

The Little Maid, Naaman, Gehazi, and Fact Versus Truth

Ministry · October 1, 2023

Service as to the Lord, Not to Men

Ephesians 6:5–8 was written to literal slaves. At the time Paul wrote it, slavery was common throughout the Roman world, and many of those who gathered on Sunday evenings — when slaves were briefly released from their duties — were bondmen in the fullest sense. Yet the apostle's word to them transforms the whole question of service: do it not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as bondmen of Christ, doing the will of God from the soul, serving with goodwill as to the Lord and not to men — knowing that whatever good each shall do, this he shall receive of the Lord.

Whatever the earthly master requires, the true object of a believer's service is Christ. That reorientation changes everything. When the master's commands align with God's will, obedience is straightforward. When they conflict, the servant already knows which authority is higher. And every act of faithful service — unnoticed, unrewarded, perhaps even penalised by the earthly master — is seen and will be rewarded by the Lord.

The Little Maid of Israel — Knowledge, Conviction, and the Glory of God

The story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5 features one of the most striking examples of service as to the Lord in the entire Old Testament. A young Israelite girl, seized in a Syrian raid, was serving as a maid to Naaman's wife. We do not know her name. We do not know how old she was. We do not know what happened to her

village when the war party came through. We know only that she was there, in that household, in that foreign land, with no power and no position — and that she had something no one else in the story had.

She did not say: I have heard that Moses and Miriam had leprosy and were cured, so perhaps Elisha might do something similar. She said — without hedge, without qualification — would that my lord were before the prophet in Samaria: then he would cure him of his leprosy. That is not cautious possibility. That is clear conviction about what God's mind was in this moment. She knew God could heal an incurable disease. She knew it was according to His purpose for Naaman to be healed. And perhaps she had some sense of the glory God would bring to Himself among Israel's enemies through this.

And her deportment evidently matched her conviction. Naaman did not dismiss what his wife told him. He went to the king immediately. Something about this girl — her character, her credibility, the seriousness with which she spoke — made him believe her. She was a nobody, an unnamed slave girl, and the Lord Jesus singled her out. In Luke 4:27 He said: there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian. The Saviour spoke of what she had set in motion. That is her reward.

Elisha — A Mouthpiece Who Refused Payment

The king of Israel tore his garments when Naaman arrived with the letter. He saw it as a political provocation, not a spiritual opportunity. Elisha, when he heard, sent word: why hast thou rent thy garments? Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. He did not go out to meet the great man. He sent a message. And the message was: go and wash in the Jordan seven times.

Naaman was furious. He had expected ceremony, a wave of the hand, a dramatic prayer. Instead he was told to dip himself in a river. His servants reasoned him

round, and he went. He dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, and his flesh became again like the flesh of a little child.

When he returned and offered a generous payment — equivalent to millions in today's terms — Elisha refused: as Jehovah liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. He had been nothing more than a mouthpiece. God had done the work. A servant of the Lord who preaches the gospel and sees someone saved did not save them — he was the instrument the Lord used. The work is the Lord's. The reward is the Lord's to give. Elisha understood that completely.

Gehazi — The Contrast That Corrupts the Testimony

Gehazi's calculation was simple and ugly: his master had left three and a half million dollars' worth of gratitude untouched. Naaman had been willing to give it. Elisha had been foolish not to accept it. He would run after Naaman and take something for himself. He fabricated a story about two young men from the sons of the prophets who had just arrived — could Naaman spare a talent of silver and two changes of clothing? Naaman, still warm with gratitude, gave him double what he asked for.

Elisha knew everything. When Gehazi returned, the prophet asked where he had been. He lied. Elisha said: went not my heart with thee? And the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee and to thy seed forever. Gehazi went out from his presence a leper, white as snow.

The contrast between Gehazi and the little maid is total. She was a slave with nothing, interested only in her master's benefit from God's goodness, concerned for the glory of God. He was the servant of the greatest prophet of his generation, surrounded daily by evidence of God's power, and entirely occupied with the three and a half million dollars he had watched walk away. And in accepting payment from Naaman, he destroyed the testimony. The gospel was made to look like a transaction — as though what God freely gives can be purchased. God is

not transactional. And Gehazi's leprosy was precisely appropriate: the disease that spoke of sin was the judgment on the man who had made the grace of God into a commodity.

David Fleeing Absalom — Fact and Truth

Second Samuel 15 brings the same principle into a different register. David, hearing that the hearts of Israel had gone after Absalom, immediately said: arise and let us flee. He did not stay and fight for his throne. He fled. Why?

Because David understood the government of God on his own life. He had sinned grievously with Bathsheba. God had pronounced that four of his sons would die as a consequence. David had confessed and been forgiven — but the government stood. The loss of the kingdom to Absalom was the government of God on a forgiven man, and David would not resist it. The way of the upright is to depart from evil, Proverbs says. David was upright at that moment because he had humbled himself, and so he departed.

A sharp distinction was drawn during this time of testing between fact and truth. The fact was that Absalom was coming and the kingdom was being taken away. But the truth was something different — David voiced it himself: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again and show me both it and His habitation. But if He say, I have no delight in thee — behold, here am I; let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him. The facts were against David. The truth was that God was still God, still good, still in control, and still David's God.

*The fact is it was incurable. But the truth is that God was able to heal it.
We tend to look at the facts and get down under the facts — instead of
thinking of the truth that our Father is over all. — (spoken in ministry)*

This is equally the lesson of Naaman. The fact was that leprosy was incurable. The truth was that God could heal it, and the little maid knew the truth. We tend to live under the facts and lose sight of the truth. David's servants who followed

him into the wilderness understood this — they acknowledged David as the one God had appointed and were ready to do whatsoever he should appoint, regardless of circumstances. Like that little maid, they were serving as to the Lord and not to men.

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