

II Kings 5:15-27; Luke 4:16-30; Grace Obscured by Greed I. Naaman's Confession II. Elisha's Refusal III. Gehazi's Greed

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, have you ever had a wonderful day marred by an unkind or untrue word spoken? For example, you have enjoyed a wonderful evening with your friends, only to have an uncharacteristic word or action sully the entire evening. What happens is that this one event or word sticks in your mind and spoils the night. Well, that is what happens today in our text. A time of cleansing and joy is sullied by the confusing and contrary actions of Gahazi! The miracle that exalted God's grace is undermined by the greed of Gahazi. As we return to II Kings 5 we remember from last week that there are 3 great men- first we saw Naaman the great warrior who is now healed from his leprosy; we also read of Ben-Hadad king of Syria and Joram king of Israel who will both be found again later in chapter 6. But our text remains with Naaman for the time being- as Naaman has humbled himself, washed in the water and was made clean by the Lord God. The only true God- the God of Israel- proves that healing will come from the waters of Israel alone- and this healing is a testament to God's grace! So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ defends the gracious healing of Naaman by rebuking Gahazi.

I. Naaman's Confession

In our first point, we consider the confession of faith made by Naaman in v. 15. After being healed and cleansed from his leprosy, Naaman returns to the house of Elisha to give thanks. He states in no uncertain terms, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. This is quite a statement- it is more than just saying that there is a God to be found in Israel- but that there is no other God than this God! No God besides Him! This is truly a monotheist statement of faith. And as far as Naaman goes, he sees himself as a servant. I am your servant! No longer the mighty, proud warrior- but a servant who has now received child-like faith in the one, True God! Growing up in Syria- and traveling through the land of Israel- there were many gods to be found. But only one is the true God- the God of Elisha! And in order to show his appreciation, Naaman wants to give a gift- a present to Elisha. Of the

3.5 million- please take some from my hand as a token of my gratitude. But after being urged in v. 16, Elisha still refuses. Now this point is going to come up later- but one of the main reasons that Elisha will not take this gift from Naaman is because God's grace is free! To accept payment after being healed would be confusing- Naaman would think that this God is like the gods of the nations who need to be manipulated- or whose favor needs to be bought for a price! But after repeated refusal, Naaman finally stops offering. Just a passing note- it is very common in Middle Eastern hospitality to refuse an offered gift as a sign of prudence- only to accept that gift when offered again. But Elisha's God is not like men in this regard. Next, we find that Naaman is going to prove his devotion by way of changing his manner of worship. In v. 17, Naaman requests 2 loads of Israelite dirt. Now this may seem strange, but Naaman is seeking to display something crucial. Remember that Naaman needed to learn last week that healing water is found in Israel alone. Salvation comes from the Jews- right? So Naaman wants to reflect this in his worship- while living in a pagan land he wants to be close to the LORD God- and He wants a little bit of the promised land near to him! He wants to worship the LORD on the LORD's terms- without polluting true worship by building an altar on land that was defiled. Now to be sure, this taking up of the dirt of Canaan does display his undeveloped theology. As Jesus will teach the Samaritan woman in John 4- a time is coming when it will not matter where you worship- because God will seek true worshippers who worship in Spirit and in Truth. But that time would come many, many years later. We are still in the OT here- so we have to take Naaman in his context. And let's not miss the point- Naaman who is a Syrian- a Canaanite- is going to be worshipping the One, True God while living in a foreign land. There is a missional expansion seen! Or as I Thes. 1 puts it, he turned to God from idols! But before Naaman leaves, he asks for permission- a consideration of his context and job. When Naaman returns home- no longer being a leper- he will be expected to accompany the king of Syria when the king worshipped in the house of Rimmon- their version of Baal. So in v. 18, Naaman asks Elisha if he would still be pardoned for going into an idolatrous temple. To be sure, Naaman will not be worshipping this false god, but as part of his service to the king of Syria he will have to still go in. So his job as the

commander of the armies would put him in a context of idolatry- but Elisha assures him that he could go in peace in v. 19. Was Elisha giving permission- or simply acknowledging the tuff spot that Naaman was in? Either way, Naaman himself knows that this is wrong and that he needs pardon for this act. And just as an aside, we need to be careful how we apply this aspect to our lives today. For example, in I Cor. 10 Paul makes it very clear that those who are part of the body of Christ ought to have nothing to do with the pagan worship and idols of the nations. We are to have no part- we are not to participate with demons in any way. So even if Naaman was pardoned for going into the house of Rimmon, we ought not and must not join hands or enter into the idolatry of the world around us. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. But let's get back to our passage.

II. Elisha's Refusal

In the next point we find Elisha and his refusal to take these gifts from Naaman back in v. 16. Since we already touched on this issue, we can be brief here. The reason why Elisha could not- indeed must not- receive payment for this miracle is because, first of all, Elisha did not perform the miracle! Elisha sent a message- and the message was- go and wash and you will be clean. A word was spoken- a message sent- but much to Naaman's chagrin- Elisha did not do anything! To receive a reward- to take payment for goods and services rendered- would be confusing, unjustified and deceitful! Elisha is not a miracle worker for hire- it was not his hand that healed! So he rightly says- as surely as the LORD lives, I will not take anything- I will take none of that gold and silver that you have brought. The second reason is this- if Elisha took the money- he would be profaning the name of the LORD! Accepting payment would say- God can be bought- or his miracles come with a price. As Rom. 11:35 puts it, who has given a gift to God that He would be repaid? The answer is- no one! We cannot give anything to God that He has not first given to us! God does not need anything from our hands when everything belongs to Him anyways! The third reason that payment cannot be taken is because this miracle was an act of grace! To accept money for a gift is to undermine the nature of the gift! In other words, God is teaching Naaman that

salvation- healing and cleansing- come from God as a gift of His grace! Freely given- we receive what He graciously gives! There are not works, merit or money that can add to or repay Him for the gifts He gives! The only acceptable response is to praise Him and give Him thanks! In our prayers and worship, to acknowledge Him as the only source of every good and perfect gift! Bringing money into the equation muddies the water and confuses the issue! Naaman has to learn- God has freely healed you- you do not deserve it and you cannot repay Him for it! This is a lesson we all tend to forget sometimes. Listen to Isaiah 55- come to the waters, buy without price- without money, receive food and drink! Freely given- graciously offered- lovingly bestowed! So healing, cleansing and feeding within the Kingdom of God are an act of God! Done for us and to by His grace- and that grace must remain alone! Not by works- so that no man can boast- Eph. 2 put it! By opening the door and receiving Gentiles, our God is also teaching us something about His love for the nations in our text as well. That is why we read from Luke 4 earlier. Naaman was a Syrian- a Gentile! There were lots of other people in Israel that were leprous- but they were not healed this day. No- a Gentile sinner received God's Grace instead! Yes, it is true that salvation comes from the Jews as we saw last week. It is the healing waters of Israel that save! But that healing water is not reserved for the Israelites alone! No, the healing water- the cleansing blood of Jesus is for all people! All nations to partake of! Even as Jesus taught in Luke 4, the rebellious Israelite may be passed over in order to bring the nations in!

III. Gehazi's Greed

But this lesson is lost on Gahazi- seeing Naaman come with all that money- and leave with all that money- is enough to drive him mad. So in v. 20, Gahazi the servant runs after Naaman. My master spared this Gentile- this Syria- but I will get something from him. Naaman got off too easy in his sight- this healing should have cost him something! Not even grace should be that free in his eyes. But in getting something from Naaman, Gahazi will get more than he bargained for! So Gahazi tracks down Naaman and tells him this bold-faced lie. He makes up some story about 2 young men who need some

money. The money is not for me- but for my master who will take care of these two young sons of the prophet- Gehazi says. Could you spare a talent of silver and two changes of cloths? There are two more bodies to cloth- two more mouths to feed at my master, Elisha's table. I mean, what is that one piece of silver worth- only \$2000. What is that compared to the 3.5 million you have on you. To this request, Naaman gladly gives him 2 talents of silver and two sets of cloths. But upon returning to Elisha, the gig is up in v. 25. Where have you been, Elisha asks. Like a kid who tries to hide the chocolate on his face, Gehazi's guilt cannot be hidden. Another lie is told- I have been right here- I went nowhere. But who can hide from the eyes of the LORD? He whose eyes see to the ends of the world are not blind to the actions of man. Because of your wicked actions, Gehazi, the leprosy of Naaman will not cling to you. So Gehazi's skin became like snow- and he left the presence of Elisha a leper. Now why was this sin so significant that it would warrant the inflicting of Gehazi with this polluting and disfiguring disease? Well, Gehazi's actions prove the desires of his heart. He has fallen in the trap of coveting. He has longed for the things below and not the things above. Leprosy is the sickness of skin- but lust and coveting is his sin of the heart. He has an unclean heart- and now his skin fits the state of that heart. As we are warned in I Tim. 6, it is a false teacher that believes that godliness is a means of gain! Gehazi embodies the sin of the NT Pharisees- using their spiritual position in order to fleece the flock- to gain financially by way of their spiritual position of power! And what is particularly troubling for Gehazi is that this man who was healed was a Gentile. This man is Syrian. He focusses on the fact that Naaman was the Syrian in v. 20- and the Syrians are the enemies of Israel! He represents not only an outsider- but an enemy of the state! There is no free lunch for my foe! But more than that, Gehazi's actions were serious because they reflect on Elisha and Elisha's God! Basically, Gehazi is tempting Naaman into the sin of Simony. As you remember from Acts 8, Simon Magus or Simon the Sorcerer believed that he could purchase the power to give the Holy Spirit with money. That money could secure spiritual power, positions and blessings. The sin of Simony is where you believe that money can influence God or secure the works of the Holy Spirit. So when Gehazi says- your money is good now! I will take payment for what God has

done. He was in fact indicating that silver and gold can manipulate God- and that is a very serious crime indeed. As Peter said to Simon Magus in Acts 8- so Elisha could say to Gehazi- May your silver perish with you because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! Gehazi will learn- God's grace is not to be trifled with! As we found in Luke 4, the rebellious Israel may be passed over in order that the Gentiles may be brought in! The point Jesus was making in Luke 4 with the wicked Pharisees is here found with Gehazi! A Gentile hears a powerful word, is washed, healed and made clean! While an Israelite seeks after silver, and in the process becomes polluted and impure! So we have a Gentile who receives grace, while an Israelite is punished- stained by sin because of His rebellion and pride! There is a warning to be found in this! Being near to a prophet is not the same as listening to that prophet! Being raised in the household of faith does not make you immune to pride and rebellion! Raised in the context of the sons of the prophet is not a substitute for faith! This applies to us all here today! We can just as easily miss the point of grace as Gehazi did! When we think we deserve to be clean and others do not- we are dangerously close to the sin of Gehazi! We all need to receive, hear and believe the powerful word of grace that is spoken! We all need to be washed in the water- made clean by the blood of the Lamb! No one deserves this gift- that is what makes it grace! So let our hearts rejoice in the free gift of the gospel- as we embrace the message of the perfect prophet Jesus Christ!

To conclude, our passage this morning proves that God takes His honor and grace very seriously! He will not have His glory go to another- nor will He allow His grace to be confused or comingled with works and money. As our theme states, Jesus Christ defends the gracious healing of Naaman by rebuking Gahazi. As Gahazi learns- not all Israel is of Israel! God has sheep from many different nations! He is free to heal and save any He chooses! Grace is the free gift of God that we receive- let no man boast! Rather let us all believe and rejoice in the cleansings that Jesus has poured out upon us!