

hold, I have *therewith* sent Na'a-man my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

7 And it came to pass, when the king of Is-ra-el had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, *Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.*

8 And it was so, when E-li'sha the man of God had heard that the king of Is-ra-el had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Is-ra-el.

9 So Na'a-man came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of E-li'sha.

10 And E-li'sha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

11 But Na'a-man was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12 *Are not Ab'a-na and Phar'par, rivers of Da-mas-cus, better than all the waters of Is-ra-el? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.*

13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

15 And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Is-ra-el: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

16 But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.

General Statement.

Perhaps there is no story of the Old Testament which has been read more than this of Naaman's leprosy and his healing. We see the great captain riding in state through the streets of Damascus, yet envied by none and pitied by all, because of his living death as a leper. We hear the simple words of the Israelite maiden, which cast a beam of hope into his troubled heart. We watch the stately caravan, marching across the uplands of Bashan and across the Jordan valley, not for war, but to offer rich rewards to the one who shall give health. We behold the paleness of terror come across the king of Israel as he reads the strange message, calling upon him to do a work which none but God can accomplish. We mark the calm and confident words of the prophet as he bids the affrighted king send the embassy to one

who can show them that there is a God in Israel. Again the procession winds its way among the hills, and again it pauses, this time before a lowly home. From its closed door comes the brief command to wash in Jordan seven times as the condition of cure. The Syrian nobleman has thought out a better plan for the miracle, and gives way to childish passion when he cannot have his way. But better counsels prevail; he bathes in the sacred stream, and soon, renewed in flesh and in spirit, he stands, humble and grateful, before the prophet. The miracle has a twofold application: one purpose to show what sin is, and how it can be taken away; and a deeper purpose, long afterward developed by the Great Teacher, to show that God's plans of salvation are not limited to the Israelite race, but reach all mankind.

Explanatory and Practical Notes.

Verse 1. Naaman. He is mentioned only in this chapter, and though he was one of the great men of his own time, yet his name would be unknown but for this record. (1) *How small and transient is earthly honor!* **Captain of the host.** Next to the throne itself, the most important station in the realm. **King of Syria.** Probably Ben-hadad II. Syria was situated north of Palestine, between the Lebanon range and the great desert, and was the great rival of Israel. **Great.... and honorable.** One word refers to his rank, the other to the regard of the king. **Deliverance unto Syria.** Rev. Ver., "victory unto Syria." This may have been in the wars between Syria and Israel, or, as the monuments would indicate, in an Assyrian war, in which the Syrians gained independence. **But he was a leper.** All his honors were as nothing to that "but." There were two kinds of leprosy, both incurable, but only one necessarily fatal. The disease was hereditary; was believed to be contagious; was deceptive from its painless character; rendered a man unclean, so that none could come near him; and was absolutely incurable. Under the strict law of Israel Naaman would have been deposed and excluded from society, but the Syrians were less careful. (2) *What a perfect picture of the disease of sin!*

2. Syrians had gone out. There was a chronic condition of petty conflict between Israel and Syria, varied by an occasional truce, or by a general war. **By companies.** In little marauding parties, to plunder rather than to offer legitimate war. **Brought away captive.** War, always barbarous, was in ancient times far more cruel than now. Prisoners were generally killed, especially the aged, the wounded, and the useless; and all who were worth keeping were enslaved. **A little maid.** This little captive became an important link in a chain of events. Note in this incident, 1) Her forgiving, generous spirit toward her captors; 2) Her fidelity, even in a lowly condition; 3) Her sympathy for the trouble of others; 4) Her simple faith. (3) *How much good even a child can do!* (4) *Trouble sometimes may open the way to usefulness.*

3. She said. (5) *See the power of a child's word for good!* **The prophet that is in Samaria.** Not the city of Samaria, but the country to which had given a name. **He would recover him.** Perhaps he had healed other lepers; or by his fame as a wonder-worker was known.

4. One went in. Perhaps it would be better to read, "he [that is, Naaman] went in." **Told his lord.**

Ben-hadad the king. **Go to.** An exclamation like our "Come, now." **I will send a letter.** A king's letter, a captain's journey, a stately procession, a priceless present, all the result of a little child's word. (6) *Let us be careful of our words, and speak such as will do good.* **Talents.... pieces of gold.** The treasure has been variously estimated at from twenty to sixty thousand dollars. **Changes of raiment.** Garments are changed frequently among wealthy Orientals, so that many suits are needed.

6. The king of Israel. Perhaps Jehoram, the son of Ahab. **That thou mayest recover him.** Himself an absolute ruler, he supposed that the king of Israel could command his subjects at will; and he considered it quite a complimentary way of expressing his desire that the king would use his influence to effect the cure.

7. Rent his clothes. An Oriental gesture, expressive of sorrow, alarm, and terror. (7) *Kings have all the troubles of common men.* **Am I God.** Then there were some things that a king of Israel would admit that he could not do; and there was, after all, a God in Israel who could bring to life. **Send unto me.** He did not understand the true purpose of the letter, which was a request and not a command, though couched in a lordly language. **He seeketh a quarrel.** He supposed that as Ben-hadad had made impossible demands upon his father Ahab, in order to provoke a war, so his successor was now doing with like purpose. A closer intimacy with "the man of God" might have lessened his alarm.

8. Elisha the prophet. The monarch was a slave, the captain was worse off than a beggar, and the man of God is the only king in this chapter. **Let him come now to me.** Spoken not in arrogance, but under divine direction, and with a consciousness of almighty aid. **There is a prophet in Israel.** One who could speak and act for God among men.

9. Naaman came. A contrast: Naaman with princely repute, and underneath his dazzling robe a leprosy skin and an aching heart; Elisha, in humble surroundings, yet wearing a scepter mightier than a king's. **His horses for his attendants, and his chariot for himself.** (8) *The seeming is not always the real.* **The house of Elisha.** Where it was is not known.

10. Elisha sent. He did not honor the haughty Syrian by his presence, but sends his commands by a