

Explore the Bible: July 24

God Heals • 2 Kings 5:1-14

Emily Beth Crews



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It's been fourteen years and I still bear scars from that event, but none whatsoever on my face. The scarring I do have reminds me of God's faithfulness to heal and restore.

We have fast forwarded to 2 Kings this week as we learn about a man named Naaman who had power, prestige, and pride, but he bore a skin disease.

Before we jump into the lesson today, let's recap 2 Kings 1-5. King Ahab dies at the end of 1 Kings and Jezebel's death comes soon after in 2 Kings 9. The prophet Elijah finishes his commission from the Lord and avoids death by going to God in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1-18), which was witnessed by the prophet who would pick up the mantle after him: Elisha.

Elisha went on to fulfill several miracles in 2 Kings such as helping a widow, giving life to a boy, making an inedible meal edible, and feeding 100 people with twenty loaves of bread and fresh grain (2 Kings 4).

“These prophets were mighty men of God, but their power lay in God’s purposes as He used them for His glory” (Lifeway). We now arrive at Naaman’s story – another man used by God to put His power and glory on display through the prophet Elisha.

Desperate (2 Kings 5:1-6). Naaman was a well-respected military commander for the king of Syria, “but this great warrior had a skin disease” (v.1). “Naaman was as great as the world could make him, and yet the basest slave in Syria would not change skins with him” (Matthew Henry).

Some translations say the skin disease was leprosy (ESV, KJV, NIV), but others simply call it a disease of the skin. Whatever the specific type of skin disease, it caused him distress and he was desperate for a cure. “He was a burden to himself” (Henry).

Naaman had a young girl who was taken captive from Israel that became a servant to his wife. This girl went to Naaman’s wife and told her she knew of a prophet in Samaria that could cure him of his ailment.

Naaman took the word of the servant girl and went to his king to plan to visit the king of Israel. When he arrived in Israel, he had with him a letter from the king of Syria and many gifts. The letter was short: “This is a letter of introduction for my servant Naaman, whom I have sent to be cured of his skin disease” (v.6).

Directed (2 Kings 5:7-10). Israel’s king interpreted the letter as a trick and “a great affront upon God” (Henry), but Elisha heard of what happened and sent a message to the king asking him to send Naaman to him.

Naaman arrived at Elisha’s home and stood in the doorway. Elisha sent a messenger to Naaman with directions on how he would be healed. He needed to “wash seven times in the Jordan; your skin will be restored and you will be healed” (v. 10).

Disappointed (2 Kings 5:11-12). Naaman was disappointed Elisha did not cure him then and there, as he had anticipated. "I thought for sure he would come out, stand there, invoke the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the area, and cure the skin disease" (v.11). He had built up expectations and Elisha was failing to meet them.

Naaman also believed Elisha was slighting his home country by asking him to bathe in the Jordan. Naaman had "nationalistic pride" (Lifeway) and believed any waters other than those in Syria were subpar.

Delivered (2 Kings 5:13-14). Naaman's servants humbly came before him and encouraged him to fulfill the instruction of Elisha. He listened to his servants and "went down and dipped in the Jordan seven times, as the prophet had instructed. His skin became as smooth as a young child's and he was healed" (v.14).

Much like salvation, the simplicity of his healing nearly kept him from being restored. "The methods prescribed for the healing of the leprosy of sin are so plain that we are utterly inexcusable if we do not observe them. It is but, 'Believe, and be saved – Repent, and be pardoned – Wash, and be clean'" (Henry).

When you read the rest of the chapter, you will learn Naaman returned to the prophet with gratitude and immediate belief in the God of Israel. He was much like the only one out of ten lepers who were healed by Jesus in the New Testament who returned to offer thanks (Luke 17:11-17).

Naaman is an example to us. "Proud men are the worst enemies to themselves and forego their own redemption" (Henry). Scripture reminds us, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble" (James 4:6).

Emily Beth Crews currently resides in Montana but was born and raised in Mississippi. She is the daughter of regular

contributor, Laura Lee Leathers.