

NAAMAN THE LEPER

By Pastor Fougere Gordon

Introduction: The coronavirus pandemic brought fear and worries in the hearts of several families that became a victim of COVID-19. Many churches had to close their doors when various members reported they had tested positive for the disease. While recuperating from the disease, people were forced to isolate themselves until they recovered. People, in general, were fearful about coming into contact with anyone that was confirmed as being COVID-19 positive. That experience of being considered “untouchable” was not only troubling not knowing if they will survive this pandemic, but also humiliating since people were taking extra precaution not to be around those infected. The issue of pandemics is not new. As you read the word of God, you will find that the Bible talked about various plagues that had touched the lives of many people. The destructive nature of those plagues back in the biblical days was just as devastating as the COVID-19 pandemic. Leprosy was considered to be a deadly plague that everyone feared. The Bible tells us that when an individual had leprosy, they were forced to cover their faces and cry out, “unclean, unclean”. Those with leprosy were rejected by society and they were usually banished away from the local population to prevent the disease from spreading. Miriam, the sister of Moses had leprosy when she murmured against Moses. Gehazi ended up with leprosy because of his greed. Also, King Uzziah defied the high priest by entering the temple of God to burn incense. Today, we will talk about Naaman, a Syrian General that ended up being a victim of leprosy. The key point the Lord wants us to focus on is that there are some situations we face

that our connections, high powered positions, wealth, and influence will not be able to save us. There are some situations we may face that will require us to seek God's mercy and support.

Sermon text: 2 King 5:1-7: "*“Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor but a leper. And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. Then she said to her mistress, “If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.” And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, “This is what the girl from the land of Israel said.” Then the king of Syria said, “Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” So Naaman departed. He took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy. And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me.”*”

Message: Naaman was the general in charge of the entire Syrian army. He was a dedicated and loyal and brave soldier who was admired and respected by the Syrian King. God had his hand on Naaman and allowed him to win victory after victory on the battlefield. The soldiers under his command trusted him because of his outstanding leadership, his wonderful personality, and his ability to win wars. Naaman, however, had a big problem since he was afflicted with leprosy which was in the early stages. It had not gotten to the point where it interfered with his job

performance, but if it got any worse, he would be forced to step down from his position.

Naaman was fully aware that having leprosy was a death sentence since there was no cure for that dreaded disease. The Syrian Army had gone on several raids, and in one instance, the army had captured an Israeli girl who was believed to be a teenager at the time. The girl ended up being a servant to Naaman's wife. This young maiden could have chosen to be angry and vindictive since she had been uprooted from her homeland and the parents that she loved while being forced to work as a maid in a strange and foreign land. Instead of being bitter, she chose to make the best of the situation and to trust God. She was fully aware of the wonderful miracles God had performed to defend and support the nation of Israel by using the Prophet Elisha. Since that young maiden was working for Naaman's wife directly, it was a matter of time before she learned about the family secret involving Naaman's leprosy. She had faith that God had the power to heal Naaman and therefore told Naaman's wife if the general were to have an audience with the Prophet Elisha, he would be healed of his leprosy. It was no coincidence that God had strategically allowed that young lady to be in that household so that God's greater plan of showing his power to General Naaman could take place. Upon hearing that good news, Naaman's wife shared that information with her husband. Rather than make arrangements to go see the Prophet Elisha directly, Naaman went to the King of Syria to let him know about what that young lady had told him. Now the King of Syria was accustomed to dealing government to government officials, and therefore, wrote a letter directly to the King of Israel asking him to heal General Naaman. You must understand that the Syrian King was a pagan. He did not know God or had any knowledge about the Prophet Elisha. General Naaman went to see the King of Israel surrounded by a band of soldiers, chariots, and money with him. He intended to let the

King of Israel know that he was an important, powerful, and wealthy man. Naaman showed the King of Israel the letter the Syrian King had written. After reading the letter sent by the King of Syria, he was not happy with the demand made for him to heal General Naaman. At that time, there had been a truce between the two nations, and the King of Israel suspected that the Syrian King was asking for the impossible in order to have a reason to start a war. Elisha heard about Naaman's visit and the dilemma the King of Israel faced. Elisha told the King there was no need to panic since it was the Lord who had arranged for Naaman to come to Israel in order to reveal to him the power of the true and living God. General Naaman was directed to go see the Prophet Elisha and Naaman took his military force, chariots, servants, and money to Elisha's house with the expectation of being healed. The money was intended to pay for his healing. Elisha was not impressed with General Naaman's prestige, wealth, power, or authority. The prophet could care less about the fact that Naaman answered directly to the King of Syria. Naaman had to learn that God's blessing was not for sale. Further, God's mercy and grace were not something that could be earned because of the General's high-level position in life. Elisha did not bother to meet with the General, but instead, sent his associate pastor, Gehazi, to tell Naaman to go to the Jordan River, dipped seven times, and then would be healed. The general was furious that Elisha did not come in person to see him. Naaman was fuming that anyone would dare ask him to go bathe in the dirty river Jordan. Naaman had to learn that when someone comes before God, they had to come off their high horse and humbled themselves before the King of Glory. That was a difficult lesson for Naaman to learn and he was willing to forfeit his healing by allowing his pride to get in the way. Naaman felt it was beneath him to submit himself to the indignity of dipping seven times in the River Jordan. When he left huffing and puffing, Elisha did not run after him to

return. Elisha was not dependent on Naaman for his livelihood because he knew that God was his source; not man. Naaman's servants tried to reason with the General and urged him to obey the voice of the prophet. The general eventually got over his pride, went to the River Jordan, and dipped seven times. As a result, the Lord healed Naaman of leprosy. The general returned to the prophet and testified to the fact that he now knows that Jehovah God was the true and living God.

CONCLUSION: Sometimes we tend to forget that God is sovereign. What that means is that the Lord is Almighty and He is the one that calls the shot; not you, not me, not man. Naaman was an important man in the eyes of the world, but he failed to understand that when he comes before the King of Kings, there is a level playing field. The Lord is not impressed with our titles, our education, our accomplishments, our wealth, our connection, or our position in life. God does resist the proud but gives grace to the humble. Thank God that Naaman was able to listen to the voice of reason in order to get his healing. The Lord told him to dip in the Jordan River seven times. In the Bible, seven represents perfection or completeness. Had he allowed his pride, anger, and resentment to get in the way, he would have missed out on this tremendous blessing from the Lord. A lot was riding in Naaman's refusal to humble himself before Almighty God. This meant that Syria would have lost a tremendous general since he would no longer be able to serve as a result of his disease. God wants to bless, heal, and come to our rescue when we are in need. Naaman opted to use his influence by going to the King instead of God's servant to seek what he needed the most, healing for his body. The Lord had placed Elisha in the right position to help Naaman but that General had to learn not to look down on his chosen vessel as being inferior to him. When we need God's intervention, the Lord may send

even a child to serve as his vessel. We must be open to God's ways of doing things because he will choose the weak thing of the world to confound the wise. So, let us set aside our preconceived ideas on how God should do things. He is Lord and he will exercise his power as he sees fit. We simply have to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God so that he can do his wondrous works in our lives. Naaman's expectation that a lowly prophet would come and bow down to him and do his bidding did not line up with God's plan. God was Naaman's only hope because his position, power, prestige, and people that he knew in high places were completely powerless to help him. That was a bitter pill for Naaman to swallow. That is why the bible says that unless we humble ourselves as a little child, we will not be able to see the kingdom of God. This story had a happy ending and God was glorified in preserving Naaman's life. God had placed a young maiden in Naaman's life to be a blessing to him, but he was not aware of that. God will likewise place people in our path to help guide us to the will of the Master. Let us depend on God for our salvation instead of our wealth, power, education, and people we know in high places when we need deliverance. The King of Israel could not help Naaman but God is able. If we put our faith in man and our wealth, the ending will not be good. In God, all things are possible. So, let us be wise and seek God instead since He can give us life and to give us that life more abundantly.

Altar Call: