EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Matthew 14–28 Sermon Series
Supports Session 7: Eternal Life
Sermon Title: "Wash in the River" (2 Kings 5:1-19)

Connection to Session 7
This week's passage emphasizes that Jesus' salvation demands humility and surrender. This theme is clear in the New Testament but is rarely emphasized in studies of the Old Testament. However, God has been saving people since before Christ came, foreshadowing the redemption that Jesus secured on the cross. One of these stories is the cleaning of Naaman, a Gentile and enemy of Israel who came to faith in the true and living God.

Comparing the rich young ruler in Matthew 19 with the cleaning of Naaman presents an interesting contrast. The ruler seems to be an easy candidate for salvation but leaves sad and without redemption. Naaman is the most unlikely candidate for salvation but leaves as a worshipper of the one true God. We should never assume who will or who will not be saved!

Introduction/Opening
Who is the most unlikely person for God to save? You may think of some horrific dictator, convicted felon, or political enemy. The beauty of the gospel message is that anyone, no matter how terrible they are, is able to come to Christ. There is no one who can out-sin the grace of God. However, all people must come to Christ on His terms, not our own. Because of this truth, you never know who will or who will not come to faith in Christ. The most unlikely person may undergo a radical transformation of grace, and the seemingly "good person" may never turn from sin and trust Christ.

If one is honest about his or her sin, they should realize that the most unlikely candidate for salvation is themselves. When one acknowledges their sin before God, they come into agreement with God about the depths of their own iniquity and the great need for Jesus's redemption. No one should consider themselves "likely" to be saved, and no one should be seen as "unlikely" to be saved. Anyone who comes to Jesus through humble surrender and faith in Him will be rescued from sin!

Outline
An Unlikely Convert (2 Kings 5:1-6)
Naaman was one of the most unlikely people to trust in the God of Israel! He was a commander of the army, meaning he had social status and wealth. He led forces for the King of Aram, a common name for Syria, that at the time of this story had been at war with Israel for the many years. Though there is a short-term truce (see 2 Kings 8:7), the Syrians were antagonistic to Israel. Naaman even had young girl who was a captive of war serving in his home.

But Naaman had something else—he had an uncurable skin disease. No wealth or position or bravery could save him. He was desperate for a solution and needed divine intervention. In the same way, our sin is uncurable, and no human effort can cleanse us. We need a Savior!

Naaman was also unaware that there was a solution for his condition until he was alerted to a prophet in Samaria. He did not know where to go until he was told by an unlikely witness—the girl whom he took captive! Though this girl was a slave in his home, she gave him the good news of redemption from the God of Israel. Naaman asked for leave from the king of Aram but did not even know where to find this

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prophet. He wrongly assumed the king of Israel could heal him, and he brought immense wealth on his journey with hopes of obtaining a cure!

An Unlikely Message (2 Kings 5:7-10)
There was some tension as the king of Israel tried to decide what to do with Naaman. The king suspected a trap and an excuse for war—there's no way he should have healed this Syrian commander! But by God's grace, word reached Elisha the Prophet. He notified the king of Israel that Naaman was welcome to receive healing from God. Imagine the entourage of horses and chariots as this great commander approached the home of the prophet! The townspeople must have watched with hopes of a great miracle by the man of God.

But Elisha did not appear or even speak to Naaman. He instructed his servant to go give the commander the most unlikely message, "Go wash seven times in the Jordan and your skin will be restored and you will be clean." (5:10). Though Leviticus 14:7 gives instructions for a priest to pronounce one cleansed of leprosy by sprinkling blood seven times on the healed person, there is no other time in Scripture where the Jordan River has any sort of healing properties. But for the student of Scripture, one should know that the Jordan River often symbolizes death to self and entrance into God's family. Symbolically, in this command, Naaman was instructed to submit to Israel's God if he wanted to be healed. Healing only comes through humility and personal surrender to God.

An Unlikely Salvation (2 Kings 5:11-19)
Naaman was furious. He expected a grand miracle and was instead dismissed by Elisha's servant. Aren't his own rivers used for worship of his gods, which flowed from the snow-peaked mountains, clean enough? Naaman insisted that his own way was sufficient and raged against the prophet's instruction.

Yet his servants spoke sense to him. Surrender and humility were the only way to be cleansed. Naaman would need to humble himself before God as Elisha instructed. The proud military man had to choose. If he remained prideful, death was certain. If he would humble himself, healing was promised. Naaman submitted to the God of Israel and was miraculously healed! Naaman recognized this was God's work, declaring, "I know there's no God in the whole world except in Israel!" (2 Kings 5:15)

Naaman's skin and soul were restored by God. Naaman offered money as a reward, but Elisha refused payment. Salvation could not be bought. The evidence of Naaman's conversion was clear; he had no care for his own wealth, but only desired to worship God alone. Naaman even asked for "advance forgiveness" (see v. 18) because of his obligatory service to the Aramean gods, because He desired to only worship the God of Israel. Naaman is truly saved, and through surrender and humility, has come to trust in the one true God.

Application Truths:
- *Be an unlikely witness.* Just as the servant girl told of God's power, we must tell even the most unlikely person of Jesus's power to save.
- *Be willing to die to self.* Naaman had to reject pride and humble himself before God. We too must be willing to surrender our pride to God. If saved, this reflects the truth of the gospel!
- *Be wholehearted in worship.* Naaman knew that his salvation meant total surrender to the Lord. If we are saved, every part of our self-identity must be submitted to Christ as a life of worship.

Conclusion
How can you be saved, not from a skin disease, but from a sin disease? The solution is found in surrender and humility to the one true God. That is expressed by faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, as the only means of Salvation. Like Naaman, we must understand there is only one way of salvation. This message is simple and straightforward but requires death to self and surrender to God. Grace is counterintuitive to sinful hearts, but it is the only means of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9).

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