**A GRATEFUL SOLDIER AND A GREEDY SERVANT**

2 Kings 5:15-27

Key Verse 15

 “Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.””

**Introduction**



 In the previous passage, Elisha invited Naaman by saying, “Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.” Elisha saw this as an opportunity to reveal the God of Israel to the Gentiles. If this one important person from Aram met the God of Israel, it would have a great impact on his nation and beyond. So Elisha took the initiative to invite Naaman to come to him. Elisha was sure that God could heal Naaman’s leprosy. Although Naaman was proud in the beginning, he curbed his pride and obeyed what Elisha said. Then his leprosy was healed. Today’s passage is about what happened next. We will focus on how to be a grateful general instead of being a greedy servant.

1. Read verses 15-19a. What did Naaman do when he had been healed? (15) Why did Elisha refuse his gift? (16) What was his first request and why? (17) What was his second request? (18) What can we learn from the God of Elisha who granted his request? (19a)

1-1, Read verses 15-19a.

 Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.”

16 The prophet answered, “As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.” And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.

17 “If you will not,” said Naaman, “please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. 18 But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant for this.”

1-2, What did Naaman do when he had been healed? (15)

 ***Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.”***

* Naaman realized that the God of Israel was the only true God. In the past he thought that the God of Israel was just one of many gods.
* He thought that the god he was serving, Rimmon, was greater than all the other gods. When he contracted leprosy, he might have prayed to Rimmon to heal him.
* “They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand.” (Isa 44:18)
* Naaman obeyed the prophet of the God of Israel, he was completely healed. So he realized that the God of Israel was the only true God.
* All other gods are nothing but man-made idols. Only the God of Israel, the living God, can solve our practical problems.
* When we simply obey God’s word we can experience the power of God and know God very personally.
* When Naaman obeyed God he gained much more than the healing of his leprosy. He came to know the living God personally.
* He came back to Elisha to confess his faith and to thank God by giving an offering. He was like the one leper out of the ten Jesus healed who came back to thank Jesus ([Luke 17:12-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/luke/17/12-19/s_990012)). He was also a foreigner, like the one thankful leper.
* He felt it was appropriate to support the ministry of this man of God whom the LORD had used so greatly to bring healing.

1-3, Why did Elisha refuse his gift? (16)

***16 The prophet answered, “As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.” And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.***

* It was because it was better for him not to accept a gift from Naaman in order to teach him the value of God’s grace.
* His healing came only by God’s grace through his obedience. It was impossible to repay this grace with money or a gift.

1-4, What was his first request and why? (17)

 ***“If you will not,” said Naaman, “please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord.***

* Like many new believers, Naaman was superstitious in his faith. He held the common opinion of the ancient world, that particular deities had power over particular places.
* He thought that if he took a piece of Israel back with him to Syria, he could better worship the God of Israel.
* "The transporting of holy soil was a widespread custom. Naaman's faith was yet untaught.
* Elisha may have felt that whenever he saw Israelite soil, he might have been reminded of his cleansing and new relationship to God.

1-5, What was his second request? (18)

***18 But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant for this.”***

* This signifies Naaman’s decision to worship the God of Israel; he would not serve Rimmon anymore. However, there was a problem.
* From time to time he had to escort his master into the worship area for Rimmon and bow down together with him. This was not right in the sight of the Lord. So he asked to be forgiven in advance for doing so.

1-6, What can we learn from the God of Elisha who granted his request? (19a)

 ***“Go in peace,” Elisha said.***

* Elisha understood him and sent him back, saying, “Go in peace.” Naaman met the living God personally through his obedience.
* Now he decided to serve God only. He wanted to bear God’s grace. This one man’s decision of faith had a great impact on his country.
* By generally approving but not saying specifically "yes" or "no," it seems that Elisha left the matter up to Naaman and God.
* Perhaps he trusted that the LORD would personally convict Naaman of this and give him the integrity and strength to avoid idolatry.
* Similarly, we may help our Bible students to rely on the spirit of God instead of trying to give all directions in advance. We trust God and can give them some space to grow their personal faith as some necessary challenge is on the way.
1. Read verses 19b-24. What did Gehazi say to himself after Naaman left? (19b-20) What actions did he take in order to take gifts from him? (21-24) What does this reveal about him?

2-1, Read verses 19b-24.

 After Naaman had traveled some distance, 20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, “My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”

21 So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. “Is everything all right?” he asked.

22 “Everything is all right,” Gehazi answered. “My master sent me to say, ‘Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent[d] of silver and two sets of clothing.’”

23 “By all means, take two talents,” said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. 24 When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left.

2-2, What did Gehazi say to himself after Naaman left? (19b-20)

***After Naaman had traveled some distance, 20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, “My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”***

* After Naaman left, Gehazi thought that Elisha should receive something because he had saved Naaman’s life.
* To serve him freely, just letting him go, seemed foolish to Gehazi. He complained in his heart against his master, the servant of God. His root problem was greed.
* He must have been shocked that his master refused to take such handsome gifts. He figured that he should benefit from such an opportunity, and he should take the initiative to run after Naaman and take something from him.
* Gehazi thought that Elisha deserved a reward. He also became exactly what Elisha avoided becoming a taker instead of being a giver.

2-3, What actions did he take in order to take gifts from him? (21-24)

2-4, What does this reveal about him?

***21 So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. “Is everything all right?” he asked.***

***22 “Everything is all right,” Gehazi answered. “My master sent me to say, ‘Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent[d] of silver and two sets of clothing.’” 23 “By all means, take two talents,” said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. 24 When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left.***

* When he saw the tremendous gift, greed prompted him to take action to run in a hurry after Naaman. Then he lied to Naaman, misusing Elisha’s name.
* It required two servants to carry these two talents about 120 Lbs in weight. He deliberately hid them from Elisha. It means that he knew that he did wrong!
1. Read verses 25-27. What did Elisha ask Gehazi? (25a) What was his answer? (25b) How was he cursed? (26-27) What can we do to avoid the sin of greed and coveting? (1Timothy 6:6-10, Romans 7:7, 25)

3-1, Read verses 25-27.

 When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?”

“Your servant didn’t go anywhere,” Gehazi answered.

26 But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves? 27 Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.” Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.

3-2, What did Elisha ask Gehazi? (25a)

 ***When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?”***

3-3, What was his answer? (25b)

***“Your servant didn’t go anywhere,” Gehazi answered.***

3-4, How was he cursed? (26-27)

***26 But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves? 27 Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.” Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.***

* Elisha knew him in person. “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you?”
* With more questions, Elisha made it clear that it is the wrong time to take money or to accept clothes.
* In this way Elisha exposed his greedy heart by mentioning money, clothing, olive groves, vineyards, and so on.
* As a man in the ministry, Gehazi was under a stricter judgement. When he allowed himself to covet what Naaman had, God allowed him to keep the riches.
* But he was cursed with leprosy that appeared to be more serious than Naaman’s. He and his descendants were cursed together.
* We see a pagan who by an act of faith is cured of leprosy and an Israelite who by an act of dishonor is cursed the most!

3-5, What can we do to avoid the sin of greed and coveting? (1Timothy 6:6-10, Romans 7:7, 25)

***1Timothy 6:6-10 - But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.***

***Romans 7:7, 25 - What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”***

***25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!***

***So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.***

* Gehazi was a servant of Elisha. He had a great privilege to learn the God of Elisha, as Elisha had learned the God of Elijah. But he did not.
* Instead he became greedy for material things. In our times, many people think greed is good because it motivates them to work hard.
* However, the Bible says greed is idolatry (Col 3:5b). Greed is a source of all other sins. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
* Gehazi’s greed led him to gain some silver and clothes, but in fact, he lost everything: his spiritual identity, his conscience, his spiritual blessing, and his health. He also became a source of grief to his descendants.

**Conclusion**

 Sin is more serious than leprosy. Sin robs us of God’s glorious image. No material things can compensate for this. Sin makes us miserable. But when we come to Jesus and confess our sins, Jesus washes us with his precious blood. He restores God’s image in us. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ! So let’s come to Jesus and His crucifixion by denying our own ideas, and be washed in the blood of Jesus and cleansed of our sins. Then we can live a happy and victorious life instead!

**One word: Where have you been, Gehazi?**