

NAAMAN: A NEARLY TRAGIC STORY

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INTRODUCTION:

- A. The word "BUT" may seem short but it's an extremely big word both in the Bible & our daily lives:**
1. Talking about a girl to a guy, "She's a really good girl, but..." – On a more serious level we say, "I would be more active at church, but..." or "I'd talk to my friend about Christ, but..." or "They're going to be celebrating their 60th anniversary next year, but he's got cancer"
 2. Another one of those cases where the word "BUT" changes everything is in the story of Naaman, a captain of the Syrian army – He was a mighty man BUT he was a leper! **(2 Kings 5:1)**
 - a. It's the if's, and's, and but's in life that really get us and it was destroying Naaman.
 - b. Naaman had everything in this world going for him, he had it all, but he also had leprosy... as we know leprosy was a very deadly & likely the most dreaded disease of that day
 - c. His story would have been a very tragic one, had he not met and listened to Elisha the prophet of God! He was a man who had leprosy, BUT he was healed by the Lord!
 3. We don't fear leprosy in our society today, but we have an even bigger "BUT" in our lives... SIN!
- B. So this story isn't just about an ancient man with an ancient disease... It's also a story about ourselves! As we study about Naaman we learn timeless lessons about ourselves, our salvation, & roadblocks**

GREAT LESSONS FROM THE HEALING OF NAAMAN:

- A. Naaman's story was a nearly tragic one because of some major mistakes in his thinking:**
1. Naaman seemed to be travelling along through life unconcerned until something tragic grabbed his attention and caused him to start searching for an answer:
 - a. We don't know much about Naaman – but we know he had achieved great significance in life. However, none of this mattered because Naaman was a man who had leprosy.
 - b. From the story maybe we may can assume some things – He probably had lived most of his life feeling quite self sufficient, he probably had not sought the will of a prophet of God before, and he likely was very caught up achieving physical success in life
 - c. Did God cause leprosy in this man to get his attention? Did God bring the servant girl from Israel into his presence with purpose? Certainly the specifics we cannot be sure, but we know the story is preserved for a reason and God is working throughout it!
 2. Naaman approached seeking God's healing according to what thought was best instead of what God thought was best! **(2 Kings 5:9-11)**
 - a. His logic did not match God's logic... Since he would not set aside his own logic, he nearly walked away refusing to be healed from leprosy – A near certain death sentence!
 - b. Can you see him riding in his chariot to Israel dreaming of what his healing would be like?
 - c. Naaman went into this situation prejudiced – He was not ready to hear what Elisha's words since he'd already dreamed up certain expectations... These formed a great barrier!
 3. In Naaman's story we see that Naaman's biggest problem was not a deadly and highly contagious physical disease, but it was the deadly and contagious spiritual disease of pride! **(2 Kings 5:11-12)**
 - a. Naaman was a great man, who had a great amount of money, who commanded a great army, which belonged to a great country... Greatly impacted his expectations in life!
 - b. Why would Naaman be willing to dip in the rivers of Damascus instead of the Jordan river? He says it himself... those rivers are better! Naaman was seeking something grander!

- c. His problem wasn't a lack of faith in Elisha's ability to heal... His problem was with the method Elisha chose! He'd do or accept anything from him... anything great that is!
- d. Do you think a poor slave would question dipping in the Jordan seven times? No, in fact, Naaman's servants seem baffled by his rejection. So what's his problem? PRIDE!
- 4. When he heard the instructions of the prophet of God, he went away in a rage! **(2 Kings 5:12)**
 - a. Why is Naaman so deeply angry? He was offended by the treatment he received and had traveled all this way with money to pay. You can see his rage brewing, him pulling off spinning the chariot wheels, & shouting in disgust about to anyone who'd listen!
 - b. Why couldn't it be done another way? Why did it have to involve water? Why not a river that is cleaner? Why not something spectacular? It just didn't make sense to him!
 - c. When I read the words of his servants in the next verse, it makes me think that they are even shocked by his rejection & anger. Why not go ahead & do what was so simple?
- 5. His story would have been a tragic one had he not taken on a more humble spirit **(2 Kings 5:13-14)**
 - a. There doesn't seem to be any pride in this man any longer – He finally sets aside his own lofty ideas and desires and listens to his lowly servants... maybe they're right after all
 - b. Naaman also shows humility by turning back to the Jordan River in complete obedience to Elisha's words... He had to develop a heart of acceptance to the ways of the Lord!
 - c. In this we see repentance in Naaman – You see before he had "turned and went away" from the river Jordan and now he is turning and going toward the river Jordan!
 - d. You see, Naaman's flesh wasn't the only thing that had been restored "like... a little child" that day – His mind and his heart had been transformed as well! **(Matthew 18:2-4)**
- 6. Some of the same things that hindered Naaman from coming to God's physical healing keeps people today from coming to God's spiritual healing **(Romans 10:1-4)**
 - a. How sad it is that we have to have something tragic bring us to our knees for us to give our attention to God! Don't wait for pain and helplessness to humble you and bring you to start looking outside of yourself for the answers for life, your sins, & your eternity!
 - b. If we are to find spiritual healing for our greatest spiritual diseases, we're going to have to stop seeking it man's way and start seeking it God's way! Sadly, too many people turn away from God's healing saying the same thing as Naaman, "Behold I thought!"
 - c. Is pride hindering you from obeying the gospel? Is pride keeping you from letting God mold your life fully according to His will? We may think Naaman was being absurd for His unwillingness to do what was so simple, but how often are we guilty of the same?
 - d. When we hear the instructions of God do we react with anger? Maybe we what we find isn't what we expected, maybe it goes against our own logic, maybe it goes against some desires we have. It takes humility to set those aside to accept God's will!

C. Naaman's story would have been a tragic one, had it not been for the witness of a little slave girl:

- 1. It is easy in studying the account of Naaman's healing to overlook one of the most important characters in the account: A little slave girl **(2 Kings 5:2)**
 - a. Due to Israel's unfaithfulness God would allow and even cause foreign nations to come in and conduct "raids" on Israel – During these small wars their city could be trashed, possessions stolen, crops destroyed, and people killed or carried off to be slaves
 - b. Now here's a little girl who knew the pain of this oppression all too well – Carried away from home by a foreign army, forced to be a slave, away from all family & friends

- c. Don't miss the point that it's a LITTLE girl – Now she's old enough to know who Elisha was & have faith in God, but she's still young enough to be called a little girl... That's sad!
- 2. Naaman's story would have certainly ended with his tragic, painful, and untimely death had it not been for this one little servant girl who was willing to speak of her faith! **(2 Kings 5:3-4)**
 - a. Just the fact that she would offer any information at all to Naaman shows that something was special about this girl! She was taken as a captive by his army, was forced to be a slave, and yet she's still gracious enough to tell him of God's power through Elisha!
 - b. It would've been easy to just sit on this information wouldn't it? To think that he's getting what he deserved. Naaman would have never been cured if she hadn't spoken up!
 - c. And yet this little servant girl is anonymous to us! We know Naaman, we know Elisha, and while the names of the kings of Israel and Syria aren't given here, we can figure them out too. To us she may be anonymous, but this girl is most certainly known by God!
- 3. The slave girl reminds us that God doesn't need a strong and influential person to carry out His will... He can use anyone to do great things who will humbly carry out His will **(1 Cor 1:5-9)**
- 4. How many Naaman's do we know out there... If we do not speak up to them, pointing them to the source of spiritual healing, who is going to show them way? **(Romans 10:14)**

D. Naaman's story was only nearly tragic because he was healed through the grace and mercy of God:

- 1. Naaman was certainly a great man, but did he really deserve to be healed by God? **(2 Kings 5:1)**
 - a. From the eyes of the Syrian people, he probably deserved healing... He was their Winston Churchill or General Patton. He won many victories for his nation. I'm sure Syrians were filled with patriotism and hope at the sight of his face or sound of his voice!
 - b. From the eyes of human reasoning, he probably deserved healing... He was a man of honor, a great military leader, and very courageous... Rare qualities among men!
 - c. Even from more spiritual eyes, you could argue that he may have deserved healing... For God had been using Naaman well to accomplish His purpose among the nations
 - d. Yet Naaman was still human – He had a disease of time and chance, was mortal like all others, and was a sinner like everyone else. He didn't deserve any mercy and grace, especially after his display of pride and anger at the Lord's plan for his healing!
- 2. Jesus referred to Naaman as being the exception and not the rule when it comes to being healed from leprosy. Additionally his point here is that Naaman was a foreigner at that! **(Luke 4:27)**
- 3. When Naaman finally submitted in his heart and in his obedience, God responded providing him with complete healing **(2 Kings 5:13-14)**
 - a. Where'd the power come from? Was it in Naaman's obedience? Was it in the water of the Jordan? Neither! The power came from God. The submissive obedience was God's requirement of man & the water was the way God chose to bring the healing to him
 - b. No one would contend that Naaman earned his healing – Money couldn't buy it and his prestige couldn't deserve it... This healing was from the grace & mercy of God!
- 4. We see ourselves in Naaman's story, but our healing is far more impressive. We too have been healed by grace and mercy, but what we've been healed from is spiritual death! **(Eph 2:8-10)**
- 5. What's also interesting is that healing for Naaman came through water, rescue for Noah came through water, and God has chosen for our salvation to come through water **(1 Pet 3:20-21)**
- 6. Like Naaman, the healing is available and God's plan for us is quite simple to understand. Will we turn away rejecting it, or humbly accept His instructions. We learn from Naaman that the failure to obey God will cost you the thing you seek the most!