

The Servant Who Became a Hero

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening. It's great to be back with you this evening to look again at 2 Kings chapter 5.

2 Kings chapter 5. We begin this morning looking at a story of a man named Naaman. And of course it's the best of stories because it's true.

It's rather unusual to find this story in 2 Kings where we have in 1 Kings and 2 Kings been talking about kings.

Here we see that Israel is under the oppressive domain of Syria or the Arameans. And that is by God's decree. It says in verse 1 of chapter 5 here, that the Lord had given victory to Syria. I'm reading from the ESV.

And so the providence of the Lord was at work. And in the Lord's providence, this Gentile general, this man we saw this morning who was deemed great, is contrasted with a girl who was deemed little.

[1 : 25] And we saw this morning how Naaman's suffering led him to, at her encouragement, to seek a Savior.

And to find that by placing his faith in the words of the prophet Elijah, bathing himself in the Jordan, and then he arises to confess, now cured, that indeed there's only one God.

And that's the God of Israel, by which he was cleansed, forgiven, healed, made whole.

And that without price, and that without work, that without great sacrifice on his part, is all by grace.

Tonight we want to look at the second part of the story. The real hero of this story is not Naaman.

It's not Naaman traveling from Syria to Israel in his pursuit of a cure.

[2 : 33] The real story, the real hero, is the servant girl. She's the hero. She becomes the hero.

And she's given without name. I want you to see three servants in this passage tonight. I want you to see, first of all, I want to look at Naaman very quickly, and I want to show you a new servant.

He rises out of those waters. In verse 15, he returned to the man of God. He and all of his company, and he came, and he stood before him, that is Elijah, and he said, Behold, I know that there's no God in all the earth, but in Israel, so accept now a present from your servant.

And I talked about this morning how he was pledging himself not to be Elijah's servant, but in company with Elijah and other servants. Elijah is now joined with a new servant of the God of Israel.

And then I want you to see a false servant, and that's Gehazi. And then finally, we'll look at a true servant, the little slave girl of Naaman.

[3 : 58] So, first of all, let's look at a new servant. Oh, and by the way, can I give you encouragement to identify yourself this evening?

Are you a new servant? New in your faith? New to the true God of Israel? New to following in your faith Jesus Christ?

Or are you a false servant? Have all the exterior of a religious man or woman?

But inside, you're just a Pharisee. There is no true heart to serve and to love the Lord, even as expressed in loving others.

Or are you like this little girl, a true servant, one who models the suffering servant, Jesus Christ.

[5 : 08] So, a new servant. Observe here that Nathan changes in his world and life view. He changes his thinking.

There's a change of mind. As he rises up out of that water, he has a new purpose. A new purpose. This is as if he now sees everything in technicolor.

He came from Syria that is, like much of the pagan world at that time, a pluralistic society. There was this God and there was that God.

There was an amalgamation of many gods. But now he rises from those waters and he says one. There is one God. And it's not an emotional or a mystical experience as much as he's come to associate that with Ben he was a leper and he was a prideful man. But as he humbled himself and trusted, putting his faith upon the words of Elijah, he was made whole.

[6 : 31] And he sees it. And he sees it. It's all grace. And then finally, as he comes back, notice that he's saying, accept a present from your servant.

It's no longer looking to Elisha and saying, give me something. Say something over me. Do something over me. I will give you something.

You give me something in return. But now he's saying a new mind, a new heart. And he's saying, I am a servant. And I want not to take, but I want to give.

Receive me as a servant. Secondly, notice a change in attitude toward possession. This is a great mark of new Christians and new believers.

Money doesn't own us anymore. We're free from possessions. The possessions that we have can enslave us by dictating our identity, dictating our significance, dictating our security.

[7 : 45] But these things now no longer have a hold on him. He's not possessed by his possessions. Or you. Money to him now is just money.

It's just money. It's just a tool. And he's going to steward it right well. But notice, now, he's not getting anything for his money.

He's not, he's not saying, Elijah, I want to give you a gift. I want to give you, out of all these possessions, I don't want to carry them back with me.

I want, I want to now make a present. And I want you to receive this present from me. He's not trying to buy anything. He's eagerly seeking to give.

He's not giving for what his money can purchase. He's giving it out of joy. It flows. And then lastly, notice this new servant is indicated in a change of relationship toward the public.

[8 : 58] Now this is important. And I, I look at this and I take note that this is truly a new servant who is committed to his new faith.

It says down in verse 17 that he's asking for this soil to be loaded up, taken back into the house of Ramon.

Now the house of Ramon would have been both a temple and a house of government. The house of Ramon would, Ramon would have been a national idol, a national deity that everyone in the country would have worshipped Ramon.

And there right under the idol of Ramon would be the king. And to lead him in would be his prime minister, Naaman. And he would sit there, the king would sit there under the statue of Ramon and with that as his authority say Ramon wills this as his earthly representative I am the king right there at his right hand is Naaman.

And Naaman says I am going to go back. He doesn't say to Elisha I am done.

[10 : 28] I am done with that job. I am done with those friends. I am done I am not going back to those dirty secular non-Christian people.

I am done with them. I am going to stay with you Elijah. I am not going to leave. No.

He has the balance. He knows that he is in the world but he is not going to be any longer of the world.

And he he says I am going to carry my faith as a new servant into the workplace. Into the classroom.

Into my family. Into my neighborhood. It is now going to be in the center of my life. It is not compartmentalized.

[11 : 27] Elijah. And Elijah this is my paraphrase says Naaman huh that is pretty creative.

This soil thing this kind of dirt in your pocket thing so that whenever you touch it you say yes I am a follower of Christ.

Christ. That you you are mindful that you are now this world is not your home. You you've started you put some thought into this.

You're starting to figure it out. I like it. Yes do that. Yes have you figured it out?

What keeps you committed in the workplace in the classroom in the home in your neighborhood and in your friendships? We've got three choices don't we?

[12 : 34] Number one we can say I'm abandoning anything any association I have with non believers those that are not servants of Christ I'm not going to quit my job I'll quit the university maybe even quit my family the Mormons do you're not a good Mormon you can sanction a divorce I'm going to quit all of those friendships did you know that within the first two years of becoming a new believer that that new servant of Christ has lost all their non Christian friends we could throw them overboard and we could live as Francis Schaeffer says in a Christian ghetto or the other extreme is compromise they'll never know I'll be what's called a secret agent Christian I'll just put my head down I'll do my work my neighborhood

I'll be nice but you know I'm just gonna watch my conversations and in my friendships wherever I live work and play I'm gonna be nice and I'm even gonna be good I'm gonna be obedient but I'm gonna be quiet I'm never gonna see everybody would have known that Naaman going back to Ramon prime minister everybody would have known that he was no longer a follower of Ramon but he's there and that's the third opportunity is to not leave the world not to compromise with the world but to have a witness in this world to live like an exile in this world to live like a refugee from another country now in this world but to live for the good of the city to live for the good of this world looking for opportunities to do good

I think what we see played out with this new servant is what we find in 1 Thessalonians 1 Thessalonians Paul says this in verse 9 or verse 8 and 9 he says your faith in God has gone forth everywhere and how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and the true God have we sorted it out have we figured it out like naming how to carry God as the center of our life into every area where we live work and play secondly I want you to see a false servant a false servant and that's Gehazi Gehazi you need to you need to have a frame of reference of verse 16 put this in context so Naaman offered to Elisha greater wealth than we said this morning the whole economy of Israel possessed he now does not want to carry these things back to him back to Syria and Elijah very important Elijah says as the Lord lives before whom I stand I will receive none what does Naaman do Naaman urged him to take it another chance and what does he say I refuse Elijah was not living in great a great stately house he was living very humbly it wasn't that he feared being tainted by those things but he wanted to be very very clear that

Naaman you have experienced something that no money can purchase you've experienced something by God's grace and that is his pardon his forgiveness and now you have a new life in him but not Gehazi a couple of marks of a false servant one mark is they are superior and self righteous superior and self righteous verse 20 Naaman is leaving town with Elijah's going peace in his ears and God he's got two donkeys unless he brought two extra donkeys or purchased them there those donkeys are not only loaded down with soil but they're going back with all the gold and all the talents of silver and this huge wardrobe road and as he leaves he's leaving with

[17 : 54] Elijah's benediction go in peace Gehazi doesn't let him get out of sight but Gehazi goes out the back door and in verse 20 says to himself my master has spared this Naaman and in the ESV it says the Syrian your Bible probably says this Aramean did you catch what's happening here Gehazi is saying I am an Israel and I follow my master but my master has let this guy off light I mean after all he's a Syrian he's an Aramean he's of a different ethnic group I mean he's he's coming out of the pagans oh my goodness he got off light

I've been serving Elijah here for these number of years and we've just been eating a little bit of dough made with oil and flour and I man he got off light he needs to pay something he needs to have skin in the game he needs something in addition he needs to give something for the blessing that he's received and it needs to come from his hand so Gehazi has all the look of a religious man but this attitude of superiority reveals his heart George MacDonald the Scottish minister wrote a series of books there was the princess and the goblin and there was the princess and curdie and in the princess and curdie book curdie the son of a miner who is doing battle against the kingdom's enemies is given a very special gift by an old princess and the gift is this she he extends his palm and she burns his palm and through that painful palm he is now able whenever he takes the hand of another person he immediately knows what the inside of that person is like so that he can take the hand of a crippled broken ugly woman and taking that gnarled hand fill the beautiful hand of a princess or he can take the hand of a man who appears to have it all together and when he takes his hand he feels a claw of an ugly beast that is the inside of the man we don't have that gift but those of us who have experienced this gospel those of us who have experienced salvation and forgiveness for free by grace alone we began to get a sense of other people in relation to that by

their actions and one of those actions is superiority another action is self righteous and a final reaction or action is that they are religious with an absence of the very grace that we've experienced they're religious they have a formula but there's no grace
I won't take the time now but you can start to count the lies it's almost as if there's many lies as they are words coming out of Gehazi's mouth and he tells this lie he doesn't he doesn't say my master needs something but he says these two seminary students as they always shall worldwide seminary students need money and resources these two seminary students have come through town they need help won't you help them it's a lie because Gehazi feigning religious ministry to these humble seminary students really wants to enrich himself and what we see is it's a great mark of self love not self giving not self sacrifice what what mark of a false servant do you bear it's easy to slip into this

Paul says in Galatians and this should this should scare the liver out of you this this is a frightening verse he says in Galatians 1 verse 8 even if we or an angel an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach a gospel of free grace alone it's by his mercy alone mercy to anyone a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you let him be accursed or as your Bible says condemned and that by God this the reason I'm laboring this is not only how easy it is for us who are servants to slip into being false servants to enrich ourselves by ministry even our pride take credit that is not ours superior attitudes that we shouldn't have but

I look at this and I see now and I understand God's severity and his judgment this chapter of 2nd Kings 5 it starts with a leper it ends with a leper it starts with someone who is of a different ethnic group and from a pagan religion but it ends with a leper being someone who's in the nation of Israel who knows who knows their theology who knows the scriptures but they don't walk with this one true God of Israel I have friends that I've had folks that look at this and say that's what I don't like about God it just seems over the top I mean this is cruel I mean really asking for a little bit of money and a few set of clothes come on and then he gives him leprosy and not only gives him leprosy but it's supposed to continue down through the family line folks

[26 : 25] God takes the gospel of grace that seriously and so shall we are to our detriment he's that serious about his name he will judge a Christian and he will judge a church he will certainly judge a denomination that says it's Jesus plus Jesus plus whatever our denomination or our church says good Christians are supposed to have those that are truly saved must have Wendy and I saw it in spades while not a Christian group we saw it in spades in the cult particularly in Mormonism during our time of planting a church in Salt Lake City but we can go there too Paul was talking to a church a church in Galatia and that church was drifting may we ever ever ever remind ourselves that it's all by grace and it's all by mercy

I'm forgiven completely completely forgiven and not by anything I've done well time races on final final final true servant the real hero the real hero is a little nameless servant girl she is at the bottom of the ladder I mean I don't even think she's on a run she is little it says that she's little she's small that means that she's young another mark is she's female she's a slave and she's Israelite she has no status and she has no power in that culture and in that society she is far from home and it is unlikely

I dare say impossible for her to ever go home again she will never know any fulfillment of her dreams now she seems to be taken care of she's in great digs here she is the servant of Nehru's wife so pretty good digs but she has no rights we don't know how she's treated she's suffering and we learned this morning how suffering is so often the tool that God drives us to the end of our rope and to the end of our road and then we see where our true salvation lies the suffering God doesn't waste suffering in our life suffering very often is the road that

God will use in our life have us go down in order to lead others to salvation and to a savior and it's the case here in the Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 5 which I encourage you to read is the chapter on the doctrine of God's providence and in essence is this whether great or whether small all circumstances are under God's direction and his disposing and his governing for his purposes Naaman was under God's control it was God who sent leprosy into his life and sent him on to a cure and his salvation to become a new servant and it was God that sent this little girl into exile as a refugee

I Wendy and I as part of our training we spent time in a community outside of Atlanta Georgia that had a refugee camp and there were more refugees in this community in this town than there were naturalized citizens and while we were there we heard the testimony of one of the refugees it was

read the person was not there but the testimony was read and this man said that war came into his community his nation and he was on the wrong side and so they fled they packed everything they had into the automobile everything then he had a little boy a little girl and his wife packed in the and they began to drive through the desert they went the back roads they went at night they were almost across the border to where they thought they would be safe going through a mountain pass they came to a block a military block not a very organized military these guys were not in uniform but they had the guns and he thought perhaps I can give them the car so he got out of the car and he said we don't want the car take everything you've got in the car and put it beside the road they thought okay they're going to go through my things and they're going to pick the stuff that they want they walked through all of his stuff they didn't want the car didn't want any of his stuff didn't want his wife didn't want his son they said we'll take her if he resisted he knew that they would kill him and all of his family what do you do after years of war they knew what you do you leave you leave with your little boy and you leave with your life and you leave with your wife and hope against hope that one day there'll be a reunion but at this point this man has never seen his little daughter again this little slave girl we don't know if she would have lost her family by death which is highly likely or maybe they were sold into slavery and bondage but to someone different she's totally and completely separated from her family what in the world what in the world would cause her to say in verse 3 would that my lord were with the prophet who is in

[34 : 15] Samaria he would cure him of his leprosy this is a true servant who has suffered this is a true servant who loves her enemy this is a true servant who pays costly forgiveness you know forgiveness is proportional if you come into my home and you break one of Wendy's vase I'm real quick to forgive you but if I loan you my wheels and you wreck my car that's a little more costly it's proportional what I would have done if I had observed this master

I would watch him deteriorate before my eyes and when a finger fell off I'd say ha I hope another new house but she didn't she didn't she is the model and is a suffering servant Dick Lucas preaching he for years was the minister at Hellensgate said this about her she paid the price of usefulness God and his providence had so placed her in that place and she was willing to love even an enemy she was willing to direct him toward salvation and where salvation lied she was willing to do that and pay the price to do that that's a suffering servant that is a true servant that is someone that really really understands the gospel because they have a suffering servant in their life even Jesus Christ are you paying the price of usefulness are you a true servant what's your family like the family that God has placed you in what's the workplace like what's the classroom like what's your neighborhood like are you paying a price of usefulness there are you employing costly forgiveness where you would die a bit more every day to self in order to serve others have you forgiven God for your circumstances I believe she did because you can't love an enemy if you're bitter about the circumstances that you find yourself in she was no longer angry at God for placing her there in Syria she wasn't angry for God separating her from her family

I believe she had come to a point to trust God with her circumstances she didn't shake her fist at God and say what are you doing what are you doing I think it was more useful and honest to say what are you what are you up to God why now what are you up to where are we going where are you taking me and lastly do you have a daily relationship with the suffering servant that this suffering servant points us to I have to be mindful that

Jesus Christ like this girl the Lord that she models he didn't on the cross look down to me who put him there my sins put him there he didn't look down and say I hope you go to hell and get what you deserve no he continued to suffer he didn't come from heaven walk among us and as we continue to deny him or reject him not love us he truly shows what it is to love and to demonstrate long suffering even to enemies he suffered he suffered and he died and it says in

[40 : 12] Hebrews 12 5 that he faced even the shame on a cross for the prize that was before him the joy that was before him what was that joy for one that had everything it was you it was you it was me such that he could look to us and say would oh would that you continue to find all life and all grace in me let's pray family father you you are so good and gracious to us please forgive us for the times that we've looked at our circumstances and we've not seen the opportunity to serve you even heroically as you have served us to love our neighbor to love our enemy to not count ourselves as superior to any but to learn afresh and anew that we are beneficiaries of your grace and of your love you are the great suffering servant not us and you have suffered and you have won us by your grace and by your love and now we are privileged to be your true servants holy

spirit transform our lives as we see you christ giving up your life for us that we may easily even count it a joy to die more and more to self and to give our life up such that others might come to know you lord may we love others particularly difficult people in our life may we love them long may we see circumstances in our life under your providence and under your hand and look for opportunities to serve and father may you jesus christ ever walk with us and we with you for surely you are our lord and our savior and we pray all these things in your name jesus amen amen