

GOD GATHERS HIS ELECT WITH THE GOSPEL

Naaman was one of God's elect who boldly confessed the Lord who saved him.

2 Kings 5:8-19

TEXT: *When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage. Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. 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. Please accept now a gift from your servant." 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. "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. 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 bow there also-when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this." "Go in peace," Elisha said.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Our Sunday and Tuesday morning Bible studies this year have reviewed and studied a number of topics under the theme of being prepared, as Peter urges in his epistle: ***Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*** 1 Pe 3 Always be prepared to give answer to the reason for your faith and hope. You never know if the Lord is using you to zero in on one of His elect!

That is what today's Old Testament Scripture reveals to us as He zeroed in like a LASER beam on the heart of one of Israel's enemies, an important man among them, a general and a great warrior named Naaman. This Scripture is for us to read so that we take Peter's admonition to be prepared as GOD GATHERS HIS ELECT WITH THE GOSPEL that we know, believe and confess. I. Naaman was one of God's elect; II. Naaman boldly confessed the Lord who saved him.

First of all let's not confuse today's prophet, Elisha, with his predecessor, Elijah, who held that mighty showdown at Mt Carmel when King Ahab's 450 prophets of Baal failed to call down fire from heaven to light their sacrifice, and were promptly executed down by the Mediterranean Sea shore. The Bible says that everyone shouted: ***The Lord -- He is God! The Lord -- He is God!*** But then they went home and went right back to their religious indifference. When saw this, he fell into depression and tried to resign. But then God came to him and said: ***I reserve seven thousand in Israel-all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.*** 1 Kings 19:18 Elijah could not see what God can see. He could not see these "7000" believers. He could not see God's Elect. Elijah could not see that one of them was not even of Israel. He would, in fact, be an enemy of Israel named Naaman whom his successor, Elisha, would convert.

This piece of history took place after Elijah was taken to heaven, alive, in a whirlwind. His successor, Elisha, would have the daunting task of continuing the Lord's ministry under the threat of Israel's ungodly kings. Scripture says that Naaman was a commander in the army of the King of Aram, and area north of Israel that is today's Syria. But sources outside of Scripture have been discovered that refer to this Naaman also as having been involved with the great Pharaoh, Ikhnaton, of Egypt. Ancient Egyptian writings were discovered in 1887 speak of this Naaman who was cured of leprosy and who served Pharaoh Ikhnaton. But more on that later.

It was personally devastating when leprosy was diagnosed in the body of this great warrior. When it's

me, it matters little who you are. Naaman would have to fight this personal disaster with the world watching. However, Naaman was one of God's elect, and it was His will that all the world should watch to see what Scripture means when it says: ***The Lord knows those who are his...*** 2 Tim 2:19 Scripture also teaches us how the Lord calls His elect: ***Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?*** Ro 10:13-15 In Naaman's case, the Lord used his leprosy to connect him with Elisha, the Lord's prophet in Israel, who was called to reveal to Naaman the saving name of the Lord.

Do see the parallel that exists between you and Naaman? Out of all the differences that exist between this mighty warrior of the ancient past, his culture, his nationality, his language, and his personal distress, you also have been located and called by name to know and confess the Lord. Naaman, in his pride and arrogance was not excited about taking a dip in the dirty Jordan River, no more than our babies want to be baptized, but when his men persuaded him, he discovered the power and promise of the Lord: ***So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.*** In the water of Holy Baptism, God's Word also does what the Lord says: You are born again. Your sins are washed away. You have the Lord's pledge and promise of a clean conscience before God.

Like Naaman, all of you who have been baptized can hold up your personal baptism and Scriptural proof of your election to salvation. Out of all souls ever conceived on the face of this earth, you are one to whom the Lord has come with this promise. The leprosy of sin is washed away. You are the Lord's!

Unless you don't believe it. Naaman believed it! His leprosy was gone. And his new faith revealed itself in his public confession of the Lord's saving name. That is typical of God's elect. Typically, we confess the name of the Lord who has saved us.

The Bible says: ***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. Please accept now a gift from your servant.*** Here is what is typical of saving faith: public confession of the name of the Lord and gratitude beyond mere lip service, but with generous giving. But this was no small thing for Naaman. To confess the Lord of Israel meant to condemn the gods of his nation and king. In so doing, he placed his life on the line.

How blessed are God's elect who live here in this day and age! While we fear no threats upon our lives, we gather for public worship of the name of Jesus. We offer our thanks and gifts of praise. Isn't that why the Gospel has survived at this location for over 100 years? God's elect give to the Lord their offerings, because here is where the name of Jesus is proclaimed. Isn't that why you are giving your generous offerings today? Because the Lord who has called you to salvation is here. May His name never depart this location!

There's another fruit of faith that pours out of the hearts of God's elect and out onto their lips. Naaman had a new concern for the truth. He would not anyone to think for one second that he was one who would compromise it: ***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. 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 bow there also-when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this.*** Naaman wanted to worship the Lord, but in a way that publicly declared his faith in the true God. The bags of earth would be his altar, symbolic of how and where the Lord came to him with salvation. With this, Naaman also would risk his life as he served kings from other lands. And as a true believer, he was concerned about doctrine and practice. He asked Elisha to know for certain that when doing his civil duty as a servant of unbelieving kings, he would not worship with them. Elisha's response? ***"Go in peace," Elisha said.***

Do not think that this is to teach us that we can be careless with whom we worship and pray. Doctrine is not established by the behavior of fallible Christians, otherwise we could point to Jacob and the other ancient patriarchs and say that polygamy and incest are OK. But to those, who like Naaman have a true love for the

Lord, a concern for one's confession of the truth is of the highest importance. While Naaman would not be able to give the kind of fellowship example that the Apostle Paul instructed the ancient Romans to observe, we who have the truth of the Gospel and God's inspired Word in written form will certainly find in Naaman a wonderful example of faith.

For example: I said earlier that we would again refer to the fact that ancient Egyptian writings refer to this Naaman with information outside of the Bible. According to ancient Egyptian cuneiforms discovered over 120 years ago, Pharaoh Ikhnaton had this prime minister, named Naaman, who had been cured of leprosy. They also say that Pharaoh Ikhnaton did not worship Rimmon, which is a variation of the name of Egypt's chief god. Rather, he worshipped Aton, which is Egyptian for the Hebrew name "The Lord." Like a LASER, the Lord, through Naaman, brought the gospel of the Lord to a heathen Egyptian. It is as Peter says: *Always be prepared to give an answer to those who ask about the hope that you have...* 1 Pe Evidently, Naaman did this, and there is evidence from ancient archeological finds that the Lord knew where another one of his elect was located.

God knows where His elect are! He calls them in amazing ways, but always through the preaching of the Gospel. He says that all who believe and are baptized will be saved! He tells His elect who eat and drink the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper that this is for the forgiveness of YOUR SINS! Could this be you? Could it be that the Lord is telling you that you are His Elect?

Yes! Believe what He says! Rejoice that He has called you! Amen.