

“By faith . . .”

The little captive maid

Laura Burdekin

THE STORY OF the little captive maid forms part of a greater story of important doctrinal significance: the healing of Naaman’s leprosy (2 Kgs. 5). We use this story to expand upon the need for humility and obedience and apply it to the essential rite of baptism, often forgetting the maid.

A little Israelite maid had been torn from her homeland and taken captive to Syria. We can only imagine her terror. If the pain of separation from her family were not bad enough, she would also have been dreading what might happen to her. She had been taken away from everything familiar to her to a strange land where she knew nobody. Yet God tells us we are no different from her; as the adopted seed of Abraham we are strangers in a foreign land (Heb. 11:13) because “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20, RV).

Her parents must have carefully taught her and brought her up in the right way, as she had a firm faith. She must frequently have thought of her faith, and decided to keep herself pure from the defilements which surrounded her and be a witness to the God she worshipped.

The chief captain of the Syrian army took her home to wait upon his wife. The quiet way in which the maid carried out her duties without complaining, despite often feeling very sad, must have attracted her mistress’s attention and made her show kindness to the maid. It also led her to confide in the maid her own sorrows and afflictions because of Naaman’s leprosy. Evidently the little maid remembered the many miracles Elisha had performed through the power he had been given by the God of Israel, for she exclaimed, “Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy” (2 Kgs. 5:3).

As a good servant, she desired the welfare of her master, despite being a captive. Many placed in a similar situation would harbour feelings of grievance which would cloud their outlook so that they could not serve their captors without resentment. However, this maid was able to regard Naaman’s sufferings with the same compassion as if he were one of her own people. Doubtless there have been occasions when we have been

wronged, and so often we find it difficult to forget our grievances. Just as we are told God forgets our sins and iniquities (Heb. 10:17), so we, like the maid, should forget our grievances.

She had lost almost everything, and was now a slave in the land of the enemy. Some may become bitter by trouble, and continually grieve their losses. If we constantly dwell on what has gone we no longer appreciate the blessings that remain. However, if we centre our lives around prayer, and ask for God’s guidance, we can take comfort in Paul’s words: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). The little maid did not wallow in self-pity or languish in hopelessness; rather, with her faith in God she made the best of a bad situation and made a fresh start in a strange land.

She had not seen anyone healed of leprosy (Lk. 4:27), yet she was confident that Naaman would be healed. As Hebrews 11:1 states: “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”. She had complete faith in God. Consequently, Naaman was healed as he humbled himself and obeyed Elisha. The power of the prophet to heal was triggered by the child-like faith of a simple soul who believed God and acted out of love.

The maid displayed remarkable courage in discussing her beliefs with her mistress, who worshipped another god. We are sometimes reserved in mentioning the Truth to others, yet the slave girl had no reservations about proclaiming her beliefs in this noble household.

The little captive maid set an inspiring example in serving her earthly master conscientiously and kindly, then with faith and courage speaking of the God of Israel, “Who only doeth wondrous things” (Ps. 72:18). She could not have seen the far-reaching result of her words. She became an ambassador for God, and, shortly after Naaman’s leprosy was cured, he, with all his company, confessed, “Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel” (2 Kgs. 5:15).