

INTRODUCTION

We are continuing the short series on the miracles of Elisha. I am preaching through the Old Testament hitting the high points I call "The Big Events of the Old Testament." Sometimes things that actually happen are funnier than stories you can tell. Judge Louie Gohmert told me this actually happened last Sunday at the Immaculate Conception Church right here in Tyler, Texas. Father Joseph Strickland was doing the children's sermon—I understand the Catholic Church is building a new Family Life Center—All the kids were gathered at the front and he was talking to them about building the Family Life Center for their church. He said, "What's it going to take to build this Family Life Center?" One of the kids said, "It's going to take money!" Then he said, "And where are we going to get this money?" One of the little kids answered something and when Father Joseph heard it, he just busted out laughing. Then he told the congregation. When he said, "Where are we going to get that money?" the little kid of the Catholic Church had said, "From Green Acres Baptist Church!" That actually happened. I don't know who that kid is but I want to meet him. I like somebody like that. Praise the Lord.

Elijah was a great prophet, but then he put his prophetic mantle on Elisha and Elisha said, "I want a double portion of the Spirit that has been on you." If you happen to count up the miracles Elijah did and Elisha did, you'll see that under the power of God Elisha performed about twice as many miracles as Elijah did. We've already looked at five of the miracles. Tonight we are going to look at two more of them.

MIRACLE #6: A LEPER IS HEALED

Miracle number six is, "A Leper is Healed."

2 Kings 5:1. "Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy."

Leprosy was one of the most defiling diseases of the Old Testament. Someone who had leprosy was considered a social and a moral outcast. Leprosy, as it was known in the Old Testament, was often a very fatal illness in which the nerve endings in the skin became deadened. Oftentimes because people had no nerve endings, they would burn the ends of their fingers off or break them off because they couldn't feel the pain. It was a terrible disease! Here this great man, Naaman, had leprosy.

I cannot talk about this passage without telling you another true story. In South Alabama there was an uneducated preacher who could just barely read—but he was good-hearted. His process of preaching (he never studied to preach) was he would walk up to the pulpit, throw his Bible on it and wherever it fell open, he would put his finger down, read the passage and start preaching. That method led to some interesting sermons. One Sunday morning he tossed his Bible on the pulpit and it opened to 2 Kings 5:1. He was reading the King James Bible and he came to the very last part of verse 1 and he read these words, "and Naaman was a " instead of saying a *leper*—since he didn't know what that word was—he said, "and Naaman was a *leaper*. That's right, folks. Naaman was a leaper. God doesn't want you to sit God doesn't want you to stand God doesn't

want you to run he wants you to LEAP!" That's a true story. "Naaman was a leaper and you be a leaper too!"

But it's not a leaper—it's a leper. Naaman had this terrible skin disease. Rather than reading the whole story, let me just tell it to you. While everybody said, "Oh, it's too bad. Have you heard? Naaman has leprosy, the commander in chief! It's too bad. He's a great man but he has leprosy." Everything good about him had been canceled out because he had this terrible disease. Naaman's wife, who was also a very prominent woman, had a servant girl who had been captured from the nation of Israel so she knew the God of Israel and she knew the prophet Elisha. One day I am sure as her mistress was weeping and crying and so downhearted because her husband had leprosy when this little girl saw her weeping, she said, "Listen, Ma'am. Don't despair. Don't cry. There is a man in Israel, a prophet of God, and he does miracles. If you can just get your husband to this man of God in Israel, I am sure he can be healed!" That was a glimmer of hope and she went and told her husband, Naaman. "Naaman this little girl says there is hope for you! There is a God in heaven and there is a prophet of God in Israel. If you will just go, you can be healed" Then, there was a glimmer of hope in Naaman's heart. He went to the king of Aram and said, "I have heard there is a God of Israel and the prophet of God in Israel has miraculous powers. If you don't mind, sire, I'd like to go and visit this man and see if he can heal me of my leprosy." Because Naaman was one of the favored leaders of that nation, the king said, "Not only do I want you to go, I will send a letter to the king of Israel, *plus* I will send all kinds of gold and silver and fabrics with you. Go and I will send an entire entourage with you!"

So Naaman took off for Israel, whose capital was Samaria. Don't confuse that with the region of Samaria in the New Testament. (The Samaritan woman) but the city of Samaria was a great fortified city. Naaman arrived there and gives this letter to the king of Israel and gives him all these goods. The king of Israel says, "Oh, no! What's this guy got against me? What if he doesn't get healed? This is just a letter that can lead to war!" This guy is saying, "Oh, no. This is terrible news!" But when Elisha hears about it, he says, "Don't fear, king. Just send him down to my house!" The king says, "Okay, Naaman. Go down to the house of Elisha, the prophet of God." Naaman and his entire entourage arrive at the house of Elisha. I can imagine there was a lot of pomp and circumstance there when they made the announcement "Elisha, come forth! Naaman, the representative of the king of Aram one of the powerful nations on earth is here to see you!" Do you know what Elisha did? He didn't even come outside. He didn't even come to the door! He didn't even walk out and give a personal audience to Naaman. He just sent word out by his servant. "Go tell Naaman to dip in the Jordan River seven times and he will be healed of his leprosy!" When Naaman got that response, the Bible says he was enraged!

Number one he was enraged that this prophet of God didn't even have enough courtesy to come out and speak to him face to face and number two the *Jordan River*? Naaman said, "In Syria we have rivers that are much more beautiful, much larger than this sorry little creek you call the muddy Jordan River!" He wants me to go dip in this and he won't even come out and talk to me! Of all things! He was offended and he turned to go back all the way back to Aram still afflicted with leprosy. One of his wise servants said, "Naaman, just think about it for a minute. If he asked you to do something terribly complicated and difficult, you probably would have done it. The very fact that he just said go get in the Jordan seven times doesn't mean that it's not a good cure. Consider doing it!" Naaman said, "All right. I will! So he went to the Jordan River. He walked

down to the little what we would call a creek of the Jordan River and he dipped down once twice three four five six times and when he came up the sixth time he was as afflicted with leprosy as he had ever been! Then he went down the seventh time, and when he came up, the Bible says his leprosy was totally gone! The Hebrew actually says his skin became the skin of a newborn baby! Wouldn't you ladies like to have that? You can go to Israel with me next year and we'll let you dip there in the Jordan River. His skin was like the skin of a newborn baby.

Naaman said, "I'm healed! I'm healed! He rushed back to the home of Elisha and said, "Elisha, I am so sorry I ever doubted you or your God. I will never worship another god except the God of Israel! Elisha, let me pay you. I have gold; I have silver; I have all kinds of riches for you! Let me pay you, Elisha!" Elisha said, "No. You can't pay me." Elisha was saying, "I didn't do anything. It wasn't me. It was the God that I serve. The reason I didn't come out to talk to you is that I didn't want you to think it was me performing the miracle, because it wasn't me! It was the God of Israel that performed this miracle." "Are you sure I can't pay you anything?" "No I don't want anything." So Naaman did a strange thing. He said, "At least let me take some dirt from Israel and load it on my mules and take it back with me to Aram so I can spread it and when I pray, I can kneel on the dirt of Israel. Never again will I worship any other God except the God of Israel!"

Message #1: The best thing you can do for a person is to tell them about God's power

What a great story that was when a leper is healed! I have been telling you there is a message in every miracle and there is a miracle in every message in the Bible. What's the message we can learn from that for us today? Let's learn three lessons about this. Number one the best thing you can do for a person is to tell them about God's power. To me the star of this whole story is the little unnamed servant girl from Israel who heard that her master had a problem and said, "You know what? I have the solution for your problem." I want you to try that spiritually, because one of the greatest analogies in the Old Testament is this story of Naaman because it is the picture of sin. Leprosy is the picture of sin and everybody who has not been healed by Jesus Christ is in the same condition Naaman was in. Everybody in this room who has ever experienced spiritual healing, forgiveness of sin, we know the solution. When we look around us and we see people who are still defiled with the leprosy of sin, we have the answer and we are obligated to do what this servant girl did to tell them about God's power to tell them about Jesus.

Maybe you heard about the guy who all of a sudden got sick. His right foot swelled up and before he knew it, his jaw began to protrude. He went to see a doctor and the doctor said "I've never seen anything like that before. Let me look it up." He got out an old medical book and looked it up. He looked at the man. "Hmm...right foot swollen, jaw protruding...Yep, I've never seen it in my life but what you have is called, 'Texas Hoof and Mouth Disease.' I've never seen it before but here it is right here in this old medical book." The doctor says, "I have bad news for you. It's a very rare disease, and it's also fatal in every case. There is no known cure. You're going to die of Texas Hoof & Mouth disease." Let's just say you are the person with that disease and you walk out of the doctor's office saying, "This is terrible!" You are walking down the street with this swollen right foot and your jaw protruding like this and you see an old friend. Your old friend says, "Hey, what's wrong with you?" You say, "Well, I have this rare disease called Texas Hoof & Mouth." Your friend says, "You know, it seems to me my old grandmother

told me she knew somebody who had that disease years ago. I think she said there is a cure for it that she heard about somewhere. Why don't you go see my grandmother?" You don't have anything to lose so you walk over and visit the guy's grandmother. You walk in the door and she says, "I know what you have. You have Texas Hoof & Mouth disease." You say, "That's right and the doctor tells me it's fatal." She says, "Oh, it's not fatal. My great, great granddaddy came up with a cure. You take some roots and some herbs and mix them up together and you drink it and before you know it you are cured. So, she mixes up all those roots and herbs and says, "Here. Drink this!" You don't have anything to lose, since you have this hoof and mouth disease so you drink it. Within 24 hours your foot is no longer swollen and your protruding jaw has returned to its normal size. You think, "WOW!!! I'm going to live!" A couple of weeks later you see this guy walking towards you and he has a swollen right foot and a big jaw protruding. You say, "What's wrong with you?" That person says, "I have a very rare disease called Texas Hoof & Mouth disease and the bad news is, it's fatal. There's no known cure." What are you going to say? Are you going to say, "Well, too bad, buddy! See you later. I'll come to your funeral." Is that what you're going to say? Absolutely not! You're going to say, "Listen. I had the same thing and although they say it's fatal it's not there's a cure. I want to tell you about how you can be cured of this strange malady. You see the same thing is true of sin. Everybody in this room who was born again at one time we were destined for Hell because of the leprosy of sin that infected all of us and we have been cured! And we know that the cure is Jesus! Tomorrow at school and at work and in the community you are going to encounter people who have the same disease you had. It is our obligation to do what this little girl did and to tell them about the cure and Jesus is the cure.

Message #2: God requires total obedience

The second message we learn from this miracle is this: God requires total obedience. There are some strange things about this story, but I want you to apply it to the process of salvation. Do you remember I said we are all defiled by the leprosy of sin? We must do what God says to be cleansed of the sin even though we don't understand it. Do you know why Naaman got all upset at first? He said, "This just doesn't make sense 'dip in a river seven times.'" There are a lot of people today who reject God's offer of salvation, because they stumble over the simplicity of it. "Surely there has to be more that I do. Surely I have to say this catechism or learn this creed or do this or do that. Surely there is more I have to do." They stumble over the simplicity of it just like Naaman did. Finally, Naaman crucified his pride and said, "Okay, I'll do it. I'll do it!" and he dipped one, two, three, four, five... On the sixth time had he said, "This is not working! I quit! And walked back, he would have died of leprosy. But he did exactly what God said to do and on the seventh time that's when the obedience clicked in and that's when he sensed healing. When God tells you to do something in the word of God, you may not understand it, you may stumble over its simplicity—but just DO it! Just obey him and that's when his power will come into effect in your life.

Message #3: Greed will destroy you

Here's the third thing we learn from this little story: Greed will destroy you. You say, "Wait a minute. I didn't hear that in the story." That's because I haven't told you the *rest* of the story. Naaman was heading back toward Syria loaded down with all this gold and silver he brought and

Elisha said, "I don't want any of it!" Elisha had a servant named Gehazi. Gehazi watches that money going over the horizon and says, "I can't believe Elisha didn't take any of it. If he had gotten some of that gold, we would have gotten some of the gold too. I have to do something about it!" As soon as Naaman and his entourage were out of sight, Gehazi hops on his mule and rides out after them. "Hey. Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Naaman gets down off his horse and Gehazi says, "Listen, my master, Elisha, has changed his mind. We have some new servants that are coming into our home and we need some money for them so he has decided he does want some of your gold and silver." Naaman says, "Great! Sure! Fine! I was trying to get him to take it when I was at his house. Here take plenty of this and he gave Gehazi some gold and silver. Gehazi rode back and hid it! He thought, "I am set for life!" A little time after that Elisha called him in and said, "Gehazi, Where have you been?" Gehazi said, "Nowhere." Elisha said, "Oh, yes you have. You have disobeyed me. You have disobeyed God and you have dishonored God and because you have lied to God. Gehazi, the leprosy Naaman had will infect you." The Bible says BOOM! Gehazi was afflicted. Isn't that amazing? There are two sides to this miracle, one man healed of leprosy and another man afflicted with leprosy. The lesson we learn is be careful or greed will destroy you!

MIRACLE #7: SEEING EYES ARE BLINDED

That's the sixth miracle. We're going to look at another of Elisha's miracles. Miracle number seven. Seeing eyes are blinded. Usually we think of it as a miracle when God makes a blind person see, but we're going to see a story tonight where God took people who could see and blinded them.

2 Kings 6:15-18. It says, "When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army [the Syrian army] with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. 'Oh, my lord, what shall we do?' the servant asked. 'Don't be afraid,' the prophet answered. 'Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' And Elisha prayed, 'O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.' Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, 'Lord, strike these people with blindness.' So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked."

Here's the scenario. If you take the time to read the background passage of scripture, the Syrian army—the army from Aram—were frustrated, because every time they attacked against Israel, the Israeli army knew where they were coming from, the reason being Elisha was a prophet of God and he kept telling the king, "This is what the army is going to do this is what the army is going to do. They had their own foreteller there in the prophet, Elisha. Finally, they decided their problem was not the Israeli army. The Syrians said, "Our problem is that prophet. We have to go get him!" so they decided to attack Elisha. They discovered where Elisha was and they surrounded Elisha and his servant. The next morning when the servant gets up all he sees is the surrounding hillside filled with this opposing army. I can just see him going back in to wake up his master. "Elisha! Elisha! We're in a heap of trouble, because right out there in front of us are thousands of enemy soldiers! Elisha gets up and looks out there and probably goes "Yawn. Don't worry about it! Calm down. Those that are with us are more than they that be with them." I imagine the servant rolled his eyes and said, "Are you crazy, Elisha?" Elisha said, "Lord, open

his eyes." When he prayed that prayer, the spiritual eyes of the servant were opened and suddenly he saw that same landscape was filled with angelic warriors and horses and chariots of fire surrounding them. The servant must have gone, "Whoa! you're right! We've got a whole lot more on our side than they do on their side."

Then they start attacking and Elisha prayed another prayer, "Lord, stop them with blindness!" Suddenly, this army comes to a screeching halt as they are all blinded! They don't know where to go! They don't know where to turn! They start out saying, "Charge!" and then they said, "Stop!" Elisha walked up to them and said, "What are you guys looking for?" They said, "We are looking for Elisha and his servant." Elisha said, "We don't know who he is, but I'll lead you to him. Follow me!" I can just imagine all of them lining up, touching each other, this long column of soldiers. Elisha leads them right into the center of the city of Samaria. They walk in through the gates and he leads them to the middle of this fortified city and suddenly they are surrounded by all the soldiers of Israel and God reversed the miracle. POOF! Suddenly they could see again. But now they see they are in the center of the fortified city of Samaria surrounded by the Israeli soldiers. I'm sure all the soldiers had their arrows drawn.

The king of Israel says, "Shall we kill them? They are sitting ducks. We can wipe them out right now! Let's do it. Just give the word, Elisha!" Elisha says, "No, let's not do that. Put your swords away. Put your spears away. Put your arrows away. We're going to feed them supper. Bring out some food. Bring out some drinks. We're just going to sit down and we are going to feed them." When he fed them, the Bible says the army of Syria turned and left and never again attacked the nation of Israel. What a great miracle!

Message #1: You are never outnumbered with God!

Let's learn some lessons from that. Here's lesson number one. You are never outnumbered with God! They that be with you are always more than they that be with them. God plus one is *always* the majority. When we approach things in life that cause us to be afraid, we are either going to face that situation with fear, or we're going to face it with faith. The choice is up to you. The servant of Elisha faced it with fear. "Oh, no! We're outnumbered!" Fear is *false evidence appearing real*. He thought they were outnumbered, but that was false evidence, because there was a greater picture to be seen. The first lesson we learn is you are never outnumbered with God.

Message #2: God's invisible warriors surround us

Here's the second lesson (and I love this one) God's invisible warriors surround us. The Bible says we are seated with Christ in the heavenly realm as it says in Ephesians 1. The words *heavenly realms* is not talking about heaven, the dwelling place of God. It's talking about a spiritual dimension superimposed on our own dimension here and it is in that realm of the heavenlies where angels and demons and prayer takes place. There is a whole invisible world around us we cannot see. That is where spiritual warfare takes place. That's what Daniel said in the book of Daniel. He was praying and a demon opposed his prayers and the angel had to come and fight for his prayers. All of that is going on around us. Many of you have read several years ago Frank Peretti's Christian novels about this present darkness about how angels and demons

are fighting around us and we can't even see it. There is an invisible spiritual realm around us and we just can't see it.

By the way it's not that angels are not there; it's just that we're so limited in our perception, we're not even aware of them most of the time. When it comes to perception, human beings are restricted with a very narrow band of sensual perception. What I mean by that is there are certain sounds we can't hear, but dogs can hear them—you know those real high-pitched whistles they can hear that we can't. That's ultrasound. There is a whole range of sound called infrasound that we can't hear either. We just have this narrow, little band. Even when it comes to seeing there are only certain things we can see in the band width of the spectrum. For instance, a common housefly can see things we cannot see. Even hawks and other birds can see things so much clearer than we can. At best our visual perception is limited! Our olfactory perception is limited, because if there was a dog in this room tonight, he could smell a different scent for every single person in this room. Thank God we are limited in that area! There are just a lot of things we don't pick up. So the reason we are not aware of this invisible heaven around us is because we are pretty limited in our perception. I believe with all my heart that they are always there. Only at certain times does God allow us to see them to remove the veil and there they are. Angels are there we just don't usually see them! They are the warriors of God that surround us.

I heard about a pastor one time that was doing a study on angels (This is a joke so you can laugh) He was studying about angels and he said, "Lord, I really want to see an angel. I really would love to see an angel!" So POOF! an angel appeared there. He said, "Wait a minute! I want to get my camera. I want to take a picture of an angel." He got his camera and he said, "Hold there" and he snapped the picture and took the film down there and had it developed and got it back. He was so disappointed when he looked at those pictures because there was not a good image on any of those pictures! The moral of that story is "The spirit was willing, but the flash was weak!" Well you don't need a camera. You don't need a flashbulb to know that angels are there, because the Bible says in Psalm 34:7 says, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them." So, thank God His angelic warriors are around us!

Message #3: You can destroy your enemies with kindness

Here's the third lesson we learn from this great miracle: You can destroy your enemies with kindness. People who don't really know the Bible sometimes make statements like this, "The Old Testament is just a book of law and justice and the New Testament is a book of love and grace." That's not totally true, because you can find experiences of grace and kindness in the Old Testament. That's exactly what Elisha did. He had his enemies right there in the city of Samaria. He could have wiped them out. But instead he said, "We're going to feed our enemies. We're going to give drink to our enemies." The Bible says because they were shown such kindness and such mercy and such grace, they left. That's what it says there in verse 23. It says, "So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory."

CONCLUSION

Do you have an enemy bothering you, causing you fits? Do you want to really destroy your enemy? Show them kindness. Show them love. As we studied a few weeks ago in the book of

Romans it says, "It heaps coals of fire on their heads and the very best way to destroy your enemy is to show them kindness and change them from an enemy to a friend.

OUTLINE

Miracles 1-5 listed in "The Miracles of Elisha, part 1"

MIRACLE #6: A LEPER IS HEALED

Messages:

1. The best thing you can do for a person is to tell them about God's power
2. God requires total obedience
3. Greed will destroy you

MIRACLE #7: SEEING EYES ARE BLINDED

Messages:

1. You are never outnumbered with God!
2. God's invisible warriors surround us
3. You can destroy your enemies with kindness



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes