

## Why People Come To God

### INTRODUCTION:

1. The passage read this morning (Rom. 5:6-11) addresses the reality of our lost situation in this world and God's response to it. And it brings to mind a question.
2. Do you ever read the Bible and wonder why people chose to come to God, to seek Him out, to give their lives to God and obey Him?
3. It is a good question to think about. And the answers that you might come to are varied, some of which are valid, while others are not.
4. This subject came up while considering an event recorded in 2 Kings concerning the life of a man named Naaman, who was a *most unlikely* individual to seek out God.
  - A. It was stated by one in this study that they wished they had more information on why Naaman believed enough to come to Elisha and to go and dip in the river Jordan and be cleansed.
  - B. This statement captivated my thinking, causing me to ponder why Naaman did what He did.
  - C. It also made me wonder why other unlikely individuals sought God and if there were any similarities between them that would be of value for us to consider.
5. Today I want to look at "Why people come to God" by looking at various examples of people who came to God and see what we can learn from them.

### BODY:

#### **I. Naaman (2 Kings 5:1-14):**

##### A. Things of note about Naaman:

1. He was a **fierce enemy of Israel** who was a **leper** (5:1-2 – "Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, **because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram**. The man was also a valiant warrior, but **he was a leper**.<sup>2</sup> Now the Arameans had gone out in bands and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel; and she waited on Naaman's wife." ).
  - a. He was captain of Aram's army, prized by his master, highly respected, a victorious warrior over Israel who caused it much harm...by God's own hand.
  - b. Despite his worldly position in Syria, he was a **leper!**
2. He was told by this abducted Jewish slave girl of a prophet in Israel that could heal him (5:3-7 – "She said to her mistress, "I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy."<sup>4</sup> Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel."<sup>5</sup> Then the king of Aram said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." He departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes. <sup>6</sup> He brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, "And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy."<sup>7</sup> When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me." ).
  - a. Naaman went by instruction of his own king to the king of Israel instead.
  - b. There he learned that such healing was only by grace from God himself, being beyond the capability of any man alone to do.
3. God offered Naaman grace through Elisha (5:8-14 – "It happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent word to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, **and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel**."<sup>9</sup> So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. <sup>10</sup> Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean."<sup>11</sup> But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place

and cure the leper.’<sup>12</sup> Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage.<sup>13</sup> Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, “My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean?’”<sup>14</sup> So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.”).

- a. It was an offer of grace to Naaman to know the power of God (and the king).
  - b. But the offer of grace only enraged Naaman because:
    - i. He thought his healing should happen in some sensational way.
    - ii. He thought the rivers of Syria were **better alternatives** than the Jordan.
  - c. Yet, he finally obeyed and was cleansed.
- B. Why did Naaman choose to come to Elisha and obey him?
1. If he knew of Israel’s prophets and Elisha’s miraculous power and works, why would he have waited until the girl said something about it?
  2. Truth: He **had no viable alternative**, no other hope for his life. That was the key to his cleansing.
    - a. Naaman knew where he stood in life! He was a man **dying** of a disease.
    - b. No one in Syria could heal him, or they would have already done so (army’s Captain!).
    - c. Though Satan presented seemingly better alternatives (a more sensational healing event and better rivers), they could not cleanse or save him!
    - d. Elisha and his words were the answer. With Elisha he was going to die from leprosy!

**II. Tax collectors and sinners** (Luke 15:1-2 – “Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.”<sup>2</sup> Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”).

A. Tax collectors:

1. Matthew (Matt. 9:9-13 – “As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector’s booth; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him.”<sup>10</sup> Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many **tax collectors** and **sinners** came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.<sup>11</sup> When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the **tax collectors** and **sinners**?”<sup>12</sup> But when Jesus heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a **physician**, but those who are **sick**.”<sup>13</sup> But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire **compassion**, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but **sinners**.”).
2. Zaccheus (Lk. 19:1-10 – “He entered Jericho and was passing through.”<sup>2</sup> And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was **rich**.”<sup>3</sup> Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature.<sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.<sup>5</sup> When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”<sup>6</sup> And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly.<sup>7</sup> When **they** saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a **sinner**.”<sup>8</sup> Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.”<sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.<sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man has come to seek and to **save** that which was **lost**.”).

B. Sinners (Lk. 7:36-50 – “Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table.<sup>37</sup> And there was a woman in the city who was a **sinner**; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,<sup>38</sup> and standing behind Him at His feet, **weeping**, she

began to **wet His feet with her tears**, and kept **wiping them with the hair** of her head, and **kissing His feet** and **anointing them with the perfume**.<sup>39</sup> Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet He would know who and what **sort of person this woman is** who is **touching Him**, that she is a **sinner**.”<sup>40</sup> And Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he replied, “Say it, Teacher.”<sup>41</sup> “A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.”<sup>42</sup> When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?”<sup>43</sup> Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have judged correctly.”<sup>44</sup> Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, **but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair**.<sup>45</sup> You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, **has not ceased to kiss My feet**.<sup>46</sup> You did not anoint My head with oil, but **she anointed My feet with perfume**.<sup>47</sup> For this reason I say to you, her **sins, which are many**, have been **forgiven, for she loved much**; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”<sup>48</sup> Then He said to her, “**Your sins have been forgiven**.”<sup>49</sup> Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this man who even forgives sins?”<sup>50</sup> And He said to the woman, “**Your faith has saved you; go in peace.**”).

C. Why did the tax collectors and sinners believe in Jesus and come to Him?

1. Possible answers:

- a. They had heard of Jesus and the great signs he had done. We are drawn to the famous.
- b. Or maybe He was the only Jew of notoriety that would give them “the time of day.” For, the Pharisees, scribes, and priests rejected these people as unworthy of their time or effort, seeing them as filth—something to be washed off (i.e., “she’s touching you!”).
- c. There may be other answers that are equally applicable.

2. But none of these are the whole of it—the ultimate reason. So, think about this for a while.

### III. Saul

A. Who was Saul?

1. Jew among Jews (Philippians 3:4-6 – “although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”).
2. Fierce enemy of Christ and Christians, or spiritual Israel, like Naaman (Acts 22:3-5 – “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. <sup>4</sup> I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, <sup>5</sup> as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.”).

B. Saul’s conversion:

1. Confronted by Jesus in a vision, was blinded, and then received his sight (Acts 22:6-16 – “But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, <sup>7</sup> and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ <sup>8</sup> And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’ <sup>9</sup> And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. <sup>10</sup> And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘**Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.**’ <sup>11</sup> But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. <sup>12</sup> A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all

the Jews who lived there, <sup>13</sup> came to me, and standing near said to me, ‘Brother Saul, **receive your sight!**’ **And at that very time I looked up at him.** <sup>14</sup> And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. <sup>15</sup> For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> Now why do you delay? **Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.**’”).

2. Saul obeyed the vision (Acts 26:19-20 – “So, King Agrippa, **I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,** <sup>20</sup> but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.”).

#### C. Why did Saul come to Jesus?

1. From a worldly standpoint there was nothing to be gained considering he was a **Pharisee** and how he was establishing himself as a **violent enemy** of Christ and the church!
2. Possible answers:
  - a. Paul was a Pharisee and would have been aware of Jesus and his works, which he had previously rejected.
  - b. He saw the risen Jesus in a vision and interacted with Him.
  - c. He was blinded during this vision, and his vision was restored by Ananias.
3. These answers are valid and played a part in *influencing* Saul’s conversion; but Saul had another reason for coming to Jesus.

### IV. Why did these people come to God?

#### A. Naaman?

1. He did so, as we have said, because he was a **dying leper** and had **no viable alternative**.
2. What the world offered could not cleanse or save Him!
3. He knew that without God’s power applied through Elisha, the disease would kill him.

#### B. Tax collectors and sinners?

1. Like Naaman, they knew they were **sick** and dying, **but in sin**.
  - a. Do you remember how in the accounts we read there was the constant reminder and condemnation from the Pharisees and others that these people were **sinners**?
  - b. They knew it was true, which set them apart from the Pharisees as Jesus’ parable showed (Lk. 18:9-14 – “And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: <sup>10</sup> “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or **even like this tax collector.** <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ <sup>13</sup> But the **tax collector**, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be **merciful to me, the sinner!**’ <sup>14</sup> I tell you, **this man went to his house justified** rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but **he who humbles himself will be exalted.**”).
2. The Pharisees could not be saved because they could not see their own sin!
3. These sinners, however, knew **knew who they were** and came to Jesus because He alone offered them hope for their burden of **sin. They had not viable alternative** (Matt. 11:28-30 – “Come to **Me**, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”)!

#### C. Saul?

1. Saul may seem to have had an edge on us because he saw Jesus, was blinded, etc.. Remember, however, that seeing Jesus was required to be a witness and an apostle (Acts 26:16).

2. Saul came to Jesus because he now knew he was a **condemned sinner in rebellion to God, and Christ was his only hope** (1 Tim. 1:12-16 – “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,<sup>13</sup> even though I was formerly a **blasphemer** and a **persecutor** and a **violent aggressor**. Yet I was shown **mercy** because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;<sup>14</sup> and the **grace** of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.<sup>15</sup> It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to **save sinners**, among whom **I am foremost of all**.<sup>16</sup> Yet for **this reason** I found **mercy**, so that **in me as the foremost**, Jesus Christ might **demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life**.”).
3. Saul understood **he had no viable alternative!**
- D. Until one comes to the same realization that the tax collectors, sinners, or Saul came to, that he/she is sick and dying in **sin**, and that Jesus’ grace and mercy is the only cure, **that person cannot be saved!**

## V. Why would you refuse to come to God?

- A. Do you think you have a viable alternative?
  1. People think the **things of this world** and **time** are a viable alternative to trusting God (Luke 12:16-21 – “And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive.<sup>17</sup> And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’<sup>18</sup> Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and **there I will store all my grain and my goods**.<sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have **many goods** laid up **for many years to come**; take your **ease, eat, drink and be merry**.”<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, ‘You fool! **This very night your soul is required of you**; and now **who will own what you have prepared?**’<sup>21</sup> So is the man who **stores up treasure for himself**, and is **not rich toward God**.”).
  2. If this is you you no idea that life, no matter what you might have, is fragile. And, if lived without Christ as your Lord and Savior, is a life **lost** that faces **condemnation** by the Lord!
- B. Do you think your sins do not condemn you?
  1. That is what the Pharisees thought and why they did not come to Jesus!
    - a. They believed the things they did made them righteous, better than others, while never considering how their sins required God’s grace and mercy like the rest of the world.
    - b. So, you may see yourself as better than others in the world, a “good person,” but to fail to come to Jesus is to ignore your sin and stand condemned.
  2. All sin condemns
    - a. Rom. 6:23 – “For the wages of **sin** [not just the really bad ones] is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
    - b. It does not matter what sin you commit (Rev. 21:6-8 – “Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.<sup>7</sup> He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.<sup>8</sup> But for the **cowardly** and **unbelieving** and **abominable** and **murderers** and **immoral** persons and **sorcerers** and **idolaters** and **all liars**, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”).
      - i. Though God offers eternal life for those who overcome in Jesus, those who commit sin, including unbelief (sin), murder, immorality, idolatry, and **lying**, will face hell!
      - ii. That **lying** is in that list shows that with God **sin is sin!** You sin, you die!
    - c. In fact, when speaking of Judgment Jesus said people would be condemned to eternal punishment because of what they did not do, because they **did not do the good deeds** presented to them, like helping the hungry, showing care/hospitality (Matt. 25:41-46).
  3. The life you are living, no matter how good you are, is **not a viable alternative to coming to God** for his grace to forgive! And, until you understand that, **you cannot be saved!**

- C. Do you love your sin more than righteousness? (John 3:17-21 – “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup> He who believes in Him is not judged; **he who does not believe has been judged already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup> This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and **men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.** <sup>20</sup> For everyone who **does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.** <sup>21</sup> But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”).
1. Some people are having too much fun/pleasure in the world to trust their happiness to Jesus!
  2. They believe the “good life” is a viable alternative to a godly life.
  3. Until you see that the “good life” has brought you nothing but **sin and death**, and know that you **have no viable alternative to Jesus’ saving grace, you cannot be saved.**
- D. Do those around you provide no reason for you to come to God?
1. Jesus said His people are to be the salt and light of the world, living in such a way to cause others to glorify God, to draw the world to Him (Matt. 5:13-16)
  2. What a horrific shame it would be to find ourselves condemned as were the Jews for a poor example before the world (Rom. 2:22-25 – “You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? <sup>23</sup> You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? <sup>24</sup> **For “the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you,”** just as it is written. <sup>25</sup> For indeed circumcision [might substitute baptism] is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision [baptism] has become uncircumcision.”).
  3. But **you will stand before God** for your choices and actions (2 Cor. 5:10). And because these will include sin, you must know that Jesus is your one and only hope! **You have no viable alternative!**

#### CONCLUSION:

1. If you are a Christian but not lived as you truly should, not trusting in God and putting him first as you shout that you might be a godly influence on other to bring them to Jesus, be aware of the severe consequences of your negligence and repent (Lk. 17:1-2 – “He said to His disciples, “It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! <sup>2</sup> It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.”).
2. If you have sinned, no matter what sin it might be, and have not come to Jesus, you better realize now that you are a **sinner** and that **you have no viable alternative to the grace and mercy** found in Him.
3. For, judgment is coming, and it will be severe (1 Pet. 4:17-18 – “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, **what will become of the godless man and the sinner?”**).
4. But God’s judgment does not have to be severe or condemning. God has provided the answer—the only answer—which is to come to Jesus as your Savior and Lord.
5. Will you come to Jesus in F-R-C-Bp?