

were not looking for and in a way at war with the flesh! this is the worm-wood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me, therefore have I hope. (Sam.) He expected the prophet to do something great for him, to stand and call on the Lord, to strike his hand over the place, and such like—no doubt but that was the way the conjurers did in Syria. Naaman would have felt much gratified by such works, would have felt that he was conferring great honor on the prophet by giving him the opportunity to make such demonstrations; but it was Naaman who must be humbled, and not the prophet; Christ is to be exalted in the cleansing of lepers, and not the lepers.

That is the great difficulty now, and it was when Christ was here. The Jews would not receive him, because he did not come according to their fleshly expectations, for had he so come they would have received him; but he could not so come and glorify God, nor could they have glorified God in so receiving him. The world has ever since his day been trying to teach a doctrine that will enable a sinner to receive Christ without a change, to receive him in Syria, and what profit would such a reception be to them?

They have proposed to endow men with worldly learning until they shall be able to present Christ in such lovely colors that the natural man will receive him, which would be simply exalting man and abasing Christ—and this doctrine the world loves; and if the prophet had preached such doctrine to Naaman, he would have gladly received it, but it would never have cleansed him—there is something in the truth beside the flesh, in fact the flesh is not in it all.

Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than the waters of Jordan? How natural, because at war with the word—the word said Jordan, and why not then Jordan as well as Abana and Pharpar? because it cuts us from the flesh that we may worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ and have no confidence in the flesh. Naaman's heart was at war with the word, but the word must triumph ere he is cleansed—there was a way that seemed right to him, in Abana and Pharpar, but the word was not there, not the word of the prophet; those streams might honor the flesh, but they would not honor the word.

But Jordan is but water, as Abana and Pharpar, but in Jordan the word has the victory, and in Abana the flesh has the victory. You might pray the publican's prayer, and say God be merciful to me, a sinner, with the spirit of the Pharisee who boasted of his righteousness, and would the words make a difference between you and the Pharisee? Of course no person would in these days use the Pharisee's words in prayer; because his prayer was condemned, but I have no doubt but that thousands have confessed with their lips and said be merciful to me, a sinner, thinking the confession was a meritorious work in the sight of God, which was but offering the sacrifice of the wicked, which is an abomination in his sight, which is going down in Abana and Pharpar, which is coming in the flesh, and under that influence the cleansing will never come, because it is not coming to Christ but to the flesh. So if Naaman had gone down in Abana and Pharpar seven times or seventy times seven, it would never have cleansed him, for he could never have done it with the spirit of the word in his heart.

But his necessities were great; his leprosy was about to kill him; and he knew that nothing of all the things he had tried had done him any good; and he would have surely returned to Syria and not gone down in Jordan, had he not have been convinced that nothing there could cure him. "To where else can we go, for with thee are the words of eternal life." What a blessed thing it is that our needs keep us at his feet; how his grace is manifested in our poverty; even when in agony we call out, and our fear is overwhelming us, his hand is extended that we may trust in him, and not in ourselves. How thankful we feel when we are lifted out of that horrible pit. Is it not a horrible pit? I have been in that horrible pit since I returned from North Carolina; and I have been taken out, too—bless the Lord!

But what if Naaman had not heeded the words of the prophet and then the words of his servants, who entreated him to go down to Jordan, would he have been cleansed? Why certainly not, but he did heed them, as you did, and he was not to be thanked or praised for heeding them either, any more than you or I would be worthy of being praised for swallowing a dose of oil when we were about to die, or drinking a cup of

water when our tongues were cleaving to our mouths for thirst, or eating when we were ready to die of hunger. Whilst, therefore, the full soul loatheth the honeycomb, to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. The words spoken to him did not make him feel his needs, but they pointed out a remedy for his disease, the last remedy and the only one too, yet so hard to get to and so hard to take until taken and then so easy! Free will indeed! how thankful should Naaman have been that he was not allowed to have his free will, and how sorry I am that I had mine as long as I did have it. Thus are we taught to pray "not my will but thine be done." And some say, but what if you had not prayed or gone to meeting that time, or heard that sermon, or your mother, when she was dying, had not talked to you, or that man had not died, or you had not got sick yourself, what then, you would never have been a christian. All true, probably, but these were means adapted to the end, and they were just as sure to be effectual as they were necessary; therefore they were not accidental at all, no more than it was an accident for Joseph's brethren to hear that corn was in Egypt, and feeling the need of it to go after it, for they would never have gone after it if they had had corn in their own cribs, any more than the righteous will repent and seek Christ.

Therefore Naaman went down in the Jordan and came up cleansed—his leprosy was gone! He was as humble as a child, and in the joy of his heart he wanted to pay for it. How can I repay the Lord for all his benefits?

J. R. RESPESS.

ALAMANCE COUNTY, N. C.,
August 8, 1869.

Dear Brother:—It is through the goodness of a merciful God that I am become willing with my trembling hand to write to you and to all of the dear brothers and sisters some of my feelings. Ma and sisters are gone to the Arbor to hear Brothers Daniel and Bell. I have heard them five days, and have been fed, consoled and built up with the sincere milk and honey. I can say bless the Lord, O my soul, for what he has done for my soul, poor, sinful mortal as I am. I have been so low in the valley before, so long in despair, I will try, by the help of God, to write a part of my troubles. In the year

1851 I was in the cookhouse alone; I was spinning some bedclothing for myself; I thought I was doing very well what I would soon accomplish for myself, and was very merry; all at once these words spoke to me, saying, "You have a soul to save that is worth more to you than all of this world's goods;" it came with such power that I left the wheel and sat down; I could not stand; I felt nervous; I never forgot that I had been very wild and lively for sport; Ma would talk to me sometimes about doing better and not be so; I would rather hear anything else than religion; I would go to frolics whenever I could; other words sounded in my ear; I then saw that I was a sinner; I could say Lord have mercy upon such a sinner as I was; that I could do nothing without the help of God; I would be justly damned. I went to a camp-meeting soon after; several of my associates professed; I thought that I was left out; that there was a time that I could have done better, but my day of grace had passed, and to destruction I must go, I left the crowd and went to the back end of the tent, and there I fell upon my face, and cried Lord what shall I do to be saved; I felt that I was forever gone. The first I recollect the crowd was gathered around me singing these words:

"Come ye sinners, poor and needy."

Everything appeared lovely to what I had seen it before, even the sun. I did not say anything, but did not take that for religion; I thought that I would obtain it before I died. I came home; it was said that I had professed, and Ma and a great many of my relations would tease me; I did not want any person to name it to me. I could not tell that; so I kept it to myself until the 9th of March, 1860. I went to Person to a section meeting; I had a thought that if I ever got a hope I wanted Mr. Stadler to baptize me; the first news I heard he was certainly dead, died the evening before it struck my heart. He was the pastor of our church, had been for many years; he was gone; I was yet in my sins; for he had talked to me for several days; I was in much distress; I was walking alone and these words came to me, "if ye love the brethren ye may know that ye have past from death unto life;" I said bless the Lord, of my soul and all that is in me bless his holy name; I was filled with love to his church and to his people. S