

## NAAMAN THE LEPER

*(2 Kings 5:1–16)*

**Purpose:** To teach the value of witnessing.

In the Old Testament of the Bible, we read the story of Naaman, the commander-in-chief of the army of Syria.

Naaman was highly respected by his fellow men and he was known by everyone to be a personal friend of the king.

If being rich and having an important job had been all that was necessary to guarantee happiness, Naaman's home would have been a wonderful place to live. But unfortunately, Naaman's home was a place of sorrow. Naaman had leprosy, a dreaded sickness for which there was no cure.

Naaman's wife, and the other members of his family, were very sad in knowing that, day by day, Naaman was slowly dying.

Even the servants felt sorry for Naaman and his wife, and one of the servants in particular wondered if she might not speak to them about their sorrow...

...if she might not tell them about the true and the living God, and about the prophet of God that lived in the land of her childhood.

The servant girl felt sure that Naaman, if he would go to the place of the prophet, could be cured of his leprosy.

So one day she gathered up her courage and told her mistress about the prophet who lived in Israel, and what she felt could be done about this sorrow in their home.

Naaman's wife had never heard of God, and yet as she sat there and listened to the servant girl tell of the wonderful things that God could do, new hope came into her heart.

Naaman's wife ran to tell her husband of this wonderful thing that she had heard. As she ran toward him, Naaman watched her with puzzled eyes.

What could have happened in their home of sorrow to make his wife so happy?

When Naaman heard what the servant girl had said, he could hardly believe his ears.

A God that could cure leprosy? Could such a thing be true? Surely the servant girl would never lie to them about such a thing.

So Naaman agreed with his wife that he would have to go and try to find the prophet.

But where? Where would he find such a man? Perhaps the king would know.

The king of Syria had never heard of a man called the prophet, but the king felt sure that the ruler of Israel would know, so he gave Naaman a letter...

...a letter of introduction for the captain of the Syrian army. And not only that...

...the king saw to it personally that a royal gift was prepared for whomever it might be that could cure Naaman of his dreaded disease.

The king did everything humanly possible to show Naaman how much he thought of him...

...to indicate to his commander-in-chief that his only wishes were for his speedy recovery.

It was a long journey, but finally Naaman arrived at the palace of King Jehoram, the ruler of the land of Israel. And before long...

...Naaman was standing before the king. An important person like the captain of the Syrian army wasn't someone to keep waiting.

The king opened the letter of introduction and started to read, *"Now when this is come unto thee, behold I have herewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy."*

Leprosy! Why, the king would hardly believe his eyes.

The ruler of Israel was suddenly very much afraid. His hands started to shake. And yet he knew what a mistake it would be to let these strangers see how upset he was.

So the king asked for time to...uh...consult with his advisors on this matter of great importance.

But the moment the strangers had left the throne room, the king tore his clothes to show how upset he was, and he wailed and he moaned, and he cried out:

*"Am I God? Can I cure a man of his leprosy?"*

*"I know,"* the king said, *"the Syrians are trying to start a quarrel! That's the meaning of this."*

The wise men of the kingdom studied the problem and tried their very best to find the answer. But because the letter had failed to mention the prophet, and because the king and his men were not right where God was concerned, their problem was without an answer.

What were they going to do? One thing they knew...

Naaman was to be shown every courtesy while he was there. He was to be given the best of everything. But all of this delay puzzled Naaman.

Why should the king have to consult with his advisers?

The king was pondering the same problem, when lo and behold, a servant came to the king with a message concerning Naaman.

Elisha the prophet had heard about Naaman's visit to the king, and the message was a request that Naaman be sent to him so that the Syrians would know there was a true and a living God.

The king, needless to say, was very happy to be relieved of his problem. Naaman was to be shown to the place of the prophet at once.

And as the caravan left the royal palace, Naaman became more and more excited about being healed, about being well again.

But when they arrived, they found themselves standing in front of a place such as a poor person would live in, and that bothered Naaman.

He was also bothered by the fact that no one was outside to meet him. After all...

He was the captain of the Syrian army!

Two of his men rode forward and shouted for someone to come out and meet their leader.

But inside the house, an old man continued talking to his servant. Elisha was telling his servant what was to be said to Naaman. And when he had finished...

...the servant went out to tell Naaman that if he would go to a certain river, the river Jordan, and wash himself seven times, he would be completely healed of his leprosy.

A river? Go wash in a river? These people were making fun of him. And besides, were not the rivers of Damascus more beautiful than the dirty, muddy Jordan?

They couldn't do this to the captain of the Syrian army.

He ordered his men to leave at once. But some of the men that were with Naaman tried to reason with him about it.

They reminded their leader that had he been told to do a difficult thing, he undoubtedly would have tried to do it. Why not do as the servant had said?

And Naaman knew in his heart that his men were right. If he was going to be helped by God, he must be willing to believe and obey.

So Naaman and his men made their way to the river Jordan.

But even as he waded into the water, Naaman was probably thinking, "Why is it all so easy? It might be just a foolish waste of time." But at least...

...his servants would have to say that he had done as he was told.

Six times Naaman went down into the water and his body remained the same.

When Naaman went down for the seventh time, the men on the bank moved forward. Was it possible for their captain to be healed? Was there a God that could do such a thing? And when Naaman came up out of the water...

...his shouts of praise gave them their answer, "My leprosy! It's gone!"

Oh, what a wonderful time it was. Naaman lifted up his head and sang for joy. In spite of the weakness of his faith, God had healed his body!

It was a humble group of men that returned to the small house where Elisha was. They told Elisha of the wonderful thing that had happened, and they tried to give the old man the many gifts they had brought.

But Elisha didn't want their gifts. He didn't want their gold. Elisha was happy for the new man that he found in Naaman.

A wonderful miracle had taken place. Naaman had been cured of his leprosy through simple faith and obedience to the will of God.

In the Holy Bible, we find that leprosy is symbolic of sin, and the story of Naaman's faith and obedience is a guide to our own salvation. In the third chapter of Romans, we read of the leprosy of our souls:

*"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* And because of this, man faces spiritual death, for God has said,

*"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."* Naaman's recovery was a miracle of God's goodness and love. But the miracle that is ours is even greater...

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16)