

# GOD PORTRAYS WOMEN

by

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### THE LITTLE MAID

II Kings 5

IN THE SPRING OF THE YEAR parties of one or two hundred Syrian marauders would invade Israel and confiscate what grain and cattle they could and take the young people who would be profitable slaves. These raids were very discouraging to Israel. The hearts of the parents were torn as their children were wrenched from their protection and carried away captive to a heathen world. But many of these godly Israelites had implanted in their children's hearts the Word of God and confidence in the Lord that would fortify them when their parental care was far removed.

On one of these occasions the enemy entered a town and snatched a little girl from her godly home. We are not told her name or that of her parents. Everything seemed against her. But God had purposes for this child and for those to whom she was taken. He had planned that she was to be an ambassador for Him, a missionary whose parish was the heathen home where she was a slave girl. She was one of the servants in a beautiful home where courtesy and human kindness had a place.

The head of the house was the king's trusted general, Naaman. As a man he was honorable and great, having many noble qualities. Through him God had accomplished His purposes for we read, "**By him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria**" (v. 1). Daniel told the king "**that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will**" (Daniel 5:21). We find the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar called God's servant whom he used to punish Israel (Jeremiah 25:9).

Had we known Naaman we would have admired him greatly. But there was a sad expression in his countenance, a secret sorrow that marred all his accomplishments and graces. He was a leper. He was a mighty man of valor, but all his military genius and courage could not overcome or expel the torturing fear of this dread disease. Though he was the envy of others, the royal favorite, there was a stain on his glory that only the hand of God could remove.

God sent this little slave girl to his home. She conducted herself most creditably. She was trustworthy, sympathetic, understanding and solicitous for the happiness of her master and mistress and thus won their complete confidence.

Her behavior makes us think of another captive, Daniel. We read that Daniel won the favor of King Darius **“because an excellent spirit was in him.”** And that his enemies the presidents and the princes **“could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful neither was there any error or fault found in him”** (Daniel 6:34). This little girl had learned to turn to God in prayer.

As a result of the many raids on their land, had her parents taught her this verse? — **“Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace”** (Jeremiah 29:7).

When King Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem he prayed that if any of the children of Israel were carried away captive and in that strange land should turn to God with their whole heart, He would hear them, **“and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee . . . and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them”** (I Kings 8:49-50). Sometimes dispersion of God’s people became the opening needed to spread the knowledge of their wonder-working God. **“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word”** (Acts 8:4).

Naaman’s heart was distressed because of this plague. But his slave girl treasured in her heart the knowledge of God, the only One who could heal the plague. She was so concerned for her master and mistress that one day she dared to make a suggestion. **“Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy”** (v. 3).

Her testimony was given at the right time and in the right spirit. They had tried many physicians but Naaman had received no benefit. They were willing to spend all they had for his recovery. New hope was kindled at the suggestion of the little maid. They put such confidence in what she had told them that the king was informed. **“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”** (v. 5).

The girl had not said that Naaman should go to the king but to the prophet in Israel. Worldly wisdom says, “Seek patronage and go prepared to pay handsomely for the cure.” But **“my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord”** (Isaiah 55:8). Every heart knows that salvation from the plague of sin cannot be bought with money or works. **“Not of works, lest any man should boast”** (Ephesians 2:9). Salvation belongeth unto the Lord” (Psalm 3:8). It cost God His all. The Saviour paid the price with His own blood that we might have the gift of life freely. We deserved death as the wages of our sins, but Christ paid the full penalty of our sins that He might open the gate of life to us.

**“When the king of Israel read the letter 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?”** (v. 7).

When Elisha heard of the king’s distress, **“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”** (v. 8).

Naaman must have remembered then that the maid had said to go to the prophet not to the king. So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and presents, and stood before the door of Elisha. He stood there expecting some recognition of his rank and office. But God is no respecter of persons. (See Acts 10:34.) Our earthly importance does not give an entrance to the presence of God. We must come as sinners.

Elisha was not discourteous because he did not come out and speak to Naaman; he wanted him to learn that though he was a prophet, he could not cure him; that only God could work this miracle. **“And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean”** (v. 10). He was not going to be healed because he was a great captain. He was unclean and needed cleansing. He was given an amazing test in humiliation and obedience.

Naaman had imagined how the miracle would be performed. **“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 name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper”** (v. 11). Our preconceived ideas and prejudices have often hindered blessing. Naaman was to learn that no hand but God’s could heal.

**“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”** (v. 12). *If we are to have God’s cleansing, we must have it in God’s way.*

He almost missed the blessing because he was so angry. His pride and temper nearly robbed him of God’s healing. But his servants, who knew him so well, tactfully said, **“My father.”** They were like his children, only seeking his good. **“If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?”** (v. 13).

They convinced him that he was stumbling at the simplicity of the remedy. Then he went down. Yes, it was humbling. **“He 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”** (v. 14). New life was imparted, the plague was gone forever. Now Naaman was a new creation, desiring now to please the One to whom he previously was a stranger. He had come to God the Great Physician through his prophet.

In the days of our Lord a leper came and worshiped Him saying, **“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”** Jesus did not tell him **“to go wash in Jordan.”** Jesus put forth His hand and touched him. No one had wanted to touch him for years. The Lord’s touch consumed the disease but did not contract defilement. He said, **“I will.”** This was no delegated authority. **“Be thou clean!”** Naaman stood, his leprosy gone and his soul made whole.

Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company. He was ready now to make public confession of God. He stood before Elisha and said, **“Now I know.”**

His thoughts had been abolished, God's commands were now to be his wishes. **"Behold, now I know that there is no god in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant"** (v. 15). His pride had vanished. A humble, contrite and grateful heart was his. But Elisha said, **"As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand [I, too, am a servant] I will receive none. And he urged him to take it but he refused"** (v. 16). The prophet wanted Naaman to know that God's gifts are of pure grace. Peter told Simon the sorcerer that the gift of God could not be purchased with money (Acts 8:20).

Now that Naaman was cleansed his conscience was sensitive, and he asked Elisha how he should behave when he returned to his home that he might be a witness to the true God. Elisha wisely left room for his growth and spiritual maturity. Gold, silver and riches lost their importance in Naaman's eyes, and righteousness, peace and joy took their place. His perspective and valuations changed. How sweet to his ears were Elisha's last words to him, **"Go in peace!"**

But Elisha had an unworthy servant, Gehazi, who was very different from his master. After all the years he had lived with this godly man, his nature remained the same. He thought that his master was very foolish not to accept something from Naaman. He was determined to have some of the gold and silver and beautiful clothes Naaman had brought with him. So Gehazi ran after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he went to meet him and asked, **"Is all well?"** Gehazi deliberately lied saying, **"My master hath sent me."** Then he asked for a talent of silver and two changes of raiment for two sons of the prophets who had arrived unexpectedly. He did not care that he had spoiled Elisha's testimony that the cure was a free gift from God. Naaman gave him more than he asked and sent two of his servants to carry it for him. Gehazi is a striking example of the words **"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition"** (I Timothy 6:9). Because Gehazi would have some of Naaman's treasures, God decreed that he should also have his dread disease. Thus he excommunicated himself from the choicest fellowship on earth by his covetousness and deceit.

Naaman had a marvelous homecoming when he returned not only cured but converted. This result was obtained through the faithful testimony of the little slave maid in his home. Had it been an anxious time for her while Naaman was gone? It would be hard to tell who was the happiest one in that home that day. Like Onesimus (see Philemon) the little maid would no longer be treated as a slave but as a beloved member of the family. I wonder if Naaman's household was like the jailer's in Philippi where all were converted and used in the service of the Lord? We like to think that the little maid was restored to her parents.

Are we modest, faithful witnesses in a strange land? Do we show the spirit of Christ in straitened circumstances? Do we commend our Lord by our conduct and industry where we are? This little maid will yet receive these coveted words from the Lord's lips, "Good and faithful."

~ end of chapter 14 ~

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