

Lesson 18 - The little servant girl and the proud general **The little slave girl and Naaman, from 2 Kings 5**

The Jesus Storybook Bible - pgs. 136 -143

Lesson

In the story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5, notice how everyone with power and worldly status is oblivious to matters concerning salvation, while the servants and underlings show wisdom concerning it. This reversal is a major pattern in the Bible.

But the main point of this story is that salvation and a relationship with God is not something you achieve — it is something you receive. You do not need to prove your worth. You just get it. You don't have to go on some sort of quest. You receive it by grace. This is threatening to some people — Naaman being a perfect example.

Naaman, a Syrian general, is stricken with leprosy. He hears via a young slave girl about the powerful God of Israel, so he goes to Israel to seek healing and salvation. You can tell by the text that Naaman understands himself to be on a quest. He goes with gold and treasure to purchase whatever he needs, with a sword ready to do some great deed because he is a man of prowess and valor, and with letters of recommendations from his king.

When he arrives at the prophet's house, Elisha doesn't even come out to meet him. Instead, the servant of Elisha tells Naaman to go wash in the Jordan River. Naaman is absolutely furious, and he goes away angry. His servants go after him and say, "If the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?" And that is the point! Naaman is like all people — if there is salvation, we are going to earn it. We have to prove our worth; we have to bring out our sword; we have to do some great deed; we have to be good people.

Naaman expected Elisha to tell him to perform some incredible feat or to purchase his healing at great cost or to recount all the things he had done to deserve it. He surely thinks, "Any idiot can wash in the Jordan River; any child can wash in the Jordan River. What kind of God sets the bar of salvation so low?"

The answer is that we have a God so incredibly loving that salvation is all of grace. But that bar is actually not low. Naaman thinks it is too low for him, but it is actually too high for him.

There are two things that the offer of free grace demands you give up. It demands and requires that you lose your pride, because you have to admit you are a sinner and need to be saved by grace. It also demands that you give up

control of your life. If you could win your salvation or the kingdom or eternal life through some great quest, then you would have your rights. But if you owe absolutely everything to God's mercy, then you owe him everything, your whole life.

Pride and control are both characteristics Naaman personified. But he had to give up both of them to receive the free grace that was being offered to him. And why is it that Naaman is saved? It is because he has a suffering servant in his life who forgives him — the little slave girl from Israel. In this story it is this little slave girl who points to the Suffering Servant who forgives us.

Memory Verse

The Lord has laid on him the sin of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

***Lesson taken from *The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum*, written by Sally Lloyd-Jones and Sam Shammas.

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