

A Little Girl in God's Big Picture

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back to 2 Kings chapter 5, 2 Kings 5. We find that on page 311 of your church Bibles.

Thinking of what to preach on today, I know I like to go through series. Well, we're just not long back. We have a communion service next Lord's Day morning, so I thought we would have what we might call a one-off.

A one-off service, a one-off sermon, but not disconnected with the last Lord's Day morning in our baptismal service, so we'll see the connections.

I know we preached, I preached in the Lysha a few years ago, and I know Jim actually preached in chapter 5 here. I haven't heard it, Jim, so I don't know what was said, so it might be all different, we don't know.

But I thought we'd take this incident, this well-known incident, but more focusing, more focusing on the first five verses of chapter 5, as we said in the title of the sermon, Little Girl in God's Big Picture.

[1 : 10] Let's read again the first five verses, and then verse 15. Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and that master is king, and in high fever 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 the 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.

And the king of Syria said, Go now, I will send a letter to the king of Israel. And after Naaman eventually does, as Elisha tells him to do, to dip seven times in the river Jordan, we read verse 15, Then Naaman 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. Well, as we said last Lord's Day morning, those of you who were here, most of you who were here, we were witnesses.

[2 : 30] We were witnesses to the baptism of little Catherine Mackay, and in our service last Lord's Day morning, our thoughts turned to Psalm 78, and particularly that focus on the commitment of God's people, commitment of parents, not to hide from our children the things of God, not to hide from our children that knowledge of God, the glorious actions of God, not to hide from them the wonders that God has done, the resolve for us, for you, to exercise your responsibility, whether as natural parents, church parents, not to hide from our children the things of God, so that our children will tell coming generations of the God who's Lord.

But in saying that, I think we have to say from Scripture, there's the reverse as well. There's the testimony from children to older generations. Children who, yes, who've known the blessing of parental guidance and the things of truth.

These same children who've conveyed that truth to others. Now, you see that in different parts of Scripture. The last psalm we're going to sing, this morning, Psalm 8.

We praise God in that psalm, that from infants and from children's lips you've ordered praise to sign. You can hear that echoed in our church building here.

You know, child-orientated praise, child-orientated faith. Well, we see that again. We see it in Samuel, young Samuel, who we're looking at not so long ago.

[4 : 12] Samuel in the temple. Samuel being sent by God to, well, declare God's word to Eli and his sons, God's word of judgment because of Eli and his sons, the sons who disobeyed God, Eli who'd been complicit in that disobedience.

Young Samuel, used by God to convey God's word. Other examples, in Scripture, we could go through them. Jeremiah the prophet. Jeremiah, a young man, a youth.

He said, Lord, I'm only a youth, I'm only young. How can I be used of you? And God telling him to speak his word to the people of Judah. And here in this passage, a little girl, a little unnamed girl, we don't know her name, but a young girl whom God sent to deliver a Syrian commander from leprosy and all that, that followed in the life of that man, that man testifying to the reality of the truth of the one true God in all the earth.

And as I said, it's really focused on this unnamed girl, this little unnamed girl and all the surrounding circumstances of her role in the change in the life of that Syrian general.

That's what we're going to focus on this morning and doing so from three perspectives. The control of God, the contrast between that little girl and Naaman, and then the call, the call of the church to be bold for the Lord.

[5 : 43] So let's look firstly at the control of God. Now, from a human perspective, the circumstances of the story are extraordinary.

Here's a young, captured girl who becomes a servant, a young girl who's been taken from her homeland, from Israel, captured in one of the raids that the Syrian army did from time to time going into neighbouring Syrian, Israelite territory and bringing back the spoils of battle.

And one of the spoils of battle being this little girl. But as we see the events that follow that girl being part of the chain, the tool train of events that lead to the cleansing of this leper, this man, cleansing of his body, cleansing of his heart.

Now, we'll look at the particulars of that little girl in a moment, but, you know, again, we have to see the bigger picture. And we speak of the bigger picture, if you like, God's big picture.

We speak of that as the sovereignty of God. In other words, God in control. God in control of all things. And, you know, you see that right at the start of chapter 5.

[6 : 58] Speaking of Naaman, by him, the Lord had given victory to Syria. By him, by Naaman, the Lord had given victory to Syria.

And, you know, as we see the circumstances that are unfolding, even as the first four verses tell us here, we're seeing here what we call the unifying hand of God.

God in control, God in control of the nations, God in control of individual lives. I mean, as the first verse tells us, God had caused Naaman, at that time, Naaman, a pagan commander of a pagan empire.

God had caused Naaman to win great victories. Now, because by implication, these victories included victory over Israel. Israel, the nation that had drifted so far from God, the nation that had turned to other gods instead of serving the one true God.

And God, in his sovereign purposes, had permitted, had allowed the conflict between Syria and Israel to happen. And one aspect of that conflict being a little girl snatched from her home, taken captive to Syria, ending up in the very home of Naaman, ending up as servant to Naaman's wife.

[8 : 21] Now, she could have been taken to any home in Syria, but under God's sovereign control, that little girl would be sent to the very home that becomes central in the whole reading of this section here when we see God's power being revealed, not just in the healing of an individual in his body, but in a healing of his soul, of his heart.

Now, maybe at this point we shouldn't just move on, but, you know, just consider for a moment, this is a difficult aspect of the sovereignty of God, the sovereign purposes of God.

This little girl in ranch from her home, from a human perspective, of course, that was the most cruel thing to do. A young girl taken from her home, taken from her homeland, going to a different part of the world, a different culture, a different language, into a place that is full of false religion.

I mean, we're saying on Wednesday evening at our midweek meeting, we won't always, we don't always know the full story of our often difficult circumstances, certainly not on this side of eternity, we will not always know these times of affliction, why God permits such and such a thing to happen. Even now, there are things I'm sure that you find, I find difficult fully to comprehend in God's sovereign purposes. But we take comfort, we take comfort in this great doctrine of the sovereignty of God, the control of God, speaking to the children about the universe, God created the universe, He's in control of the universe, He's in control of the nations, He's in control of individual lives.

[10 : 01] The God who numbers the stars and rows them by name is the same God who numbers the very hairs of your head. He is sovereign in your life.

Now again, we can look at different parts of scripture to confirm that truth. The story of Joseph, again looking at that some time ago, classic example, someone who reigned from his home, cruel brothers, jealous of Joseph, Joseph's been a favourite of his father Jacob, Joseph taken as a slave to Egypt and in the sovereign purposes of God, Joseph in various circumstances under God's sovereignty, used of God, interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, becoming prime minister in Egypt and the wisdom that God gave him to save a people because of the famine.

And then of course, one people being saved was Joseph's family back in Israel. His astonished brothers coming to meet him many years after Joseph's enslavement and Joseph saying to them, as for you, you meant evil against me but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.

Well, they might say that for the Surrey and that raiding army, they meant it for evil that that little girl should be captured and taken many miles away from her home. She'll never see her home again. But God meant it for good so that Naaman be healed in his body and his soul. And of course, the primary example in that great truth of the big picture, if you like, the sovereignty of God is the death of the Lord Jesus.

[11:47] Remember what Peter said to the opponents of the Lord Jesus after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Remember what Peter said. He was telling them, you killed him.

You killed Jesus. But that in itself was under God's sovereign purposes. You read in Acts 2.23, Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

So by faith, by faith, it's for you, it's for me to trust in God's sovereign purposes. He is sovereign. He is in control.

Remember, God does all things well. And yes, behind a frowning providence he hides that smiling face. He is sovereign.

And what do we see in God's sovereign purposes, God's sovereign control? We see a contrast. We see a contrast between the commander and the child. Let's deal with naming, first of all, the commander.

[12:53] I mean, you see how he's described there in verse 1, verse 1, a great man, high favour with his master, with a king. By him, the Lord had given victory to Syria, a mighty man of valour.

war. I mean, you know, you think some of the great commanders in world history like Napoleon or Wellington or Montgomery. I mean, you know, he's in that kind of league.

The commander of one of the great armies of the day, the Syrian army. And he has to say that the king had a very special favour on him. I mean, obviously Naaman was a very brave man, a courageous man, a great leader of people.

you know, he was at the top of his profession. And no doubt because he had that position in society, he'd be wealthy, he'd be popular, and yet, and yet it all meant nothing in the face of an affliction, in the face of a personal tragedy.

We're told he was a leper. I'm sure footnote tells you this. It could mean a number of skin diseases. A man, a valiant warrior, a leper, a leper.

[14:07] You know, they're side by side, warrior, valiant, leper. Now, as we said, this is probably one of the many skin diseases around at the time. We don't need to go into the details, but the point surely is this, that that skin condition that Naaman had was sufficient to blight him as a sick man, somebody who needed to be healed.

Now, again, there's various interpretations of what the skin disease was, but the whole point is that here's a man who is being considered needy, needy for healing.

In the culture of the day, certainly in Naaman's culture as well as Israelite culture, skin diseases had that effect of the person being, you know, ostracised from society, somebody considered to be separate.

And of course, as a great general, this couldn't be the case. So he needs healing. In God's sovereign purposes, God's sovereign purposes, this Naaman is afflicted.

Without his affliction, and this truly is the key point here, without his affliction, he would not have known of Elisha the prophet. Without his affliction, he wouldn't have known about the one true God.

[15:26] Without his affliction, he would not have known there is no God in the world but in Israel. He wouldn't have known the one true God. Without that affliction, he would have remained a pagan in pagan Syria.

But God in his mercy granted him that affliction. In his mercy, God granted that Naaman was given that skin disease so that he would come to know God as the one true God.

And it so happened that in that knowing God, that a little girl in his very household would be used to direct Naaman to, yes, to Elisha and above all to the God of Israel for the one true God.

And so that he would know that little girl's God is the one true God. God using his affliction to bring him to that sure, saving knowledge, yes, of the one true God.

I think we've said it a number of times in the last few weeks but we say it again. even at times to give thanks to God for our many afflictions. That God using even your afflictions, my afflictions, to bring you to that stronger faith, to that sure knowledge of God the Lord.

[16:41] God does all things well in his sovereign purposes. Well, back to Naaman here. I mean, who was to help Naaman in his immediate situation?

Well, of course, the Syrian king couldn't help him. No one in the army could help Naaman. No one in society, in this society anyway, could help Naaman. But there was help.

There was help, as you see there in verses 2 and 3, there was help from a little girl, as we said, kidnapped from her home in Israel. We don't know her age, maybe 10, 11 years of age, we don't know.

But obviously Syrian bandits had been in a raid in Israel to snatch this little girl from her home.

Okay, time factor, it's a long time ago, nearly 3,000 years ago.

We know these things still happen today. We see it in the news of children being snatched from their homes in different parts of the world. It's a tragedy, grief, horror, and no doubt the same sort of heart wrenching feelings happening in Israel over this little girl being taken.

[17:49] This is the amazing aspect of the story. this was part of God's plan, part of God's sovereign purposes in the salvation of Naaman. This little girl, no doubt she'd been kidnapped for a purpose, to be a servant in the home of some rich Syrian nobleman or noblewoman.

But as we said, in God's perfect plan, she was led to Naaman's home, to become servant of Naaman's wife. God overruling, God overruling even in the evils of that kid to bring good out of the situation.

Now, just think of her position. This little girl, she could so easily have been bitter, so easily been bitter against Naaman, against Naaman's wife, taken from her home, taken from her family, taken into this new culture, having to learn a new language, a new way of life.

And yet, when you see even this short, short statement of this little girl, what she says about her knowledge of Felicia, and her concern for Naaman and his condition, she's certainly showing no bitterness.

She's showing by her words and by her actions that she truly is a child of the living God. She doesn't, you know, rejoice in Naaman's predicament.

[19:15] No, she wants them cured. But even in her exile, even in that foreign land, she remains a follower of the one true God. She is loving, we would say, loving her enemies.

She's doing good to those who hated her. And in the wonderful providence of God, this little girl is used mightily by God.

She's that, we would say, that crucial link in the chain, that crucial cog in the wheel in God's dealing with Naaman. Now, humanly speaking, she's got nothing going for her.

We're not even giving her name. Naaman is named, excuse the other slight pun, Naaman is named. This little girl, she's a victim, she's a victim of a cruel raiding party.

She's a servant, I mean, Naaman is a commander. And yet, this little girl knew the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. This little girl was considered inferior by her captors, but we have to say she was greater than the greatest of Israel's enemies.

[20:22] She knew God is the one true God. Even after her capture, her faith doesn't desert her. I mean, yes, she was stolen from Israel, but no one could steal from her faith in the one true God.

So you see the contrast, the contrast between Naaman and the unnamed servant girl. Contrasts are great, and yet it's this little girl who is going to prove to be the strong one, the one who's strong in faith, the one who's strong in the Lord, even though she was in that foreign land.

And there's so much then that you can learn, we can learn from, well, this little part of the story, this little girl in God's big picture. There's so much wisdom, even in these few verses that we're focusing on this morning.

Well, even let's start focusing even more at verse two again. She's not just carried off a girl, but she's actually called a little girl.

Now, again, this is why the original language is so important. Don't let anyone tell you that learning original biblical language is unimportant. It is important. Go to the original language.

[21 : 39] Little. The word little doesn't just mean young in age or even young in size. Little, in the sense of the original language, can mean insignificant.

And certainly in the context of the story, that's what she would have appeared to her captors, to Syrian society. She was at the bottom of Syrian social scale.

But she is going to be used mightily of God in God's service. She, as we said, is that link in the chain. And through her work, as it were, Laman is going to be lent to Elisha, and above all lent to the one true God.

So, insignificant in the eyes of the world, but not insignificant in the eyes of God. If you know God as Lord, if you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you are not insignificant.

You are not insignificant in God's service. I mean, how can you be if he's called you by name? If he's called you by name as one of his children, how can you be insignificant? We're thinking of the world there and how if even numerically speaking we might feel insignificant.

[22 : 50] insignificant. Even in a congregation, a small congregation, we might feel insignificant. But no, God is with us. God is with you who know him.

So you are not insignificant. You have a part to play in the work of the kingdom. And God will ask you and does ask you to serve him where God sends you. Just as this little girl was sent to Syria to be used of God and God's service.

Don't ever think that you are of no use to the Savior. You know, when the exiles were in Babylon, we sang these words, how can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

Sometimes, you know, we often think that ourselves. We are in a foreign land in many ways, a land that's alien to the one true faith, a land where God's name is not exalted.

How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? We can sing that song. Even though we are ridiculed and tormented as a people, you know that you have the one true God, that you know him through the Lord Jesus.

[24 : 00] So yes, sing the Lord's song. Tell of the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus. Tell by your words and your witness that he's Lord. Don't be ashamed to call on him as Lord.

Don't be ashamed to testify to the Lord Jesus as Saviour. Be bold for the Lord, which I believe this little section is showing us here, the call to the church to be bold for the Lord.

I mean, you know, again, when you look closely at this little section here at the start of chapter 5, she had no qualms, no qualms, you know, about directing Naaman to Elisha, to the prophet in Israel.

I mean, there's Elisha, he's a prophet in Israel, Israel, Israel's an enemy of Syria, but she's no qualms about mentioning Elisha's name. I mean, Elisha's a prophet of God and she's mentioning his name in pagan territory.

She had that faith to believe that, yes, through Elisha, that Naaman could be healed. There she is standing for the truth, that truth that was lodged in her heart, even though, as they said, should be considered insignificant, in the eyes of others.

[25 : 17] And so it's, I think there is a lesson to be learned here, the Christian church that upholds the gospel. We might appear to be small and insignificant, even insignificant in terms of influence, but we're not to be silent.

We're to be bold for the Lord, as that little girl was bold for the Lord her God. God. And isn't it so often the case that we sin in our silence?

You know, when we should be speaking the truth of God's word, testifying to the gospel, and yet we're silent and we sin in our silence. You know, we can be afraid of the reaction of others, the reaction of our friends and our neighbours, our colleagues.

But no, that in itself is a lack of faith in God. It's a fear of man. But that little girl had no fear of man. There she is, bold in her faith. And notice, in her boldness, she's not ridiculed. She's not dismissed as somehow irrelevant by her superiors.

[26 : 20] Because notice how verse 4 begins. So Naaman. Okay, so she tells Naaman's wife that Elisha the prophet could cure him of his leprosy.

So Naaman. In other words, Naaman responds. He thinks there's something in this. He goes. And he, as we see the story eventually, reaches the point where he is healed.

Healed in body. Healed in his heart. So through this little girl in the land of Israel, the chain of events continue to the point where, as we said, Naaman knows that healing from God.

Behold, I know there is God in all the earth, but in Israel. You know, we might never know this side of eternity.

How many so-called insignificant people, whether young or old, how many so-called insignificant people have been instrumental in the transforming of their lives and leading sinners to see the Savior.

[27 : 26] Savior? So be encouraged in your witness for the Savior. Don't hold back. Don't hide your light. Let that little light shine. Let that little girl let her little light shine for the Lord.

There she is in that dark land. She shone for the one true God. We're in a dark land. Let your light shine for him. We never hear of that little girl again, actually.

Don't see her anywhere else. True and say that in the pages of Scripture. She just appears for a brief moment, a brief moment in time. But yet in a brief moment in time she does so much for the Lord.

You and I have our brief moments of time. These moments to be used to serve our Savior. Don't pass by the opportunities that God gives you in this little space of time that he gives you under his sovereign purposes.

It would be a word in season to afflict and afflict his soul. And that word in season that brings so much encouragement, so much comfort, so much blessing, the blessing of God.

[28 : 33] Even that little word of comfort from God's word. So, well we've considered this little girl in God's big picture. Well you're in God's big picture.

You who know him. You who love him. So be encouraged, even in this little narrative. Be encouraged to continue in your witness and know that he's with you.

And blessing your conversations, blessing your examples as you testify to the reality of his power and his grace in your life. So you can tell others of the reality of that power.

So that they, you too, who do not yet know him as Lord, if that's the case, then listen. Listen to the words that others tell you of the gospel that saved them.

So that you who are a needy sinner might know that cleansing, that renewing in your life. Well may God bless the earth. It's word this morning. Amen.

[29 : 35] Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for your word. even this little story of this little girl and yet used mightily by you.

Lord, bless our conversations, bless our words. May we know that with you there is that majority. So help us, Lord, to put our trust in you in all things, at all times.

And help us to use the times, the short times that you give to each one of us, to use these times for your glory and praise. Go before us now, Lord, bless our fellowship, one with another after the service.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we mentioned Psalm 8. Let's now sing from Psalm 8 on page 7.

And we'll sing from the beginning down to verse 5. In all the earth, O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name! For you have sent above the heavens your glory and your fame.

[30 : 39] From infants and from children's lips, you order praise to sound, to silence all your enemies, the wicked to confine. 1 to 5, Psalm 8, to God's praise.

Amen. God bless you.

dwell on God on purpose.

as you may hear except that you light the worm tune here and glory.■c on earth. What I see 15 above the earth. God bless you.

He lives and me work and have spent her hisa■■■ to