

[2 Kings 5:1-5, 9-15a](#)

God's Incomprehensible Ways – The Healing of Naaman

Introduction

What do Frank Sinatra, Naaman the commander of the Syrian army and all of us in this room have in common? We like to do things our way. Sinatra even did a hit song titled "I Did It My Way". We're really good at wanting our way. For example, Adam and Eve wanted to do things their way after they were deceived by Satan. King David did things his way in an adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband. My wife, Julie, and I were newlyweds and we had an incident about clothes in the closet because I wanted my way.

Wanting our own way reflects our self-centeredness, which emanates out of pride, which is sin. Pride says our way is best and no one else's is, including God's ways. Scripture, however, speaks to the fact that God's ways are so much better than ours. Here's what the Author Himself of the Bible says about His ways. [Isaiah 55:8-9](#)

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

[Isaiah 55:8-9](#) (ESV)

I have a saying, which expresses the fact that God's ways are so much higher than ours. **God's incomprehensibility is too incomprehensible for me to comprehend.** The magnitude of God and His ways is staggering! He's beyond understanding! Attempting to comprehend God's ways is like trying to empty all of the water from every ocean, lake and river on Earth using a teaspoon. It can't be done! Here's an assurance. Not comprehending God's way is okay. In fact, it's necessary that God have some mystery. I would challenge us that if we fit God into our own box, we've reduced Him to our ways and our thoughts and we're really not worshiping Him.

The text in 2 Kings 5 is about the healing of Naaman's leprosy, but what we want to take from this message is that God is the hero of the story. The focus is on God and His incomprehensible, unchanging, unfailing, sovereign, exclusive, perfect ways, which point us to His Beloved Son, Jesus. We get to brag about God's greatness to the praise of His glory and boasting about Him points us to the beauty of God in the gospel because He is the gospel. He is the good news!

Here are four points which we can glean from the text in [2 Kings 5](#) concerning God's incomprehensible ways. They are:

- Sovereign
- Exclusive
- Perfect
- Point to Jesus

Historical Background

The story of Naaman takes place around 850 B.C. Syria and Israel were enemies and already had wars with one another and would continue to have wars. However, the story of Naaman takes place during a time of peace. Jehoram was the king of Israel and Benhadad II was king of Syria. This was also the time of Elisha succeeding Elijah as God's chosen prophet to His people, Israel.

In addition, leprosy, a disease of the skin, was common during this time period. In the book of Leviticus, there were laws for the people of Israel about leprosy. In fact, these laws stated that the leprosy person shall wear torn clothes, let his/her hair hang loose and shall cry out 'Unclean, unclean'. He/she shall live alone and his/her dwelling shall be outside the camp. Leprosy parallels our sin because if left untreated, it is hideous, deplorable and a death wish.

It should be noted that leprosy was incurable at this time and excluded people from society in Israel, as attested to by the aforementioned Levitical laws. This was not the case for those with leprosy in Syria, who were allowed to interact with others. But leprosy respects no one, whether from Israel or Syria. So, Naaman's dilemma was either to continue as a leper or be cured by the Word of God through the prophet Elisha. It would be God's incomprehensible ways that Naaman would experience, even though he wanted to do things his way.

1. God's Ways Are Sovereign

Naaman was a great man with his master and in high favor because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. Everything that Naaman was could be attributed to God, including the fact that God was sovereign over his leprosy. In the text from [2 Kings 5](#), God's sovereignty over Naaman's healing was manifested in a little slave girl from Israel. Isn't it interesting that God would use an Israelite slave girl - a child - to point the way to Naaman's healing? Seems insignificant doesn't it?

Jesus spoke of a seemingly insignificant mustard seed and compared it to the kingdom of God. The gospel, a tiny seed, turns into a significant thing, which has significant effects on the lives of everyone who embrace it. An insignificant slave girl was used by God to change the life of a significant man in order that the kingdom of God would grow.

Jesus also spoke of Naaman's leprosy. [Luke 4:27](#)

²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

[Luke 4:27](#) (ESV)

Jesus was saying that God dispenses His grace to whomever He pleases. In this case, not one Jew was cleansed of leprosy in the time of Elisha, except only Naaman the Syrian. To proclaim that God chose to cleanse an enemy, a Syrian, was unthinkable. That's why the priests and religious leaders were filled with anger against Jesus because He said things and did things that didn't agree with their ways.

God's ways are truly sovereign. Sovereign is defined as supreme, paramount, having unlimited and absolute authority. The theme of God's sovereignty is written about throughout the book of Isaiah chapters 45 and 46. For example, [Isaiah 45:12](#)

¹² *I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.*

[Isaiah 45:12](#) (ESV)

If you've looked through a telescope or at pictures from the Hubble Space Telescope, the moon, stars and galaxies provokes a sense of God's greatness and His sovereignty over His creation. All of creation is His, including all of us. [Psalm 24:1](#)

¹ *The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,*

[Psalms 24:1](#) (ESV)

Indeed, God is sovereign. He owns everything. We own nothing. God owes us nothing. We owe Him everything. Take note that the sovereignty of God is one of our core values at La Crescent Evangelical Free Church. A core value means that a particular truth that Scripture defines is at the very heart of our belief in who God is. With regard to God's sovereignty, the core value states that God is supreme and sovereign over all things for His own glory.

Do you and I believe our life is under God's sovereignty? Do you and I trust that God is in control when chaos and despair are manifested in such things as people dying in earthquakes or Islamic State militants ruthlessly murdering Christians? What about in our own families? Do you and I worry that God isn't concerned about our marriage, a wayward child or an elderly relative who has Alzheimer's disease? Is not God sovereign over all of these? Are we trusting in God's sovereign ways or would we rather trust in our ways? [Proverbs 3:5-8](#)

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. ⁸ It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.*

[Prov 3:5-8](#) (ESV)

2. God's Ways Are Exclusive

Naaman wanted healing his way, not God's way. Naaman arrived at Elisha's door with his entourage of chariots, horses and servants. The silver, gold and fine clothing that he had brought to find favor with Elisha, the prophet, was of incredible worth. He also expected Elisha to turn his healing into a spectacle, with waving of the prophet's hands and calling upon the name of the Lord his God. Naaman also challenged that his healing be done in the Jordan River. Wouldn't the clean and beautiful waters of the Abana and Pharpar Rivers near Damascus be better than all the waters of Israel, including the dirty, muddy Jordan? But God's exclusive ways are always right.

Exclusive is defined as independent, not shared with others. Some examples of God's exclusivity in Scripture are creation, love, faithfulness and salvation. Only God created everything. Only God has a love and faithfulness that is perfect. Only God has the remedy for sin. Only God

provides the pathway to a son/daughter relationship with Himself. Only God can do miracles of healing, such as He did with Naaman's leprosy.

Yet, the remedy for healing his leprosy was "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." Simple enough isn't it? And yet Naaman's response was to turn away in an angry rage and disrespect for God's way of healing his leprosy. There is a danger in turning away from God's way and wanting our way instead. [Proverbs 14:12](#)

¹² *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*
[Prov 14:12](#) (ESV)

Naaman was on a path that would lead to death if he didn't receive the cure for his leprosy. More importantly, he was on a path that would lead to spiritual death if he didn't receive a cure for his sin. God's way is exclusive in that it is the only way to be cleansed and forgiven of sin. Here's the beauty of the gospel. **There is no one or nothing else that can be the exclusive pathway to God except through Jesus.** [John 14:6](#)

⁶ *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*
[John 14:5-6](#) (ESV)

No one who has ever lived, is living or will live can come to God except through Jesus. A man named John Newton experienced the exclusive ways of God, which changed his life. Newton, the writer of the hymn "Amazing Grace" was a captain of a slave trading ship in the mid 1700's. During a violent storm while on the ocean, he realized God's way for his life was the only way. Later, he became a pastor and wrote the hymn which praises God for his exclusive way of rescuing wretched sinners from the darkness of sin. The words "I once was lost, but now am found; was blind but now I see" are the heart of the gospel message, which proclaims Jesus as the only way to God. And since God is exclusive in His ways, He is also perfect in His ways.

3. God's Ways Are Perfect

Remember, Naaman was storming off in a furious rage because God's way of healing didn't line up with his. Naaman's servants implored him to listen to Elisha. In essence they were saying, "Here's the cure! If it were difficult, wouldn't you do what you were told? And this is so simple! Will you not do it?" God's perfect way included using the servants of Naaman to make a great change in the life of a desperately, needy man.

When it comes to perfection, there is none like God. He is the author of perfection. He Himself is perfect. He is without sin. And yet in His perfection, He would orchestrate a perfect healing not only for Naaman's leprosy, but healing for his soul. And God would use Naaman's imperfect servants to speak truth into his life, even after he had turned away from God in a disrespectful, angry, rage.

At that moment, God changed Naaman's life. God changed his heart and what had been pride, arrogance and anger was turned to humility and submission. Scripture says that God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. So, Naaman went into the Jordan and dipped himself seven

times, according to God's way, not his way. And his flesh was restored like that of a little child and he was clean.

In Scripture, the number seven is used numerous times to indicate perfection and completeness. As an example relating to our text, the Levitical law stated that in the case of leprosy, a person would be quarantined for seven days and then examined by the priest to assess his or her condition. If the leper was determined to be cleansed of the disease, the blood of a sacrificial bird would be sprinkled seven times on the one who was cleansed of leprosy.

Now, consider this with regard to God's perfection. Under the new covenant in Christ's blood being the perfect sacrifice for every believer's sins, the person who trusts in Jesus has an eternal redemption that is secured by His perfect righteousness, which covers every sin - past, present and future. That's what it means to be in Christ. Is your hope for today, tomorrow and eternity depending upon nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness? Many have rejected the hope found in Christ alone, but for those who have received Jesus as their hope, the gospel changes everything.

Fanny Crosby, who lived from the early 1800's to the early 1900's, was one such person that the gospel changed everything. Blind virtually all of her life, she wrote over 8,000 hymns, including "To God Be The Glory" which proclaims God's perfection in His glory. The second verse goes like this: "O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood! To every believer the promise of God; The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives."

After Naaman dipped in the Jordan River seven times, God cleansed him of his leprosy. As a result, not only was Naaman's skin restored like that of a child, but he was made right with God. He came back to Elisha, he and all of his servants, and proclaimed God's glory as the only sovereign, exclusive and perfect God. Naaman experienced that perfect redemption Fanny Crosby wrote about, which points us to Jesus.

4. God's Ways Point to Jesus

How does the story about a military commander of the Syrian army nearly 3,000 years ago, who had leprosy, point to Jesus? Leprosy is like sin. Both are hideous, disfiguring, and deplorable and are a death threat. People like you and I, whether we want to admit it or not, are a lot like Naaman. We really want to do things our way, even when it involves being cleansed from the horrible and ugly effects of sin.

And this is where pointing to Jesus comes in. God in all of His sovereignty, exclusivity and perfection made the only way for people like you and I to be cleansed and made right with Him. The sovereign, exclusive and perfect way of God is only through Jesus alone. Only God's way matters in the end! [Acts 4:12](#)

¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

[Acts 4:12](#) (ESV)

In the story of Naaman, Scripture states that Naaman's flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean. This reminds me of a new born child, whose flesh is soft, new and

unwrinkled. This also reminds me of what Jesus said when He told Nicodemus that "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus was talking about a spiritual birth, a birth that only God can accomplish.

Because of God's sovereignty, exclusivity and perfection, Naaman was given new life when the disease of leprosy was healed. Naaman was also given new life when he turned toward God and trusted in Him. This is a picture pointing to the fact that in Christ alone a person is made new and set free from the horrible disease of sin.

[2 Corinthians 5:17](#).

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

[2 Cor 5:17](#) (ESV)

Application for the church

The central truth of today's message is that God is sovereign, exclusive, perfect and points us to Jesus. So, how does that apply to the church today? What areas of our lives would we ask God to change in order to become more like Jesus? Are you and I willing to receive God's grace and mercy in order that our lives would be changed for His glory and for our good? Or would we rather do things our own way? Would we rather make much of ourselves or make much of God?

For example in marriage, husbands and wives, are we willing to be a reflection of the gospel, trusting God's way, so as to dispense grace and mercy into our home? And if we're serious about honoring God's way in marriage, will we value and then apply the very Word of God as cited in [Ephesians 5:25-27](#)?

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Eph 5:25-27 (ESV)

That Scripture is a picture of Christ's adoration for His Bride, the church. Likewise, the church is to adore her Husband, Jesus. And if our marriage is a reflection of the gospel, then husbands and wives, we should adore the spouse God has given us to His glory. Husbands, do we adore our bride? Wives, do you adore your husband? This is God's way for marriage. Does your marriage and my marriage line up with God's way or our own way? If it isn't God's way, why is that?

Here's a charge for all of us, from the youngest to the oldest at La Crescent Evangelical Free church. Will we be ambassadors for Christ in an increasingly hostile culture toward the gospel? Will we trust God in His sovereignty, His exclusivity and His perfection to use us to point others to salvation in Christ alone? If he can use a little, slave girl, as well as servants, of a great military commander such as Naaman to point the way to healing, not only from leprosy, but spiritual healing, then He can use people like you and I to do the same.

Conclusion

Here's a couple of final thoughts. Elisha's message of washing in the Jordan River seven times to heal his leprosy was nonsense to Naaman. God's ways are always right and true, but they don't always line up with our own common sense and certainly don't line up with the culture that surrounds us. It's incomprehensible that God would choose to rescue and cleanse from sin people like Naaman, John Newton, Fanny Crosby, as well as you and I. But that's our God!

Why would God choose to heal Naaman? To the praise of His glorious grace! Why would God choose to heal you and me? To the praise of His glorious grace! The answer certainly isn't because we deserve it. Scripture states that "None is righteous, no not one". The gospel is very clear that God chooses to heal people like Naaman, people like you and I, people who really like to do things our way, because God does not withhold any of the riches He lavishes upon those who are in Christ. [Ephesians 1:3-6](#).

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

[Eph 1:3-6](#) (ESV)

What a promise! What an incomprehensible, sovereign, exclusive, perfect God who points us to His Beloved Son, Jesus, for His glory and for our healing. Amen!