



+ **YOU**

Summer 2023
Set Apart: A Life Lived for God

Sermon Title: A Life Surrendered

To be used with Session 4: Set Apart In the Way We Think

Scripture: 2 Kings 5:1-19

Connection with the Study: To complement the Bible study “Set Apart In the Way We Think” this sermon uses the story of Naaman to illustrate the difference that takes place in a life surrendered to God, even when that surrender has just taken place and the full ramifications of the transformation have not had time to develop to maturity.

Introduction: Paul Harvey used to tell “the rest of the story” in which he would inform his audience of an interesting fact after setting it up with contextual information that preceded it.

There once was a man who took a most unusual bath in muddy water and came out clean. And now, for the rest of the story, taken from 2 Kings 5:1-9:

- Naaman was the top military man for the king of Syria/Aram. (
- He had a serious skin disease. (“Leprosy” was used for various skin diseases.)
- His wife had a servant/slave girl, captured during a raid against Israel.
- The servant told Naaman’s wife that he could be cured if he would go to the prophet in Israel.
- The commander told his master, the king, who sent him to Israel with 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, ten sets of clothing, and a letter informing the king of Israel that he was to cure Naaman.
- The king of Israel flipped out, believing that the king of Syria/Aram was trying to pick a fight because he knew he could not cure leprosy.
- The prophet, Elisha, heard about it and told the king to send Naaman to him so that he would know there was someone in Israel through whom God spoke.
- Naaman showed up at Elisha’s door with all the gifts he had brought.

1. Surrendering Your Throne (2 Kings 5:10-14)

Naaman had to let go of his own pride and purpose and surrender to God’s power, no matter how absurd it seemed from a human perspective. No one had ever found a cure for any of the skin diseases labeled as leprosy and arbitrarily dipping seven times in the less-than-pristine waters of the Jordan River did not make any sense to the warrior. Perhaps he reflected on the fact that he was there in the first place because he was following a servant girl’s suggestion, so why not follow the urging of the servants who accompanied him all the way to Elisha’s house? It was an act of humility that culminated in his healing. Holy thinking is counterintuitive to worldly

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thinking, but we must decide the end result we desire. Do we choose what the world can offer or what God promises?

2. Surrendering Your Goals (2 Kings 5:15-17)

Naaman had a plan regarding how to respond and it coincided with and was financed by his master, the king. It would be an appropriate response, should healing actually take place and bring honor to the person who cured him. But Elisha was not acting by his own ability or on his own power. He was simply and humbly serving as God's representative, and the prophet saw no reason for profit. When his planned reward was outright rejected, Naaman continued in humility as he surrendered his now former goals and accepted the conclusion stated by Elisha. Embracing new goals that reflected his new life, Naaman quickly and easily moved to accommodate the transformation of his total life, requesting to take soil back from the place of his healing and proclaiming he would never worship any god except the one true living God. Naaman now had direction and growth that transcended his military career and success.

3. Surrendering Your Limitations (2 Kings 5:18-19)

Spiritual growth and maturity do not come automatically. Naaman had to surrender his habits and allow God to develop holy habits in him. In doing so, he learned a wonderful lesson about how God sees the heart even though we are usually limited to seeing our circumstances. The seemingly impossible circumstance that would confront Naaman (continuing to go into the temple of Rimmon with his earthly master) was placed in the context of God's omniscience and grace. God knew what it looked like on the outside to others but He was judging the situation by what he knew was in Naaman's heart. "Go in peace" (v. 19) was the same thing Eli said to Hannah when she explained that she was not drunk but had been praying in anguish. (1 Sam. 1:12-17). Elisha's call to go in peace reflects that more guilt would be laid on Naaman.

Conclusion: Commander Jeremiah Denton was a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War, suffering repeated, even daily, torture. Yet, he never betrayed his country. His loyalty never wavered because the Navy pilot had firmly fixed it before being shot down. His captors were so focused on getting him to answer the questions for the television interview that they missed the coded message he was sending when he blinked his eyes: T-O-R-T-U-R-E.¹

Of greater significance than our national allegiance, which will likely never be challenged as severely as Denton's and the other POWs, our eternal allegiance will undergo continuous assault from the prince of darkness. It is imperative that we fully surrender our lives—heart, soul, mind, and strength—ahead of time. We can trust God and praise Him for guiding our thoughts during the most trying times.

*Jeremiah Denton died in 2014 at the age of 89.

¹ [cbsnews.com/news/jeremiah-denton-ex-senator-and-vietnam-pow-who-blinked-torture-in-morse-code-dies-at-89/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/jeremiah-denton-ex-senator-and-vietnam-pow-who-blinked-torture-in-morse-code-dies-at-89/) and <https://www.wearethemighty.com/mighty-history/this-vietnam-war-pow-morse-code>.

Jim Gantenbein lives in Port Orchard, Washington. He and his wife, Cathy, are the grateful parents of three married children and eight grandchildren. Jim is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.