

“The Root of All Evil”
2 Kings 5:20-27
(Preached at Trinity, February 13, 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. This chapter opened with an introduction to Naaman, the captain of the Aramean or Syrian army. He is described as a great man in the eyes of the king, highly respected, great in military exploits, a valiant warrior.
After describing his greatness we read at the end of **Verse 1** - “but he was a leper.” In spite of all of his successes it was his leprosy that defined him. And in spite of his greatness, he was powerless to do anything to cure his disease.
2. We are also told of a young Israelite slave-girl who was taken captive in war and put in servitude. God's purpose in it was for the salvation of Naaman. She told Naaman of a prophet in Israel who could cure his leprosy. She was a faithful witness of the God of Israel.
3. Naaman set his sights on seeking this man that might bring about his cure. Working through the king of Aram, a huge gift was collected and Naaman began the journey. Naaman arrived with a great display of his power and authority – horses and chariots.
 - A. Elisha was unimpressed with Naaman's power. He simply gave him the message of his deliverance.
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."
 - B. This must also be our method—to carry God's message of deliverance through the Gospel to all men.
4. Naaman was told to wash seven times in the Jordan.
It was to be an act of submission and obedience. It was to be an act of faith in the God of Israel. At first, he was greatly offended. In fact, he was furious. It was humiliating. Yet, God did humble him. He went, and washed, and was cleansed.
5. God did more than just heal Naaman of his leprosy. There was a much greater grace Naaman was receiving, a much greater cleansing. Naaman was transformed. His heart was opened to see the greatness of God.
 - A. Naaman's heart was overwhelmed with gratitude.
2 Kings 5:15 NAU - "When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him, he said, "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; so please take a present from your servant now."
 - B. Elisha refused his gift. He didn't want attention to be placed upon him as if the healing was by his power. He didn't want to rob God of all praise and honor.
 - C. Finally, Naaman asked for Elisha's blessings as he returned in service to the Aramean king and Elisha sent him away in peace.

6. But this isn't the end of the story. Elisha's servant, Gehazi, had quietly stood on the sideline observing everything that was taking place.
- A. We were first introduced to him in **Chapter 4** when Elisha was staying at the home of the Shunamite woman. Elisha asked him to inquire of her how he might repay her for her gracious hospitality.
2 Kings 4:12-13 NAU - "Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite." And when he had called her, she stood before him. ¹³ He said to him, "Say now to her, 'Behold, you have been careful for us with all this care; what can I do for you?"
- B. The author implies that he was a wise and faithful servant. When the Shunammite woman refused any reward it was Gehazi that told Elisha of her childlessness. But as we will see tonight, Gehazi's wisdom was worldly wisdom.
- C. Gehazi loved recognition. He was most likely the messenger Elisha sent to the king in **Verse 8** and to Naaman in **Verse 10**.
 And we'll see in **Chapter 8** Gehazi gained some influence before the king.
2 Kings 8:4 NAU - "Now the king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Please relate to me all the great things that Elisha has done."
7. Naaman had arrived with a kingly treasure. It would have been over a million dollars by today's calculations.
2 Kings 5:5 NAU - "He departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand *shekels* of gold and ten changes of clothes."
8. Gehazi is listening to Naaman's desire to reward Elisha and he is considering what a huge sum. To his dismay, Elisha turned down the offer. He must have said to himself. "What is Elisha thinking?! This is unbelievable. Naaman is making this great offer and Elisha is refusing it. Not to mention, this Syrian is the man that led the Aramean armies against Israel. Elisha is letting him off far too easy.
9. He pondered the situation and concluded that he would rectify Elisha's error in judgment.
2 Kings 5:20 NAU - "Behold, my master has spared this Naaman the Aramean, by not receiving from his hands what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him."
10. He convinced himself that this was the right thing and even invokes the name of God, implying God's blessings upon his expedition. He was actually taking God's name in vain.
 "As the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him."
11. As so often the case, we determine what we want to do and justify ourselves in doing it, even while knowing in our heart it's the wrong thing to do. This was the situation with Gehazi. He pretends God is with him – "As the LORD lives" while at the same time exposing corruption in our actions.
- A. First, he lies to Naaman.
Verse 22 – "My master has sent me . . ."
- B. Then, he lies to Elisha – "your servant went nowhere"
- C. All the while, he was blinded to the lusts that led him to the sin.
 He saw nothing wrong with his actions. After all, Naaman had arrived with ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes. All Gehazi was asking was a single talent of silver and two changes of clothes.
- D. If his actions were just, why did he need to lie about it?

12. The conclusion to the story is the second miracle in this chapter. The first dealt with the healing of grace, the second with the curse of sin. Both were from the hand of God. Naaman was healed of his leprosy and Gehazi is afflicted *with* leprosy. We are meant to see the contrast.

2 Kings 5:27 NAU - "Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever."

I. What is the cause of this sin?

A. The lust of our flesh

1. The sin of Gehazi is the ancient sin of humanity. It is the sin of lust, covetousness, and greed. It was ultimately the cause of Adam's sin.
1 John 2:15-16 NAU - " Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."

Genesis 3:6 NAU - "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

2. This is the pattern. We look upon it, we want it, we feel we deserve it.
3. This is what motivates far too many politicians—greed, selfishness, and pride. It drives their thirst for power and they want more and more.
4. The love of wealth grips the heart of all men.
George Rawlinson observed: "Avarice is one of the most hungry passions of the soul. It is never satisfied. [John] Dryden calls it 'A cursed hunger of pernicious gold.' It is that passion that makes all men like Gehazi *run*. Men are everywhere out of breath in their race for wealth."¹

B. The deceptions of Satan

1. Satan whispers in our ear. He calls into question the Word of God and gives us ways to transgress without feeling guilty
2. This is what he did with Eve. It will make you wise. You will become like God.
3. This is what he did with Jesus. You are hungry. Why don't you turn these stones into bread.

C. The call of this world

1. This world is always putting its riches on display.
2. It will soon captivate your heart and draw your affections.
1 John 2:15 NAU - " Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
James 4:4 NAU - "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

¹ Cyril J. Barber, *The Books of Kings: The Righteousness of God Illustrated in the Lives of the People of Israel and Judah*, vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004), 162.

II. The cure for this sin

A. We need a new heart

1. What was the ultimate difference between Naaman and Gehazi?
 - a. Notice Naaman was filled with gratitude. He was filled with praise and reverence towards God. He wanted to give gifts to God.
 - b. Gehazi was filled with lust and ambition. He was ready to do whatever necessary to satisfy his greed.
 - c. The difference was God's grace in giving a new heart. Gehazi needed a heart that desired God more than earthly riches.
2. Notice at the beginning of this chapter Naaman was also in need of a new heart. He was described as great, but it was worldly greatness. He loved the acclaim and was offended at the thought of humbling himself. He thought he could gain his desire by the riches he brought.
When God gave him a new heart it ceased being only about him.

B. We need a Kingdom priority

1. This was our Lord's command
Matthew 6:33 KJV - "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
2. This was the essence of Elisha's words to Gehazi
2 Kings 5:26 NAU - "Is it a time to receive money and to receive clothes and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male and female servants?"
3. When we maintain a Kingdom priority everything is judged by how it honors Christ. In this one, selfish act Gehazi undermined all that Elisha taught Naaman in **Verse 16**. Elisha was teaching that everything must have its focus on God. God was the source of Naaman's healing and the source of all that Elisha was doing. He was teaching Naaman that the benefits of God's grace cannot be purchased. They can only be received by grace.
Gehazi was now telling Naaman that Elisha had had a change of heart.

C. We must maintain our pursuit of righteousness

1. Paul described it as fleeing covetousness while pursuing righteousness
1 Timothy 6:10-11 NAU - "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹ But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness."
2. Righteousness must be our goal, our hunger and thirst
Matthew 5:6 NAU - "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

D. The Christian must find our everything in Christ

1. We must be satisfied in Him
2. How do you grow in your satisfaction of Christ?
By seeking to know Him more. By communing with Him, finding joy in Him.
3. The great downfall of Gehazi was his selfish heart. It was all about Gehazi. Perhaps he even had an expectation of succeeding Elisha as Elisha succeeded Elijah. All Gehazi cared about was Gehazi.

4. Without Christ we will only care about ourselves. With Christ, nothing else matters.

1 Corinthians 2:1-2 NAU - "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

Conclusion:

1. We need to understand that without the transforming grace of the indwelling Spirit we will lack the power to live above this world. We will be like those the Apostle Paul described: "Having a form of godliness, but denying its power."
2. We also shouldn't miss, that without this transforming work we will fail to live in the wonder of God. Gehazi witnessed the miracles that Elisha had performed. He witnessed the unstopping flow of oil. He witnessed Elisha raise the boy from the dead. He saw Elisha remove the poison from the pot of stew. He also saw Naaman's skin change from the leather texture of leprosy to that of a child.
And we can't dismiss the countless sermons he heard from Elisha. Even though he witnessed these marvelous miracles from God and clear teaching he was unmoved by these spiritual blessings. He was unable to shake the attraction of this world. Idolatry was in his heart, and he would lie and deceive in order to satisfy his greed.
3. It reminds us of Judas. He lived beside Jesus for three years but failed to embrace the spiritual blessings that were before his very face.
4. The same will be true of us. We are dependent upon God's transforming grace. We are in no less need of cleansing than Naaman. May God grant us to see the spiritual blessings that are before us in God's Word and in Christ within us.