

Love Speaks Sacrificially

2 Kings 5

Introduction

Michelle shared the bad news with her friend Sue before sharing the good news. "It's cancer, but they caught it early. Treatment will be difficult, but they think I should pull through just fine." Sue took it even harder than Michelle had. "This is so unfair! Why do bad things happen to good people like you?" she asked. "I don't know," said Michelle, "but I'll get through it."

Greg was packing up boxes in his garage when his neighbor Chad stopped by, wondering what was going on. Greg shared the news that since he lost his job their family had not been able to keep up with the mortgage. "We finally fell too far behind and the bank foreclosed," he said. "That's tough," replied Chad. "How are you going to make it?" "I don't know; I don't know," said Greg. "But don't you worry about us; we'll be fine."

Michelle and Greg were Christians. Sue was not, and Chad had fallen away from the church years ago. What opportunities did both Michelle and Greg miss?

A servant girl had lost many things, but when the opportunity presented itself for her to share the good news of her God, she took it.

Background

The prophet Elisha had the difficult task of proclaiming God's Word to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Israel was well into its spiritual decline as a nation, headed towards God's punishment at the hands of the Assyrians.

2 Kings 5:1-6

1. In the description of Naaman in verse 1, what seemingly insignificant little word may be the most important?



2. Put yourself in the servant girl's position. How would you feel toward your master in general and then after learning he is sick?
3. Was Naaman that desperate that he would try anything to save himself? What would make him take her suggestion so seriously?
4. God is never absent in the work of his people or in the work of conversion. Where do you see the Lord's work in these six verses?
5. *"From the lips of children . . ."* At times children are better evangelists than adults. Why do you think this is so?
6. Share a story of a child sharing the love of Jesus.

2 Kings 5:7-12

1. Compare the faith and attitude of the king of Israel to the servant girl.
2. Explain how Elisha also spoke sacrificially in love.
3. What did Elisha mean when he said, "he will know there is a prophet in Israel"? How did he show this?



4. Naaman's reaction is not uncommon to those experiencing God for the first time. His pride threatens to get in the way. What did he, and what do some people you witness to today, expect?
5. What would you say to someone who is disappointed that their situation didn't turn out as they would have liked?

2 Kings 5:13-19a

1. Naaman's position and list of accomplishments give the impression he was not a man to be questioned. Yet the servants go to him and urge him to change his mind. List some possible reasons they did this.
2. The servants carefully exposed the underlying problem Naaman had with Elisha's request. What was it?
3. Although this was not a baptism for Naaman, as New Testament Christians we cannot help but notice some similarities that remind us of God's great gift to us. Can you find some?
4. Naaman's joy is clearly evident. Explain his desire in verse 15.
5. Elisha displays a sacrificial love once more as he speaks to Naaman. In what way?
6. How else did Naaman display the faith that had been created in his heart?



7. Naaman's road to physical healing and, more importantly, to spiritual life began with the request of a servant girl who spoke in love. How might their relationship have changed after his homecoming?

Taking this truth home

1. Taking a cue from the servant girl, what are some things you might have to give up or set aside for the sake of speaking in love?
2. How do Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 help us in this?
3. From where do we receive the power to do this? (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9)
4. Martin Luther explains the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed this way: "I believe I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him." Apply this to our task of speaking in love sacrificially.

Summary

At times speaking in love requires sacrifice as I set aside personal feelings or desires for the sake of the gospel. By faith the servant girl and Elisha set aside the desires of the sinful nature so that the power and grace would be seen. May the Lord give us that desire to count the cost of discipleship, confident that speaking in love is always worth it.