

2 Kings 5:1-14

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[0 : 00] I'm trying to do some thinking on why do people not believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus?! Why do you maybe? Why do you not believe? Maybe you're a teenager, maybe you're here, you come to church, but you don't believe the gospel. You're not following the Lord Jesus.

Why is that? Now there are many reasons, aren't there, of course. But I think that one of the most common reasons, and it's a reason that people are very reluctant to admit, or else they don't realise, is this.

And let me say it gently if I can, that they are simply too proud to believe the gospel. Too proud to be seen. Maybe you don't like that.

And they make excuses, of course, folk. They give you other reasons. But I want to say to you, and try to prove to you this morning, that that is the underlying reality. That maybe today you don't want to admit your spiritual need and your lostness and commandly to the Lord Jesus Christ and to beg him for salvation.

It's quite odd, isn't it? It's quite strange, because people in other areas of life, they're always looking for help. So you go into the bookshops, and there's huge sections out there of books on self-help.

[1 : 22] There's every kind of conceivable help. There's a whole industry built around you and I admitting our need for help, and trying to improve ourselves in various ways.

And so why are folk unwilling to admit their spiritual need? I'm going to look at a guy this morning who thought that was a big problem.

A man who nearly blew it. If he didn't listen to some loving, wise words. I suppose verse 13 is my text in 2 Kings chapter 5. His servants came to Naaman, and they asked him this question.

My father, it is a great word. The prophet, the man of God, has spoken to you. Will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, wash and be clean? Naaman was a five-star general. He was a very, very powerful man.

He was the commander-in-chief of the armies of Aram. There was a dominant power in that region in about 850 BC, when this incident occurred. He is a highly respected commander.

[2 : 24] He is highly commended in the chapter as it was read. We're told that he was a great and an honourable man in the eyes of his master. He'd made it. He was a mighty man of valour.

By him the Lord had given victory over Syria. He was a very prominent man in society. He'd made it. He was wealthy. He was successful. He could be described as the man who had absolutely everything.

And yet he was a leper. He was a leper. And that terrible phrase cancels out everything else. And it makes everything else ultimately worthless.

He was a great man, but he was a leper. He was an honourable man, but he was a leper. He was a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper.

The Lord had given him great victories, but he was a leper. We're not absolutely certain what this leprosy was. It is a skin problem. Whatever it was, it was very painful.

[3 : 27] It was disfiguring. And ultimately it was a deadly illness. It was a horrible illness. It was an illness that disfigured people and Naaman had it. It cut them off from society.

And in the end it could prove fatal. He was a leper. And friends, that is where our link to Naaman comes in. Because this story is relevant for you and I.

Both you and I are born in sin. We are born lepers. It's not a physical leprosy. But it is the leprosy of sin.

It is an ugly disease, sin, isn't it? It is things that ruin our lives. It disfigures us. It makes us unclean. And most importantly of all, the things we thought, the things we've said, and the things we've done have separated us from the God who made us to enjoy him. The Bible says, all have sinned.

[4 : 28] And fallen short of the glory of God. And that includes you and me. That is the grim reality. It's like leprosy for Naaman. It undermines and it devalues all the good things that are in your life.

And there are many good things, aren't there? But they are devalued. And they are undermined by this leprosy. By this sin. And everything that you have. And everything that you accomplish. The bottom line of it is, is you are a sinner. Like I am. You may be very successful. You may have a great reputation.

You might be brilliantly bright. But you are a sinner. You might have a really happy home life with a loving wife and husband and children. But you are a sinner. You might be very highly regarded by your friends and by your family.

But you are a sinner. And Naaman was a leper. And yet God has been kind to you, hasn't he? I'm sure you've had opportunities to hear the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 30] The good news of how you can be saved from your sin. And you will hear it this morning. And God has been kind to you. God was kind to Naaman, wasn't he?

By this really strange providence. By this really strange thing that happened in Naaman's life. There is this prisoner of war that is living with him. This little girl from Israel.

Who is an absolute hero, isn't he? She must have been a remarkable little child. She has been torn violently away from her parents and her family. She has been enslaved. She has been taken to a strange land.

And she has been abused. And yet apparently this little girl is not angry. She is not bitter. She is a very, very caring, loving young girl.

And a believer. So she says, verse 3. She said to her mistress. Would that my Lord were with the prophet. The man of God who is in Samaria. He would cure him of his leprosy.

[6 : 30] Do you see what strong faith this little girl had? What a great encouragement it is to you who were children. This little girl. Who doesn't have her mum and dad around her. She's been torn away from her family.

She's in a foreign land. And yet God puts her in the hall of fame. Doesn't he? And he uses her in this very difficult situation. You think it's really hard for you to be a Christian in school? You think it's really hard to stand for the Lord Jesus in school?

Who is, isn't it? It's even harder for this little girl. This little girl. And yet she speaks. And what strong faith she had. Elisha at this point has not cured anybody.

He's not cured anybody of leprosy before this. It had never happened. And yet she believed that the man of God could heal her master. And Naaman is so desperate, isn't he? So eager to be cured.

He listens to this slave girl. He acts on her testimony. And he goes to Israel. And he goes to the prophet. And he was told how to be cured. How wonderful. It's good news.

[7 : 29] What did he do with the good news? Well look. Verse 12 at the end. He turns away. In a rage. He was furiously angry.

Spluttered with indignation. To go all that way. With such need. To hear of the answer. And then to reject it completely.

How many people do the same thing? They come to churches like this. They hear the message of salvation.

How Jesus Christ has come into this world to save sinners. How he has come to earth and died for people like you and me. And he invites you to come to him. And he invites you to put your trust in him.

And you may not go away angry. Though some do. But loads of people just shrank their shoulders or something. And they just walk away. They don't do anything about it.

[8 : 31] It's as if they've never heard the best news that anyone can ever hear. What do they do? Why do they do that? Why do they do that? Is it possible that you will do that this morning?

It's possible for you to be here this morning. And not be a follower and be a believer of the Lord Jesus. To not be living for him. And you'll hear the gospel. And you'll understand it.

But you'll walk out of here and you'll do nothing about it. And that would be a tragedy, wouldn't it? So let's look at Naaman. And I think as we look at Naaman.

We see ourselves in the mirror of his reaction. To the message of salvation for his appalling need.

Naaman, he had two problems with the message. He had two problems with the gospel, if I can put it like that.

And lots of people have these two same problems. The first problem is this. The good news was too humbling. The good news was too humbling. The emphasis on the narrative, as you read it through, I don't know whether you picked it up.

[9 : 31] Was that Naaman is a great man. The greatness of Naaman. The importance of Naaman. He is the commander of the army. He was a great and honourable man of the Lord.

He was a mighty man of valour. The Lord had given him victory. He goes to Israel with a letter of recommendation from a mighty king, Ben-Hadda. And he is admitted for an interview with King Jehoram of Israel.

He's a man, doesn't he, who operates at the highest level of society. If he'd been travelling on a plane, when he got to the top of the steps, he would turn left, wouldn't he? All the rest of us would turn right.

He travels by business and first class. So Naaman is a very important person. And yet, how does Elisha treat this VIP? Can you see that?

It's very casual, isn't it, to say the least. He doesn't even travel to the palace to meet him. He says in verse 8, Well, let him come to me.

[10 : 31] Let him come to me. And he shall know that there's a prophet in Israel. And you can imagine, can't you, Naaman bristling when he heard that message. However, what Evan Naaman thought, he did it, didn't he?

And he goes to Elisha's house. And in the story, we are meant to catch, aren't we, something of the sheer impressiveness. Something of the sheer grandeur of his arrival at Elisha's home.

That is why the scripture says, Naaman went with his horses and with chariots. And his chariots. He stood at the door of Elisha's house. And the horses and the chariots were there. The motorcade comes through with the police escort.

There's Ferraris, there's Mercedes there. And he rolls up to this little humble home in the back of nowhere. With his horses and his chariots. And what happens? Elisha won't even come to the door. Elisha sends a messenger and says, Can him go and wash in the Jordan seven times? Here is the military leader of the superpower which dominates Elisha's country.

[11 : 38] And Elisha can't even be bothered to come to the door. To meet his VIP distinguished visitor. And that is strange. Isn't it? In general, as I've read this over these last couple of weeks.

Elisha seems a little bit gentler than Elijah. Not so gruff. He seems more accessible and more approachable. Elisha doesn't stand on his dignity.

And yet here he is, well he's reserved. He's a bit brusque. He's curt. He's almost rude to the distinguished visitor. Well at least that is what Naaman thought of the verse 11.

But Naaman was angry. And went away saying, behold I thought that he should surely come out to me. And those last words are emphatic in the original language.

He should surely come out to me. As important person as I am. We see, don't we, that self-dignity.

[12 : 39] So often, don't we? Doesn't he realise who he's talking to? A bit of a silly story. The person who went into Harrods. The celebrity who went into Harrods.

And he was complaining about how he'd been treated by his shop assistant. And he went to the woman on customer service. Do you know who I am? She went on the intercom and said, could we have some help here?

There's a gentleman who doesn't know who he is. Now I don't know if that's true or not. But Naaman is that kind of man, isn't it? Don't you know who I am? Don't you realise who you're talking to?

And Naaman feels he's being degraded. That he was being humiliated. And he's not going to obey the instructions of somebody who treats him with such a cavalier fashion.

One commentator says this. Naaman wished to be treated as a great man who happened to be a leper. Elisha treated him like a leper who happened to be a great man.

[13 : 39] What's the important thing, Naaman? Is it your greatness? Or is it your leprosy? Why are you coming to me? Are you coming to me because you are a great man?

Or are you coming to me because you are a leper? It's too humbling, isn't it? His pride is stunned. And that is still what bothers people. About the gospel.

It puts everybody on the same level. There is no difference. There is no difference. It's not just what it says. 250 years ago.

One of the leading noble women in England was the Duchess of Buckingham. And she was invited to the Countess of Huntingdon's home. She was invited to her London home to hear the gospel preacher George Whitefield.

And George Whitefield preached the gospel to her. The Duchess of Buckingham wrote a thank you note to the Countess of Huntingdon. Let me quote it to you. What I heard was most repulsive.

[14:43] And strongly tintured with impertinence. And disrespect towards superiors. It is monstrous to be told that you can have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth.

People wouldn't be the same as... They wouldn't be so Jane Austen-ish today, would they? In the way that they express themselves. But there are many people that are still exactly like her. Let us all understand this with crystal clarity. That here in the presence of God, you and I, by nature, are lost sinners.

And that is all we are. And nothing else matters. Your position in society doesn't really matter. The number of degrees or E-levels or GCSEs you hold after your name.

Actually doesn't matter. Whether you've got a white collar, blue collar, no collar job. Doesn't matter. What country you come from. To a certain degree doesn't matter.

[15:51] What your reputation is in society. It doesn't matter what your background is. He was a leper. She was a leper. And if people are to be saved, they must acknowledge that.

And come in exactly the same way as everybody else. To be a Christian, you have to say, I am needy. I am lost.

I am helpless. I am dead. And I cast myself on God's mercy. And God resists the proud. But he gives grace to the humble.

And some people are too proud, aren't they? They are too proud to bow their heads. To bow their hearts. And to bow their wills to the Lord Jesus Christ.

They just will not do it. But there's another objection, isn't it? Not only was the good news for Naaman too humbling.

[16:52] It was too simple. It was too simple. There's nothing to pay. There's nothing to achieve. There's no rituals.

There's no miracles. There's no ceremonies. If you do this, All your sins will be dealt with. Past, present and future. And you will have a new nature.

And you will have everlasting life. And people say, well it just can't be as simple as that, can it? People like complicated things.

They love complicated things. I read this week about Scientology. I didn't know anything about Scientology until this week. L. Ron Hubbard. Do you know him? He wrote to George Orwell in 1947. And he said that the easiest way to make a lot of money is to found a new religion. So he founded the Church of Scientology. I don't know how much you know about it.

[17:52] But his textbook is called Dianetics. He teaches that people are governed by eight dynamics. And they are taught by therapists to subdue their engrams, whatever they are, or their past traumas, by stages of auditing.

This frees our spiritual essence and builds awareness. To be audited, you have to be put into a device called an e-meter, which is used to guide the auditing process.

This takes several hundred hours at great expense. When you've arrived at the state of clear, there are another 15 levels to deal with. Ron Hubbard's writings and recordings are the infallible and only scripture of the new movement.

And young Scientologists take a vow of service for a billion years. There are over 140,000 Scientologists in the UK.

And there are over 9 million Scientologists in 70 different countries. Film stars, Scientologists, aren't they, from M downwards.

[18:58] If the Prophet had told you to do something great, if Elisha had come to the door and said, Naaman, listen, I've got an e-meter. You know, you can have all these things.

This is going to take hundreds of hours. You'll have to come and live with us for a while. It's going to cost you an absolute fortune. You'd have done it. You'd have done it. The Christian Gospel, the Christian message, is the simplest of all religions.

There is no fasting. There is no penance. There is no yoga. There is no prayer wheels. You bow to the Lord Jesus Christ.

You bow your head. You bow your heart. You bow your will. To the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the simple Gospel. And that is why many, many people reject it.

It's too simple. The servants understood Naaman's thinking. They said, Naaman, what the Prophet has told you, that is a great thing.

[20 : 06] That message, it is a great thing. If he had asked you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? Naaman was expecting to be told to do something that is difficult and complex and impressive.

Something great. His disease is serious. And so Naaman thinks, well the remedy is bound to be more complicated. You see that in the way that he approaches this whole incident.

He kind of goes into international diplomacy. He goes through the king. Look at the enormous amount of money he took with him. Look at verse 5. So he went in the middle of the verse taking within 10 talents of silver 6,000 shackles of gold and 10 changes of clothing.

6,000 shackles of gold is 2,400 ounces. Gold is currently selling, according to buygold.com, for 785 pounds per ounce.

Do you know how much Naaman had with him? He had only 2 million quid in cash. 2 million pound in cash. Used banknotes. That is what he was willing to pay for a cure.

[21 : 12] Or perhaps he expected a dramatic situation. Look at verse 11. I love this. Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.

No doubt, just thunderous applause. But Elijah didn't. Elijah didn't want his money. Elijah didn't perform some dramatic ritual.

Or at least, Lord Naaman, he will ask me to perform some heroic task. Some great thing.

Something that only a man like myself could accomplish.

I'm a great man. I can do great things to be cured. And Elijah says, go and wash yourself. Imagine.

And say, go and wash myself. Go and wash myself.

I've come all this way from a palace in Samaria to this miserable little village to be treated like a beggar. And what I'd be told is, go and wash myself. I wash myself every day.

[22 : 16] And if I want to wash myself, he says, I'll go to that beautiful clear river running through the centre of Damascus. I'm not going to wallow about in this muddy little drain like the river Brent.

Do you know who I am? I've come all this way. I brought all this money and you tell me to go and wash myself. It's too simple.

And he couldn't take it. That can't be right. And I think that is still in people's minds. What is the gospel?

The gospel is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Rely on him. Trust him. Love the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Confess your sin. Turn away from your sin. Give up on your hard-hearted pride. And ask Jesus to be your saviour. And Lord.

[23 : 20] That's it. It's too humbling, isn't it? And it's too simple. And is this why you're rejecting the gospel?

Does it seem simplistic to you? You're teenagers, isn't it? I'm amazed at some schools. Schools, I think, now are slightly different.

You are brought up in that you are able to make these decisions. You are able to judge. You have been given the skills and the tools so that you are equipped to go and make the decisions.

You can do it. And somebody says to you, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is believe on the Lord Jesus and be safe. And you think it's too simple. It's too simple.

There must be more to it than that. It's too simplistic. It's too foolish. Don't you know about all the religions in the world? Well, let me appeal to you.

[24 : 19] Let me appeal to you as Naaman's little servant girl did to their master. And gently and affectionately and persuasively. Like they said, my father, my father.

It's a term of love and respect and affection. If the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more when he says to you, go, wash and be clean.

Does it make sense? Does it make sense this morning to reject a message because your pride is hurt? Is that worth being lost for all eternity? Supposingly you were seriously ill.

Supposingly you were seriously ill this morning and you went to hospital and you found out that you have to submit to a humiliating, embarrassing, invasive medical procedure.

And you say to the nurse and the doctor, I am not putting that gown up. No way. I am not letting you do that to me. Do you know who I am? Of course you wouldn't.

[25 : 23] You would say, as all of us say, don't you? If that's what it takes, I'll swallow hard and I'll do it. I don't particularly relish it, but if that's what it takes to make me better, wouldn't it be a ridiculous thing to do anything else?

What would you think of a God? What would you think of a God who made distinctions among people? What would you think of a God like that? What would you think of a God who favoured important people?

What would you think of a God who was more interested in the intellectual? Would you want a God like that? Does it make sense to reject the message because it's too simple?

Isn't it true that the most important things in life, the most lasting realities, are supremely simple? So when you are thirsty and you open the fridge, you pull out an ice-cold can of Coke, and you open it, I'm joking.

But you take the simple things in life. When you're hungry, there's a piece of warm, fresh bread in your heart with butter on it. There's nothing better than that.

[26 : 44] When you feed your children or your grandchildren's arms around your neck, giving you a hand, that is a simple thing. That's not complicated. But is there anything better than that? The fundamentals of our existence, the great things of our existence, are simple.

They are simple. And what is more appropriate than a simple gospel that is designed for all kinds of people in every age all over the world?

And the gospel is humbling, and the gospel is simple. And these, in fact, are the most wonderful aspects of the gospel. Just think about that with me for a minute. Why is the gospel designed to humble you and humble me?

Why? Is it because God wants us to make us feel bad? Does God like seeing you riddle and bow and cringe before him?

Does God like putting you down? No. The gospel humbles you and I for us to make room for God. To let God be God.

[27 : 51] Naaman had to realise something, that only God could heal him, couldn't he? Only God could heal him. The king of Israel couldn't heal him. Elisha couldn't heal him.

His money couldn't heal him. His efforts couldn't heal him. There was no great thing that he could do to heal himself. God alone could heal him. And that is why Elisha didn't pay respect.

Why he's discourteous or rude, in a way. Why? Because he loved him. That is why Elisha himself doesn't appear on the scene, as far as we know at this point.

Naaman never saw him. He wanted all the focus to be on God. For weeks, Naaman has been thinking of this prophet, doesn't he? This prophet. This prophet in Samaria. He comes to the king and he says, where's the prophet?

The prophet will he meet. Here's money for the prophet. And he goes to the prophet's house to meet the prophet, and the prophet is going to do it. And the prophet says, I'm not even coming out. I can't heal you, Naaman.

[28 : 56] That's why he's told to watch seven times in the Jordan, seven times in the Bible. It's always the kind of stamp of God. It's a perfect number. And we see, if we read verse 15, that Naaman got the point.

Look what he says in verse 15. Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and he stood before him, and said, behold, I know there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.

You see, he's no longer praising the prophet, the prophet, he meant the prophet. He's not saying anything about the prophet, but he's saying there is a God, and there is a living God, and there is a true God.

And you see, if you're not a Christian, your pride, and I want to say this as gently as I can, your pride is your sin.

It's mine too. It's not just a little bit extra. It's not that we're sinners, and then we're a little bit proud on the side. Our problem, is our pride.

[30 : 03] And our grave difficulty, is our pride. And we have put ourselves, in the wrong place. And no true preacher of the gospel, can feed people's pride, or pander to people's pride, because we're not helping them, we're not, we're not, we're harming them by doing that.

We're not bringing you to God, we're keeping you from God. And this morning, it is God, it is God who you have got to deal with. And no one else.

It is God who you have offended. It is God who you have sinned against. It is God who will judge you. It is God who alone can save you. And you see, it's not just an accident, that the gospel humbles people.

That is part of salvation. Part of salvation is being humble. For God gives grace to the humble. It has to be humbling.

If it didn't humble us, we could not be saved. And so to reject the gospel, because it is humbling, is to reject the very thing, that you need, and I need to be humble.

[31 : 13] And why does this gospel seem so simple? The servant said to Neiman, you don't have to do any great thing. Why did they say that?

Is it because salvation is something superficial or trivial, and no big deal, that salvation is easily accomplished? All you have to do, all you have to do is bow your head and murmur a prayer. It's not complicated. It's not involved. No big thing is natural. What are they saying? You don't have to do a great thing. You don't have to do a great thing this morning, because there's someone else who's done a great thing.

There's someone else who's done a great thing. It's not that great things don't need to be done. They do need to be. Our sins need to be forgiven. That is a great thing. You need to be righteous before God.

That is a great thing. You need to have a new nature. That is a great thing. You need to be kept all through your life and taken to heaven. That is a great thing. They are great things.

[32 : 18] It's not that they don't need to be done. But it's because they have been done. They have been done. The Lord Jesus Christ has done the great thing. That is the point.

This verse is pointing us directly to the Lord Jesus. There's no sense in it without him. He has done a great thing. He has come to this earth and lived for over 30 years of perfect life.

He has kept all of God's commands. So that that obedience can be credited to you. And accounted to you. When you believe on him.

And that is a great thing. And on Calvary's cross, he hanged and he suffered and he died. And he paid all the sins for his people. And he paid for them in full.

So that if you trust him. All your sins can be forgiven. Past and present and future. And that is a great thing. And on the third day he rules from the dead. And he's been taken up to heaven.

[33 : 14] He's conquered the grave. As the first fruits of those who sleep. So that we can know today. That we have eternal life with Jesus Christ. And that is a great thing. And that is precisely why God doesn't ask you to do a great thing today.

He won't allow you to do great things. He doesn't want any great things from us. Because his son has done the great thing. And we're not to blur that.

We're not to hide that. We're not to dress that up. What great thing can you do that can pay for your sin? Why is it a simple gospel?

It's a simple gospel because Jesus has made it a simple gospel. Salvation wasn't simple. It's simple now. You see there's nothing magical about washing in the river Jordan.

Naaman was cleansed in exactly the same way that you and I are cleansed. Naaman did two things didn't he? What did he do? Naaman obeyed the command. And he believed the promise.

[34 : 19] He obeyed the command. And he believed the promise. Wash in the Jordan. And you will be clean. He washed in the Jordan.

And he was clean. And the gospel is. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The command. And you will be saved. The promise. Well he went and dipped seven times in the Jordan River.

And according to the saying of the man of God. Do you see it? Verse 14. His flesh was like that of a little child. What do you do when you see the baby?

What do you do? You touch their cheeks, don't you? You touch their skin. That's why their skin feels so good, doesn't it? Feels so clean.

Feels so fresh. And you can come to the Lord Jesus Christ this morning. Right now. Right here. Right at this moment. And all those ugly scars in your life.

[35 : 21] And those scabs. And those sores that are there. And I speak to all of us. We all have them. Ugly things in our past.

Stinking things. Horrible things. We come. To the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is taken away. And you look as it were at your skin.

And it's like that of a little baby. Fresh. And clean. And you begin all over again. Why then should you not come?

When God says come. Come and wash. And be clean. And receive eternal life. It's no longer water is it? There is a fountain filled with blood.

Drawn from Emmanuel's veins. Sinners clenched beneath that flood. Lose all their guilty stains. Why has God brought you here this morning?

[36 : 17] Why has God brought you here this morning? Is it to receive salvation? Naaman was the man from outside. We read Luke 4.27. That many lepers were in Israel at the time of Elisha.

The prophet. And none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. The man who no one expected to be cleansed. The man who had no claim on God. The man who was outside the people of God.

But God reached out. And brought him in. And he cleansed them. And God delights to do that. And if you are here this morning. And you are outside of the kingdom of God.

Will you not hear the humbling. Simple call of the gospel. Wash and be clean. Jesus Christ has died for sinners. And his blood atones for all sin.

Will you bow to him? Will you acknowledge your need? Will you come to him? Or rejoice him there would be in heaven this morning. This morning. If somebody who is lost was found.

[37 : 20] What glory there would be to God. Wash and be clean. His flesh was restored. Like the flesh of a little child. Let's pray.

Let's pray.