

PP Unsung Heroes of the Bible: No Age Limit Required

2 Kings 5:1-19

April 11-12, 2015

Series Introduction

When you think of the founding of our country, you likely think of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin

But then there was John Adams who wasn't tall and imposing like Washington, wasn't a lean and handsome renaissance man like Jefferson, or an inventor like Franklin, yet he played a key role in the founding of our country

He was assigned the privilege of putting together the Declaration of Independence, yet he gave the task to Jefferson, who was known for his writing skills

He was willing to let another man get the glory while he worked quietly behind the scenes
Very few if any of us will ever be famous

Our names may not be headed for the best seller lists and songs will probably not be sung by us or about us, but what we do for the kingdom of God can be great!

Leonard Bernstein once said that *the hardest instrument to play was the second violin, because no one wants to play second fiddle*

The series we begin today, is a series of the second fiddles who were incredibly influential in small yet significant ways

They were the John Adams of the Bible, content to be in the shadows of the great

We invite you along with us as we discover greatness that can happen just outside the limelight!

PP Story Overview

We are given a brief biographical sketch of a man named Naaman in **2 Kings 5**

“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.” 5:1

My bible just said his country was Syria, yours may read **Aram**...they are the same people
Syria was a region of people who descended from the youngest son of Shem (Noah), Aram

PP They occupied territory that God had given Abraham: ***“On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates’”*** **Genesis 15:18**

The Euphrates River cut through the region of Syria, so King David began to reclaim the land
God had given to them, eventually forcing Syria to submit

But after Israel's civil war, Syria, Aram, rebelled, setting off repeated times of conflict and
cease-fires, not too unlike the modern middle East today

How interesting it is that God had given Naaman, the commander of His people's enemy, victory
His ways are higher than ours, He always has a purpose for what He does

But the plotline of this story takes a dramatic turn near the end of verse 1

Naaman was a great man, highly favored by his king, mighty man of courage, victorious because
of God, ***‘but he was a leper’***

To be clear, no one knows if this is a skin infection like psoriasis, ringworm, or if it is full-blown
leprosy called Hansen's disease

Lepers were common all through Israel and the world during this period of history

All 59 verses of Leviticus 13 are dedicated to the treatment of lepers, protecting the community
Experts have found the disease in Egyptian mummies, so it is believed it started there, where the
Egyptians once lived

It is contagious, spreads through air, bodily contact or even clothes that carry the bacteria
It usually starts with a white, pinkish patch of skin, typically on the nose, ear, forehead or face
As it spreads, eyebrows and eyelashes disappear, then spongy tumorous growths begin on the
face, spreading around the entire body

It progresses and attacks the larynx so that the leper speaks with a harsh, grating voice
It invades bone marrow, preventing blood supply, so bones shrivel and the nose, toes and fingers
begin to be reabsorbed into the body

Eyes go blind, and teeth fall out, but this horror is even worse with what I'm about to explain
Leprosy is so destructive because it attacks the nerve pathways so that neural impulses cannot be
transmitted to the brain and the result is the inability to feel pain and injury

A cut goes unnoticed, becomes infected, spreads to gangrene

You could often smell an approaching leper before you could see him from their rotting flesh
It was a death sentence, and it struck terror in the hearts of everyone around the entire world
It's the extent of what Naaman will do that convinces me that he has Hansen's disease

The entire verse turns on this word 'but' ... ***'but he had leprosy'***

I think we all have them, *'thorns in our flesh'* that make us realize our need for God's grace
He had something beyond his control that touched every area of his life and bowed him down
So low that he was willing to listen to the advice of a little foreign slave girl

She told him about a prophet in Israel who can cure him, so, ***"So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing."*** 5

Just this past Tuesday, silver was valued at \$16.82/troy ounce and gold at \$1,212/troy ounce

PP Ten talents of silver = 8,448 ounces which today would be valued at \$142,095

PP 6,000 shekels of gold = 2,400 ounces which is valued today at \$2,06,400

PP Let's price a change of high-end clothing, low, at \$1,000, so 10 changes at \$10,000

PP (All 4 on once slide) Altogether, what Naaman brought Elisha was valued at **\$3,058,495**

This is a lot of wealth... desperate times call for desperate measures!

But it reveals the pagan belief system of Naaman, a pay per miracle belief system

The costlier the gift, the greater the chances of getting the god to do what you desperately wanted
Not much different than what prosperity preachers all over the world teach and practice today

The truth is, anything good God does for us, is because of His inexhaustible grace

Naaman would be saved the same way everyone is: ***"For by grace you have been saved through***

PP ***faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*** Ephesians 2:8-9

He arrived in Samaria, the capital of Israel, appeared before King Joram with his appeal, but the
faithless king threw up his hands, thinking Syria was trying to provoke him to war

But Elisha, the prophet of God sent word: ***'Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel'*** 5:8

Naaman took his entourage and gifts and arrived at Elisha's door, but Elisha wouldn't even come
talk to him, instead he sent a messenger to him with instructions to wash 7 times in the
Jordan River, 25 miles away

Naaman furiously turns around to go home, nothing had gone the way he expected

The prophet didn't come out *'to me'* 5:11

He didn't call on *'his God'* and wave his hands over the place and cure it

Water won't work, this is leprosy, not a stain!!

And then his pride surfaces more clearly: my rivers back home are better than any water in Israel
Friends, Naaman's problem was much more deadly than leprosy, for leprosy is one of the bible's
favorite metaphors for the disease of our souls called sin

Sin is a spiritual infection that numbs the conscience, corrupts the soul, spreads and destroys!

His pride was the stench betraying the infection in his heart

But his servants plead with him to trust the prophet, to believe in what he said

So Naaman went to the Jordan, dipped 7 times, and his flesh was restored, the leprosy was gone,
but infinitely more important, he was saved eternally

The evidence of that appears in **verse 15**, *"Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant."*

He presents a present, not to pay for salvation, but to express gratitude for it

But Elisha turns it down, turns down 3 million, for money has no hold in his heart

In the next chapter, Syria besieged Israel, causing a famine so severe that a donkey's head, an
unclean animal, sold for 80 shekels of silver, and the dung from a dove for 5 shekels of
silver, which may have been the name of a plant

3 million would have come in handy

Well, there is more to this story that you can read, but we haven't yet looked at our unsung hero
We leapfrogged over her, but now we return, and meet her in verses 2-3

"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." 2-3

She peeks from the shadows long enough for us to meet her, but not long enough to learn her
name, or discover a great deal about her

But what we have is enough to strengthen each of us to be faithful where God has put us!

PP 1-She let go of the past

"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 was part of the spoils of a successful war-time raid

Marauding forces would attack border towns with one main objective: *capturing slaves*

And whether she was given to Naaman when they divided their spoils, or he purchased her, she
was his wife's servant

She was taken from her parents, her village, her people, her culture and abducted

She wasn't holding on to that, seeking vengeance, gloating over the leprosy of Naaman

She wasn't enslaved to her past, refusing to let go of unforgiveness or hatred

She lived with the same mindset that the Jewish people would have to learn to have when God
allowed them to be defeated and deported to Babylon

PP *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their*

produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” **Jeremiah 29:4-7**

She was seeking the welfare of Naaman, with a genuine heart of love
 She is a slave in his home, a servant girl, yet she yearned for, hoped for her master's welfare
 This is love, this is powerfully convincing to the world of a heart changed by grace!

Friends, are you unchained from your past?
 Has grace allowed you to let go and forgive something terrible that was done against you?
 Unforgiveness is a prison where there is no love, and some die in it, wreaking physical,
 emotional and spiritual destruction
 This is one of several character qualities of this little girl that make her so amazing and such an
 example for us

PP 2-She was faithful in the present

“She said to her mistress, “Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.” **2 Kings 5:3**

It is not always the way of God for salvation to occur by one person sharing the good news
 And not always, does each person share the whole good news
 I find it so wonderful to realize that God often does not just use one person in a person's
 salvation, and that each of those people do not need to know all the answers
 If it wasn't for this servant girl, where would Naaman have been?
 I'll tell you where, sooner than later, dead
 For leprosy always spreads
 If it wasn't his death, he was headed toward infamy, separation, seclusion and rejection
 She didn't tell Naaman how he could be cured, or know where the leprosy had come from
 She simple, wonderfully, beautifully told him who could cure him
 She had no theology degree, didn't work on the staff of a church, or read dozens of books on
 evangelism, she simply pointed Naaman in the direction of one who could help

PP 3-She was confident for the future

Listen to her confidence... *“She said to her mistress, ‘Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.’”*

She didn't say he might cure Naaman, but he could, fact!

Friends, how did she know any of this?

PP Listen to what Jesus said about this time period: *“And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”* **Luke 4:27**

So how did this little Jewish girl know that Naaman, could be healed?

Furthermore, think about this, why would she put any confidence in a prophet of God anyways?

Where was God when she was ripped from her family?

Friends, faith is a gift from God, it doesn't really make logical sense at all

If you are waiting to make sense of God, and salvation, you will die in suspense

Faith is a gift from God, something that Jesus authors and perfects

I cannot see any other explanation for how this little girl with all her experiences, could have believed to the point she would encourage her master to see the prophet in Samaria

What if she was wrong and Elisha couldn't heal her master and he came home humiliated and full of despair?

Friends, without doubt, she had been taught the stories of God's redemption in Israel

Parents, do not lose confidence in what you have taught your children of God?

Double down and teach them all the more, and connect life to God as often as you can

PP *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."*

Proverbs 22:6

Proverbs are not necessarily promises, but assurances of what will normally happen when we obey God

Often, the greatest faith can be seen in the young, and this little girl believed and witnessed!

If you are hearing me today and you are young, listen to the Apostle Paul's words to you

PP *"Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12*

By God's grace, let go of the past, be faithful in the present, and confident for the future

Be an unsung hero and do great things for God's kingdom!

No Age limit required!

Pray