

## December 15

**Scriptures:** Read 2 Kings 4 & 5

**Key Verse:** “Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel...” (2 Kings 5:15)

### Overview

In chapters four and five we are given a series of miracles that not only confirmed Elisha’s ministry and call, but also cared for human need, thus showing the love and compassion of God to the true Israelites. Elisha was like a shepherd travelling about to minister among his sheep in order to turn their hearts unto God and build their faith in Him. We see God’s care and provision for the needy widow through the multiplied oil. We see that with the prayer of faith God restored life to the boy, for it was His will to bless the faithful Shunammite woman.

God also showed His care for His children during the famine by purifying the deadly stew. God can miraculously transform something poisonous and bitter and make it good and sweet. He does this in the lives of people through Jesus. God also provided for His servants by supplying bread from the firstfruits of a faithful man. That man gave it to Elisha as God’s representative, since there were no ministering priests in Israel at that time (Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 2:12; 23:10, 17; Numbers 18:12-13). By miraculous multiplication of the food, the blessing of God was shared by all.

There was yet another miracle that showed God’s great love and redeeming power extended to a Gentile heathen. Truly we know that God’s salvation is for the whole world (Romans 3:29; 10:12-13). Naaman, a man of position and honour in Syria (also called Aram) was afflicted with leprosy. God used Naaman’s Israelite servant girl to tell him of His miracle-working power through the prophet in Israel. This brought a gleam of hope to Naaman, and as soon as he received permission from his king, he travelled about 160 kilometers to Samaria, he went searching for the salvation of his sickly body, but God in his love and providence was more concerned with the salvation of his soul.

The king of Israel did not have faith in the power of God, so when he read the message from Naaman’s king, he was distressed, fearing that the king of Syria was looking for a reason to go to war. Elisha’s message to the king of Israel, however, was confident, for they were to know that there was a prophet of God in Israel (5:8).

Elisha dealt with Naaman’s pride, for one must be humble in coming to the all-powerful living God. Elisha himself did not even go out to meet Naaman, but sent word of the humiliating thing he must do to be clean. Naaman was indignant, for he had imagined his cleansing would come through the mighty prophet’s presence as mediator in some sort of magical ceremony. Elisha, however, wanted Naaman to give the credit to God for his healing. With the convincing and wise words of his servant, Naaman agreed to obey the prophet’s simple instructions. The salvation of the Lord is not something difficult to receive. It is found in obedience as one accepts His gracious gift, His Son Jesus.

What joy must have filled Naaman's heart when he saw he was cleansed and had received the salvation of the Lord God of Israel. This was not only in his body, but, more importantly, his soul as well, because Naaman came to truly believe in God. If Naaman had not suffered this affliction, he would never have found salvation. God often allows suffering to bring people closer to Himself.

When Naaman returned to Elisha, his words expressed his change of heart. Rather than praising him, he gave all the praise and glory to God and openly recognized Him as the only God. His statement of faith put the Israelites to shame, for many of them believed in heathen gods as well. Jesus Himself held up Naaman, a Gentile, as an example to the unbelieving Jews of his day, putting them to shame (Luke 4:27). Truly God's mercy and grace was, from the very beginning, extended to the whole world. The salvation of God cannot be bought. Naaman had come prepared with much money and many goods to give for his healing, but Elisha would not take any reward. It was God's miracle and God's free and gracious gift, just like our salvation through Jesus.

It is sad that this wonderful story ends with a tragic incident. Elisha's servant, Gehazi, did not have his same spirit. He yielded to temptation when he saw the possibility of attaining material gain through the ministry of God's grace. This very temptation has been the downfall of many ministers (2 Corinthians 2:17; 1 Timothy 6:10). Would that all God's children have the same spirit of Elisha and that those who are far from God, as Naaman had been in his heathen country would come with faith and receive God's healing for their souls through His free gift of Jesus Christ.

## **Prayer**

Thank You, Lord, for the mighty works You have done and are still doing. Help us to humble ourselves before You, recognize our great need, and trust in Your love and provision.