

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family
Title: Two Sides of Human Beings: Strengths and Weaknesses
Lesson: 2 Kings 5:1-14

5 Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from a skin disease. ² Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease." ⁴ So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ⁵ And the king of Aram said, "Go, then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. ⁶ He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his skin disease." ⁷ When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his skin disease? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." ¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

(Slides 1) There is a saying "Every coin has two sides." This means that there are two sides to everything. Wisconsin's Summers, for example, are so beautiful. And people can easily find green pastures, green trees everywhere in Wisconsin, and Wisconsin's Summers are great everywhere. Whenever I look at the green pastures of Wisconsin, I think of an old Korean song: "On

that green pasture I want to build a picturesque house and live with my beloved together for a hundred years.” Wisconsin's beautiful Summers make people forget the cold and harshness of Wisconsin's winters. The other way, we cannot talk about Wisconsin without mentioning Winter. Wisconsin's Winters give us a lot of conversation pieces. One of the questions people in Wisconsin always ask me is, “What do you think of winter in Wisconsin?” If we want to talk to someone, but have nothing to talk about, one of the best conversation pieces are to talk about Wisconsin's Winters because we can talk about Wisconsin's Winters, snow, and shoveling for 24/7. Of course, I love Wisconsin's Winters, and I think Wisconsin's winters are beautiful.

(Slides 2) Every coin has two sides. Wisconsin also has two sides. If so, what about people? This saying can apply to all of us, right? So, we can say everyone has two sides. We call the two sides strengths and weaknesses. When we are dating before marriage, we tend to only see or to only focus on our partner's strengths. We may think: “If I could be with this person for the rest of my life, I would be able to overcome all the storms of life. However, when we get married, we begin to see that their strengths sometimes become weaknesses, and their weaknesses sometimes become strengths. Of course, I want to believe that my wife has only strengths. Likewise, everyone has two sides just like every coin has two sides and Wisconsin has two sides.

In today's scripture lesson, there is a man named Naaman.

(Slides 3) He was the commander of Aram's army and he was a great man and in high favor with his master because he had many victories from many battles. He was a mighty warrior, but he had one problem. It was that he had long suffered from a skin disease, also called leprosy. He was respected by many in his country. He called upon many skilled doctors to heal his illness; however, no one could cure him. At that time, leprosy was being called God's judgment or God's curse. His life was going smoothly until he got the skin disease. He won every battle he fought and was respected by many. In other words, he was a man who had nothing to fear on this earth. However, his skin disease left a stain on his life. Leprosy drastically reduced his self-esteem.

(Slides 4) Naaman's disease was not only a personal problem, but also a national problem because he brought many victories to his country as a

mighty warrior. When he was suffering from the skin disease, he got a solution in a place he never thought of. He got the solution from a young Israeli girl serving his wife. The maid said to her mistress: “If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease.” (3)

Naaman was skeptical of the young maid's words, but there was nothing he could do to cure the disease other than to obey her words, because he had already seen many doctors, but no one had cured him. So Naaman gets permission from his king for his treatment and goes to the king of Israel with the king's letter and precious gifts.

When the king of Israel was asked to meet Naaman and heal him, the king of Israel was very surprised and afraid because if Naaman's disease did not get better and rather got worse, the Aramaean army could attack with this cause. So, when the king of Israel was trembling in fear and was unable to do anything, the prophet Elisha said: “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.” (8) So Naaman and his men went to see Elisha.

(Slides 5) However, Elisha did not go out to meet them in person, but told them through his messenger: “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.” (10) Naaman got a solution, but he did not accept it. He was very offended by Elisha's attitude. He thought that at least Elisha would come before him and pray for his healing. However, Elisha did not appear to them directly, and spoke only through his messenger, so Naaman felt Elisha was very rude and tried to return to his country.

In fact, Naaman's self-esteem was low because of leprosy. He was always sensitive when talking about leprosy. He came to Israel to be healed with his earnest desire. He gave up his pride, came to Israel to be healed from the disease, and came to Elisha, but contrary to his expectations, Naaman felt that he was ignored by Elisha. Likewise, sometimes our weaknesses interfere and prevent us from building positive relationships with others. For example, we may speak to someone with no ill intention, but they may perceive it differently and feel hurt and react sensitively. Conversely, there are times

when someone speaks to us without any ill intention and yet we can perceive it differently and feel hurt or offended.

(Slides 6) Friends, all of us have two sides. No one is perfect. Naaman was a great man, and although he was respected by many, he also had weaknesses that he didn't want to reveal to others. We too have strengths and weaknesses. And those weaknesses sometimes interfere with our relationship with others, and sometimes our relationship with God. So what should we do?

God wanted Naaman to humbly obey the word of God. Although Naaman had the skin disease, God wanted him to humbly come and pray before God with his weakness. God changed Naaman's heart through his subordinates. Of course, Naaman's country may have had rivers cleaner than the Jordan River. However, what God wanted from Naaman was to obey God's word and to go to the river God had appointed. When Naaman immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, the Bible says that "Naaman's flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy."

Siblings in Christ, what does God want from us? Does God want us to be successful in life? Does He want us to make a lot of money? Does He want us to be number one of the world? Nope, He just wants us to obey His Words. To obey God's Words, we must know God's Words. To know His Words, we must read the Bible. To hear the words of God, we must pray. Bible reading and prayer are essential in our journey of faith. Just coming to church on Sunday to worship may not be enough to fully understand God's Words.

I hope you will spend time reading the Bible and praying every day. And, continue to share with God about your weaknesses. Then God will open our eyes to see and ears to hear, turning our weakness into strength. Amen.