

# THE WAY UP IS DOWN

2 KINGS 5:1-14 • TV-485B

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A television broadcast sermon delivered  
SUNDAY, JULY 31<sup>ST</sup>, 1994

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Transcribed, edited and published  
APRIL 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2020

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### 2 Kings 5:1-14

*Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper. And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.*

*And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.*

*And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me. And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.*

*So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. 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. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the*

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*name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.*

*And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, 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? 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.*

I'm going to speak to you today from the book **2 Kings chapter 5:1-14**.

I'd like for you to take your Bibles and look at the Scripture with me. Now, I've preached from this passage before. I've preached on this subject years ago, on this television program. But the reason I'm repeating it is because it's one of my favorite messages; it's one of my favorite subjects.

The title of the message; this is the title of the message: **"THE WAY UP IS DOWN."**

Now; here in **2 Kings chapter 5:1-14** is the story of a man by the name of Naaman and most of you are very familiar with it. You see, Naaman was a great warrior. He was a General. He was the leading officer in the Syrian army.

And he was a Gentile; he wasn't a Jew, he was a Gentile. But God had used this pagan Gentile General to bring deliverance to Syria. God had used this man as an instrument of His power and purpose to accomplish great things for the country of Syria.

He was a mighty man. The Scripture said, *"He was an honorable man, (a man of honor), a man of valor, and a mighty man, but he was a leper."*

And then it says; there was in his household, a young woman who was an Israelite. She was Jewish and she had been captured and brought to that country and she was a servant in Naaman's household.

And she knew about the prophet of God. It's doesn't say she knew Elijah but she knew about Elijah. And she knew her master Naaman was a leper. So she told Naaman's wife; she said; "There's a prophet in Israel who could heal my master of his leprosy, if he'd go to the prophet Elijah in Israel that he'd be made whole."

Well Naaman went to see his own king, the king of Syria and told him what this girl had said; this young woman had said that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal him of his leprosy. So, the king of Syria sent Naaman down to Israel. He sent him with gold, silver, and a lot of beautiful clothes and all kind of possessions and treasures.

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And he took these things and a letter down to the king of Israel, not to the prophet, not to Elijah, but he sent him to the king of Israel. And he came to the king of Israel and the letter from the king of Syria to the king of Israel said, "I'm sending you my servant Naaman who's a leper and I want you to heal him."

And the king of Israel rent his clothes and he was beside himself. He said; "This man must be trying to make war with us. He said; "Am I God, am I God to kill a man or make him alive? I can't, I can't cure leprosy. What's behind all this?"

Well, the prophet of God, Elijah, heard about and knew what was going on; God revealed to him what was going on. But the Scripture said; "He heard that the king of Israel rent his clothes and he was beside himself and troubled over this situation."

So Elijah, the prophet of God, sent word to the king of Israel; he said, "Send Naaman down here to me and I'll, I'll take care of his leprosy. And he'll learn that there's a prophet of God in Israel. You send Naaman to me and Naaman will learn that there's a prophet of God in Israel."

Well, Naaman came to the little house where the prophet Elijah lived and with his carriages, chariots, horsemen, soldiers, silver, gold, treasures, and all these, in his fine uniform and his medals and all these things.

And he stood before the door of the prophet Elijah. The Scripture says, "He stood; before the door." He didn't stoop; he didn't go in; he stood before the door expecting the prophet of God to cater to him, expecting the prophet of God to oblige him.

But Elijah didn't appear. He didn't come out at all. Elijah sent a servant, a slave, out to Naaman, to this great, important, impressive, General. And his servant said to the General: "Naaman; my master said for you to go dip seven times in the River Jordan and you'll be clean."

And the Scripture says, "Naaman turned in a rage." He was so angry, so angry. He turned in a rage and he said; "I thought, I thought, surely he'd come out to me and put his hand on the place and call on his God, his God, and I'd be clean."

And he stomped off. He was going to leave. And one of his simple servants said to him; "Master; if the prophet of God had told you some hard thing to do, would you have done it? If the prophet of God had given you some expensive thing to give would you have given it? Of course; then why don't you do the simple thing that he commands? Why don't you go down and wash?"

And the Scripture said: *"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."*

The way up is down; he went down and he came up. He went down humbled, stripped, broken, and submissive. He came up, with flesh like a little child, cleansed and soft and new.

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Why is this story in the Bible, there are 19 verses here committed to Naaman, a Gentile heathen General who was healed of leprosy? Why is this in the Bible?

First of all: Well, I know it's authentic!

I know it's genuine because my Lord referred to it **in Luke 4** when my Lord Jesus Christ went down to Nazareth to preach, when He would define the sovereign mercy of God, when Christ our Lord would define the sovereign mercy of God; He said to those Sabbath-keeping, legalistic, ceremonial Israelites; *"There were many widows in the land of Israel in the days of the prophet and God didn't feed any of them. He fed a Gentile."*

*"And there were many lepers in the land of Israel in the days of Elisha and God didn't heal any of them. He healed Naaman a Gentile."* The Lord Jesus Christ used this message right here Himself. I'm in good company this morning. So, it's authentic.

Secondly: I know it's not there to instruct lepers to go to the River Jordan to be healed!

I know that; I know that a leper cannot be healed by dipping seven times in the River Jordan. The River Jordan doesn't have any power to cure leprosy, none whatsoever. It never did; it didn't then and it doesn't now.

But I know this; Naaman could never have been healed of leprosy if he'd not gone into that River Jordan. Now I know that; I can't explain that, but I do know that river doesn't have the power to cure leprosy but Naaman couldn't be cured without going in that river.

I'm going to show you why this story is in the Scripture. It's there to give us a picture, an illustration of how God brings a sinner to himself. He brings us to Him also. *"He translates us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His dear Son."* He brings us to Himself.

And the way He does it is to strip us, break us, humble us, and bring us down first. That's right! Just as the brazen serpent is a picture of Christ crucified; Naaman is a picture of the sinner who looks to Christ.

Do you remember when the brazen serpent was lifted up and Moses said, "Look and live, and they looked?" Well that brazen serpent is a picture of Christ. And this man Naaman is a picture of sinners like you and me who are brought to Christ, brought to look to Him, love Him, and believe Him.

You see; Naaman belonged to the Lord, even when he was in heathen Syria, even when he was in heathenism, paganism, idolatry, and false worship he still belonged to God. Just like Saul of Tarsus; Saul of Tarsus wasn't brought to faith until he was 40 years old but he belonged to God before he was born.

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That's what the Scripture says, "*God who separated me from my mother's womb called me by His grace.*" And Naaman belongs to God. Naaman is an object of God's grace. Naaman is an object of God's mercy. Naaman is an object of God's love.

Christ said so; Christ said, "God sent His mercy to Naaman. He sent His prophet to the widow." But you see; listen to me now: Naaman was an object of God's love, an object of God's grace, and an object of God's sovereign mercy.

But Naaman himself must learn who God is. He's got to learn that God is God. He must learn his own inability. He must learn his own helplessness. He must be brought to the place where he will willingly give God the glory.

Naaman must be brought down. His pride has to be broken. He must give the glory of his deliverance to God. If he buys it, if he purchases it, if he pays for it, he gets the glory; if it's free and by grace and by sovereign mercy, God gets the glory. He's got to be brought to acknowledge that.

He must realize he can't buy grace. He must learn that salvation is of the Lord from first to last, Alpha to Omega; it's of the Lord. He's got to learn that. And then he's got to be brought to faith. He's got to be brought where God brought him.

Listen to **verse 15**; after he came up out of that river he went back to the prophet and this is what he said: "Behold; now I know there's no God in all the earth but in Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is God."

He didn't know that back yonder. He knows it now. Do you see that? "*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*" This work must be done. It's the work of conviction; it's a work of convincing men of sin.

It's a work of humbling and converting sinners. It's a bringing down. It's a stripping. A man that's never been lost has never been found. A man who's never been stripped has never been clothed. A man who's never been dead has never been raised. A man who's never been blind has never had his sight restored.

That's got to take place if this proud General is to know God. And it has to take place in every sinner whom God redeems because you see, "*God resisteth the proud. He gives grace to the humble.*"

God said in **Isaiah 45:23**; "*I've sworn by myself. The Word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness. It shall not return unto me void. Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess He's Lord.*"

It has to take place. You see, if you've missed conviction, you'll miss repentance. And if you miss repentance, you'll miss faith. And if you miss faith, you'll miss Christ. And if you miss Christ, you'll miss life.

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And it all goes back to this point of conviction, humbling, and breaking. Naaman is an object of grace. He's a choice jewel in the crown of Christ. But Naaman has got to be brought down, down. Do you see that?

All right; let's look at it carefully at these verses and see what we can find out, God dealing with this man Naaman as He deals with us.

First of all: Naaman had many commendable traits

You'll see there in **verse 1**; it says: "He was honorable. He was mighty in battle. He was well loved by his king and by the people."

God had even delivered Syria by this man's hand and by his cunning work in battle. But he was a leper. All these good things that could be said about him, but he's still a leper. He covered it pretty well. He had a uniform on. You couldn't see his skin underneath the uniform. He had his fine, tailor-made, best uniform on. Underneath there was that old dying skin, that scaly leprosy.

And that's a picture of us. You and I and everybody listening to me, we might have some commendable traits. Some of you are husbands, fathers, sons, good neighbors, good workmen, and outstanding citizens.

Some of you wives are fine mothers, daughters, kind to your neighbors, and so helpful. But, you're a sinner. No use denying it. And we cover it pretty well.

We cover it with religion, we cover it with morality, we cover it with smiles, we cover it with a whole lot of things, but the Scripture says: "*There's none good, no not one. There's none that understandeth. There's none that seeketh after God. All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way. Your sins have separated you and God.*" It's an inward heart disease that's responsible for all our troubles and sorrows and death and darkness.

He was a mighty man, honorable man, but he was a leper. He had something wrong, something that was fatal, and something that would eventually destroy him. And there's something wrong with us. Sin is a transgression of God's holy law. And our sins have separated us from God and sin when it's finished bringeth forth death, eternal death.

Secondly: Naaman wanted to be healed, but he went to the wrong place.

He went to the king of Israel. Nothing was said to him about going to the king of Israel. The young woman said, "If my master could get to the prophet, the prophet in Israel, he would be healed."

But he didn't go to the prophet; he went to the king. Who is this prophet? If you'll read **Deuteronomy 18** you'll find that this prophet, not Elijah; Elijah was a picture of that prophet Christ.

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Moses said, “God will raise up that prophet, and him you shall hear. He shall speak my words, and everyone that hears my prophet will be blessed. And those that hear not my prophet; I’ll require it of them.”

Christ is that prophet. *“God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. He hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son.”*

Naaman went to the wrong place; he didn’t go to the prophet. And we today; men are going to the wrong place. Nothing was said to Naaman about going to the king of Israel.

And nothing is said to us about going to the front of the church, or going to the altar, or going to Mary, or going to the law, or going to the baptismal pool, or going to the sacraments, or going to the preacher; it says: Go to Christ, *“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I’ll give you rest. Come unto me. I’m the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me,”* Christ said.

Do you see how we are like Naaman? We’ve got something wrong, seriously wrong. He knew it. He went to the wrong place.

Thirdly: He wanted to be healed.

He not only went to the wrong place but he took the wrong things with him. He took silver and gold and raiment. My friends; we do the same thing. We can’t condemn Naaman when we offer God for redemption, our tithes, our times, and our talents, our hearts, our morality, our righteousness, and our good works.

Naaman came to the king of Israel with all of these precious treasures. He was going to exchange the silver and gold for cleansing. *“We’re not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold from our vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot or blemish.”*

Don’t go to the wrong place. And don’t take with you the wrong things. When I think about this Naaman taking the wrong things I think about that Pharisee who went to the temple to pray and he stood and prayed thus with himself; “Father I thank you I’m not like other men. I tithe, I give alms to the poor. I fast twice a week. I’m not an adulterer, I’m not an extortioner, and I’m not like that Publican.” And my Lord said, *“He went home condemned.”* He offered God in exchange for mercy, his works, (in my hands no price I bring).

Naaman brought the wrong things and then watch this.

Thirdly: He came to the prophet, he finally got to the right place. Finally, he came to the prophet. The king of Israel sent him to the prophet, God’s prophet. Finally, he came, but he came with the wrong attitude. It said, “He stood outside the door.”

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I can imagine that this little house where the prophet of God lived; it wasn't very impressive. I imagine it's like a lot of those little houses I see in Mexico with a thatched roof and a curtain over the door, a round house with one room and a dirt floor.

And here this proud General is standing there with his uniform and his medals and his hat on, you know, and his swagger-stick and his scarf around his neck to cover his rotten flesh. And he stood there in his pride.

You know; old Naaman wanted to be treated like a great man who happened to be a leper. And all he was in reality was a leper who happened to be a great soldier. Elijah knew his pride. He knew his arrogance and he wouldn't come out to meet Him. He wouldn't cater to Him. He sent his servant out.

He knew the man's problem. The man needed to be broken. Mercy is at the feet of Christ where that adulteress woman fell and kissed His feet and bathed Him with tears and dried Him with the hair of her head. Mercies are found at the feet of Christ as a humble sinner falls there.

And this proud, arrogant, General had to be brought down. And you and I have got to be brought down to the feet of Christ so that He gets all the glory.

And there he stood with a wrong attitude. And Elijah sent his servant out there and Gehazi the servant came out and said, "My master said for you to go and dip seven times in the River Jordan."

Now; Naaman got the message but he had the wrong thoughts, he had the wrong ideas, "I thought." You know, God said; "*Your thoughts are not my thoughts. Your ways are not my ways. There's a way that seemeth right unto you and the end thereof is death.*"

It's not what you think; it's what God says. The way of life is not the way you think it is; it's the way God says it is. "I thought He'd come to me. I thought He'd come out and put his hand on the place." Christ said, "*You come to me.*"

That's what all the preachers are doing now, laying their hands on people, people laying their hands on the television. My hand has no power. The power is in the blood of Christ, in the grace of God, in the mercy of God, and in the righteousness of Christ.

"I thought He would lay His hand on me and say some words and call on His God." No sinner, you're going to call on your God. It's not "my God" that's going to save you; it's "your God." Do you see what I'm saying?

"I thought, I thought, I thought He'd come to me. He doesn't know who I am, does He? Does He know who I am? Does He know who's out here? I thought He'd come out here to me and He'd go through some hocus-pocus and lay His hands and call on His God."

Oh boy! Thomas said, "*My Lord and my God.*"



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Well; finally, he did something right. He had something wrong with him and he came to the wrong place and brought the wrong thing and had the wrong attitude and had the wrong thoughts.

Finally, he got straightened out, the word of a simple servant; he said, “Now master, if He told you something hard to do you would have done it. Why don’t you go wash?” And that’s what happened.

Why don’t you come to Christ? Why do you go through all this rigmarole, sprinkling infants, bowing and scraping, and giving all this money, time, talent, heart, and hand, and hustling around, zeal and all of this sort of thing, organization, religion, and all of these things?

And God holds it in utter contempt. *“That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God.”* God saves sinners, helpless sinners, stripped sinners, worthless sinners, undeserving sinners who are in the dust at the feet of Christ. Look unto Him for mercy like the thief on the cross.

Well, he took off his gold braid, took off his stars, laid down his swagger-stick. He wasn’t swaggering now; he was a naked leper. And his soldiers, I’m sure, were looking at him like they’d never seen a sight like that before, decayed and rotten flesh.

And there he stood like he really was, like he really was, nothing to cover him. Don’t hide your sins. *“He that hideth his sins shall not prosper but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them will find mercy.”*

He went down into that river, down, low as he could get, muddy, dirty, Jordan, but he came up washed. There’s power in the blood. There’s power to cleanse the guilty. There’s power to save the helpless. There’s power to redeem the lost. There’s power to reach the fellow that’s the furthest away.

But let me tell you now, God is not selling anything. He said: *“If I was hungry I wouldn’t ask you. The cattle on a thousand hills is His and the silver and gold hadn’t yet been mined is His.”* He doesn’t need you, me, or anything we’ve got. You need Him.

But if you’ll come like Naaman, stripped, as you really are, nothing, no veneer, nothing to hide behind, just an open, dirty, rotten, dying, sinner, in the dust, in the dust, bathing in the blood of Christ, and you’ll come up clean.

Do you know what this man did? He went right back to the prophet. He went in the house now and he said, *“There’s no God in all the earth but in Israel.”*

And he said to Elijah; he said, “I want to give you a little something to help your ministry.” Elijah said: “I don’t need anything, I don’t need anything. I’m just glad God did something for you.” And he turned and went home.

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There's more to it. I wish I had more time to tell you about it but won't you get the tape and read the Scripture!