

Luke 4:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

Analysis

And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. Jesus cites a second example from Elisha's ministry (2 Kings 5). The emphatic *oudeis autōn ekatharisthē, ei mē* (οὐδεὶς αὐτῶν ἐκαθαρίσθη, εἰ μὴ, not one of them was cleansed, except) underscores God's sovereign choice. Many Israelite lepers remained unhealed while God cleansed Naaman, commander of the Syrian army—Israel's enemy.

Leprosy represented both physical disease and ceremonial uncleanness, often understood as divine judgment. The verb *katharizō* (καθαρίζω, to cleanse) carries both physical and ceremonial meaning—Naaman was healed and made ritually clean. That God chose to cleanse a Gentile military leader who didn't worship YHWH while Israelite lepers suffered demonstrated that God's grace isn't constrained by ethnicity, merit, or covenant status. This pointed directly to Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost, including Gentiles.

Historical Context

Elisha ministered in the Northern Kingdom during the 9th century BC, succeeding Elijah. Second Kings 5 records Naaman's healing—he was commander of Syria's (Aram's) army, which had defeated Israel in battle. Syria was Israel's bitter enemy. That God sent a captive Israelite girl to witness to Naaman, then cleansed him

through the prophet's word, while Israelite lepers remained unhealed, was deeply offensive to Jewish pride. Naaman initially resisted Elisha's simple command to wash seven times in the Jordan, expecting elaborate ritual. His healing came through humble obedience, not merit.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does God's cleansing of Israel's enemy while Israelite lepers suffered reveal about grace transcending human categories?
2. How does Naaman's healing through simple obedience (despite initial resistance) illustrate salvation by faith, not works?
3. Why would Jesus' citation of God blessing Gentiles while bypassing Israel particularly enrage His Nazareth audience?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	πολλοὶ	λεπροὶ	ἦσαν	ἐπὶ	ἐλισσαίου	τοῦ	
And	many	lepers	were	in the time	of Eliseus	G3588	
G2532	G4183	G3015	G2258	G1909	G1666		
προφήτου	ἐν	τῷ	Ἰσραὴλ	καὶ	οὐδεὶς	αὐτῶν	ἐκαθαρίσθη
the prophet	in	G3588	Israel	And	none	of them	was cleansed
G4396	G1722		G2474	G2532	G3762	G846	G2511
εἰ	μὴ	Νεεμὰν	ὁ	Σύρος			
G1487	G3361	Naaman	G3588	the Syrian			
		G3497		G4948			

Additional Cross-References

John 17:12 (Parallel theme): While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

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