

ABANA AND PHARPAR
by Pastor Jim Bornzin October 2010
2 Kings 5:1-15

“Yessir, I’ll order the troops to move,
There won’t be any trouble.”
“Captain, tell them to move, NOW,
And I mean, on the double!”
So spoke Naaman, the leper,
Who, at times, wished he were dead,
Commander of the army of Syria,
Whom foreign armies dread.

Naaman was a leader,
With many battles won,
Naaman was also a leper
Whose skin looked bleached by sun.
His sores made him untouchable,
A scourge which most men feared,
They kept their distance, but obeyed
A commander they had cheered.

A little maid from Israel
Had been captured by this man,
But she felt sorry for him
And gave his wife a plan.
“In Israel there’s a prophet
Who could cure this dread disease.
Tell Naaman about him;
Go and tell him, please.”

Her mistress talked to Naaman
Who went and told his king,
Who promptly wrote a letter
Explaining everything.
“To the king of Israel
And to those it may concern,
Please cure my servant Naaman
And my respect you’ll earn.”

So Naaman left for Israel
And took along the letter,
His hopes arose; he was soon convinced
That he’d be feeling better.
He also took gold and silver
And clothing as a gift.
But when the king of Israel read the letter
He knew it would cause a rift.

“Who does this man think I am?
Am I God who can cure or bring to life?
His king must surely be joking,
Seeking to cause strife.”
He rent his garments, let out a cry
That was heard throughout the land.
Elisha, the prophet, heard the cry
And replied in his own hand.

“Why, O King, have you torn your robes?
Send Commander Naaman to me.
I will show him what a prophet can do,
The power of God he’ll see.”
So Naaman brought his horses and chariots
And came to Elisha’s door.
Elisha sent a messenger
With this simple message, nothing more.

“Go to the River Jordan,
Wash seven times and be restored.
Go and wash and be made clean
In the power of the Lord.”
But Naaman was furious
And went off in a rage,
“Surely this Elisha cannot be a prophet;
I doubt he is even a sage.”

“And surely Abana and Pharpar,
The rivers of my home,
Are better than the waters of Israel;
I never should have come!”
His servants tried to calm him;
With Naaman they pleaded.
“Why don’t you just try it?” they asked.
And finally they succeeded.

So he went to the Jordan River
Seven times he washed his skin
As the man of God had commanded;
On his face there came a grin.
His skin was clean, his flesh was healed,
His life had been restored.
He knew that from this moment
The God of Israel was his Lord.

continued

“There is no God in all the earth,
 Except the God that I’ve found here.
 I will worship the God of Israel
 Above all that I hold dear.”
 There’s a lesson here for all of us,
 Don’t let pride get in the way;
 Listen to what the Bible says;
 Do whatever the Lord may say.

There are two rivers in Damascus
 Abana and Pharpar are their names,
 Now you may know the answer
 When you play Bible Trivia games.
 But Abana and Pharpar also mean
 We think we know what’s best,
 But God may tell us different
 And put us to the test.

“Go and wash in the Jordan,”
 Is a very simple command.
 “Go to church on Sunday,”
 Is another simple demand.
 Is spirituality difficult?
 Is it painful to obey?
 Or is it just too easy to make
 Excuses along the way?

We read in today’s gospel lesson
 Ten lepers by Jesus were healed.
 Only one came back to give his thanks,
 Only one at the Lord’s feet kneeled.
 “O God, dear Jesus,
 Have pity on us!” we plea.
 And then when he does, what do we do?
 Return, and give thanks for all to see?

Let us study the scriptures
 Let us live by God’s Word;
 Let us come to God’s table,
 Bow our knees to the Lord.
 Then, cleansed and forgiven,
 Rise, go and tell,
 For you are God’s children;
 By faith, you’re made well. Amen.