



WEEKLY
CHRISTIAN
FOCUS

BRIBES OR GIFTS? KARMA OR GOD?

A close look at a few of the many lessons in the story of the healing of General Naaman of Syria! This story is found in 2 Kings Chapter 5, in the Old Testament.

When I lived in China, I very slowly began to understand that society there worked according to the principle of 'Guanxi', 关系 more or less meaning; protection and relationships. People build relationships according to their knowledge of other people. Each party or person or group understands that they wish to use each other in some way at some time.

This includes marriage and business and politics of every form especially. It is an art I think in China, albeit a dark art in some situations.

Of course this type of system is very open therefore to corruption, trickery and bribes. And even then if you bribe someone, someone else may come along with a bigger and better bribe! Your bribe will count for nothing and probably will not be refunded, or at least not in the same way.

But before we castigate the

dear Chinese who have had very little, historically, of the True Gospel in comparison with many other nations, we should look carefully in our own western backyards. We who claim to be believers in the Creator of the Universe and His Son Christ Jesus, or even just 'moral' people, we will often stoop to the same procedures, (and more on that coming soon).



This is the story of the great Syrian (Aramean) general Naaman. He had leprosy.

So, let's get started. This is a quite famous chapter in the Bible; there are many lessons and nuggets we can learn from this story in 2 Kings Chapter 5 in the Old Testament of the Bible.

I can count at least a dozen spiritual and practical lessons in this chapter! But as I read it this morning with my 12 year old son, I looked on it in a new

way. **Thanks to him, actually! Obviously, he will become greater than I, (which should not prove too difficult), as he should and thank you for your prayers for that in the name of Jesus and the kingdom of God.**

In my life I have usually heard of the importance of the young Israelite slave girl telling Naaman's wife about the God of Israel and how He could cure Naaman's leprosy. Also perhaps how Naaman got angry; the prophet of God, Elisha told him that he had to go dip in the dirty waters of the Jordan river seven times to be healed. Naaman had to OBEY the prophet to be healed and not be angry etc.

Besides the lesson about Naaman's obedience to dip himself into the river I cannot remember other lessons in any other sermons about this chapter, and I have listened to a LOT of sermons! But there are many more!



Here we are talking about the ways of the world and greed,

bribes and Karma or God's Judgements, and also God's wonderful mercy in healing dear Naaman, who was a gentile, and not 'officially' one of God's people!

Let's have a look at this using the Amplified version. I do pray you greatly enjoy a few parts of this 'chapter', please ask God to open your heart and see whatever He wishes to show you.

I will only be commenting on a limited number of verses, which bring out the lessons of Greed, Bribery, Gifts, and similar points! Praise the Lord!



2 Kings 5

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, accepted [and acceptable], because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper.

2 The Syrians had gone out in bands and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid, and she waited on Naaman's wife.

3 She said to her mistress, Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.

4 [Naaman] went in and told his king, Thus and thus said the maid from Israel.

5 And the king of Syria said, Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel. And he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, 6,000 shekels of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

General Naaman left for the land of Israel with all these 'gifts'. As my son and I were reading this, he said these were not gifts, but rather bribes! I began to try to explain how some countries use this 'system', but he was adamant they were 'bribes'. And he very well may be right!!

6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel. It said, when this letter comes to you, I will with it have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of leprosy.

7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he rent his clothes and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends to me to heal a man of his leprosy? Just consider and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me. *The King of Israel, like many politicians had a completely wrong outlook on the arrival of Naaman and the King of Syria's letter!*

8 When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, he sent to the king, asking, why have you rent your clothes? Let Naaman come now to me and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. *Elisha was a cool head, wasn't he? A cool head among hot kings and politicians, who was able to put some sense into the King of Israel. I feel we need a lot more 'Elisha's' in today's world and 'Elisha-resses' as well!*

9 So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stopped at Elisha's door.

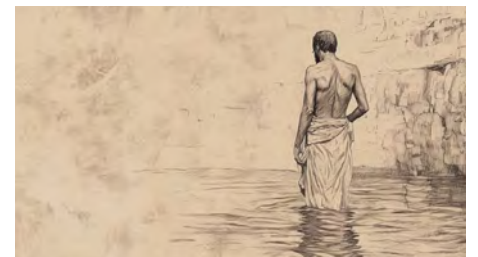
10 Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.

11 But Naaman was angry and went away and said, Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and heal the leper.

12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? 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 said to him, my father, if the prophet had bid you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather, then, when he says to you, Wash and be clean?

14 Then he went down and



dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, as the man of God had said, and his flesh was restored like that of a little child, and he was clean. So as we see here, Naaman finally humbled himself with the help of his servants, who had more sense than him.

15 Then Naaman returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and stood before him. He said, **Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. So now accept a gift from your servant. Naaman, now humbled and healed and understanding there was a True God in Israel, returned, as the**

custom was, to present a gift in terms of thanks and respect to the man of God.

16 Elisha said, As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will accept none. He urged him to take it, but Elisha refused.

Elisha, like Abraham many centuries before refused a gift, even given as a token of thanks

17 Naaman said, Then, I pray you, let there be given to me, your servant, two mules' burden of earth. **For your servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice to other gods, but only to the Lord.** *Naaman however was not finished; he had been totally converted to faith in God and wanted to bring back some of the earth/soil from this Special Land, so he could be able to build an altar when he got back to Syria. He was totally born again in one sense. A new man, physically and spiritually! Praise the Lord.*

18 In this thing may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master [the king] goes into the house of [his god] Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, may the Lord pardon your servant in this thing. *Already Naaman knew that his new faith could cause him some difficulties, and, his conscience bothering him, asked Elisha for mercy and advice.*

19 Elisha said to him, Go in peace. So Naaman departed from him a little way. *Naaman took the first steps in the long journey back to his country in the north, along with his entourage, bodyguards and mules! And that should have been the happy ending! But God has*

more for us to learn.

20 But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not receiving from his hands what he brought. **But as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him.**

*Gehazi, like Judas with Jesus, did not have even his own heart right! He was so numb to the Spirit, that he could even utter the words 'as the Lord liveth'. You will find this expression all through the Old Testament. ***

Can people so close to miracles and witnessing the power of God, fail to understand it all? *There are quite a few Biblical examples of that, and Gehazi is one!*

21 So Gehazi followed after Naaman. When Naaman saw one running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him and said, is all well? *Simple sheep Naaman, now a believer with a soft and thankful heart, meets the servant of the man of God, of whom he expects only true words and to be an extension of the great man Elisha.*

22 And he (Gehazi) said, all is well. My master has sent me to say, there have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets. I pray you, give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.

23 And Naaman said, be pleased to take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of garments and laid them upon two of his servants, and they bore them before Gehazi. *(Naaman, in good faith, gave Gehazi double the gift that Gehazi lied to him about. He*

sent his servants to help with the delivery!)

24 When he (Gehazi) came to the hill, he took them from their hands and put them in the house; and he sent the men away, and they left.

(So Naaman himself, nor his servants, nor even he hoped Elisha) would never have known about this terrible deception)

25 He went in and stood before his master. Elisha said, where have you been, Gehazi? He said, your servant went nowhere.

26 Elisha said to him, **did not my spirit go with you when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money, garments, olive orchards, vineyards, sheep, oxen, menservants, and maidservants?**

27 Therefore the leprosy



of Naaman shall cleave to you and to your offspring forever. And Gehazi went from his presence a leper as white as snow

What an amazing three verse section of powerful lessons! Are there even three better verses in the Old Testament that have so many lessons!? Gehazi comes in and even lies to Elisha. Elisha asked him the question which forced the lie. Just as we have done in our own lives when asked a question or questions from other people of God or even strangers. How much of a Gehazi are we or have we been previously?

Elisha, like Jesus Christ, had

the gift of knowing and seeing everything that was important. Elisha had seen Gehazi and Naaman get down from his chariot to meet him. **Elisha said his spirit went and saw it all!** Wow, how tremendous. What great gift of God, and probably an enormous weight as well.

So Gehazi met his end; he was allowed to live, but his judgment was that he inherited the leprosy of Naaman, the sickness by the Word of Elisha, returned in the physical air and attached itself to Gehazi and his descendants after him (forever)! Today the non-Christian world calls such events 'Karma', and there is a famous song about it I have attached a portion below, but we know that it is the result or repercussion of great disobediences and sin which finally reaches a tipping point. God gives us all space to repent (Rev. 2:21) and time to change. Jesus talked a few times about 'go and sin no more lest a worse thing happens to you'. Obviously Gehazi's sins had been building up for a long time. Somehow Elisha must have tolerated it, and had known God was going to do something. What time is it now then?

Elisha closes out with this great message:

Was it a time to accept

- money,
- garments,
- olive orchards,
- vineyards,
- sheep, oxen,
- menservants, and maidservants?

Are you accepting bribes, favours, 'gifts' from people or brethren? Is this the right time to be doing that? Are they gifts or are they bribes? The answer is in the spirit and heart in which they are both given and received.

Finally take some time and figure out who you are in this story. Enjoy this simple project:

Are you:

- The King of Syria, who sent his favourite general to be healed in Israel?
- The King of Israel who had the bad habit of being suspicious of all things and people's intentions.
- The prophet Elisha
- Naaman, the raging man and warrior, who eventually became meek and mild and healed or

- Gehazi, the lying steward and servant of God's great prophet.

Score yourself out of ten!

**Until next week,
God willing
Jerry for the WCF Team**



**** BibleGateway - Keyword Search: as the Lord liveth**

[\(1477\) Naaman Healed Of Leprosy - YouTube Great stuff 3 minutes!](#)

Here is an excerpt of a song (could easily be about Gehazi and others) written in the 1960's

Author John Lennon

[Instant karma's gonna get you
Going to knock you on the head](#)
(and give you leprosy)

You gonna break your body, Gehazi
Pretty soon you're going to be dead

What in the world you're thinking of
Laughing in the face of love?
What on earth you trying to do?
It's up to you, yeah, you

Instant karma's gonna get you
Going to look you right in the face

How in the world you gonna see?
Who on earth d'you think you are?
Laughing at a fool like me?
Superstar, right you are

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