

## **2-19-12 – Attitude Adjustment**

### **2 Kings 5:1-19**

We have been trying to develop our sermons around the reading schedule during this time between Christmas and Lent. I looked at the reading schedule and decided to read ahead, especially since we are going to stop this schedule on Wed for a while as we enter Lent and the Ashes to Fire series. Wednesday's reading will be about Gehazi (Elisha's servant) from 2 Kings 5:20-27, but the reading schedule just says 2 Kings 5, so I read the entire chapter and became more intrigued by the story of Naaman than Gehazi. Then she came home with the bulletin Friday night and look at the cover – Naaman washes seven times in the Jordan River. I asked if she picked that cover because of my message title – NO. Where did you get it from then? It was the one in her bulletin program for this week. How does that line up with our biographical reading schedule? It doesn't. she pick that reading schedule for the year from a different source altogether. Wait – I decide to do a sermon on a subject kind of out of the blue that was somewhat part of our reading schedule that she picked somewhat out of the blue for a reading for next week, and the bulletin cover for this week is the same story? I think God wants us to look at this story for some odd reason. I don't know why – I will just be obedient and pray there's something in this message that is meaningful for you today.

The readings for the week are posted in the bulletin for you to follow along. This week we will move into 2 Kings and see the transition from Elijah to Elisha as the prophets of Israel. Then on Wednesday, we will put this biographical reading schedule on hold and begin together the readings and studies for Ashes to Fire. The readings for each day will be posted in the Good Morning email and on our Facebook page. It might be cool to engage in a little Facebook chatter related to these readings as we engage this series together.

So Elijah was a very powerful character in the Bible. He performed many miraculous signs. His main emphasis was to speak for God against the evil of the nation and to preach repentance. His replacement, Elisha, has a shift in emphasis. Of course he is also against evil, but his primary emphasis is compassion toward those in need. He made a bold request to receive a double portion of Elijah's spirit when he succeeded him. His request was granted and if you check your Bible you will see that Elisha performed twice the number of miracles as Elijah, the last one after he died.

**READ: 2 Kings 5:1-19**

I gave you a little background on Elisha, so now let me give you a little background on Naaman. In v. 1 we read that he was the commander of the army of the king of Syria or Aram – Israel’s enemy. The king’s name was Ben Hadad II. He was a great and successful commander or General of the Army and brought many victories for Syria; he was a mighty man of valor. He was wealthy, powerful, influential, and had the ear of the king of his country.

The narrator of our text attributes his great victories about Israel to God – who is the ruler and controller of the destinies of ALL nations. At the time of our text, there was a peace treaty between Aram and Israel. Of course there are always those little border fights that go on, but things were peaceful overall. Naaman had one problem – a big problem – he was a leper. He suffered this incurable skin disease and was miserable as a result. All his power and wealth could not cure him of this dreaded condition.

In one of the raids against Israel, the soldiers took captives back to Syria. One POW was a young girl from Israel. She was given to Naaman’s wife as a servant. This young girl must have been scared as she was taken from her home and country and forced to become a slave to foreigners. She noticed her new master’s skin condition. She also knew in her homeland, there was a prophet of God who could heal this condition. She heard of his miracles and power.

**v. 3** – This little girl said to Naaman’s wife, ***“I wish my master would go to see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy.”*** What a powerful statement – dripping with faith. She had to step out of her comfort zone to say such a thing to a powerful enemy of her country. Why would she even go there – just let him rot in his disease – he’s the enemy – he captured and enslaved her – he took her away from her home and family. She makes this bold unconditional statement – the prophet would heal him – no maybes – no doubt. She stepped out of her humility and humble state to make a bold statement of faith to this enemy commander.

Have you ever felt the Lord moving you to speak up for Him in an unwelcoming environment? Maybe to someone in upper management or to an atheist co-worker? You know God can answer their issue or bring them the peace or comfort they so desperately need. You can stay quiet and safe or put it all on the line and speak up. This girl could have been killed or discarded for saying what she said, but she took the chance, moved by her knowledge of God and the compassion of this prophet, and she spoke up. What was Naaman’s reaction?

Remember Naaman is a pagan – not a believer in the God of Israel. He was military, powerful, a self-made man. He was proud and his reputation was built on his own abilities and accomplishments. He had no regard for this prophet of Israel or for the God of Israel. It was all about him, and any way to possibly get cured of this horrible affliction was worth a try. He goes to his king to relay what the slave girl said. Naaman was a leper; that was enough to make people gag. The king was all for sending him there for a chance to be healed of this condition. So Naaman is sent to Israel with a letter of introduction.

King to king – the letter asks the King Jereboam of Israel to heal Naaman. Jereboam freaks out since only God could do such a thing. How could Ben Hadad ask this – he must be trying to pick a fight with Israel by this impossible request. Jereboam tears his clothes because his back has been put against the wall. How could he respond? He can't perform the miraculous. He never thinks of consulting Elisha about this, but Elisha hears what is going on and intervenes.

God had preset this stage. The slave girl said exactly what God wanted her to say. She was exactly where God wanted her to be. Naaman reacted exactly the way God wanted him to react. Elisha was in tune and came to the situation with an answer to King Jereboam's dilemma. Let this Naaman come to Elisha so he would learn there is a prophet of God in Israel. This was Naaman's moment, but he didn't know that yet and he was ready for it yet. There was a deeper work God needed to accomplish in his heart before any physical healing could take place. This was about to happen, but maybe not the way we would expect.

**v. 9** - Naaman sets out with gold, silver, clothing, and an entourage of horses, chariots, and officers with him. He was bringing everything he knew of to win the favor of anyone, even an enemy prophet in order to get what he wanted. He was used to getting what he wanted, and he knew best how to accomplish this. The slave girl made it sound like a sure thing, and he was going to ensure it was a sure thing. If he was an Israelite, his leprosy would have prevented him from holding an official government position (Lev. 13:46). He wouldn't have a job, or money, or prestige. He would be a homeless wanderer – an outcast of society – unclean. Here he is coming to buy his healing from Elisha. Like many of us, he had a common misunderstanding about how God works. He came with preconceived ideas and expectations. He was setting himself up for a huge disappointment.

He not only wanted to impress Elisha with his grand entrance and entourage, but he expected to see some spectacular spiritual fireworks on his behalf. He'd heard stories about Elisha's miracles, and assumed God always did things in a big, showy way. He arrives at Elisha's place and the prophet doesn't even acknowledge Naaman. He sends his servant out to instruct Naaman instead – the nerve of this guy. Doesn't he realize who Naaman is – how powerful – how high up on the food chain in his country – the conquering country – Syria. This is just not right. You don't send out your servant to meet a man of such prestige.

You can see Naaman's attitude shining through loud and clear in this story. Wait it get's worse... Gehazi gives Naaman the prophet's instructions for being cured of his leprosy. Go to the Jordan River and wash seven times and you will be healed. WHAT? This pushes Naaman over the edge. He is instructed to pack up his posy and travel 25 miles to the muddy stream they call the Jordan River and bath there? Is this guy kidding? He must be messing with me! He would probably be more dirty after washing there than before. The Jordan was kind of disgusting. If bathing in water was going to cure him, surely he could find some cleaner water than the Jordan. He didn't even have to leave his home country – their rivers were much more beautiful than anything in Israel.

**v. 11** - Naaman is furious at the way he is treated and insulted. In his arrogance, he spews venom as he stalks away... ***“I thought he would certainly come out and meet me! - I expected him to wave his hand over the leprosy and call on the name of the Lord his God and heal me!”***

Naaman was willing to give up a healing because he didn't agree on the method being suggested to receive it. Why not? Did you ever feel that way? God has a different plan.

I remember when I was sick and asked God to heal me of cancer. I wanted him to do something spectacular, miraculous even. Oh, I promised to give him the glory and everything. What a testimony I could have to share for Him. I believed it; I claimed it; I told God what the Bible said (as if He didn't know or needed a reminder); and I sought others to tell me what I wanted to hear, but nothing worked the way I wanted or expected. I was still sick and needed surgeries, and chemo, and a year of hospital stays, and five years of follow-up visits. God was working a deeper thing in my life – a humbling thing – a work that would change who I was and what I was to become for Him. I really had no choice. When I finally submitted to His will – no matter what – I started to see the hand of God behind the scenes in my healing.

Naaman needed an **attitude adjustment**. His pompous arrogant attitude would have to be broken down. He was learning a lesson in humility that would change him forever – and for the good – and for God. The prophet's instruction didn't make sense; it wasn't logical; it was insulting and degrading – And that's exactly what Naaman needed. It wasn't more degrading than having leprosy in the first place, but he was troubled. He needed to learn that God doesn't always work in ways that are logical to us. Many times God's ways defy logic, but His will is accomplished when we humbly yield to His ways regardless.

**v. 13** – His officers talked him down from his anger. After all he came to the prophet to be healed. If Elisha would have told him something difficult to do, he would have obeyed without hesitation. Why not simply obey and go wash in the Jordan seven times, if that's what he said to do. It was a simple thing to do to be healed of leprosy – but it was a humbling thing to do too. Naaman had a choice to make. He could remain arrogant and lose the healing, or he could humbly submit and acknowledge the God of Israel by this action. He would first have to humble himself and then see if God would heal him. Obviously it had nothing much to do with Elisha. For Naaman to be healed in this way, through this method, it would have to be a work of a real God who heals miraculously what is impossible to heal in the flesh. It would take faith.

**Jas. 4:6** – *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

Naaman had to dip or bath seven times in the Jordan – not just once or twice or even 5 times, but seven times – A number of completeness in Scripture. He needed to be completely and sincerely humble. Once this was accomplished, he was ready to receive from God. Naaman had to learn what we all have to learn: While God may choose to show His power through the spectacular and the showy, He may equally choose to work His wonders through the mundane and the ordinary. His actions are not bound by our expectations, and His manner of working always remains His choice. After all – He IS God!

Elisha was given insight about Naaman's attitude and the humility he needed to be right with God. That healing was more important than the physical healing from leprosy he eventually received as well. Naaman was healed of an incurable disease – it was a miracle. His skin was restored to that of a child – smooth and pure.

Naaman was not only healed physically, but he was healed spiritually as well and first.

**v. 15 – “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.”** You can see the change in Naaman’s attitude. He had a genuine attitude adjustment. He is no longer arrogant, but humble and acknowledges he is now a servant of Elisha and of the God of Israel.

**v. 17 –** He must return to his pagan land, but now as a servant of Almighty God. This won’t be easy, but he asks for soil from Israel so he can sacrifice and worship the God of Israel even in his own home country.

He must remain in service to the king in Syria, so he also asks that when he helps the king into the temple of their god, he would be pardoned when he bows before this now foreign and false god. His entire allegiance has change and he is now sold out to the one true God.

God understands where our heart is. Are we really in His service or pretending? Do we need a lesson in humility in order to really experience spiritual healing and the will of God in our lives?

**v. 19 – Go in peace.** These are Elisha’s final words to Naaman. He is pardoned because he is now a new person in God. He will never be the same again. He has been touched by the power of the Holy Spirit and transformed into a man after God rather than a man who thinks he is god.

We all need an attitude adjustment every now and then. Hopefully it is a one-time experience, since it is never comfortable, but needed. How is your attitude lately? Have you forgotten the One who saved you and changed your heart and mind? Do you need an attitude adjustment?

God is merciful and extends His grace to the humble not the proud. Today – humble yourself before the Lord and He will lift you up and make you into the servant He wants you to be. All it takes is obedience to His word as we see from the story of Naaman. First comes humility, and then comes the touch of God in your life by faith.