

The Downfall Elisha's Servant, Gehazi

2 Kings 5:20-27

2 Kings 5:20-27 - *"But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him."*

So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, "Is all well?" And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me, saying, 'Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.'" So Naaman said, "Please, take two talents." And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed them to two of his servants; and they carried them on ahead of him. When he came to the citadel, he took them from their hand, and stored them away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed.

Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, "Where did you go, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant did not go anywhere." Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever." And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow."

Background Notes

In the first part of 2 Kings 5, Naaman, the Syrian military general, was healed of the disease of leprosy. At the word of the Lord through the prophet Elisha, Naaman immersed himself seven times in the River Jordan, and was healed. A tremendous miracle! Naaman wanted to give a gift of thanks to Elisha, but Elisha refused. Elisha did not want any misconceptions that Naaman's cure had been bought to ripple out.

But Gehazi, Elisha's servant, couldn't resist the temptation to get some of Naaman's money. Gehazi reasoned, "I can't believe it! My master Elisha has spared the life of Naaman the Syrian but wouldn't receive the gifts he brought! As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him." So Gehazi ran after Naaman's chariot. "Naaman, wait a minute! Hold on. Not so fast!"

Naaman stopped his chariot, got down, and said, "What's up Gehazi? Is all well?" And Gehazi said, "All is well, but listen. A couple of Bible students have come down from the mountains of Ephraim. These guys are in need, and we were thinking maybe just a talent of silver and clothing would be helpful. Not for us of course! This is all for the new ministry."

Sounds logical. And Naaman said, “No problem. Why take just one talent? Take two!” Naaman urged Gehazi (v23), and Gehazi finally agreed: “Well, since you insist, we’ll take two talents!”

Because of the weight, Naaman had two of his own servants help Gehazi to carry the money back, and Gehazi hid it from Elisha. But Elisha knew exactly what had taken place because God had given him supernatural insight. As a result of his deception and lies, Gehazi was severely disciplined (v27). Elisha said, *“Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever.”*

That’s a pretty severe penalty, isn’t it? Leprosy in your family down through the years? Why so tough? Why so severe? Answer: Gehazi’s sin was a serious sin.

Doctrinal Points

1. Defiling the Lord’s work is a serious sin.

To defile means to corrupt or to contaminate - and that’s exactly what Gehazi did. Look at verse 20: *“As the Lord lives, I will run after him and take something from him.”* Think of that. Gehazi was doing something that was wrong in the name of the Lord! That’s defiling the Lord’s work. That’s like a TV evangelist getting rich in the name of the Lord.

Furthermore, Gehazi lied about the ministry (v22). The tale of the two prophets from the hill country of Ephraim was completely false. It sounded good - but it was all a lie.

The bottom line was, Gehazi wanted to get rich. He wanted Naaman’s money. Lying is always wrong, but to lie about the Lord’s work is a very serious sin. In verse 26, we see Gehazi’s real motive. He wanted clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants. According to Elisha, that’s exactly what Gehazi wanted to do with this money. Hide it, store it, and then at the appropriate time bring it out and buy all these things.

Gehazi wanted to be rich. He wanted get rich through the ministry. That is corrupting and contaminating the work of the Lord. That is defiling the Lord’s work. There are people today in the ministry, even true Christians, who are in it for the money. But defiling the Lord’s work is a serious sin, with serious consequences.

2. Dishonoring the Lord’s servants is a serious sin.

Gehazi not only lied about the ministry - he lied about Elisha. Look at verse 22. He put words into Elisha’s mouth when Naaman asked, “Is all well?” And Gehazi answered, *“All is well. My master has sent me, saying, ‘Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of*

silver and two changes of garments.” Gehazi falsely claimed that Elisha had said that. He dishonored the Lord’s servant. He lied, and he put the lying words into Elisha’s mouth! He slandered Elisha - a very serious sin.

Not only that, when he returned, he lied directly to Elisha. Elisha asked, *“Where did you go, Gehazi?”* And he said, *“Your servant did not go anywhere.”* (Sounds like something a teenager would say when trying to conceal something from a parent, doesn’t it?) With multiple lies, Gehazi dishonored Elisha, one of the Lord’s servants.

It’s very easy to commit the particular sin of dishonoring the Lord’s servants. Gossip and false criticism dishonor the Lord’s servants. And in any church or ministry, the Lord’s servants are the ones who are doing the work. If that includes you, you’re subject to criticism. Others doing the work around you are subject to criticism as well. You’re subject to criticism when you’re the Lord’s servant.

Be warned about criticizing the Lord’s servants. Be very careful about bad-mouthing one another in your church, because all of you should be involved in doing the Lord’s work. The Lord may literally remove you from a church position or a particular ministry if you criticize the Lord’s servants. Dishonoring the Lord’s servants is a serious sin.

3. Distorting the Lord’s gospel is a serious sin.

Gehazi not only defiled the Lord’s work and dishonored the Lord’s servant - he also dishonored the Lord’s gospel. The gospel is the Lord’s good news. By lying and taking money, Gehazi distorted **the good news that God’s gifts are free**.

When Naaman and his entourage got back to Damascus, I’m sure the good news quickly rippled out - the good news, of course, that Naaman was cured. A miracle! His leprosy was gone! But I bet the message was in some way distorted. “How much did he have to pay to get cured?” “Well, he got ripped off of some silver, but it was worth it. In the end he was cured.” That would have been a distortion of the good news.

And when the people in Israel heard about this miracle, questions would tend to be raised. “Hey, did you hear what happened? Another miracle in the ministry of Elisha!” “What happened?” “Well, this guy Naaman had leprosy, so he came from Syria to see Elisha. Elisha told him to dip seven times in the River Jordan, and he was cured!” “Fantastic! And Elisha didn’t take a penny?” “Well, Naaman did give him some silver, but ...”

Somewhere along the line the distorted word would have rippled out. A distortion of the good news. Naaman’s healing was the free gift of God, but Gehazi caused the good news to be distorted. Unfortunately we can do the same. So be very careful in how you present the gospel, including what you say and how you live as a believer. Distorting the Lord’s gospel is a serious sin, with serious consequences.

Practical Applications

1. You can be sure that one lie will lead to another.

Notice that Gehazi had to lie to Elisha to cover up his lie to Naaman. That's the way it goes. Once you start to lie, you can be sure that one lie will lead to another. I'm sure we've all experienced that at some time in our lives.

Truth is like a jigsaw puzzle. The pieces represent the true facts, and they all have to fit together. If you put one piece of jigsaw puzzle in the wrong place, the other pieces don't fit. Then they have to be changed, or somehow forced to fit. So it is with a lie. The "facts" must continually be changed to make them fit in with the lie.

Right now in congressional hearings in Washington, a government official has changed his testimony four times in five months. He's trying to make his testimony fit together - but he can't! And he never will be able to make his story fit together, because too many lies are involved.

You can be sure that one lie will always lead to another. Whether it's teenagers lying to parents, or parents lying to their kids, or lying to your spouse, or lying on the job, or lying in the ministry - you can be sure that one lie will lead to another.

2. You can be sure that you will be tested in the area of money.

Elisha was tested in the area of money, and he passed the test with an "A+!" Gehazi was tested in the area of money - and he failed miserably. And as a believer, you can be sure you'll be tested in the area of money.

In Luke 16:11-12, the Lord Jesus said, "*So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?*"

In other words, one of the ways the Lord determines whether you're capable of handling greater spiritual responsibilities is how you handle money, so you'll be tested in the area of money. You may be tested to see if you can handle large amounts of money properly. You may be tested to see if you will give a percentage of your money back to the Lord. You may be tested to see if you can account for someone else's money honestly. You may even be tested to see if you can keep your hands off someone else's wallet or credit cards, when you could get away with using someone else's money.

You can be sure that you will be tested in the area of money!