

“THE GOSPEL AWAKENING.”

COMPRISING THE

SERMONS AND ADDRESSES,

Prayer Meeting Talks and Bible Readings,

OF THE

GREAT REVIVAL MEETINGS,

CONDUCTED BY

MOODY AND SANKEY,

IN THE CITIES OF

Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Boston,

WITH THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE

CHRISTIAN CONVENTIONS OF MINISTERS AND LAYMEN.

From Verbatim Reports by our own Phonographer, and those of the New York Tribune, Chicago Inter-Ocean, Boston Journal and Boston Globe.

ALSO THE LIVES OF

D. L. MOODY, I. D. SANKEY, P. P. BLISS, REV. JOSEPH COOK,
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NAAMAN, THE LEPER.

“Go and wash in Jordan seven times.” 2 KINGS 5:10.

We have for our subject this evening, “Naaman.” We are told in this chapter that we have just read, that he was a great man; but he was a leper, and that spoiled him. He was a successful man, yet he was a leper; he was a very valiant man, but he was a leper; he was a very noble man, yet he was a leper. What a blight that must have cast on his path. It must have haunted him day and night. He was a leper, and there was no physician in Syria that could help him. It was an incurable disease; and I suppose he thought he would have to go down to the grave with that loathsome disease. We read that several companies had gone down to the land of Israel, and brought down to Syria some poor captives; and among them was a little girl, who was sent to wait on Naaman’s wife. I can imagine that little maid had a praying mother, who had taught her to love the Lord; and when she got down there she was not ashamed to own her religion—she was not ashamed to acknowledge her Lord. One day, while waiting on her mistress, I can think of her saying: “Would to God your husband was in Samaria. There is a prophet there who would cure him.” I can imagine her looking at the girl, when she said this: “What! a man in Israel can cure my husband; you must be dreaming. Did you ever hear of a man being cured of the leprosy?” “No,” the girl might have said; “but that is nothing. Why, the prophet in Samaria has cured many persons worse than your husband.” And perhaps she told her about the poor woman who had such an increase of oil, and how her two boys were saved from slavery by the prophet; and how he had raised the child of that poor woman from the dead; and, “if the prophet can raise anybody from the dead, he can cure your husband.” This girl must have had something about her to make those people listen to her; she must have shown her religion in her life; her life must have been consistent with her religion, to make them believe her. We read that Naaman had faith in her word; and he goes to the king and tells him what he intends to do. And the king says: “I will tell you what I will do. I will give you letters to the king of Israel; and, of course, if any cure is to be effected, the king will know how to obtain it.” Like a great many men now-a-days, they think, if there is anything to be got, it is to be got from the king and not from his subjects. And so you see this man starting out to the king of Israel, with all his letters and a very long purse. I cannot find just now how much it was; but it must have been something like \$500,000. The sum was a very large one, likely. He was going to be liberal; he was not going to be small. Well, he got all his money and letters together, and started. There was no small stir as Naaman swept through the gates of Syria that day, with his escort. He reached Samaria, and sends a messenger

to the king announcing his arrival. The messenger delivers the letter to the king; and the first thing he does is to open the letter, and begin to read it. I can see his brow knit, as he goes on. “What is this?” he exclaims. “What does this mean? This man means war. This Assyrian king means to have a war with me. Who ever heard of such a thing as a man cured of leprosy?” and he rent his mantle.

Everyone knew something was wrong when the king rent his mantle; and the news spread through the streets that they were on the eve of a war. The air was filled with war; everybody was talking about it. No doubt the news had gone abroad that the great general of Assyria was in the city, and he was the cause of the rumors; and by and by it reached the prophet Elisha that he (the king) had rent his mantle, and he wanted to know the cause. When he had heard what it was, he just told the king to send Naaman to him. Now you see the major-general riding up in grand style to the prophet’s house. He probably lived in a small and obscure dwelling. Perhaps Naaman thought he was doing Elisha a great favor by calling on him. He had an idea that he was honoring this man, who had no influence or position. So he rides up. A messenger is sent in to announce Major-General Naaman, of Damascus. But the prophet doesn’t even see him. He simply tells the servant to say to him, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times.” When the messenger comes to Naaman and tells him this, he is as mad as anything. He considers it a reflection upon him—as if he hadn’t kept his person clean. “Does the man mean to insinuate that I haven’t kept my body clean—can’t I wash myself in the waters of Damascus? We’ve much better water than they have here. Why, if we had the Jordan in Syria we’d look upon it as a ditch. The idea—wash in that contemptible river.” He’s full of rage as he can be; and he said, “Behold, I thought.” That’s the way with sinners; they always say, they thought. In this expression, we can see he had thought of some plan, had marked out a way for the Lord to heal him. That is the way with nearly every man and woman in Chicago. They’ve got a plan drawn out; and because God does not come and save them according to their plan, they don’t take him. Keep this in mind: “My ways are not your ways, nor my thoughts your thoughts.” If you look for him to come in that direction, he will come the other way. “My ways are not your ways.” He thought—My friends, no man gets into the kingdom of God till he gives up his thoughts. God never saved a man till he gave up his own thoughts, and takes up God’s. Yes, Naaman thought that the moment the prophet knew he was outside he would come out and bow and scrape, and say he was glad to see such a great and honorable man from Syria. Instead of that he merely sent out a messenger to tell him to go and wash in Jordan seven times.

When we were in Glasgow, we had an employer converted, and he wanted to get a man in his employ to come to our meetings, but he wouldn’t come.

If he was going to be converted, he wouldn't be converted by those meetings. You know when a Scotchman gets an idea into his head, he is the most stubborn man you can find. He was determined not to be converted by Moody and Sankey. Like a good many here, they say: "If I am going to be converted, I ain't going to be converted down in that old tabernacle." The employer talked and talked to this man, but he couldn't get him to come. Well, we left Glasgow, and got away up to the north of Scotland—in Inverness; and he sent this man up there on business, thinking he might be induced to go into the meetings. One night we were singing "On the banks of that beautiful river," and he happened to be passing, and wondered where the sweet sounds were coming from. He came up finally; and I happened to be preaching that night on the very text, "I thought." He listened, and soon did not know exactly where he was. He was convicted; he was converted, and became a Christian. "I thought," how many people have said, "I'd never be converted by these meetings;" "I'll never be converted in the Baptist Church;" "I'll never be converted in the Presbyterian Church." A man makes up his mind not to go there, and he goes. A man must yield his own way to that of God. Now, you can see all along that Naaman's thoughts were altogether different from those of God. He was going to get the grace of God by showing favors; and a good many men now think, they can buy their way into the kingdom of God. My friends, we cannot buy the favor of heaven with money. If you get a seat in the kingdom of heaven, you have to accept salvation as a gift.

Then another thing he thought. He thought he could get what he wanted by taking letters to the king, not the prophet. The little maid told him of the prophet; yet he was going to pass the prophet by. How many people would go into the kingdom of God, if it wasn't for pride! He was too proud to go to the prophet. But pride, if you will allow me the expression, got a knock on the head on this occasion. It was a terrible thing for him to think of obeying—going down to the Jordan, and dipping seven times. He had got better rivers in Damascus, in his own wisdom, and says, "Can I not wash there, and be clean?" He was angry; but when he got over it, he listened to his servants. I would rather see people angry than see them go to sleep. I would rather see a man get as angry as possible at anything that I may say, than send him to sleep. When a man's asleep, there's no chance of reaching him; but if he is angry, we may get at him. It is a good thing for a man to get angry, sometimes; for when he cools off, he generally listens to reason. So his servant came to him and said: "Suppose he had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?" Probably had he told him to take cod liver oil for ten years, he would have done it. If he had told him that he wanted as much money as Naaman had brought up, that would have been all right. But the idea of literally doing nothing—just to go down to Jordan and wash him-

self—it was so far below his calculations, that he thought he was being imposed upon. It is so in our days. How many people expect to get salvation by some sudden shock, some great event happening to them, or some sudden flash of light to break upon them. Some think that God’s plan of salvation requires months to find out. They go on stumbling over its simplicity. And so his servant said: “If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? hadn’t you just better go down and wash in Jordan?” Perhaps he said: “If I go down to Jordan and am not cured, what will my enemies say when I go back to Damascus?” But he was influenced by the servant, and he went. That was one good thing in Naaman’s character: he was influenced by a humble messenger. A good many people won’t accept a messenger, because he is not refined and cultured and educated. My friends, never mind who brings the message. It is the message you want, not the messenger. If a boy was to bring me a telegraphic message with good news, I wouldn’t notice the boy, wouldn’t look to see whether he was white or black. It would be the message I would want. And so it was with Naaman. It was a little Hebrew girl who first told him to come to Samaria; and now he was told to wash by his servant.

So he goes down, and dips into the waters. The first time he rose he said: “I’d just like to see how much my leprosy has gone.” And he looks, but not a bit has left him. “Well, I’m not going to get rid of my leprosy in this way; this is absurd.” “Well,” said the servant, “do just as the man of God tells you; obey him.” And this is just what we are told to do in the Scriptures, to obey Him. The first thing we have to learn is *obedience*. Disobedience was the pit Adam fell into; and we have to get out of it by obedience. Well, he goes into the water a second time. If some Chicago Christians had been there, they would have asked, sneeringly, “Well, how do you feel now?” He didn’t see that he was any better, and down he went a third time; but when he looked at himself, he had just as much leprosy as ever. Down he goes a fourth, fifth and sixth time. He looks at himself, but not a speck of it is removed. “I told you this,” he says to his servant; “look here, I’m just the same as ever.” “But,” says the servant, “you must just do what the man of God tells you to do—down seven times.” He takes the seventh plunge, and comes out. He looks at himself; and behold, his flesh is as that of a little child. He says to his servant: “Why, I never felt as good as I do today. I feel better than if I had won a great battle. Look! I am cleansed. Oh, what a great day this is for me! The leprosy has gone.” The waters to him had been as death and judgment; and he had come out resurrected—his flesh as that of a little child. I suppose he got into his chariot, and away he went to the man of God. He had lost his temper; he had lost his pride, and he had lost his leprosy. That is the way now. If a man will only lose his pride, he will soon see his leprosy dis-

appear—the leprosy will go away with his pride. I believe the greatest enemies of men in this world are unbelief and pride. I believe hundreds and thousands in Chicago would press into the kingdom of God, if it were not for their pride. He goes back to the man of God, and takes his silver and gold. He offers him money. “I don’t want your money,” replies the prophet. If he had taken money, it would have spoiled the beautiful story. Naaman had to take back everything he brought from Damascus, but his leprosy. The only thing that the sinner has that God wants is his sins; and if you let him take them tonight, he will get rid of your leprosy; He will take it. Never mind your feelings. No soul in this audience will go down to the dark caverns, if he is willing to obey God. And now the question comes to you all tonight, will you obey him? You haven’t got to go a thousand miles away and dip into a Jordan; but just believe where you sit—believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Is there anything to hinder you from obeying God now? He will give you power to accept him. Do you believe He would offer you salvation without giving you the power to obey him? Don’t go from this hall with any such delusion, my friends. Don’t go home from this Tabernacle with this leprosy, thinking that you cannot get rid of it. If sin is better to you, then, of course, hold on to it; if leprosy is worth more to you than to be purified, then keep it. Naaman would have gone back with his leprosy, if he hadn’t met that prophet and gone down to Jordan. If you go out of the Tabernacle tonight without accepting him, you go out as a sinner; and if death comes, as it may, suddenly upon you, there is no assurance in the Bible that you can pass through the pearly gates. There is no leprosy there; you must leave it here. If a leper was to get into the kingdom of heaven, all heaven would be affected by him. There is a fountain opened in the house of David for the lepers. This night you can be saved, if you will. The door is open—on the hinge; the battle is fought on this fact, if you will—not because you can’t.

Oh, but you say, “I have tried.” Naaman might have said, “I have tried,” too. Probably he had tried all the physicians in his country; but Naaman couldn’t be cured. He couldn’t cure himself. When Christ said to that man who had a withered hand hanging at his side, “Stretch out thy hand,” he might have said: “I’ve tried to stretch it out for twenty years, and I can’t do it.” But when the command was given him, the power came also. All that was wanted was the will of the man. My friends, if you don’t accept the Gospel and obey it, and you go down to death, there is not a ray of hope that you will escape the punishment held out in the Bible. There is not a word in the Bible to lead you to believe that you will escape condemnation, if you go down to the grave with that leprosy. Do you think, I ask again, that He will ask you to repent and accept eternal life without giving you the power? The moment you obey, that moment the blessing comes. Who will accept him tonight? I

wish I could believe for you all; but I cannot. I would have you all come into the kingdom of God tonight. One of two things you have got to do—either accept the remedy He offers you, and be saved; or spurn the remedy, as Naaman was going to do, and go home with your sins. May God open your eyes to see the necessity of being saved by this great remedy.