

WASH AND BE CLEAN

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Lessons: 2 Kings 5:1-14, New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine 159-163

There is a story in the Word about a proud and important soldier, commander of the whole Syrian army. His name was Naaman. He was rich and powerful, but he had the terrible skin disease of leprosy. His money could not buy him back his healthy skin. He was completely powerless against his disease. He would have done ANYTHING to be cured, but no doctor could help him.

And then he heard about Elisha the prophet, or man of God, and was told that Elisha could cure him of his leprosy! When he heard this, he gathered a lot of gold, and silver, and beautiful clothes to offer as gifts to Elisha for curing him. But Elisha did not even go out to meet him. Instead he sent a message by his servant boy, Gehazi, that told him to wash seven times in the Jordan River. Naaman was furious. He was insulted. He was ready to take his gold and silver back to his homeland without even doing what Elisha told him to do, when one of his servants said: "My father, if the prophet had commanded you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather, then, when he says to you, 'Wash and be clean?'"

That made Naaman stop and think. Yes, he would certainly have done some great thing to be cured of leprosy. If the man of God had told him to build a great temple to the Lord, he would have done it. If he had told him to fight great wars for the Lord, he would have done it. Why was it hard for him to do the very easy thing that Elisha asked? All he had to do was to go to the Jordan River, which was not far away, and wash in it seven times. It seemed too simple! It seemed even a little bit humbling. When he forgot about his pride, and did that easy thing, he was cured, and his skin became healthy again.

Think of what this story means to us. We live in this world only a few years (even 100 years is not much compared to eternity!) and our life after death will be happy or sad depending on whether we go to heaven or to hell. Going to hell is like having leprosy forever. If we stopped to think about it, we would do almost anything to avoid that. If the Lord asked us to do some great thing if we wanted to go to heaven, wouldn't we do it? Of course we would. But He doesn't ask us to do one great thing. Instead, He asks us to keep our minds as clean as we can. This means that whenever some evil idea comes into our mind, whenever we find ourselves wanting to do something that we know is wrong, we have to say to ourselves, "I won't do that because the Lord told me not to." This isn't always easy to do. It is very ordinary, and not particularly great. It is like

washing your face and hands. It is a way of keeping yourself clean. That is the kind of thing we have to do to keep our minds pure.

Naaman, at first, was too proud to go and wash in the Jordan River. Sometimes we are too proud to admit that evil ideas come to us. It is difficult to admit that we are wrong. It is embarrassing to see our own evils. It is like seeing dirt on our face. Once the dirt is seen, it is usually not very hard to wash it off. That gives' a picture of the way the Lord wants us to prepare for heaven. You can think of it in five easy stages:

- 1) Learn the difference between good and evil.
- 2) Learn to notice when you have done something wrong.
- 3) Admit that it is evil.
- 4) Decide not to do it because it is against the Lord's wishes for you.
- 5) Ask for His help to clean up your life.

The first step is very important. The Word was given to us to help us see the difference between good and evil. Notice especially the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Commandments. They teach that murder, adultery, stealing and lying are evil. You cannot help feeling anger at times. That is natural. The evil to watch out for is the evil of hatred and murder. You cannot help being interested in sex. The evil to watch out for is adultery and anything that destroys marriage. You cannot help being interested in having things. It is evil to take something away from somebody else. There are times when it does not seem to be safe to tell the truth. The evil part is twisting the truth for selfish reasons.

As you grow older you learn more about good and evil and about how to live the life that prepares you for heaven. But no matter how much you learn or how old you become, all the Lord really asks of you is that you "wash and be clean." Have you the courage to do that "little" thing?