

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



Naaman's healing

Sara listened. Every night at just this time, a mournful sound echoed throughout the entire house — the sound of her mistress weeping. Perhaps she had some terrible problem. Whatever the cause, her mistress's hopelessness penetrated deep into Sara's own loneliness.

Everything had changed abruptly in Sara's life recently. Syrian forces had invaded the land of Israel and defeated the Hebrews. Sara had been taken from her own home and transported back to Syria, as if she were part of the spoils of war. And suddenly, here she was, a servant to the wife of an important Syrian general.

General Naaman was a wealthy man. He had won many important military victories, for which he had been rewarded handsomely by the king of Syria, who had given Naaman great honors and riches.

"I guess it could always be worse," Sara allowed. Naaman's wife was very kind to Sara. Because Naaman was away most of the time and the couple had no children, his wife had little to do to occupy her time. It wasn't long before Sara became like her mistress's own daughter. It saddened Sara to hear her crying. Tonight, she decided that she would do something about it.

Slowly, Sara crept down the hall to the quarters of her mistress. She looked in and saw the woman kneeling before a statue, which Sara supposed must be one of the many gods of Syria.

"Madam," Sara called softly, "I mean no disrespect, but may I do something for you?"

"Come here, my child," Sara's mistress replied, "I think not, but stay here with me for awhile, and perhaps my trouble won't seem so bad."

"What trouble?" Sara asked. "It is not for myself that I cry," answered her mistress, "but for my husband."

"Has he been killed?" Sara shuddered. "No," said the older woman through her tears, "but if something is not done soon, he surely will die. You see, Sara, Naaman has leprosy, and this disease is killing him very slowly. All of his military victories and all of his wealth are of no use to him. This leprosy has taken away his peace."

"And so you come before these gods every night and pray for a miracle?" Sara inquired. "Tell me, Madam, do these gods answer you?"

"No," her mistress replied sadly. "In my country," Sara began, "we worship only one God. There is a prophet named Elisha who lives in Samaria. He has healing powers given to him by our God. Elisha could cure your husband of his leprosy. I am certain if Naaman went to see him, he would be healed."

"Blessed be your God, Sara, for sending you to live in this household! Thank you, child," her mistress cried.

As soon as Naaman returned home, his wife told him about the prophet, Elisha. He dispatched a message to the king of Syria immediately.

"Go and visit this prophet, General Naaman," the king advised. I will provide you with a letter of introduction. It's the least I can do for you, after all of your services to our country."

The king of Israel received this letter a few days before Naaman was to arrive. "Why does this king send a leper to me to cure?" he cried. "I think he just seeks another cause to invade us!"

None of the king's servants could convince him otherwise, until Elisha finally heard about the whole ordeal. "There is nothing for you to fear," Elisha advised. "When Naaman comes, send him to me at once. He will see for himself that a true prophet of God lives here in Israel."

A few days later, Naaman stood in his chariot at Elisha's door. Surrounded by his officers and servants, Naaman had come loaded with presents of gold and silver.

Naaman, nervously waiting for Elisha to emerge, was certain that the prophet would come and lay hands on him and pray to his God. His leprosy would be gone forever. When only his servant returned a few moments later, Naaman was puzzled.

"Well, where is the prophet?" Naaman demanded.

"Sir," the servant replied cautiously, not wanting to offend his master, "I bring a message from Elisha."

"What message? Quickly, speak," Naaman said.

"Elisha said that you are to go and wash yourself in the Jordan River seven times. When you have done so, you will be cured of your leprosy."

Naaman was enraged. "Make ready," he commanded. "We leave for Syria at once."

"General," one of his officers urged, "we will pass this river en route home. Couldn't you just try it to see if there be any truth to this advice?"

"The rivers of Syria are far better than some dirty river in Israel," Naaman said angrily. "We've come all of this way only to be insulted. I expected this prophet to at least utter his foolish advice to me himself. What does he take me for anyway?"

The officer waited for Naaman to calm down. Then he continued, "If Elisha had proposed something of great difficulty for you to do, I know that you would have rushed to accomplish it. Why, then, is it so hard for you to obey him in such a simple thing?"

Naaman offered no explanation, but as they approached the Jordan River, he slowed his chariot. While his officers waited, Naaman immersed himself in the river seven times, exactly as Elisha had instructed.

Before he had even uttered a word everyone knew. Never had they seen Naaman's face so happy. "It's completely gone! I am healed!" Naaman cried.

Back to the prophet's house they went. This time, Elisha came out to see Naaman and his whole party of officers.

"Please accept these gifts," Naaman offered. "Of course, nothing I can give you will ever repay you enough."

"No, I will not take payment of any kind," Elisha replied. "For God has accomplished this cure in you, not I."

"And I will no longer offer sacrifices to any other god but the one true God I have learned about in Israel," Naaman said. "He alone is worthy of our praise."

"So you have been healed indeed, General Naaman," Elisha acknowledged, smiling. "Peace be with you on your journey home."



For discussion:

- (1) What was Naaman's attitude when he first came to Elisha's house? How did his attitude change after he had been healed?
- (2) Sara told her mistress about the one true God. Today we call this "witnessing." How can I share my faith in Jesus with others?
- (3) Naaman had his mind set on just how Elisha should heal him. Do I bring my problems to Jesus with the solution all worked out by me, or do I give my problems to Him with faith?

For further reading:

- (1) The story of Naaman's healing is found in the Old Testament in 2 Kings, Chapter 5:1-18
- (2) Proverbs 3:5-7 tells us about true faith in God for our problems.

Meditation for Lent:

Dear Jesus, transform my stumbling blocks of fear, doubt and stubborn pride about my problems into steppingstones of complete faith, trust and humility. Help me to have faith that you will heal me in your own way.

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