

Are you ready for a Breakout this morning?

Breakout means: A violent or forceful break from a restraining condition or situation; a military attack to break free from encirclement... **Breakout...** Where we experience the victory (smashing success) and where we experience a sudden, forceful escape, from prison or enemy.

Does this sound painless?

In his book... "The Problem with Pain"... C.S. Lewis writes...

"We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Pain gets our attention... I'm not a particular fan of pain... or the lessons it teaches at times. It's hard to imagine... living a life that is free from the pain/sorrow/grief of this world.

I believe that Father God has a message that shouts louder than the shout of pain in our lives...

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Psalm 147:3

Our pain gives us a platform...an opportunity to praise our God for His faithfulness.

The question becomes then, what am I saying to the world in the midst of my pain?

The story of Naaman provides an amazingly beautiful picture of how to answer that question.

Naaman had an incurable disease—leprosy— a person inflicted with it was considered unclean... physically and spiritually... an outcast and certainly not someone to be touched. This was Naaman's pain... this disease would eventually kill him... unless he dies in battle or unless he finds a cure.

2nd Kings 5... Verse 13

*"Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something difficult, you would have done it. So why don't you do what he said? **Go wash and be clean.**"*

Verse 14 Naaman swallowed his pride... and obeyed Elisha's instructions.

*"So he **went down** (about 20-25 miles away) and **dipped himself** seven times in the Jordan, **according to the word** of the man of God, and his flesh was **restored (came back)** like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."*

The name of the river Jordan means... to go down... to descend... to sink in. Naaman had to humble himself to listen to instructions from a servant, travel further than he wanted, remove his armor, dip himself into a foreign river that actually meant to... humble yourself.

Do you think God was trying to send a message through Naaman's pain?

(Last week) How far are you willing to go to be healed? Another way to look at that is...how obedient are you willing to be?

So often we're afraid of experiencing pain... but pain reminds me that I am not in control... that I need a Holy God to deliver me.

Psalm 34:18

"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."

Here's something else I find interesting... Leprosy is caused by bacteria which attack nerve endings and destroy the body's ability to feel pain and injury. Without feeling pain, people injure themselves and the injuries can become infected, resulting in tissue loss.

Naaman was a dead man walking...now he can feel again... he was sensitive, vulnerable to pain again. His breakout allowed him to feel again... I wonder what that did to his military career.

Sometimes your pain... my pain and how God works through us... makes us sensitive to the pain of others. That's how this story started... Naaman's servant girl who he captured (a nice word for kidnapped) on a raid into Israel, became the instrument for his healing. She lost her freedom, her family... her pain must have been great... yet she tells her master of a way out of his pain.

Here's a huge point in this story...Pain wants to be louder than your promise, louder than your purpose, louder than your potential... it wants to quiet your voice. Jesus on the cross, in His pain cries out... *"Father forgive them!"*

What will you cry out over your pain?

How we respond to pain tells us how we'll respond to our purpose! Will we back down, shy away or run away because the pain is too great. Or will we seek revenge, payback or withhold the Good News of God's salvation because it costs us too much? Or will we respond to God's purpose?

2 Corinthians 1:3–6,

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all **comfort**, who **comforts** us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to **comfort** those who are in any affliction, with the **comfort** with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in **comfort** too. If we are afflicted, it is for your **comfort** and salvation; and if we are **comforted**, it is for your **comfort**, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer."*

Think God is serious about comforting each other? Our pain gives us a platform...an opportunity to share their pain and point people to God. Father God comforts us so that we might share His comfort with a world in pain.

Back to verse 14

*... and his flesh was **restored** (turn back) like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."*

The text states that his skin became as smooth as a child's skin. It came back... it turned back... It wasn't the skin of a battled harden general or old man... it was restored to brand new skin! **Clean = cured, purified and set apart** – You can say... his healing was more than skin deep... this was a soul level cure, a heart level healing and a mind that was set free.

Verse 15

*"Then he **returned** to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, "Behold, I **know** that there is **no God in all the earth but in Israel**; so accept now a present (blessing) from your servant."*

What you choose to return to matters... Naaman didn't return to Damascus (earthly wisdom, false gods) **He return the voice of God.** You return to the right source... God!

Did you notice what Naaman didn't do here? Naaman doesn't mention the healing... or how great he must feel... He mentions only God!

The breakout here is not discovering the cure... it's discovering who God is!

Naaman responds with an acknowledgement of who God is...the Hebrew word here (yaw-dah) suggests a personal experience, a personal contact with someone on a intimate level... the word is used to symbolize a covenant relationship between two people... something spiritual and physical.

Naaman now knows who God is!

Back to verse 15... *so accept now a **present (blessing)** from your **servant**.*

Naaman is so grateful he wants to give back but not as a man in authority, not a general... not someone in command... but a servant!

Outward displays are nothing without an inward change...a grateful heart shows off that change!

Elisha refuses the gift...Verse 16

*"But he said, "As the **LORD** lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none." And he urged him to take it, but he refused."*

In many cultures of that time it was customary to offer a gift to the gods of the river and since Naaman is a new convert... he has a lot to learn. He had to learn how to walk in his new skin and realize that God's gift of healing was absolutely free—he could not pay for it. We must remember that God's gift of forgiveness is absolutely free—we can do nothing to earn it.

God's love is relational, not transactional

We don't choose the river (the method) God defines the method. **We don't choose the breakout** (the victory) God defines the victory. **We choose God! We don't choose the river but how we walk out of it matters.** It took obedience for Naaman to walk into that river and healing... it also takes obedience to walk in healing according to His purposes and not our own.