

[Written for Zion's Landmarks.]

### Naaman the Syrian.

(See 5th chapter 11th verse Book of Kings.)

Naaman represents the sinner upon whom special grace of God is bestowed in his cleansing. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian. (Luke 4:27.) And when they of the synagogue heard these things they were filled with wrath. And people are yet filled with wrath when the doctrine of God's discriminating grace is taught. They might have said then as they often say now, that God was unjust not to cleanse all the lepers, but we know that he did not do it, for Christ has so taught us. And Christ at another time thanks the Father that he had hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes, because it seemed good in his sight to do so. We know also that God chose Abraham and took him from his father's house, in which they worshipped idols, and led him into Canaan and blessed him and multiplied his seed, when no other man or family was so blessed. These are hard truths to which the carnal mind is enmity, but let us be careful not to war against them lest we be found fighting against God.

Syria represents the world, the flesh, the land of darkness, our own works or righteousness, from which by God's discriminating grace or election we are translated into the land of promise, the kingdom of light and righteousness. Abraham was chosen and led from Ur of the Chaldees into Canaan; from the other side of the flood, from his father's house where they served other gods. It was election that caused him to be separated from the idolatry of his father's house, and from the destruction of a polluted land and led him into another country and caused him to sacrifice to another God, where he was protected, and where kings were reprov'd for his sake, saying touch not mine anointed. It was this also that separated Lot from Sodom whilst the inhabitants of that polluted city were destroyed with fire and brimstone. It was this election or purpose that separated Ruth from the polluted land of Moab and brought her into Bethlehem Judah to the feet and bed of Boaz. And also this election that provided the word of the little Jewish maid to reach the ears of the suffering leper, Naaman, in the land of Syria.

Naaman was a great man with his master, the King of Syria. The land of darkness has its king; the apostle calls him "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," etc. Paul was in the service of this king when he was going afoot 150 miles to Damascus with letters of authority to bring the poor lambs of Jesus that were bound to Jerusalem to be punished. But the king in Israel not only rules in Israel but he rules also in all the kingdoms of the heathen, and with him there is power and might so that none can withstand him. Therefore we find that Paul was here taken from the service of the prince of darkness and placed in the service of the prince of light. His old prince might kick and demur and contend, but he (Paul) is taken as a lawful captive and led away from darkness to light to fight for another king. And he fought to the end; he fought the good fight; he kept the faith up to the time of his departure to the land that is very far off to see the king in his beauty.

Naaman was an honorable man, but that did not keep him from being a leper; and he was a brave man, a man of valor, but notwithstanding all this he was an incurable leper—at least there was no doctor or herb or stream in Syria that could cure him. But he was one whom God purposed to cleanse, though he was away off in the land of Syria. The means are subordinate to the end; the means are effectual, and are always in time. The Jews did not send the little maid down to Naaman's house to hunt him and to tell him of the prophet in Israel, for they did not know of it, and had they have known of it, it is very likely that they would have rather poisoned him than healed him, for they knew him only as a powerful enemy. Nor did the Syrians when they captured her in one of their raids into the land of Israel do it that she might bear the message of cleansing to Naaman; it was far from their hearts to honor the prophet in Israel by the raid and the capture and carrying away the little maid. But they did, nevertheless; they were at the expense, peril and trouble of going for and carrying the little maid into their own land that Naaman might hear

her words. Nor did the Jews and Gentiles at Iconium, when they combined with their rulers to stone and despitefully use Paul and Barnabas, design to glorify God by using such means to make them fly unto Lystra and Derbe and unto the region that lieth round about there, to preach the gospel of Christ, but their design was to stop the preaching of it. As the Jews, when they crucified Christ, thought to destroy his words and works, only rather furthered them. As when Paul was persecuted and at last was sent to preach the gospel at Rome. When they whipped and imprisoned Paul and Silas it was not that their words should reach the ears of the jailor and his household, but rather that their words should cease altogether.

But the little maid was there in due time, that her words should reach the ears of this leprous Gentile. Salvation is of the Jews; through her captivity salvation is come to the Syrian; and so all Israel shall be saved as it is written. There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, that is, the Deliverer shall not come out of the flesh, the law or our own works or righteousness, or even our faith, if that faith is a production of the flesh, for in it is nothing good and nothing good can come out of it.

The little maid's words were words in season: "Would God my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." The words were conveyed to the ears of the sick man, the man who had used all the medicines of Syria in vain. I will venture to say that all the herbs that grew in that great country that possessed any healing qualities were used, all the doctors, the best and most learned, but none of them had the balm, for the balm grew in Gilead and the physician was there, and not in Syria, who could cleanse the leper. And we may well believe that Naaman, who had all the means for a cure that any man could have in Syria, had used all the means that he knew of or could hear of and had at last given up or despaired of ever being healed, so that the little maid spoke and told him, though an enemy of the prophet in Samaria. It must have been good news!—he was prepared to receive it then, and not until then—his necessities urged him and he is led out.

But he takes with him a letter from his king to the king in Israel, (but it was not to the king that the little maid's words directed him, but to the prophet,) and ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of raiment. But this wealth would have cured him as well in Syria as in Israel; but he must be taught that it is without money and without price. Naaman, when he met with the unexpected rebuff from the king in Israel, must have felt somewhat like the Israelites did at the Red Sea, that his trouble had all been for nothing, but that he grew rather worse for his pains. It is true that the king in Israel was the anointed of the Lord, as Saul was, but he does not represent the anointed as David was; Saul was anointed once and out of a vial, but David twice and out of a horn; showing in Saul's case that his kingdom should not endure, and in David's that it should. The law is the anointed of the Lord, but it is anointed to destroy and execute; in it there is no mercy, but it delivers the debtor over to the sheriff and to prison.

But the leper was not to be deceived by the words of the little maid, and the rebuff of the king only prepares him to go to the right place for a cure and to appreciate it when it came. And it was so when Elisha, the man of God, had heard that the King of Israel had sent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou sent 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 his chariot and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And he sent a messenger to the leper, 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 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. The cleansing was not to come as Naaman expected it, for he wished it in a way that would honor him, but it could not be that way and cleanse him. What a comfort it is to us to know that we received the cleansing in a way we