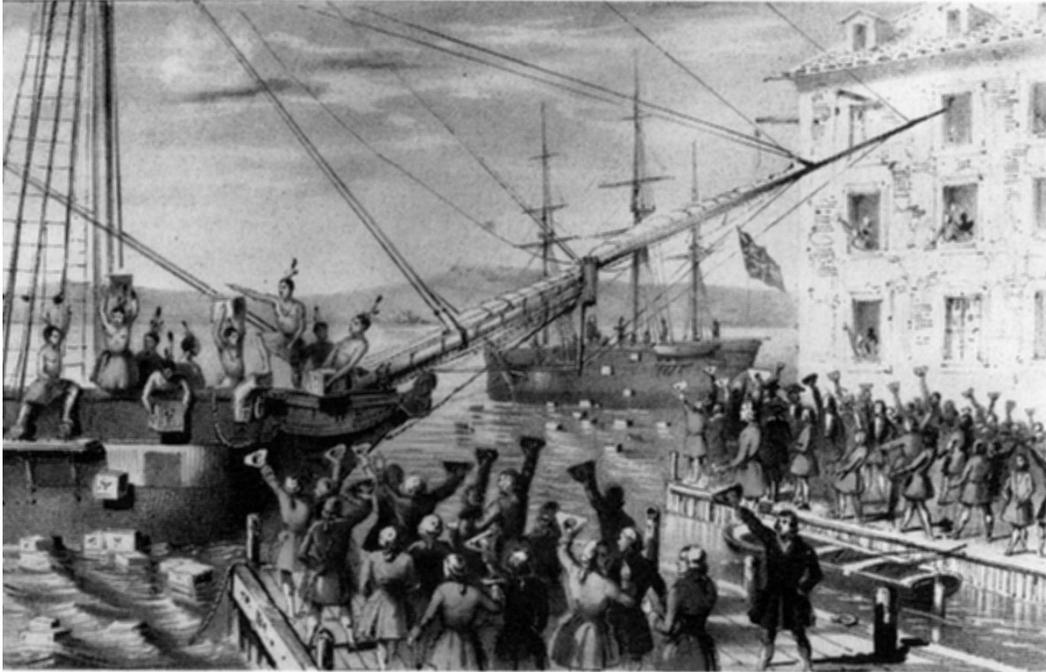


# Let Freedom Ring!

## 12. Sea-Soaked Tea and God-Saved Men



Scripture: Mark 16:16

### *Introduction*

**“It was now evening, and I immediately dressed myself in the costume of an Indian, equipped with a small hatchet, which I and my associates denominated the tomahawk, with which, and a club, after having painted my face and hands with coal dust in the shop of a blacksmith, I repaired to Griffin’s wharf, where the ships lay that contained the tea.**

**“When I first appeared in the street after being thus disguised, I fell in with many who were dressed, equipped and painted as I was, and who fell in with me and marched in order to the place of our destination.**

**“When we arrived at the wharf, there were three of our number who assumed an authority to direct our operations, to which we readily submitted. They divided us into three parties, for the purpose of boarding the three ships which contained the tea at the same time.**

**“The name of him who commanded the division to which I was assigned was Leonard Pitt. The names of the other commanders I never knew. We were immediately ordered by the respective commanders to board all the ships at the same time, which we promptly obeyed. The commander of the division to which I belonged, as soon as we were on board the ship, appointed me boatswain, and ordered me to go to the captain and demand of him the keys to the hatches and a dozen candles.**

**“I made the demand accordingly, and the captain promptly replied, and delivered the articles; but requested me at the same time to do no damage to the ship or rigging. We then were ordered by our commander to open the hatches and take out all the chests of tea and throw them overboard, and we immediately proceeded to execute his orders, first cutting and splitting the chests with our tomahawks, so as thoroughly to expose them to the effects of the water.**

**“In about three hours from the time we went on board, we had thus broken and thrown overboard every tea chest to be found in the ship, while those in the other ships were disposing of the tea in the same way, at the same time. We were surrounded by British armed ships, but no attempt was made to resist us...”**

**So wrote George Hewes, of the events that occurred the evening of December 16, 1773, in which he participated. A group of men calling themselves “the Sons of Liberty” organized by Samuel Adams into three groups of 50 Boston residents each, burst from the Old South Meeting House and headed through a great crowd of about 7,000 spectators toward nearby Griffin’s Wharf. There three ships—the *Dartmouth*, the *Eleanor* and the *Beaver*—were loaded with hundreds of crates of tea. By 9 p.m., they had opened 342 crates of tea and threw them into Boston Harbor.**

**Dressed as Mohawk Indians, the protestors took off their shoes, swept the decks, and made each ship's first mate agree to say that the Sons of Liberty had destroyed only the tea and harmed nothing else. The disguised colonists met with almost no resistance. Within a few hours they had dumped nearly 45 tons of tea into the sea in the largest tea party in history. The next day, the Sons of Liberty send someone around to fix the single padlock they had broken.**

**“The Boston Tea Party” as the protest came to be known, was the flash point in a dispute that had been simmering between the British colonists and the British government for some time. In short, it lit the fuse that led directly to the American Revolution and the battle for independence.**

### ***I. Muddy River Man Finds Freedom from Leprosy***

**The Word of God tells a similar tale of a submerging that led to liberty. Only in this tale the water involved was muddy rather than salty. It was a man instead of tea who was submerged. The freedom involved was from certain, slow, disfiguring death rather than economic and political oppression. Yet as surely as the Boston Tea Party played its crucial role in the struggle for America's freedom as a sovereign nation, so the story we take up from the Bible this evening parallels a greater spiritual liberty God intends we enjoy.**

**The story of the leper-general Naaman is found in the book of Second Kings, chapter 5. The tale of the Muddy River Man in search of freedom from the illness of leprosy parallels the search of all who seek salvation. The central truth for us is as simple, clear and relevant for us as it was for Naaman 3,000 years ago:**

**We can only be saved on God's terms.**

**But what exactly are those terms? Let's examine them as they appear in the story of the man who washed in a muddy river to become clean.**

*The first term of salvation is that we see our need.*

**II Kings chapter 5 begins with these words:**

**“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.”**

**Under ordinary circumstance, a man like Naaman would never have seen need for seeking the God of the Bible. He was proud and powerful. He enjoyed wealth, influence, and success. Only a short time before Naaman led the Syrian forces of his master against Israel’s army, routing them in battle and killing the Israelite King Ahab in the process. If he were interested in any god, it would be one from his own nation—not the God of a people he had so ably defeated in battle.**

**But there was a crack in tough-minded Naaman’s armored shell. He had a serious personal problem that was killing him by inches. Naaman was a leper. Had the general lived among the Israelites, he would have been banished from all society at the first sign of the disease—quarantined lest others contract his illness. Even among the Syrians of Aram the prospect of the slow moving, physically disfiguring, incurable, flesh eating progress of the disease cast the darkest of shadow over his future.**

**Naaman could halt the charge of thousands of enemy warriors with a command to his own forces, but he was powerless against the eroding enemy that lurked within. For all his wealth, power and success, the lowest slave in the realm wouldn’t have traded skins with him.**

**Any serious illness has a way of affecting a person’s entire family. The general’s wife grieved her husband’s calamity. This thing was impossible to hide even from the household servants. Mighty Master Naaman was a leper!**

**Often life’s cruelest blows allow us to understand God’s first term for finding salvation. Naaman saw his need. Perhaps there were news spots on his arm, numbness in another fingertip when he reached for a goblet of fine wine, or the shock when an ear lobe fell away in his fingers in the**

**bath. The horror for what lay ahead haunted him. Naaman needed something money couldn't buy, position couldn't command, his king couldn't give, and his gods couldn't grant. He needed healing.**

**Until we see our desperate need, there is very little God can do for any of us. Blessed are those who hunger, thirst and mourn. Blessed are those who see their own great need. They have met the first term of salvation.**

***But when we have seen our need, there is a second term of salvation: We must seek in faith.***

**The New Testament says that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of the Lord. The word of faith in God that brought hope and faith to Naaman's heart came from a most unusual place. The Bible says:**

**“Now the bands from Aram had gone out and taken captive a young girl from Israel, who served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, ‘If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy!’” (verses 2, 3)**

**It was only a simple sentence of longing and compassion in the mouth of a child. But it lit a flicker of hope in a hurting heart. That little slave girl had every reason to hate those who had stolen her from her home. She might have wished her captors harm and gloated in secret over their misfortune for the misfortune they had inflicted on her. But when she saw her captor's pain and fear, she loved them instead.**

**The girl spoke to her mistress. Her mistress told her husband. General Naaman told the King of Aram. The King of Aram said, “By all means go to Samaria and seek this cure. I'll write a letter on your behalf to the King of Israel.”**

**So the spark of faith in the heart of a nameless slave girl grew until it found its way to the kings of two nations and affairs of state. Who taught the little Israelite girl that God could heal in the first place? Was it a parent, a grand parent, a teacher? One who teaches a child to love and serve God unleashes a power that can shake nations and move the hand of heaven.**

**But the word of faith bears no fruit until it is acted on. General Naaman was a man of action. While the king wrote the letter, Naaman prepared a suitable gift to take as payment for the cure he sought: Ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of fine clothing. That is 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and ten fine suits of royal clothing as well. While today's precious metals values do vary, this proposed payment for healing would be somewhere near two million dollars in value.**

**Naaman had no inclination to be stingy in this matter. He had seen his great need clearly. He went seeking in faith for a cure. But there were more terms of salvation Naaman had yet to learn. He didn't know yet that he could only be healed on God's terms. He had written this contract himself, set the price for his own cure, and come asking heaven to sign. That didn't work then, and it won't work now.**

**The King of Israel in Naaman's day was likely wicked King Ahab's worthless son, Joram. He was amazed when the famous general of the nation who had killed his father in battle rode into his capital city of Samaria with a wagon load of treasure and a body guard. When he read Naaman's letter of introduction from the King of Aram, King Joram was terrified.**

**The letter said:**

**“With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy.”**

**The King of Israel was not a man of faith. He tore his robes in fear and said, “Am I God? Can I heal and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!”**

**A person's true worth and greatness has less to do with their position among men than it does with their position before God. King Joram's lowliest subject—that nameless slave girl stolen away into enemy exile—showed more faith and wisdom than did her king sitting on his throne surrounded by advisors. What was the difference? She looked to heaven for help. The king only looked to himself.**

**Would Naaman be forced to retrace his steps northward to Aram again without being healed? Joram's single greatest opportunity to speak of the power of the God of Israel, the God of the Bible, found him entirely unprepared. Fortunately, someone else intervened. The Bible says:**

**“When Elisha the man of God heard that the King of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: ‘Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know there is a prophet in Israel.’”** (*verse 8*)

**The prophet Elisha wasn't boasting. He saw clearly that Israel's honor and the honor of the true God were at stake. He was confident that God could handle the situation.**

**Naaman and his bodyguards soon left king's palace for prophet's cottage. As the chariots, war horses and treasure wagon thundered to a stop at Elisha's door, a household servant appeared from within. He eyed the armed warriors and their steeds warily. He squinted at the sun-blazed armor and the wagon load of treasure. Finally his gaze rested on General Naaman. He cleared his throat and said, “Elisha told me to tell you this: ‘Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored, and you will be clean.’”**

**Then the servant ducked his head, turned, went back into the house and shut the door behind him. The interview was over.**

**Naaman's mouth dropped open in surprise. Hot blood rushed to his face. His jaw snapped shut. He was used to being saluted. He was used to being honored. He was used to giving—not taking—orders, particularly from household servants. He had ridden eighty-odd miles with a cart load of treasure and a king's letter of recommendation. This wasn't the kind of service he had been expecting for the two million dollar fee he intended to pay!**

**The Bible says:**

**“But Naaman went away angry and said, ‘I thought he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God—wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus,**

**better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?' And he turned and went off in a rage."**

**Naaman had met the first two terms of salvation. He had seen his need and come seeking in faith. *But he was having trouble accepting the third term God requires: the one who would be saved must be willing to humbly obey.***

**All down through sacred history God has tested man's faith by requiring actions that cut across human pride, run contrary to human logic, and hold the decided risk of public embarrassment if they backfire. The question has never been whether God has the power to save. Rather it is whether we have a heart of humbly obey His exact instructions so that we may take hold of the salvation He willingly gives.**

- **"Put a brass snake on a pole, Moses! Have anyone who has been bitten by the serpents here in the wilderness look at it. Those who do will be healed."**
- **"Tell the elders of Israel to take their waling sticks and dig into the hot desert sand. The well they dig in this fashion will cure the nation's water shortage."**
- **"Go, borrow all the jars, pots, and pans your neighbors have. Close your door and pour oil from your single small jar into all of the borrowed vessels until they are filled. Sell the oil to pay off your debtors, then live on what is left over."**
- **"Pour a handful of meal into a pot of accidentally poisoned stew and feed it to the starving students. If you do, the deadly poison of the wild gourds won't hurt them."**
- **"Fill the empty stone hand-washing jars with water from the well. Draw some out and take it to the Master of the Feast. Then the problem of not enough wine for the wedding guests will be solved."**
- **"Roll away the stone from four day dead Lazarus' grave so that he may come out!"**

**There are many more puzzling commands we might mention that appear in the pages of the Bible. Among them, there is one that fits most naturally with the story of King George's dunked tea at the Boston Tea Party and Naaman's need for a cure from leprosy. In the gospel of Mark, chapter 16, verse 16 Jesus gives this explicit command to all who would take hold of the spiritual cure from the leprosy of sin that His perfect life and death provide for us. Jesus says:**

**“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved;  
but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”**

**For one who believes in Jesus, baptism--where humanly possible--is not an optional part of the Christian faith. Rather, it is the very means by which faith in Jesus death, burial and resurrection that provides release from sin and entry into God's people is expressed.**

**What is baptism? In the original Greek language “baptismo” meant to submerge an object. When a dyer of fabric wished to color a piece of linen, he baptized it by pushing the entire cloth beneath the surface of a vat of dye so that it was thoroughly soaked. In a battle at sea, when one warship rammed another, the ship that sank was said to be “baptized” since it sank fully beneath the surface of the waved.**

**During the Boston Tea Party, King George's resented tea was baptized by submerging it in the salty waters of the harbor. George Hewes told of the care the Sons of Liberty took to see all the tea was submerged completely. He wrote:**

**“During the time we were throwing the tea overboard, there were several attempts made by some of the citizens of Boston and its vicinity to carry off small quantities of it for their family use. To effect that object, they would watch their opportunity to snatch up a handful from the deck, where it became plentifully scattered, and put it into their pockets.**

**“One Captain O'Connor, whom I well knew, came on board for that purpose, and when he supposed he was not noticed, filled his pockets, and also the lining of his coat. But I had detected him and gave information to the captain of what he was doing. We were**

**ordered to take him into custody, and just as he was stepping from the vessel, I seized him by the skirt of his coat, and in attempting to pull him back, I tore it off; but, springing forward, by a rapid effort he made his escape. He had, however, to run a gauntlet through the crowd upon the wharf nine each one, as he passed, giving him a kick or a stroke.**

**“Another attempt was made to save a little tea from the ruins of the cargo by a tall, aged man who wore a large cocked hat and white wig, which was fashionable at that time. He had slyly slipped a little into his pocket, but being detected, they seized him and, taking his hat and wig from his head, threw them, together with the tea, of which they had emptied his pockets, into the water. In consideration of his advanced age, he was permitted to escape, with now and then a slight kick.**

**“The next morning, after we had cleared the ships of the tea, it was discovered that very considerable quantities of it were floating upon the surface of the water; and to prevent the possibility of any of its being saved for use, a number of small boats were manned by sailors and citizens, who rowed them into those parts of the harbor wherever the tea was visible, and by beating it with oars and paddles so thoroughly drenched it as to render its entire destruction inevitable.”**

**That’s Boston Tea baptizing! They baptized coats with tea in their pockets, along with hats and wig where it had been secreted. They rowed around the harbor the next morning and pushed any tea that still floated under with a paddle. Made sure it is wet through and through. According to the very meaning of the word, genuine Biblically recognized baptism involves the same complete submersion of the person being baptized beneath the surface of the water. Those are God’s instruction, the way we can show our faith in Jesus death, burial and resurrection on our behalf. He went under the earth and rose again the third day to provide our salvation. We go under the water and rise again as a sign that we have received it.**

**If we would be saved, if we would see God’s power in our lives, if we would be counted as His own and receive the healing from sin He has promised, we must humbly obey, doing exactly as He commands us.**

**Have you been baptized by immersion to express your faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins? If you have not, an opportunity for you to arrange to do so in the near future will be provided this evening.**

**But let's return to Namaan's story. He too needed a baptism to find the healing he sought. But he was ill inclined to comply. Fortunately, Naaman's bodyguard have learned more of the Israelite prophet's powers from talking with the common people than the general has learned in his interview with King Joram. They show high regard for Elisha's message sent through his servant. The Bible says:**

**“Naaman's servants went to him, and said, ‘My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, wouldn't you have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed!’”**

**God does not ask the impossible of us. But what He does ask, He expects us to do.**

**“Go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan and you will be healed.”**

**“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”**

**So Naaman turned back from his mad dash home to get his army and avenge the insult to his honor. He turned the horses' hooves eastward the twenty-odd miles to the muddy waters of the little Jordan river. It wasn't much of a stream. Its waters carried silt and clay. Water bugs skeetered across its surface and the gooey mud oozed up between the general's toes as he stepped naked into the flow. Imagine! Getting clean by washing in a dirty river. This is not a thing he would have thought of, or would have chosen.**

**But this river had obeyed God before. It had stopped flowing in flood season to let the twelve tribes of Israel cross over when God's people first entered Canaan at the end of the wilderness wanderings. It had parted twice before the prophet Elijah's mantle in the years just past.**

**It was this same muddy Jordan River where the spotless lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, would one day be baptized. There He would**

**fulfill all righteousness, set us an example, and bear the leprosy for all our sins in His own body to Calvary. On that day, all three members of the Godhead would be present. There would be the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending to light on Jesus head. There would be the voice of the Father speaking from heaven, “Behold this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”**

**Naaman’s need for physical healing and his instruction to dip himself according to God’s instructions in the Jordan prefigured the salvation from sin we may take steps to receive through our own compliance with God’s command to be baptized. The clear water, stone bottomed, poet praised waters of Syria with green idol groves along wide flowered banks would never match the Jordan. This was God’s river, the only river appointed to Naaman for healing and cleansing.**

**In our day there are those who, like Naaman, falter at obeying God’s explicit commands as well. What matters which river you wash in? What matters which day you worship on? What matters if one is baptized by immersion at a time of life when personal faith in Jesus can be affirmed? How important is it really to do exactly as God says to obtain exactly what He promises? Is it true that the only religion that can lead us back to God is the religion that comes from God in the first place? Can we only be saved on God’s terms rather than alternatives provided by other people, or on our own terms? What would have happened if Naaman had failed to comply in any particular with the instructions given him by God’s prophet?**

**Fortunately, the proud general chose the course of exact obedience. The Bible says:**

**“So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him—and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.” (verse 14)**

**If we do what God commands, He will do as He has promised. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved...”**

**Naaman was overjoyed! No more leprosy. No more scars. His ear was healed. His fingers could feel the drops of water dripping from his beard. He had even lost his wrinkles. The disease hadn’t simply been**

**stopped, his physical forces had been reversed. All he had already lost was restored. He was free. Let freedom ring! Let freedom ring!**

**He laughed like a child while his men clapped and cheered on the bank. Naaman had met the third term of salvation: He had laid down his pride. He had forfeited his own reasoning. He had humbly and explicitly obeyed God's instructions and commands. His request had been granted. He had been healed.**

**General Naaman might have traveled northward from his place of healing at the Jordan toward the border of his own nation. It was over 20 miles back to Elisha's house in Samaria—quite a distance out of his way. But God put it into his exalting heart to retrace his steps to the prophet's door.**

*There was a fourth term of the salvation he had already received yet to learn. It was this: We must receive salvation as a gift.*

**The Bible says:**

**“Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, ‘Now I know that there is no god in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant.’ The prophet answered, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.’ Even though Naaman urged him, he refused.”**

**Heavy bars of gleaming silver lay uncovered in the cart. The six hundred shekels of fine gold blazed beside them in the sun. The ten gorgeous jewel-studded gowns with interwoven threads of precious metal were waved aside. Nothing could purchase what Naaman had received. Not even millions. His healing was a gift of a good God, granted without money and without price.**

**These are the terms of our salvation today:**

- **We must see our need.**
- **We must seek God in faith in Jesus' name.**

- **We must humbly obey God’s explicit instructions, which include freely choosing to be baptized by immersion as Jesus commands.**
- **We must openly acknowledge that God’s mercy in forgiving our sins is a gift that we can neither earn, nor deserve.**

**The Bible says:**

**“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and that is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works that no one can boast.” *Ephesians 2:8, 9***

**“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” *I Peter 1:18, 19***

**“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’” *Romans 1:16, 17***

**“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” *Romans 6:23***

**Load up your shining silver, Naaman! Take back your glittering gold! Place the gorgeous gown’s of man’s weaving back into their trunk! Such treasures may buy much of what this world offers. But they will never win God’s favor, heaven’s smile, or the miracle of mercy and healing from the leprosy of sin.**

**Salvation is a free gift. It is free because none of us could ever afford its true price. The blood of Jesus is worth more than our noblest efforts. It is more precious than our greatest treasures. The blood of Jesus is what it cost to buy our salvation. What could we offer that could ever compare? Being baptized is not a work we do to earn salvation. It is a reaching out as God commands to receive salvation freely offered.**

When Naaman saw to his amazement that his riches were refused, he begged two further favors. The first was two mule loads of Israelite earth to take back home to Syria. Probably the general intended to spread the dirt under a tree on his back patio and build an altar there to worship the God of Israel who healed him. There was an ancient religious idea that connected a nation's god with the actual land where that god was worshipped. While Naaman acknowledged no other gods existed but Israel's God, he still begged a bit of Israelite earth on which to kneel properly. It was his way of keeping his gratitude for the wonder of this day's healing with him always.

The general requested a second favor as well. He looked ahead to his official duties upon his return to his homeland. He wished Elisha to know that while his office required he wait upon the Syrian king who was his master when the king went to worship in the temple of Rimmon, that the general would only be waiting on the king's needs. He would not be worshipping the king's idol god.

The prophet was wise enough to not attempt to set this new worshipper of the God of the Bible straight on every point of teaching and practice on the day of his conversion. He saw Naaman's sincere desire to honor the God who had healed him. That was enough.

Elisha lifted his hand in blessing. "Go in peace," he said.

There is one more term of salvation that flows naturally from the first four. It is found in the story's conclusion. *The fifth term of salvation is this: When we have experienced God's goodness toward us and received His healing, we must serve others with gratitude.*

We are saved freely by grace through faith as a gift from God. The sign of our acceptance of this is our reaching out to receive it through baptism—as commanded by Jesus. But we are saved for a purpose. Ephesians 2, verse 10 says:

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do."

Listen carefully! We do not do good works in order to be saved. But we are most certainly saved in order to do good works. When we have

**found healing and salvation in Jesus, we have the privilege of serving others with gratitude to God for what He has done for us. Any salvation that hasn't touched our attitudes, our actions and our affections is incomplete.**

**See Naaman's willingness to serve. The Bible says:**

**“After Naaman had traveled some distance, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, ‘My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he had brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him.’**

**“So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. ‘Is everything alright?’ he asked.”**

**Naaman was a changed man. The haughty general who had stormed away in rage when the prophet didn't roll out the red carpet for him now steps down from his chariot to meet Elisha's servant as an equal.**

**“Everything is alright,” Gehazi answered. “My master sent me to say, ‘Two young men from the company of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.’”**

**Naaman, his heart softened and overflowing with gratitude, was eager to serve. He fell for Gehazi's selfish lie without a question.**

**”By all means,’ replied Naaman. ‘Take two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing.’ He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants and they carried them ahead of Gehazi.”**

**Gehazi's greed and evil does not cancel Naaman's good. His eager and glad service for God's sake is what heaven seeks in every believer. The general got down from his chariot to inquire concerning the welfare of God's servants and God's cause. He gladly gave twice as much as had been requested. He personally prepared the two packages for the**

supposed young prophets in training. He sent two of his own servants back to deliver the gift.

How different Naaman's heart than the heart of Gehazi! The servant's sly story, though unquestioned, was sure to raise doubts in Naaman's mind on the journey home. A talent of silver and two suits of rich clothing were not pocket change. Gehazi's lie knew no shame.

**“My master Elisha sent me to say: ‘General Naaman, I know I turned down your gift earlier. But a couple young ministry training students have arrived and need bus fare home. Could you help them out a bit? Say \$30,000 dollars? You say, “Take \$60,000? Sure, why not? Just send it along with my servant.”**

Such a request was certain to raise eyebrows and cast suspicion on the financial integrity and full disclosure of the use of funds donated to God's cause. But Gehazi little heeded these consequences. The wealthy Naaman was on his way home, and the doubled silver Gehazi's lie had stolen was safely in his possession. Yet he couldn't let these Syrian servants walk in on the prophet himself. No. This matter must be kept secret.

**The Bible says:**

**“When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left. Then he went in and stood before Elisha.”**

**How could Gehazi imagine that the God who can heal a leper cannot see a theft?**

**“Where have you been, Gehazi?” Elisha asked. “Your servant didn't go anywhere,” Gehazi answered. But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you?”**

**Gehazi stiffened in horror. He had been found out. Elisha, the man of God, had seen it all! But there was more. Gehazi, the liar and thief, learned the same God who saw his hidden deeds could read his secret thoughts. Elisha said:**

**“Is this the time to take money, or to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, and herds, or men servants and maid servants?”**

**The prophet read Gehazi’s mental shopping list with ease. Then he stood on his feet and pronounced God’s sentence for the crime.**

**“Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.’ And Gehazi went out from Elisha’s presence, a leper, as white as snow.”**

**So Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, paid for the wrong he had done.**

### ***III. Conclusion/Appeal***

**The evening of the Boston Tea Party, when the last of King George’s tea had been emptied into the sea, Lendall Pitts led a group of the Sons of Freedom from the wharf. Their axes and tomahawks still rested on their shoulders. Somewhere in the crowd of onlookers a fife played as they marched past the home where the British Admiral Montague had been spying on their work. As they passed by, the Admiral called out, “Well boys, you have had a fine, pleasant evening for your India caper, haven’t you? But mind, you have got to pay the fiddler yet!”**

**In the end, every sin must be accounted for. Either Jesus sacrifice will answer for our sins before God, or we must answer ourselves. Either we will either be cured from the leprosy of sin and find God’s free salvation like Naaman, or we will be cursed like Gehazi to bear that guilt permanently. The question is: Will we comply with God’s terms for our salvation?**

**What are those terms?**

- First, we must see our need and acknowledge it.**
- Second, we must seek Jesus in faith for the forgiveness and healing from the leprosy of sin His life, death, burial and resurrection provides.**

- **Third, we must humbly obey God’s exact requirements—including accepting the salvation freely offered through Bible baptism.**
- **Fourth, we must receive salvation as a free gift, not something we can earn or expect as our rightful due.**
- **And finally, as we have freely received we must freely give.**

**If you have not been baptized and would like to make that decision this evening, we would encourage you to come forward at the conclusion of the service. There will be someone here in front to help you make preparations for this.**

**Tomorrow evening, our subject will be “Cornflakes, Peanut Butter and Exercise Machines: An American Health Reformer”. Be sure to come for this most interesting subject!**

**Let’s pray.**

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**Lord Jesus,**

**There are those here this evening who have not yet been baptized, but who are making that decision tonight. We pray your blessing on them as they prepare for this important event. Amen.**

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**Those who wish to be included in the upcoming baptism that is being planned, please come forward at this time.**

*Note: Those who come forward should receive the eight leaflets that provide a review of the basic teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Their names should be taken along with addresses and contact information. The time of the baptism should be announced. Be sure they are reviewed in *The Five C’s of Christian Faith, The Five S’s of Adventism, and the Four B’s of Bible Belief*. These cover the essential truths those prepping for baptism need by way of review. Pray with them confirming their decisions.*

