my kids to bed and then I hit the bottle and I drift off, and I can't hide it anymore. It is destroying my life." And that man gives her counsel saying, "You need to go away for a few weeks and you need to get help, and you cannot do this alone." But she walks out of his office and she never follows through because two weeks away from her parents would require a confession and humiliation.
- A young man goes to see his youth pastor. He is loaded down with guilt because he has stolen big money from the school office. He breaks down in tears because he wants to be free, and his youth pastor says, "The only way out of this is through confession and probably community service or some other consequence for your choice. That pain and humiliation will be short-

lived, but the freedom you desire is possible. You can get past your past. But the boy goes away sad, because he has decided in his heart that the price of healing is too high to pay.

The Bible says, "In order to be lifted up, you must humiliate yourself." You must humble yourself, and you will then be exalted.

Naaman was a fortunate man. Do you know why? He could not keep his pain hidden. One look at his skin and a little boy would say, "What's wrong with you, Mister." Even clothing and armour could not conceal his wounds. And so, this public display of his problem propelled him to go and to seek healing from God.

And if you are here today, you may not be so fortunate. You may have secret sin in your life that is eating you up, stealing your joy, damping your happiness, and so long as you can keep it covered up, you are convinced that things will get better.

You're wrong. It's the truth that will set you free and not deception. And in just a moment, I'm going to lead us in a time of prayer, and I want you to search your heart and see if God isn't calling you to get your house in order, to leave the life of denial, and to seek out help.

These ministries are created to help you find healing. And this altar is here, for anyone that is dealing with pain, and wants to find peace.