

“Grace for a Gentile Leper”
2 Kings 5:1-14
(Preached at Trinity, January 30, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In this chapter the author continues to describe the miracles of Elisha. There are two miracles in this chapter. One describes God's grace of healing upon a Gentile military leader. The other describes God's curse upon the greed of Elisha's servant; he is smitten with leprosy. In the first miracle we see the administration of mercy, in the other the administration of justice.
2. We begin with an introduction to Naaman, the captain of the Aramean or Syrian army. He is described as a great man, great in military exploits, a valiant warrior. After describing his greatness, we read at the end of **Verse 1** - "but he was a leper." No amount of worldly success or honor can spare us from the miseries of this fallen world. Disease and infirmity strike both rich and poor. Matthew Henry wrote: "No man's greatness, or honour, or valour, or victory, can set him out of the reach of the sorest calamities of human life; there is many a sickly crazy body under rich and gay clothing."¹ In the eyes of the Israelites, he was double cursed. He was a Gentile and he was a leper.
3. We are told of a young Israelite girl who was taken captive and put in servitude. God's purpose in it was for the salvation of Naaman. We must not cry out against the sovereign dispensations of God when we don't know all of His purposes. Like Daniel, although taken captive placed in servitude, she sought the good of her master.
2 Kings 5:3 NAU - "I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy."
Was she one of God's remnant? She knew Elisha. She knew God's power.
4. Naaman was a great man, but not above listening to the words of his slave-girl. He goes to his king for help in seeking the aid of this Israelite prophet.
 - A. The Aramean king sends a letter to the king of Israel assuming that the Israelite king would be intimately acquainted with this great prophet. He assumed greater intimacy than there actually was.
 - B. The king of Israel would have been Jehoram, the son of Ahab and brother of Ahaziah. He was under God's judgment upon the house of Ahab and Elisha anointed Jehu to succeed him.
2 Kings 9:24 NAU - "And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength and shot Joram between his arms; and the arrow went through his heart and he sank in his chariot."

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 528.

- C. When Jehoram received the letter from the king of Aram he was terrified because he had no relationship with God and he had no relationship with God's prophet. The lost are easily over-swept by fear.
5. When Elisha heard of the message Jehoram received and his response he determined to receive Naaman, not for the sake of Jehoram but for the glory of God.
2 Kings 5:8 NAU - "Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."
6. Naaman was a valiant warrior, but he was respectful of God's prophet. Instead of ordering Elisha to come to him or instead of sending a messenger to Elisha, he came personally and stood at the doorway of Elisha. At the same time, he arrived with a great display of his power and authority – horses and chariots.
2 Kings 5:9-10 NAU - "So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and *you will be clean.*"
7. He was told to wash seven times in the Jordan. This is a common pattern in Scripture. God works through the use of means.
- Jesus used spit to make a mud salve to anoint the eyes of the blind man. Then he told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam.
 - Jesus put his fingers into the ears of a deaf man and put saliva on his tongue.
 - In the previous chapter Elisha made the widow's oil multiply. He purified the poison stew by adding flour to it.
- Naaman was commanded to wash seven times in the Jordan. It was to be an act of submission. An act of faith in the God of Israel.
8. With this he was greatly offended. He was furious.
- A. He probably thought Elisha would see the display of his greatness and personally come out and heal him—That he would perhaps wave his hand and speak a word and he would be healed. Instead Elisha sent a messenger.
- B. And to be told to wash in the Jordan was repulsive. It demanded a days journey that Naaman thought was totally unnecessary. The Arameans had defeated Israel. Naaman was insulted at the thought of going down into the muddy waters of the Jordan – and not once, but seven times. There were must greater rivers in Syria, clean and clear. If he needed to wash these rivers would be a much greater choice. So he left in great anger.
9. His servants came to him and mildly rebuked his pride. If he had been commanded to do some great, heroic deed, he would have immediately complied. Would a great man not be willing to humble himself. So he went, and washed, and was cleansed. Naaman was cleansed to his very core. He had a theological transformation. He now saw God as the only God, the God worthy of his life.
2 Kings 5:15 NAU - "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth"
2 Kings 5:17 NAU - "your servant will no longer offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD."
10. This passage speaks much about the grace of God.

- I. God was mindful of this Gentile captain.
- A. Naaman was a Gentile
1. The Gentiles were outside of God's covenant promises which were given exclusively to Israel.
Paul wrote in **Romans 9:**
Romans 9:3-4 NAU - "For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises"
 2. The exclusion of the Gentiles was lived out vividly by the Jews. The Jews hated the Gentiles. The very dirt of Gentile lands was unclean and would defile a Jew. Jews did not eat with Gentiles nor even eat food prepared by a Gentile. They would not invite a Gentile into their home.
Exodus 23:32-33 NAU - "You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. ³³ "They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for *if* you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."
 3. Naaman was a Gentile, excluded from the promises of God, an alien and an outcast, and yet God was mindful of him.
 - a. Even the lost are recipients of God's common grace—the grace of God's mercies upon those who hate Him. We know that God is sovereign over every detail of every life. He is sovereign over every detail of the universe.
 - b. Naaman is called a great man in **Verse 1** but he was great because God made him so.
2 Kings 5:1 NAU - "because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram"
We should note that it was over Israel that Naaman was given victory. The author doesn't tell us why. All we need to know that Naaman's success was all of God.
 - c. All that we are is what God has made us. This is true of all men. There are many gifts that men enjoy. Some are given the ability to do great physical feats and excel in the sports world. Others are given marvelous minds and are able excel in the world of academia, or rise in the business world, or achieve success in their field of scientific enquiry. Great leaders are made by the hand of God. All of Naaman's victories were given to him by God.
 4. Naaman was blessed of God and did not know it. He was proud of his country, proud of his king, proud of his army. But he had never given praise to God. Few give God the glory for what they are.
- B. There was a much greater grace Naaman was receiving
1. Naaman's heart was being opened to see the greatness of God. This Gentile outcast was becoming one of God's own people.

2. From the beginning God purposed to include the Gentiles. Even in the OC God was drawing Gentiles to Himself – Rahab, Ruth, the widow of Zarephath.
God’s true Israel has always been those united to Abraham by faith.
 3. It was never God’s purpose to limit His grace to physical Israel. His purpose was to save spiritual Israel—His elect people.
Paul referred to this as a mystery:
Ephesians 3:3 NAU - "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief."
Ephesians 3:6 NAU - "that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,"
 4. Paul is saying that this is the mystery now revealed.
That God has one people in Christ.
- C. God reached out to Naaman by His sovereign, electing grace
1. It was a particular grace.
 2. Jesus rebuked the Jews for thinking their physical heritage guaranteed their acceptance before God. He used Naaman as an example of God’s sovereign grace.
 3. Leprosy was common in the ancient far east. Multitudes in Israel were afflicted. There were strict laws to govern those afflicted. They were considered unclean and were banned from contact with others. Multitudes of Israelites were left to suffer their affliction of leprosy. But God reached out to this Syrian Gentile.
Luke 4:27 NAU - "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

II. Leprosy was often used as a personification of sin

- A. Naaman was a leper
 1. Leprosy defined him
Verse 1 records that he was a great man, a highly respected man, a valiant man. But then read he was a leper. His leprosy overshadowed his life.
 2. Leprosy was a terrible disease.
 - a. It affected the skin, the nerves, the eyes.
The skin would become scaly and discolored. Sores and ulcers would form due to the poor blood supply.
 - b. Nerve damage would cause the loss of sensation.
Eventually fingers and toes drop off or were absorbed from repeated injuries or infection
 - c. The poor victim emitted an unpleasant odor. The disease also affected the larynx so that the leper spoke with a strange grating voice.
 - d. The leper could be seen, smelled, and heard identifying his condition.
 - e. In ancient times the disease was incurable leaving the victim in a hopeless condition.

- B. This is the nature of humanity
1. Every part of us is unclean and defiled. The smell of sin rises from each of us and we are removed from the holy. And our condition is hopeless apart from Christ
 2. Sin has attacked us in our entirety
 - a. It perverts our wills so that we will not serve and honor God
 - b. It perverts our minds so that we cannot think right thoughts about God
 - c. It perverts our hearts – we have no affections towards God. Rather than trembling at the sinfulness of sin lost humanity glories in it.
 3. Sin is both hereditary and contagious.
It is incurable and leads to death.
No human physician can provide a cure for it.
 4. Death would end the disease of leprosy but death cannot cure the plague of sin. It maintains its grip even beyond the grave
It is folly for pastors to preach the funerals of lost people pretending that death is the end of suffering. For the lost death is only the beginning of suffering.

Conclusion:

1. Elisha told Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan dipping himself seven times. This was an act of faith and obedience. It was that way and no other way. Why do we have to embrace Christ? Why Christianity? Why not some other way? Surely, God would be pleased with many ways of obtaining eternal life. The Gospel seems too narrow for some, but it is the only way of salvation.
2. At first, he rejected the cure. It didn't seem reasonable. It didn't involve Naaman's greatness or his valor. It didn't involve him doing some great feat.
2 Kings 5:13 NAU - "My father, had the prophet told you *to do some* great thing, would you not have done *it*? How much more *then*, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'"
3. All that was required of Naaman was to for him to see his need and to go to the cleansing waters. He went down and he was cleansed.
2 Kings 5:14 NAU - "So he went down and dipped *himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean."
4. Notice how his cleansing is described.
2 Kings 5:14 NAU - "his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean."
 - a. A child's skin has the quality of newness without the blemishes of aging. When God saves us He makes us new.
2 Corinthians 5:17 NAU - "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."
 - b. Using a child as the type we also find the innocence of childhood. I'm not saying innocence in the sense of being free from sin. We are born guilty and corrupted by sin. But a child has not yet fallen into the corruption of the open, willful sin of adulthood.

Jesus spoke of the simplicity of childhood.

Mark 10:13-16 NAU - "And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*." ¹⁶ And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them."

5. Being cured from the curse and filth of sin demands seeing our great need and fleeing to God's one remedy – Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
Matthew Henry rightly said:
"When diseased sinners come to this earnest desire for a cure, that they are content to do anything, to submit to anything, to part with anything, for a cure, then, and not till then, there begins to be some hopes of them. Then they will take Christ on his own terms when they are made willing to have Christ upon any terms."²
"Believe, and be saved"—"Repent, and be pardoned"—"Wash, and be clean."³
6. God is sovereign over His redemptive purpose.
It was God that afflicted Naaman with leprosy to humble him.
It was God that gave him success as a military leader.
It was God that ordered the captivity of the young Israelite girl.
It was God that sent Naaman to Elisha.
And it was God that moved upon Naaman's heart to humble submission to Elisha's command.

And It was all of God who effectually worked in you His sovereign grace of salvation.

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 529.

³ *Ibid.*, 529.