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The Kingdom of Israel

Naaman 2 Kings 5:1-14

A year through the Bible

April 30, 2023

Welcome:

* We believe that following Jesus changes everything.
* 11:00 service Latino multiethnic. I am really wanting to lean into the heart of God here. How you can help.
  + Be consistent. Critical mass matters.
  + Invite families.
  + Come early and stay after to connect.

Opening Illustration:

Let’s do a quick review: How the kings of old fall.

It’s a cycle. God identifies a humble heart. They gain affluence. They begin to have spiritual amnesia. They lean into arrogant autonomy. Cut off from the vine of life, they fall.

How the kings of old fall. (I would love the graph below on the screen.)

Our soul is *NOT* most at risk when we are desperate for God. We are spiritually most at risk when we think we don’t need Him.

Sermon Opening:

Let’s move to today’s message.

Scriptures:

Focus on: 2 Kings 5:1-14 (ESV) (Starting on \_\_\_\_ in the chair Bibles.)

David and Goliath.

Let me open with a big idea.

Humans are masters at trying to rebuild spirituality over and over again in ways that keep themselves as the king.

Years ago, I had a young man approach me who didn't attend the church. He was wildly partying with some people a few months prior and discovered that one of the individuals he had been with intimately had a deadly STD. He was waiting on some test results to see how it would impact him. He was desperate and wanted me to pray for him.

The conversation that followed was much longer, but one of the ideas we talked about was this.

He was spiritual and believed in the power of God, but he wasn’t religious.

What did he mean?

He wanted to use the power of God without submitting to the kingdom of God.

What if: “I am spiritual but not religious” may be the same as… “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” -James 2:9.

This has always been the struggle. We want to have the power of God without submitting to the kingdom of God.

Text:

1 Samuel 17:34–37 (ESV)

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman’s wife. She said to her mistress, “Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.” So Naaman went in and told his lord, “Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel.” And the king of Syria said, “Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, “When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy.” And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me.” But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel.” So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha’s house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.” But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, “Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage. But his servants came near and said to him, “My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” 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.[[1]](#footnote-2)

* The people of God continue to reject embracing the heart of God and it continually puts them in states of war and weakness.
* Syria and Israel now have a long history of political tension and war. It appears in one of the raids of Syria on Israel, a little girl was kidnapped.
* Sidenote: We must be careful of anachronism. The placing of our modern values, customs, and contemporary view of the world on these historical events. There are a lot of complex geopolitical things at play. When reading the Old Testament, it is well worth taking the time to study historical context.
* Naaman is a Syrian warlord who has seen the suffering and death of Israelites at his hands. He now needs help. The king of Israel will have nothing to do with it. The prophet is willing for the sake of Naaman and Syria's soul.
  + Think of this as a Muslim Jihadist coming to America for help. Our political leaders "tear their clothes" and a pastor opens his heart.
* God's goal is not the destruction of evil people but the destruction of evil *in* people. Humans are not the enemy; they are victims *of* the enemy. (Ezekiel 33:11)
  + “Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”-Ezekiel 33:11
* How will God rescue Naaman? He will deal with his proud heart.
  + This whole text contrasts Naaman’s power and prestige with his need for humility. Even in The Hebrew there is evidently a play on the phrase *na‘arah qetannah* (“little girl”) in v. 2. The “great man” (v. 1) had a problem, to which the “little girl” had the solution; but the solution involved Naaman’s becoming, like her, “a little child”[[2]](#footnote-3)
  + Naaman wanted something grand, complex, and hard to cure his serious sickness. It ended up being a very simple action that would require a different kind of hard – humility.
* Our greatest wholeness isn't of our making but in our relinquishing. The most alive and vibrant you could ever be doesn’t come from something you can build, make, or take. Life to the full forever comes simply from real surrender to the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ.
* To believe in God, to believe He is powerful, and to want His help is not the same as following Him. Real salvation is a love and trust issue.

Final Thoughts:

Back to the young man who wanted me to pray he wouldn’t catch the deadly STD he was exposed to. What did he want?

If he wanted me to pray that God would give him back his health so he could return to his old ways, he was missing the point of religion completely.

God doesn’t let you use his power to further separate you from Him.

In true humility, if the decision is made to relinquish pride and actually follow Jesus, the deeper healing can come.

The greatest healing for this young man was the same for Naaman and the same for you: not the healing of your body, but the healing of your soul.

I am not asking if you believe God is real, powerful, or even impressive. I am asking if you really have decided to make him Lord of your life.

1. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.2Ki5.1-14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Crossway Bibles, [*The ESV Study Bible*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esvsb?ref=BibleESV.2Ki5.14-15&off=24&ctx=%E2%80%9315+a+little+child.+~The+Hebrew+is+na%E2%80%98ar+) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 654. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)