

THE QUEST FOR A CURE

"Go and wash in the Jordan seven times." A simple reply and yet a seemingly ridiculous remedy for a man plagued with a terrible disease.

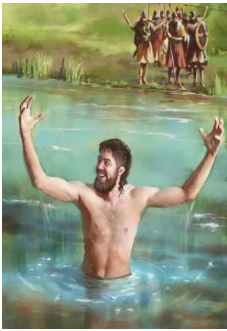
Naaman was no ordinary man. He was the commander of the Aramean army and is described in 2 Kings 5 as "a great man before his master," "highly respected," and "a valiant warrior," but he was a leper. Even a little girl who had been taken captive and was acting as a servant to Naaman's wife showed compassion and concern for him by saying, "I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy." Upon hearing of this great hope, Naaman went to his master, the king of Aram, and was granted permission to go in search of this prophet.

With Naaman's arrival in Israel, it became known to Elisha, the man of God, that one had come in search of healing. He told the king of Israel, "Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Naaman's much anticipated day had come! A day of healing, freedom and cleansing! A day of salvation! As Naaman arrived at Elisha's doorway with his horses and chariots in all the pomp and circumstance of a great army commander, he expected his reception and healing to be no less eventful.

But the man of God didn't even come to the door to greet him. Elisha sent a messenger to him saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean." A simple message. That was it. Naaman went away furious saying, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.' " He even reasoned that the waters in his homeland were better than all the waters in Israel. "Why couldn't I wash in them and be clean?"



It wasn't until his servants came and spoke to him that Naaman had a change of heart. They asked him, "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?'"



Naaman's anger subsided, and he turned and acted according to the word of the man of God. He went to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times. Freedom! Cleansing! Healing! Not through the power of the river nor the ritual, but healing that came from his faith in the power and promise of God. His flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child.

Naaman's leprosy is symbolic of a much greater, far more destructive disease in all men—sin; and his journey for a cure was a foreshadowing of ours. Upon hearing that there is a great Prophet and Healer, and believing that he is able to provide a cure, we are moved by faith to the door of the man of God; the very Son of God. It is here we find a simple message, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38) Our message to “go and wash” is much the same as Naaman's. Just as he incorrectly reasoned that there must be better waters to wash in, we see that the power is not in our reasoning or in our works, but in the power of God alone. Our baptism that “saves us” is “not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 3:21) We must have faith that God is able to heal.

It was Naaman's repentance, or his turning back, that allowed him to receive this free gift of healing. We are faced with the same choice. Our will or His will? Do we leave in anger, pride, stubbornness and doubt and continue a path fulfilling our desires, or do we turn and humbly submit to a healing God and a life that glorifies Him? Our obedience to the call is crucial. The free gift is awaiting.

Naaman returned to Elisha and proclaimed “Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.” We are likewise reminded in Romans 10:9, “That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.” Proclaim and praise Him for who He is and what He has done!

The same powerful God that cured Naaman of his leprosy is the same God today that has the power to forgive our sins and provide us an eternal home with Him. How merciful, loving and full of grace is our God!

“And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” (Acts 22:16)