

Come to God *His* Way

Michael Heiss—April 18, 2015

Good morning, everyone! How many times have we heard it said, and how many times has Fred pointed out, that when you come before God you do it *God's* way. You come to God on *His* terms, not our terms. A man like Cain never learned that lesson. He didn't come before God *God's* way!

This morning we're going to look at a man who actually finally did do it *God's* way. He was a mighty Gentile, a great general serving under the king of Syria. God actually loved this man, and yes, he was a bit arrogant. We're going to see a fascinating story of this man Naaman.

2-Kings 5:1: "Now, Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and exalted man with his master because the LORD had given deliverance to Syria by him. He was also a mighty man, *but* a leper."

Don't think that he had what we call the terrible disease of leprosy. This word 'leper' covers a rash or skin diseases. So, you could have any kind of a rash and the word could be translated leprosy. It's not really the leprosy that we think of in terms of leprosy, but an unsightly rash.

You'll notice that it's given at the end of the sentence. Rabbinic scholars are really pretty sharp when it comes to understanding the meaning of various Hebrew words and the way they're located in sentences. I think they're correct in this one.

The way it's constructed, they say, is that he was a man who tended to put people down, a man who had a highly exalted opinion of himself. Of course, he really had something to be exalted about, in a way. Not like Sir Winston Churchill who, when he met a particular individual and was told that this man was modest, replied, 'I never met a man who was more modest to be about.' Naaman was a great man.

Verse 2: "And the Syrians had gone out by companies and captured a young girl out of the land of Israel...." Syria wanted to make forays into Israel and capture people. Syria was big and strong; Israel was not quite so big and strong.

"...And she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said to her mistress, 'I wish my lord *were* with the prophet in Samaria, for he would heal him of his leprosy!'.... [the prophet was Elisha] ...When *Naaman* came in he told his lord, saying..." (vs 2-4). There's a gap between vs 3 and 4 because Naaman is now coming into the king. Between

those two verses was a conversation that took place between Naaman, the servant, and Naaman's wife.

"... 'Thus and so said 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.' And he departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing.... [kind of a small fortune] ... And he came in *with* the letter to the king of Israel, saying, 'And now when this letter has come to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you. And you shall heal him of his leprosy'" (vs 4-6). And the king almost fainted; he was beside himself!

Verse 7: "And it came to pass 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 to me to recover a man from his leprosy?....'" *He's against me; he's trying to insight a war with me. He's trying to get me to do something for his commander and I can't do it, and it will be an excuse to invade my country.*

"...For consider now, and see, for he is seeking a quarrel with me" (v 7). The king of Israel was beside himself. Finally, word got to Elisha as to what was going on.

Verse 8: "Now, it came to pass 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 now come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.'" *Oh, king, don't fret yourself over this thing, send him to me and I'll take care of it. He shall know that there's a prophet in Israel.* The king of Israel went 'Whew! Go to Elisha; here's his address! Go!' *He went!*

Verse 9: "And Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha."

What would you expect was going to happen? Did not Elisha know this great commander from Syria was coming to him? *Yes!* Naaman came with his chariot and entourage and cried out 'Company, halt!' What did Elisha do? Did Elisha come out to greet him? Did Elisha say, 'Oh, great general, come and I shall call upon the great God and He shall send lightning across the skies and you shall be healed.' *No!* He sent his hired servant out to him.

Verse 10: "Then Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, 'Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you

shall be clean.” Naaman had a tizzy-fit! He was furious! He was going to go away.

Verse 11: “But Naaman was angry, and went away. And he said, ‘Behold, I said within myself, “He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God and strike his hand over the place and heal the leper.” Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?’ And he turned and went away in a rage” (vs 11-12). ***He wasn’t going to do it God’s way!***

I have to admit that the Jordan River doesn’t have much to recommend itself, it’s a dirty river. ‘And I’m going to dip myself seven times in that mess? Not a chance!’ Thankfully, for him, his servants had a little more wisdom:

Verse 13: “And his servants came near and spoke to him and said, ‘My father... [notice the reverence they had for the general] ... *if* the prophet had told you *to do* a great thing, would you not have done *it*? How much rather then, when he says to you, “Wash and be clean?”’” We have to read between the lines here, because the Bible is a very, very short, concise book and leaves out a lot of detail.

You can image that Naaman’s thinking about it. ‘All right, I’ll try it.’ Verse 14: “Then he went down...” And there’s the Jordan and he’s looking at it and thinking to himself: ‘I’m going to dip myself seven times in that?’ But he did, holding his nose: once, twice, three, four, five, six, seven times. He gets up and looks at his hands and his servants look at him. The old *King James* translates it ‘astonied.’ Believe me, they were all *astonied!*

Verse 14: “Then he went down and dipped seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God. And his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little boy, and he was clean.” ***He did it God’s way!*** God instructed him, and he did it reluctantly, I agree and admit it, but he gritted his teeth and did it.

Then what did he do? ‘Aha! Mission accomplished; I shall return to my Lord the king of Syria.’ No, he didn’t. There was something about Naaman. He wasn’t just an arrogant character. God saw something in him or God would have never worked through him.

Verse 15: “And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company. And he came and stood before him. And he said...” [when you read the next sentence, think of another great Gentile king—a king of kings, a man great and powerful—Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4)—and see what attitude was. Think of these parallel events:

“...‘Behold, **now I know that *there is no God on all the earth, but in Israel.*** So accept now a present from your servant.” (v 15). Naaman the great general of Syria comes before Elisha and says, ‘Behold, your servant.’ He understood what had happened and had humility in spite of his tendencies at times to put people down.

Not now! Elisha said that he would know that there was a prophet in Israel. More than that, he learned that there was a God in Israel! “...accept now a present from your servant.”

Verse 16: “But he said, ‘As the LORD lives, before Whom I stand, I will receive none.’ And he urged him to take it, but he refused.”

Verse 18: “In this thing may the LORD pardon your servant, that when my master goes to the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he is supported by my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, may the LORD pardon your servant in this thing.” In other world, in going into a pagan god, he’s not worshiping that god. He knows that god is nothing, but it’s his duty as a servant of the king to assist his king.

What would you think if someone came to you and said, ‘May I go to this pagan shrine and help my king, my master’? What did Elisha say?

Verse 19: “And he said to him, ‘Go in peace.’...” In essence, Elisha said ‘Okay, fair enough, you’re not worshiping that god, you’re simply serving your master.’ Interesting understanding of Elisha.

The whole point of this little message is that Naaman ***learned to come to God on God’s terms!*** When you come to God on His terms, it usually works out well. This story has a happy ending, because the man humbled himself before God. You might even remember Ahab. When he heard of the pronouncement against him, he humbled himself and went in sackcloth and ashes and took God by surprise. He didn’t expect it, and God said, ‘Okay, fair enough, I’ll hold off on My sentence.’ Read this sometime at your leisure and compare it with Nebuchadnezzar.

I ran across something that I thought I would read to you, that really has nothing to do with this message, but we all know that our God is a great God, the Master genius, the Master Designer of humankind, life and the universe. This God—our God—even had it down to our eyelashes. I didn’t know this, but I thought I would read it to you, about eyelashes; God thought of everything:

Eyelashes Grow to Just the Right Length to Shield Your Eyes
(articles.mercola.com/sites)

How Your Eyelashes Keep Your Eyes Safe by DR. Mercola (May 28, 2015)

Your eyes are vulnerable to viral, bacterial, fungal and even parasitic infections. Your tear duct system offers some protection against invaders by coating your eye in a thin layer of mucus, oil, and water. This keeps your eyelid and cornea lubricated and helps remove foreign particles.

Your eyelashes are the next line of defense. They help to keep dust and other debris from falling in your eyes, and they also act as sensors, causing your eyes to blink if an object gets too close. According to a study published in the Journal of the Royal Society Interface:

Your Lashes Are the Perfect Length to Protect Your Eyes

Eyelashes are not unique to humans, of course. All mammals have wet eyes and need eyelashes to not only protect from debris but also control airflow and rate of evaporation on the surface of the cornea.

That I did not know!

In a study of 22 mammals, including humans, researchers found that most eyelashes are one-third the length of the eye, which turns out to be just the right length to minimize airflow over the eyeball. According one study author, Dr. David Hu from the Georgia Institute of Technology:

“As short lashes grew longer, they reduced air flow, creating a layer of slow-moving air above the cornea. This kept the eye moist for a longer time and kept particles away. The majority of air...

Not in a storm, a blinding sand storm or wind storm, forget it, all bets are off. You still have to protect yourself. But normal walking and talking:

...essentially hit the eyelashes and rolled away from the eye.”

Protecting the eye so it doesn't dry out from the flow of air.

Our Creator had it down pat to the point where He even perfected eyelashes to protect our eyes. ***How great He is!***

Scriptural References:

2 Kings 5:1-16, 18-19

Scripture referenced, not quoted: Daniel 4

Also referenced: Article:

How Your Eyelashes Keep Your Eyes Safe by DR. Mercola; May 28, 2015
(articles.mercola.com/sites)

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Transcribed: 4-26-15

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