

Perceptions

Harmony M.B.C., Oct. 9, 2011

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1Kings 5:1-17

Read v. 1:

Today, we are going to read about an event that involved at least 6 people in such a way that we have an opportunity to see 7 ways they perceived things...how they looked at certain things. We will see that the ways they looked at things were instrumental in how they behaved, and how events unfolded in this story.

Willa Cather, a 19th and 20th century author and scholar, once wrote, “The miracles of the church seem to me to rest not so much upon faces or voices or healing power coming suddenly near to us from afar off, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always.”

This insightful idea really is a capsule of understanding about the fact that the way church members see things can more or less determine how they are able to understand and use truth and enlist the power of God. It also greatly affects how a church functions.

In our text today, as we look at the various perceptions of the characters here and learn something about how those perceptions shaped their behavior, maybe we can consider how a changed perspective could have altered their behavior and brought them closer to the reality that is in the Lord. We should understand that the Lord is unsullied truth, and if we have insights into the nature and acts of God, we can look directly at those things that can give us a proper perspective for our lives and behavior.

I. Read vv. 1-3 - In v.3 we want to look first at the perspective of the young Israelite girl who waited on the house of Naaman

- childlike acceptance of the power of God to do anything
- childlike acceptance of the power of God is often used to set in motion things that are life-changing

II. Read vv. 4-6 -In vv.5-6 we see the perspective of the Syrian king

- Everything can be done by decree, and everything has its price
 - This perspective extended to the actions of the king of Israel; that is, he would notify the king of Israel that a certain thing was to be done, and the king could get it done.
 - There was no consideration for consulting with the man who was more authoritative before God than the king of Israel - The Syrian king was locked into this political behavior by how he saw things
- Based on human perspective, men will be led to try to accomplish by human politics what can only be accomplished by getting to God

III. Read v. 7- In v.7 we see the perceptions of the king of Israel

- He interprets the visit from Syria as an attempt and intention to start a fight

- ▶ Mis-perceptions will always lead to the wrong conclusion and often to the wrong response
- ▶ The king here thought the king of Syria meant to cause trouble, but it was really a peaceful contact.
- ▶ Sometimes people misconstrue things by mis-perceptions in situations that are opposite to this one. That is, they think overtures by others are innocuous or are peaceful gestures, when they are in fact the overtures of deception with harm as the intent.
 - Illustrate: Hezekiah receiving the Babylonian envoy in 2Kings 20. Baladan, king of Babylon sent him a letter and presents because he heard he had been sick. Hezekiah showed those Babylonian dignitaries all his treasure. Then Isaiah came to Hezekiah and told him what those Babylonians were going to do as a result of his friendliness. Their plans were sinister and destructive to Israel).
- ▶ When people make predictions based on their perception that human nature alone determines actions, they will probably misinterpret both the purpose of an encounter, and the outcome of an encounter
 - Illustrate using Elisha and the young servant surrounded by the Syrian army in 2Kings 6:8-17

IV. In v.8-10 we see the perceptions of Elisha

- ('wherefore has thou rent thy clothes? The king was under great stress and anxiety about the threat he perceived)
 - ▶ Great stress and anxiety are a waste of time for a person who perceives and rests in the power of God , but stress and anxiety will be a common companion to those who do not
- ("...let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel).
 - ▶ Those who perceive the purposes of God are confident about God's power
 - ▶ Also v.10

V. In vv. 11-12 we see the human perceptions of Naaman

- Naaman perceives himself to be somebody special even in the presence of God
 - ▶ Human opinions always exalt the person over the creator of the person (even though it is many times an unconscious arrogance and pride) -
- Human perceptions about God's way of doing things are almost always wrong
- v.12 - Human perceptions about what God values are almost always wrong
- Natural men have the perception that wounding of pride is a great offense (Naaman went away in a rage)

VI. In v. 13 we see the perceptions of men with common sense - Quip for v.13 - Men in the game are blind to what men looking on see clearly. —Proverb (Chinese)

- Expectations born of mis-perceptions blind men to solutions of simplicity (Naaman had a mis-perception about what he thought might be the pathway to being cleansed of leprosy)
- Men with common sense can reason that when perceptions get in the way, one loses sight of that which makes sense (i.e. wash in water and get clean).

VII. In vv. 14-17 we see the regenerated perceptions of Naaman the believer

- Naaman suddenly has the capacity for putting it all together - "Knowledge comes by taking

things apart. But wisdom comes by putting things together.” —John A. Morrison

- v.14 - Naaman perceived that obedience to the will of God is the first step to cleansing
- v.15 - Naaman perceived that public acknowledgment of the cleansing power of God is the first step to giving God the glory He deserves
- v.16 - Naaman perceived that dedicating his life to the one true God was to be the strength of his life and food for his soul