

There Is No Other God In All The Earth

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Date: 31 May 2026

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[0 : 00] Please do turn your Bibles. We're going to read from 2 Kings this evening, 2 Kings chapter 5. And we do have a visitor Bible scattered around the place, so if you don't have a Bible with you, please do grab one.

You'll see them dotted around. 2 Kings chapter 5, page 311 in the visitor Bible. 2 Kings chapter 5, and we're continuing our series with Phil Copeland's through this book.

So 2 Kings chapter 5. Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper.

Now the Syrians, on one of their raids, had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, would that my Lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria.

He would cure him of his leprosy. So Naaman went in and told his Lord. Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel.

[1 : 30] And the king of Syria said, go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel. So he went. Wow. I was warned there might be an issue with this pack.

Shall I switch it over? Press on. We're going to press on. So we're halfway through verse 5.

So Naaman went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing.

And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman, my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy.

And 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 sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?

[2 : 35] Only consider and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me. But when Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king saying, Why have you torn your clothes?

Let him come to me now, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house.

And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean. But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.

Are not Abana and Phapa, 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.

But his servants came near and said to him, My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you. Will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, wash and be clean?

[3 : 50] 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. 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 from your servants. 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.

Then Naaman said, If not, please let there be given to your servants two mules loads of earth. For from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any God but the Lord.

In this matter may the Lord pardon your servant. When my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in

the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon your servant in this matter.

[4 : 54] He said to him, Go in peace. But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, the man of God, said, See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian in not accepting from his hand what he brought.

As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him. So Gehazi followed Naaman. And when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, Is all well?

And he said, All is well. My master has sent me to say, They have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets.

Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing. And Naaman said, Be pleased to accept two talents. And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags with two chains of clothing and laid them on two of the servants.

And they carried them before Gehazi. And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house. And he sent the men away. And they departed. He went in and stood before his master.

[6 : 08] And Elisha said to him, Where have you been, Gehazi? And he said, Your servant went nowhere. But he said to him, Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you?

Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants? Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.

So he went out from his presence a leper like snow. Amen. Amen. May God bless to us his word this evening.

Well, good evening and please have your Bibles open to 2 Kings 5. And if anyone drifts off this evening and I spot them, I shall repeat that loud bang from earlier.

So just be warned, okay? What does a genuine conversion to the Christian faith look like?

[7 : 24] You can turn to many places in the Bible in order to see that. And 2 Kings 5 is one of them. Last Sunday in chapter 4, we saw the word of the Lord working powerfully through Elisha to protect the Lord's true Israel.

That is the remnant, his small group of real believers in Israel who'd kept covenant with God and had refused to go along with the idolatry that had spreaded around the kingdom of the north like putrid gangrene.

The Lord graciously protected his people and showed his faithfulness again and again. And in 2 Kings 5, God's grace goes global.

For we see the word of the Lord working powerfully in a lost pagan Gentile, humbling, cleansing, and changing him forever.

As Bob Fowl says, This chapter is a gospel story of grace reaching out to the stranger. The grace which was to take the gospel to Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth is already at work here.

[8 : 38] There is a passage that will thrill us as a church, will get us moving in mission, but it also is a passage, when we read it in light of the rest of the Bible, that has a real bite.

A real bite. With that in mind, let's run through the chapter now in five scenes this evening. Five scenes. Scene number one, verses one to four.

Notice the scope of the Lord's sovereignty. The scope of the Lord's sovereignty. So we find ourselves suddenly in Syria, next door to Israel, and we meet commander Naaman, who is described as being a great mighty man of valor.

And in his homeland, everyone loves Naaman. His master, the king, holds him in high esteem, and he's a great military success, especially when it comes to fighting against Israel.

He's even managed to lead a successful mission into Israel and take some Israelites captive and drag them off back to Syria to live as slaves.

[9 : 47] But the truth is, none of the Syrians, not even Naaman himself, knows the real source of his success. But we do, because verse one tells us. What does it say at the end of verse one, or the middle of verse one?

The Lord had given victory to Syria. You see, the Lord is the one true sovereign God over not just Israel, but all nations. He alone rules the world he has made, and everything in it at all times,

including world leaders.

The Lord has all of the world's leaders on a leash. The actions that they carry out, world leaders, they are fully responsible for them, but ultimately they can only ever carry out what the Lord has decreed for them to do in eternity past.

The Lord is totally sovereign on the big scale. And by the Lord's gracious providence, one of these captives that Naaman took from Israel will turn out to be instrumental in seeing him changed forever.

But before we get to that, just notice one more glaring, jarring, sorry, jarring detail that we're told about Naaman, jars with the rest of his shiny resume there.

[11 : 05] Look at verse one, the end of verse one. He was a leper. A leper. Now this is not the same as leprosy today, which I'm told is called Hanson's disease.

Back then, leprosy was a term given to a whole bunch of really nasty and incurable skin conditions. And Naaman clearly suffers from a severe case of this, whatever it was.

Is there any hope for him? Well, please look at verse two. Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife.

Friends, here we see that the Lord is not only sovereign on the big scale, but also on the smaller scale of individual lives. And we meet yet another nameless member of God's true Israel, this little girl.

Just picture her, if you will, for a minute. She's been through a horrific time, stripped away from her homeland as a prisoner, to live a life of servitude in exile.

[12 : 15] But despite all this, all this horrific time that she's clearly been through, she is living faithfully for the Lord her God. And she has total confidence in his word.

She also clearly loves her neighbors, despite the fact that they took her prisoner. Isn't that remarkable? And in verse three, out of compassion for her suffering master, she turns one day to Mrs. Naaman and says, Mrs. Naaman, if only my Lord would go to the prophet who is in Samaria, that's the capital city of Israel, he would cure him of his leprosy.

And in verse four, Naaman decides to give it a shot. Now we will see what happens next, but let's just think a bit more about this little girl whom the Lord has sovereignly placed in Naaman's house. She would have been a beautiful example to the very first readers of kings. Who were the very first readers of kings who received this book in its fullness?

And the answer must be the later generation of God's people who were in exile in Babylon. As they read kings, they would see lots of painful truths because they would see that the exile that they were in in Babylon, it was fully deserved.

[13 : 44] For time and time again, this book declares to them their unfaithfulness was appalling. And their rejection against the Lord and breaking his covenant, what has happened to them, is fully deserved.

But for the faithful members of God's people, the true Israel, the remnant in exile, as they read this book, it would have greatly encouraged them because they would see, well, yes, the Lord controls all nations, so this exile is not an accident, it's his doing.

And now that we are in a foreign land, well, the Lord will be with us with his word still, even though we're far from Israel. And also the Lord wants us to carry on living like this little girl.

Living by faith, loving the Lord, and loving my neighbor, even amongst the pagans who had taken us captive. For the Lord has a heart for all people, friends, all people from all nations.

The Lord does not delight in the death and destruction of any. He wants gospel hope to be proclaimed to all people, even in the darkest of nations. And so he wants his true Israel to be a light to the nations, showing off his beauty wherever the Lord had placed him, even in captivity.

[15 : 04] And friends, for us today, this unnamed little girl still remains a great example for us too. For we as God's people today are exiles.

Do you know that? If you're a Christian today, you are an exile, says the New Testament. Our true home as Christians is yet to come. It is our true home with Jesus in the new creation, this world made new in resurrection bodies.

That's where our home is. And so as long as we live in this dark world, we are exiles. And as we live here, we are called to love the lost around us by pointing them to the prophet of the Lord, the man of God, par excellence.

We're to point to Jesus in both our conduct and in our speech. Who's the little girl today? Well, she is the lone Christian in the office or staff room or wherever who pipes up to tell her atheist boss, if only my master would come to church on Sunday, come and meet the Lord Jesus Christ in His Word.

He will cure you of something far greater than leprosy and that is the curse of sin. Are you making the most of whatever the Lord has placed you?

[16:30] Scene 2, verses 5 to 8. Notice the panic of the Lord's king. The panic of the Lord's king. In verse 5, Naaman asks his master, the king of Syria, for permission to go to Israel and permission is granted.

And notice that the king of Syria in verse 5, he expects this prophet of the Lord to be found in the king of Israel's court, which is why he then gives Naaman a letter to hand over to the king of Israel himself.

But the king of Syria couldn't be more wrong, could he? Because the current king of Israel, as we've seen, wants nothing to do with the Lord's prophet, as we'll see more in a moment.

In verse 6, Naaman arrives in Samaria, goes to the king of Israel, hands over the letter from his master, and we are told that the letter read as thus, when this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant that you may cure him of his leprosy.

And in verse 7, the king of Israel is absolutely devastated. He is immobilized, he is alarmed, he's paralyzed with panic and dismay.

[17:51] He thinks the Syrians are working a fresh fight. Oh, here we go, another war. The fact that there is a true prophet of the Lord in Israel doesn't even enter into his mind for at least a nanosecond.

He says nothing of the Lord, he says nothing of Elisha, he's just consumed by his own frenzied fear. One commentator says this, the king shows that he knows nothing of the power of the living God. Well, in theory, he knows only God, whatever he means by God, had the power to cure leprosy. But for this king, that was only a useless formula.

One might say that the king is the epitome of the unbelieving, unseeking attitude of Israel. Just look at it, what a contrast to the living faith of the little girl of verse 2.

Well, in verse 8, the news reaches Elisha and he graciously offers to help the king. He tells the king not to be dismayed, but to send Naaman to him, so that, look at the end of verse 8, he, that's Naaman, may know that there is a prophet in Israel.

[19:12] And as you read that, you think to yourself, look at how patient the Lord God is. Look at God's patience. For the events that are about to take place, they aren't just going to be for Naaman's benefit.

They will be, but they will also be for the benefit of this pathetic king and his perverted people. He is the king of a people who have been at least part of the covenant nation.

He should therefore be seeking the Lord in such dilemmas, but he hasn't. This king, like the majority of the nation, has the name of Israel, but not the faith of Israel.

Friends, that should alarm us as the professing covenant people of God today. That should deeply unsettle us, get our hearts thumping. It is possible to be numbered among God's people outwardly, and yet, live life without God.

Your name may be on a church membership list. You might even rock up frequently on a Sunday, so as to be seen to be amongst God's people, go through the motions, and yet you do not seek him, long for him, or thirst for him.

[20:28] And you definitely don't cast your anxieties upon him. Friends, the Bible warns us, if we are living our lives this way, playing make-believe like the king of Israel, stop.

Stop pretending to be one of God's people, and become one of God's people. Repent. Turn to the Lord today. For that is why the Lord has been so patient with this world.

Every day that he delays judgment, it's so that we will all come to repentance, and keep walking by repentance. We're seeing three, verses nine to twelve.

Notice the offensiveness of the Lord's offer. The offensiveness of the Lord's offer. So Naaman is sent away from the king of Israel.

The king of Israel has taken up Elisha's offer. And in verse nine, he arrives at the front door of Elisha's house. We're not told what Elisha's house looked like. I can't imagine it would have been pretentious or really grand.

[21 : 36] But Naaman's grand. Naaman is a man full of pomp and grandeur. Just picture this. He pulls up at this house of the prophet, and he comes with all of his cash, with all of his gear, his commander gear, no doubt, surrounded by his servants, all his horses, and all his chariots.

And in verse 10, Elisha, in desperation to please this mighty man, storms out of his house with great urgency, looking very impressive and powerful, and he accepts a hefty cash payment from Naaman, and he starts to call on the name of the Lord with great show and impressiveness, and waves his hands all over Naaman, and the magic begins.

No. That's not what happens in verse 10. That is what Naaman expects will happen. For back then, that's what pagan prophets all did.

That was standard pagan prophet behavior. Naaman comes to God's word assuming that God's word will match up with his expectations. In pride, Naaman has written God's script for him.

But the Lord isn't some fake pagan idol, and Elisha is no bog-standard fake pagan prophet. What happens next, deeply shocks and offends the proud Syrian commander.

[22 : 58] Look at verse 10. Elisha doesn't even bother coming to the door. Rude. Very rude. He's sitting on his sofa.

What does he do? He says, oh yeah, he says to one of his servants, would you mind just going out and talking to that commander out there? Just tell him this message of the Lord's cleansing. Pass it on. So the messenger goes out to the front door to Naaman and tells him the way of the Lord's cleansing.

He says, go to the river Jordan, dip yourself in seven times, your flesh will be restored. And Naaman, in verse 11, is lewit.

He has a right go at Elisha. I paraphrase verse 11, he says this, how dare that man treat me like this? Does he know who I am and what I've done?

And yet he doesn't even come out to see me and give me the proper prophet treatment that I deserve. He just sends a lousy messenger with a lousy message.

[24 : 03] Go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan. What rubbish! If it was that simple, I could have just washed myself in one of the far superior rivers of Syria.

And with that, he storms off in a huff. The way of the Lord's salvation was so offensive to Naaman because it wasn't grand enough for him.

It was too simple. It was weak looking. And it offended him above all because it required him to humble himself greatly.

But friends, it was the only way the Lord offered to him. And as he stormed off, that man had a choice.

In his anger, he could carry on, carry on living by pride, reject the Lord's way, reject the Lord's offer, and stay a leper.

[25 : 04] Or he could humble himself, trust in the Lord's way, and be cured. And friends, don't we find the same thing today when it comes to the gospel?

Yes? In the gospel, the Lord holds out his way of cleansing and salvation to all people. But so often, it seriously offends proud hearts and stubborn wills.

For when some people hear the gospel today, it is just so different to what they're expecting. Most people, when they come to the gospel, assume that the way of the Lord's salvation is this, be good and God will accept you.

I've got a bunch of friends that I've known all my life since nursery. I talk to them now and again about the gospel. Last time, I spoke to one of my friends who says he's an atheist. He said to me, well, if there is a God, I'll be okay because God loves a trier.

People actually believe that. That's what they expect the gospel to say. But the gospel does not match up with that expectation because it says, no, you can never live your life like that.

[26 : 11] And so you'll never get into God's kingdom like that. But God has graciously offered you his way of cleansing. All you need to do, that's quite simple really, trust in the man who died on the cross some 2,000 years ago and you will receive a renewed life, the forgiveness of sins, resurrection from the dead and eternal life.

And some proud hearts hear that and they often scoff and ridicule. Really? That's what the gospel is all about? That's the way to be saved?

It's offensive because it seems so simple and weak and it requires us to humble ourselves greatly. But friends, there is no other way. It is the only way.

See? Scene 4, verse 13 to 19. Notice the power of the Lord to cleanse.

So Naaman's servants are standing there this whole time and Naaman's servants think that this word from Elisha that they've heard via Elisha's servant, they think it's wonderful.

[27 : 27] They don't find it offensive. They don't find it ridiculous. They think it's glorious. And they implore their master Naaman to obey the word that he has heard.

And when you read about those servants there, you can't help but think back to the little girl of verse 2 again. When these servants next to Naaman were back in Syria, one wonders if they had encountered this little girl too.

If she'd already been witnessing to them before this moment, we can't be sure. But anyway, in verse 14, Naaman eventually humbles himself. And like the faithful members of the remnant back in chapter 4, he chooses to walk by the obedience of faith in the word of the Lord that was spoken to him.

And he goes and he dips himself seven times in the river Jordan. and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child.

He was made clean. And once again, the word of the Lord shows itself to be totally trustworthy and so good for all those who surrender their lives to it.

[28 : 38] And the flesh of this man that was once stinking and dead and decaying and spoiled is now made new and clean. But friends, the word of the Lord has done so much more than just cleanse this man's skin.

Naaman is no longer a proud pagan Gentile. Notice the wording at the end of verse 14. Look at it again, please. It has not been put here by accident.

This is very deliberate by the author. It says, when Naaman came out of that water, his flesh was now like that of a little child. That is almost identical to the phrase used back in verse 2 to describe the Lord's faithful servant in the house of Naaman.

In other words, the author wants us to see that Naaman, by God's grace alone, is now just like the little girl and that he too now belongs to the Lord God.

God's grace and friends, this is as miraculous as the raising of the dead son back in chapter 4. Here was this man who was once unclean, spiritually dead, lost in his pride, a worshiper of idols, not just a stranger to the Lord and his promises, but also an enemy of the Lord and his people.

[30 : 04] But not anymore. Not anymore. Let's just look at the things that Naaman does next because these things that he does next, they confirm that he is a changed man.

It's always what happens when the Lord takes hold of someone's life. The marks of his mercy and grace will burst out and become apparent in their conduct. Notice then that we see Naaman's change of attitude to Elisha.

He has a massive change in his attitude to Elisha. Five times in verses 15 to 18 when Naaman is talking to Elisha, he describes himself as your servant.

That is, he is now Elisha's servant. It's quite a shift from the arrogant anger that he held towards Elisha back in verse 11. He now submits to the word by submitting to the Lord's prophet.

And look at what Naaman goes on to confess. Verse 15, look what he says, Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel.

[31 : 17] The man who once believed there were many gods across the nations now confesses there is only one God, the Lord of Israel. Naaman has turned away from idols to serve the living and true God.

Now of course it is true that there is still a bit of confusion in him as there is often a bit of confusion with people who are just new to the faith, freshly converted. We need to be patient with people like that.

So for example, verse 15, he thinks he still has to pay something to the Lord's prophet for the work that he has done. And this is why Naaman was sent to Israel with loads of cash by his master because in paganism you paid your prophets to take action.

Well look at verse 16, Elisha gently but firmly corrects this new convert. He says, verse 16, as the Lord lives before whom I stand I will receive none.

That is, I don't want any payment from you, Naaman, nothing. Now of course there were times when it was right for Elisha to accept offerings from the Lord's people.

[32 : 31] We saw one last Sunday in chapter 4, verse 42 with the man who comes to bring his first fruits to Elisha at the time of famine. But I take it that here Elisha is saying no to this gift because

this isn't the right time to accept any payment or any offering.

For Elisha doesn't want Naaman to confuse his new faith with his old paganism. You see, the cleansing that he's received from the Lord, this beautiful gift, it is all of God's grace.

It has been given as a gift of God's undeserved kindness alone. It can't be bought or paid for by anything in Naaman's possession. It is all a gift of God's kindness because that's what he's like.

And Elisha's saying, this is what your Lord is like now, Naaman. Well, having heard all of that in verse 17, Naaman then goes on to make a resolution and he makes this resolution in the form of a sign and then also in his speech.

So let's look at the sign in verse 17. He asks that two big massive loads of Israel's soil, soil from the promised land below his feet be dug up, put into sacks for him to carry back to Syria.

[33 : 54] My friends, there's nothing idolatrous or superstitious about this action. Elisha doesn't rebuke him for doing this. It just seems to be a public way of displaying that this man has a new allegiance in his heart.

It's almost like he's saying, the soil which I'm taking with me, this soil is taken from my true home. This is where I really belong now, in the land of promise, not in Syria.

And then, to match the sign of the soil, he says these words. Look at verse 17. From now on, your servant will not make any offering or sacrifice to any god but the Lord.

In other words, he's saying, yes, I'm going back to Syria, but I will never again worship those filthy Syrian gods. From now on, I will worship the Lord exclusively, for he alone is God and there is no other.

And notice as well, in verse 18, he has a new sensitivity in his conscience. Here is a man who now cares about not offending the Lord God.

[35 : 11] That's what verse 18 is all about. In verse 18, his conscience sits uneasily with the thought of, hey, I'm going back to Syria here.

I'm going back to my old position, back to my master. And that will involve, from time to time, unavoidably, having to take part in state occasions, in the temple of the fake god, Rimmon.

It seems that part of the duty of Naaman in these state occasions was he was to accompany his king, go into the temple of the idol and bow down whilst holding the arm of the king to physically support him as he bowed down.

Naaman thinks about that and he goes, oh no, I don't want to do that anymore. But it's unavoidably part of my role. What am I going to do?

Well, that's when he turns to Elisha and he says, Elisha, please, tell me that the Lord will pardon me for this. For when I bow, please let the Lord know that I am not worshipping this false god.

[36 : 20] In the past, some folks have read that in verse 18 and they've really ripped Naaman into shreds and they say, oh well, his conversion is incomplete. Well, if you think that, you are pitting yourself against the word of the Lord because look at verse 19.

Elisha hears this request and he says to him, go in peace. That's fine. The Lord understands. The Lord understands.

Go in peace. He is a true convert and he goes back to Syria, a member of true Israel by faith.

friends, 2 Kings 5 declares to us that the Lord not only has the power to do this, the Lord also loves to do this, to cleanse and transform people from all nations through the word of his gospel.

And friends, knowing this, it should surely give us great confidence confidence and a great eagerness should spur us on to throw all that we have and all that we are behind our church's mission.

[37 : 30] Our church's mission that Willie's been preaching about recently, to see the name of the Lord Jesus made known and to see more and more people being brought here on any given Sunday so that they may receive the same type of treatment here from our gracious and compassionate God.

The Lord has the power to do this and he also has the will to do this. He wants to do this with his elect. But before we move on to our final point, there is one more thing for us to think about from Naaman's healing here and this is the bite.

This is the bite for us today. And that is the fact that this healing of Naaman, it was actually really bad news for Israel at that time.

Just think back over to what we've seen Naaman saying and Naaman doing in verses 15 to 18. Just think in your minds about all the things he said, the lively, beautiful faith he's displayed and now

think, please, what was it like back in Israel then?

Where in Israel will you hear a confession like the one Naaman made in verse 15? Who in Israel, aside from the remnant of faith, is determined to worship the Lord exclusively?

[38 : 58] Where in Israel at that time can you find a conscience that is deeply unsettled about the possibility of displeasing the Lord? God. Friends, Naaman's faith here far outstrips anything one could find in idolatrous Israel at that time.

Naaman's faith puts Israel to shame. In actual fact, this Syrian convert implicitly condemns Israel. He receives the blessings of Israel's God while Israel itself is being bypassed. If you don't believe me, you need to remember that that's what Jesus said when he preached on this passage in Luke chapter 4.

Do you remember that? It almost got Jesus killed. Luke chapter 4, Jesus said this, And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and not one of them was cleansed, only Naaman the Syrian.

And the people of Nazareth who were listening to Jesus were livid with him. They were furious, not because he told them about a Gentile leper who was cleansed, but because Jesus said that God cleansed Naaman while bypassing Israel.

[40 : 29] Israelite lepers at the time of Elisha stayed lepers, but God cleansed this pagan one. God turned away from Israel when he extended his grace to Naaman.

For in reality, Israel was refusing to receive the Lord's grace. And so the Lord went to the outsiders, to the Gentiles. And Jesus warning the covenant people of God of his own day, that they were guilty of doing the same thing in Luke chapter 4.

And friends, it is a danger still for the covenant people God of God today. It's a danger for us, the church, as people who profess to belong to the Lord and have had long privileges of enjoying his word ministered to us week in and week out.

one preacher talking about this point said this, what is happening when a first year uni student with no church background, an alcoholic father, and a mother with a living boyfriend, embraces Christ when he hears the gospel?

While another student, who's been raised in a Bible preaching church, and known the gospel nearly all her life, stands totally aloof from it, and is completely unmoved by it.

[41 : 58] Is God again bypassing Israel while cleansing Assyrian? It should be enough to make the evangelical church tremble among her privileges.

So friends, Naaman not only is a great encouragement to us in our mission, if we have real faith, he's also a warning to the church in every age, to shun the proud presumption of unbelieving Israel in Elisha's day, in Jesus' day.

If we live the way that they lived, the way that this king in verse 7 lived, don't think for a second that the Lord won't bypass us and take his grace elsewhere if we walk as they did.

Told you there was a bite to this passage. There's another bite in scene 5, verses 20 to 25, where we see the danger of distorting the Lord's grace.

The danger of distorting the Lord's grace. So Naaman leaves Elisha and is now heading back to Syria. He's just headed off.

[43 : 15] He travels a little distance up the road with his convoy and someone is watching him really keenly and that someone is Gehazi, Elisha's assistant.

The man who has repeatedly seen the word of the Lord working so powerfully and yet what he is about to do shows that he is a member of unbelieving Israel.

He's fueled not with a love for the Lord and his word but by selfish gain. He's a man obsessed not by grace but by greed.

In verse 20 he sees Naaman and his traveling band heading off and he says to himself, my master spared this Syrian.

And in the Hebrew there, our English translations don't make this obvious, but in the Hebrew there, the word translated as Syrian is actually a very derogatory term. It is a racial, racial slur against Naaman.

[44 : 19] It was a horrible word. Shows exactly what he thinks of this Naaman. Not as a precious member of God's people to be loved and built up, but as a low life to be used for selfish gain.

And at the end of verse 20, Gehazi does a sort of evil mimic of what Elisha did back in verse 16. where Elisha promised in the Lord's name not to take payment from Naaman, but in verse 20,

Gehazi flips that around and now in the name of the Lord promises to do the opposite. Do you see how wicked that is? In verse 21, he follows Naaman, catches up with him, and stops him. And in verse 22, he just flat out lies to Naaman.

He goes to Naaman and he says, oh, yes, well, sorry to pull you back, but my master Elisha has sent me to you because he's changed his mind. He will take payment from you after all because two sons of the prophets, yes, two sons of the prophets have just turned up and they're in need, so please can you give me two talents of silver and two sets of lovely clothes for them.

Thank you. And in verse 23, Naaman, out of a genuine heart wanting to please the Lord and help the Lord's people, he hands over what Gehazi has asked for.

[45 : 50] He even sends two of his own men to carry the requested items back for Gehazi. And in verse 24, Gehazi takes the stuff that he's robbed from Naaman, and he sends these servants back to their master on the road to Syria, and then he takes the goods and he puts them in his own house for himself.

Gehazi has done a great evil here. He smashed the ninth commandment by the bare-faced lie that he told. He smashed the tenth commandment in coveting Naaman's stuff.

But friends, worst of all, he has distorted the truth about God's grace. Remember back in verse 16, why Elisha refused to take anything from Naaman?

He did it in order to teach Naaman about the nature of God's grace and how it was so wonderfully different from the dark paganism he'd just been saved from.

And Gehazi here has completely trashed all of that with his selfish, greedy actions. He's despised God's mercy and grace and distorted the truth about God.

[47 : 11] And it's a very, very dangerous thing. In verses 25 to 26, Elisha confronts Gehazi for what he's done because you cannot hide anything from the word of the Lord.

In verse 27, we are told that as a just punishment for what he's done, the leprosy that used to cling onto Naaman's skin had now come upon Gehazi and it clung onto him and to his descendants too.

The Bible says, woe to anyone who distorts the truth about our Lord and his grace in any age actually. That's why the New Testament is full of warnings to the church about the dangers of twisting and distorting the gospel of God's grace in any way.

For the consequences of doing that, they're actually far worse than the punishment Gehazi faced.

For example, listen to the words of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 1.

He says this, Paul says to the church, if we or any angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be damned, accursed.

[48 : 35] As we've said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be damned, accursed.

It is a dangerous thing to distort the grace of our Lord. God. So friends, in these last days, as we as a church seek to follow the example of this little girl, both as individuals and as a corporate body, and as we hold out the gospel of hope and cleansing to the lost around us, let's be sure that as we do that, we are sharing the real gospel of God's grace.

Let's pray that the Lord will help us not to undermine that gospel in any of our actions or our deeds. For the gospel that is real declares that salvation is found in Christ alone, it is received by faith alone, and is given by grace alone.

Friends, if we do that, then I think 2 Kings 5 should tell us that we should expect to see more and more Naamans popping up all over the place here with us, who have been cleansed, renewed, and are now worshipping the Lord with us, because they've been transformed by the gospel.

For the Lord our God loves to do this. Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we praise you for the grace that you've shown us in Christ.

[50 : 33] May you help us as a church to continue to walk humbly before you. Lord, in our lives, may we repent where we need to repent.

May we never presume upon your grace. but walk faithfully before you. And may we continue to do all that we can to hold out the real gospel of your grace to the lost around us, so that they may hear and believe and worship you.

Father, please do not bypass us, but be pleased to use us by the power of your spirit and glory of your name. And we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.