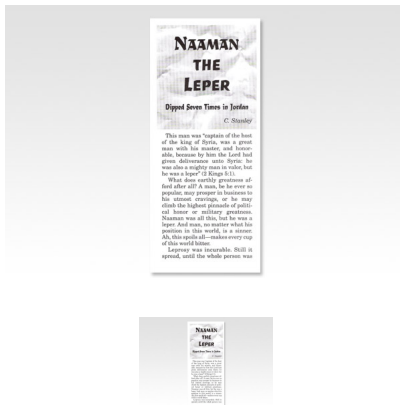




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Description

Naaman the Leper Dipped Seven Times in Jordan

This man was "captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valor, but he was a leper" (2 Kings 5:1).

What does earthly greatness afford after all? A man, be he ever so popular, may prosper in business to his utmost cravings, or he may climb the highest pinnacle of political honor or military greatness.

Naaman was all this, but he was a leper. And man, no matter what his position in this world, is a sinner. Ah, this spoils all-makes every cup of this world bitter.

Leprosy was incurable. Still it spread, until the whole person was filthy - bloated, pimpled and scabbed-wretched picture of man's ruined, utterly ruined, lost condition through sin. And, what is still worse, like the leper he finds every effort to cure himself in vain. The fearful poison spreads. Oh, how loathsome is sin! My reader may have long hoped to get better, but have you not rather got worse? Not a physician in Syria could cure the leper. Not a remedy on earth is found for sin. Search all nations:

Man has found no cure for sin. The whole world is one great leperhouse.

God has chosen the weak things of this world. A little captive maid is God's messenger to this mighty Syrian. She says, "Would God my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." And I can say to my reader, "Would God you were at the feet of Jesus. He would cleanse you from your sins."

The King of Israel had no such faith as this little maid said. He only thought the Syrians sought a quarrel. He, thinking of himself, said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive?"

"And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard," he sent for the leper to come to him. "So Naaman came." So like man was his way of coming! Such gifts! Such horses and chariots! And he stood at the door. But Elisha received none of his gifts. The salvation of God is not to be sold. "And Elisha 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." He does not even come out to him; he sends a messenger. It must be by faith, not by sight or by sign. God gives His bare word. He that believes is saved.

Now Jordan was the type or figure of death. The ark had stood there, while all Israel passed over dryshod into the land of Canaan, a most striking illustration of Jesus taking our place in the river of death. There was no cure for this great leper but to be dipped seven times in the river of death. There is no means in the universe by which a sinner can be cleansed but by the death of Jesus. His blood alone cleanses from all sin. This made the leper uncommonly, or rather commonly, angry, for it is the anger of the human heart against God's mode of cleansing from sin. Surely, the leper thought, there would have been some great thing done to him. And so with the sinner. Surely, he thinks, God must do some great thing to me or in me by which I shall be saved. Burial in Jordan - why, this is contemptible!

Besides, "are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" And he went away in a rage. So, now, one poor leprous sinner will say, "Are not the doctrines of my own church better than this salvation through the death of Christ alone? My church tells me to fast, to keep the vows of my order, and, in fact, to keep all the orders of my church. Is it not far better to wash in these rivers of my own religion than to simply believe God about the death of Christ?"

Well, try hard. Wash, wash, wash. But find me one, out of all the millions who wash in man's own religious rivers, that is clean from sin. Find me one who knows even his sins forgiven by all his fasting, praying and order-keeping. No, there is not one who washes in the old man's rivers who either does or can know with certainty that he is saved. Naaman's servants say, "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?" All nations bear witness what man will do (if doing would do it) to get clean from sin.

"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."

How beautifully, to be sure, this does set forth death and resurrection, the two great lessons of God: the death of Christ-the end of sin; the resurrection of Christ the beginning of an entirely new existence. The old leper goes down into death-burial with Christ. The new man comes out in all the freshness of the newborn child. Oh how spotlessly clean is that new creation. "And he was clean." This is God's only way of cleansing. "In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unprovable in His sight" (Col. 1:22). Jesus went down into death. Every believer is dead with Him, buried with Him, risen with Him, and perfect in Him without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Rom. 6; Eph. 5). Oh to know the power of resurrection, being made conformable to His death-to leave poor old leprous self in Jordan. Ah, the old leper takes some dipping. Often, when we think we have learned the death of self on the cross, self still needs some dipping. Ah, you are occupied with the old leper still, remembering his sorry scabs and running sores. Oh, down with the leper, down, down to Jordan. Down, down in death is the only fit place for self. For its righteousness and its wickedness, the grave of Christ is the only place. Look away from the old leper to the

risen Christ. If Adam were full of the poison of sin, God has made the risen Christ to be our wisdom, sanctification, righteousness and redemption.

There is no leprosy in the risen Christ. And "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). "Forever perfected." "Clean every whit."

Oh, my reader, have you learned this wondrous lesson? Have you gone down into death? Are you risen with Christ? Then set your affection on things above. Every old spot of leprous sin is gone. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God" (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

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