

# The Great Man, the Girl Servant, and the Godly Prophet

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Date: 12 June 2022

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, these are the intimations, then we're going to begin worship now singing in Psalm 105, Psalm 105 on page 374, singing to June Peterson, and we'll sing verses 1 to 7.

Give thanks to God, call on his name, to men his deeds make known. Sing ye to him, sing psalms, proclaim his wondrous works, each one. See that ye in his holy name to glory do accord, and let the heart of everyone rejoice that seeks the Lord.

We'll stand to sing these verses 1 to 7. Give thanks to God. Sing psalms, proclaim his wondrous works, each one.

See that ye in his holy name to glory do accord, and let the heart of everyone rejoice that seeks the Lord.

The Lord almighty and his strength, with steadfast hearts sing ye.

[ 1 : 38 ] His blessed and his gracious face, sing ye continually.

Think on the works that ye hath done, which admiration breed.

His wonders and the judgments all, which from his mouth proceed.

O ye that dad of Abram's race, his servant will appear, and ye that Jacob's children are, whom he chose for his own.

Because he and he only is the mighty Lord our God, And his most righteous judgments are, in all the earth abroad.

[ 3 : 02 ] We're now going to call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Almighty and gracious God, we give thanks that we are gathered here today once again in your name.

We give thanks for these words that you have given us to sing in your praise, words that remind us, Lord, that it is our great privilege to worship you, a privilege to know you as our God, and to sing your praises, to call upon your name in prayer, and to contemplate the great works that you have done.

Lord our God, we come before you not in our own merit, or any worth that we have in ourselves or in our works. We come in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son.

We come, O Lord, confident that he is the ground on which we are able to approach you, and find approval and acceptance with you. And as we have been singing, help us, we pray, to rejoice in your presence, in his name and for his sake.

We thank you again, Lord, today for your many acts of kindness toward us. For you continue to show us your favor, despite the fact that we need to confess frequently our shortcomings, our own failures, our sins against you, and our lapses, and the many ways in which, O Lord, we fail to match up to the standard that you set before us.

[ 4 : 33 ] O Lord, we are conscious that were we to depend on ourselves and our own ability, we could never find a place of acceptance in your sight. We thank you today that we depend upon the finished, perfect work of the Savior, that we come in his name, the Lord Jesus Christ, and on the promise that you will receive us and accept us in him.

We thank you for the way in which that favor and acceptance lasts and will last throughout eternity for your people. For all who have come to trust in him, you promise that the righteousness that you impute to them will be sufficient and will never be changed and cannot in any way be taken from them.

We thank you today for that righteousness. Righteousness, as the Apostle Paul said, that is not of ourselves, but that righteousness that is through faith in Christ. The righteousness of Jesus himself.

And we thank you, Lord, today that we have once again the opportunity to come to contemplate and to give thanks for all that you have done in regard to this.

Bless us, Lord, we pray today as a congregation. And this week we have entered, Lord, we anticipate by your will, taking part in many other activities and services throughout the week.

[ 5 : 54 ] We set these before you and ask, Lord, that you would bless us and bless them to us. We pray that your word might continue to flourish amongst us, that the gospel will take effect, O Lord, increasingly in our lives, that we may come more and more to show that fruit in our lives, that spiritual fruit that is the product of your Spirit, and that we may therefore be as lights in the world and as the salt of the earth.

holding forth the word of life as your disciples. Forgive us, Lord, we pray for the many opportunities we let pass by us in the way of your serving.

We thank you, Lord, that we have access to the way of serving you in this world in different ways. And we pray that you would enable us by your Holy Spirit to be effective in this world.

Lord, we pray for our community around us, for all the communities in which we find your people today, throughout our land and indeed all the way through the world. O Lord, our God, we recognize that there is so much against the gospel, so much thinking, so much in the way of actions of people like ourselves, and yet who are themselves ranged against you, and who do not care and indeed are in opposition to the values and the principles of the gospel itself.

Remember all those today, Lord, who stand in enmity against the gospel and against your people. Whatever structure of society they belong to, whatever groups they may have formed for themselves, Lord, you have given us a desire and a heart to pray for those who don't know you, for those who oppose you, for those who openly stand and defiantly against your will, against your word, against your church.

[ 7 : 50 ] We pray for your church as well, O Lord, in our nation, and we pray that you would grant your blessing to the gospel, even though we know that we hear, Lord, and see defections from your truth, and that we see some, O Lord, have set up for themselves what is effectively an alternative gospel.

Gracious Lord, we ask that you would restore where that has been the case, granted you would keep before us, Lord, how futile it is to import the culture of the age into the ways of Christ.

And Lord, we ask that you would make us conscious that we need to adhere closely and lovingly to your commands, to your standard, to your promises and precepts that are always going to be sufficient in every way for human beings throughout the age.

We ask your blessing today for our young folk, our children, and as they receive instruction, Lord, in your word, bless them today, we pray, and make us thankful for those who teach them, who give of their time to study the lessons and to impart them to the children.

We ask that you'd bless them, Lord, from the youngest through to the oldest age group amongst them. And we ask that the efforts that are made, Lord, in terms of meetings for discipleship, meetings for parents and children in regards to the work in the congregation in these days and weeks to come.

[ 9 : 19 ] We ask, Lord, that you would bless us and bless parents as they would take part in these discussions. Help them, Lord, we pray, to contribute meaningfully to it. And help us to listen to the ways in which our parents of young children seek to bring their concerns and the other issues that they face in their lives to be discussed and to be part of our thinking as we look ahead.

Lord, bless, we pray, those today of our number who are ill. We pray that you'd grant blessing especially to those who are seriously ill. Bless those who have COVID. Lord, we pray that it may not progress in a way that would become really ill, that they would become really ill.

We pray that you would grant your hand upon them, Lord, to prevent this. We pray that you'd bless all others, Lord, who have different illnesses. We pray for those who are anticipating surgery and waiting for word, those recovering and those receiving other treatments.

We pray for those who have issues of mental health, illness. Lord, we ask that you would be pleased to speak to them today and give to them a sense of your presence and of your provision for them too.

And help us, we pray, to bear in mind all those who suffer in different ways and give us to realize, Lord, more and more how you have made provision for us in the gospel and how especially in our own community we have so much also that is valuable in terms of meeting our needs.

[10:55] Bless us then now, we pray. Continue to go before us as we worship you here. And throughout this day, help us to maintain it as a day of rest, as a day that is holy to the Lord.

Lord, we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's sing again to God's praise. We're singing now from Psalm 130, 130.

This time in Sing Psalms version. That's on page 173. If you're using the Blue Psalm book, Psalm 130, page 173, the tune is Martyrdom.

Lord, from the depths I call to you, Lord, hear me from on high and give attention to my voice when I for mercy cry. Lord, in your presence, who can stand if you our sins record?

But yet forgiveness is with you that we may fear you, Lord. The whole of the psalm, Lord, from the depths I call to you. Lord, from the depths I call to you.

[12:05] Lord, hear me from on high and give attention to my voice when I for mercy cry.

Lord, in your presence, who can stand if you our sins record?

But yet forgiveness is with you that we may fear you, Lord.

I wait, my soul, wait for the Lord.

My hope is in His word. More than the watchman waits for God, my soul waits for the Lord.

[13:43] O Israel, dear God, O Israel, dear God, O mercy is with Him, and full redemption from their sins.

His people He'll redeem. Let's now turn to read from God's word in the scriptures of the Old Testament, and it's in 2 Kings chapter 5.

The second book of Kings, chapter 5, we're going to read verses 1 to 14. It's page 372 in the pulpit Bible.

It should be around that same point for yourselves. 2 Kings chapter 5 and reading 1 to 14.

Naaman, 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.

[15:10] 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, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel. So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothes.

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?

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?

[16:26] Let him come now to me, 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 his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.

Are not Abana and Farpar, 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 a servant 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?

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.

[17:39] Amen. May the Lord again bless to us, reading his word to his own praise. Before we turn to look at this passage, we'll sing once again to his praise, this time Psalm 25.

Psalm number 25. Again, it's in the Sing Psalms version, page 29. We're going to sing verses 4 to 9. The tune this time is rocking him.

O Lord, reveal to me your ways, and all your paths help me to know. Direct and guide me in your truth. Instruct me in the way to go. You are my Savior and my God.  
All day I hope in you alone. Remember, Lord, your love and grace, which from past ages you have shown. Do not recall my sins of youth or my rebellious, evil ways.  
Remember me in your great love, for you, O Lord, are good always. Because the Lord is just and good, he shows his paths to all who stray. He guides the meek in what is right and teaches them his holy way.

[ 18 : 50 ] We'll sing these verses. O Lord, reveal to me your ways. O Lord, reveal to me your ways, and all your paths help me to know.

O Lord, reveal to me your ways, and all your paths help me to know. Direct and guide me in your truth, instruct me in the way to go.

You are my Savior and my God. All day I hope in you alone.

Remember, Lord, your love and grace, which from past ages you have shown.

Do not recall my sins of youth or my rebellious evil ways.

[ 20 : 30 ] Remember me in your great love, for you, O Lord, are good always.

Because the Lord is just and good, He shows his path to all who stray.

He guides the meek and watershright and teaches them his holy way.

Now let's turn to 2 Kings 5, the passage we read a minute ago, verses 1 to 14.

And we'll consider some of the teaching in this passage this morning. You might say this is an account of the field marshal, the slave girl, and the prophet.

[ 21 : 52 ] This is a story of Naaman, the account of his being healed of his leprosy. He was the head of the army of the Syrians. And there's also this slave girl that had been taken captive by the Syrians on one of their raids.

And of course there is the prophet Elisha, the man of God. People's lives sometimes are often bound by the circumstances, the experiences that they share in life.

Many lasting relationships began with people being unexpectedly thrown together into certain situations and circumstances that perhaps they hadn't anticipated.

And yet from that developed some lifelong relationships or friendships. And you have, whether that was the case here or not, but you have the lives of certain people thrown together in this incident here in chapter 5.

In fact, there are six individuals, six people altogether in the passage. If you take in the rest of the chapter as well, there are two kings, the king of Syria and the king of Israel.

[ 23 : 00 ] There's the prophet Elisha. There's this little slave girl. There's Naaman. And then later in the passage, there's Elisha's servant Gehazi. And they're all together in this incident that took place, especially circled, centered on Naaman and his healing of leprosy.

So we're going to look at these in turn and look at how in the account that we have here, as we follow it through, these three individuals, we're going to focus on these three, the Naaman himself, the servant girl, and also Elisha, the godly prophet.

You have the great man, the girl servant, and the godly prophet. And from that, some of the teaching in the passage comes across to us as we focus on the three individuals themselves and how they interrelate throughout the way the passage develops.

So look at, first of all, the passage begins with the field marshal, the great man, 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. Now that's a very deliberate description. And you might ask, well, why does it go into all of that detail? One of the reasons is that the following detail is such a contrast, you might think, to what's being said there already.

[ 24 : 26 ] So this man, Naaman, he was in charge of the whole army of the king of Syria. If you go by the ranks in the British army, that would make him field marshal, the very top of the strata of the strata of command in the Syrian army.

So he was commander of the army, of the whole army. Not only that, but he was very close to the king. The king obviously valued his leadership. He depended on him so much as the leader in charge of the army.

He was also a brave man. It's spoken there in very clear terms. He was a mighty man of valor. The Lord by him had given victory to Syria.

All of these details are followed by this, but he was a leper. For all his greatness, for all his stature, for all his bravery, for all his ability, for all his courage, he was a leper.

Now, in the Old Testament, sometimes the word for leper can be indicative of other similar diseases, but it seems here that it was indeed leprosy, Hansen's disease, as it's called nowadays, that this was in fact what this man suffered from.

[ 25 : 45 ] He had this serious condition. Leprosy was and is, although it's rarer now than it was then. It's a disease that affects the skin, but it's actually a disease, first and foremost, of the nervous system.

It attacks the nervous system, and then it can develop in such a way that leads to muscle wastage and deformity, as you know. And as it attacks the nervous system and the nerve endings, especially, you'll find that those who have had leprosy and have leprosy, and as it has developed, will lose the sense of feeling in their fingers, for example.

That's why somebody with leprosy can pick up something as red hot and not feel pain. And, you know, that's just by the way, but we often complain about having pains, and pain is certainly very, very difficult to live with, but actually, in one sense, pain is beneficial because it tells you there's something wrong, and it tells you it's something you maybe need to deal with, maybe even urgently. Sometimes we should just stop and think that pain is something we should actually thank God for, though it is very difficult to live with constant pain, and we need medication for it, and there's nothing wrong with that.

I want to imagine living without any sense of feeling, without the nerve endings that tell you that something's red hot. Well, here was a man who was a leper. He suffered from leprosy and probably had some of those issues with regard to his own body.

[ 27 : 20 ] And in the Bible, as you know, leprosy is mentioned frequently, but leprosy is also mentioned in the Bible symbolically. It's not that God actually inflicted people with leprosy just so that he could use it as a symbol of something, but leprosy, as it did exist, as a disease, having its own characteristics, the Bible uses it or it was used under God's direction as a symbol of the effects of sin as well.

Because one of the things you find with leprosy and with leper is that leper was actually set away from the main body of the people in order to actually be in a place by themselves, a leper colony as it used to be called.

Sometimes you might think, well, that's pretty cruel. You're sending people away because they're suffering from leprosy. They're with others who suffer from leprosy. They're actually outside of the social circles of their own people.

And of course, that is the case, but it's a protective measure. It was really a form of quarantine so as to protect those who didn't have leprosy in case they themselves contracted it and began to suffer from it.

So in many ways, it was an act of quarantine and of protection, a protective measure for the community. In any case, that meant that the person with leprosy was kept at a distance from the main body of the people.

[ 28 : 47 ] And as you find in the Bible, leprosy to be symbolical of separation from social interaction and certainly separation from God in the sense that leprosy was a symbol of sin and the effects of sin and the wastage of sin.

All of these things were built into it as a symbol, as something which represented that. And you'll find, therefore, that when you come to the New Testament, you've got a wonderful emphasis in the likes of Mark chapter 4, chapter 1 and verse 40, rather, of Jesus doing something which wasn't actually allowed ceremonially.

The leper was unclean, but Jesus touched this leper and cleansed him. If you will, said the man, you can make me clean. And Jesus touched him and said, I will.

Be clean. Be healed. And that, of course, reminds us that Jesus is the great healer. Here he is dealing with what represented sin and represented being ostracized and separated from the community and needing to be rehabilitated.

And that's what a Christian is. It's somebody who has been dealt with by God so that the sin that is ours naturally is dealt with and dealt with successfully and we're rehabilitated into the company and in the fellowship of the people of God spiritually and morally.

[ 30 : 16 ] That's what God does. That's what God in saving his people does. That's what conversion, that's what being or becoming a Christian in many ways is about. Well, here is a man

who, for all his achievements, for all his stature, he suffered from leprosy.

And it just reminds us as well, doesn't it, that for all the achievements we may have in this life, for all the stature that we may gain, for all the social prominence we may have, we still need a healer. We still need Christ. We still need Jesus to be our Savior. None of these elements in our ability, in our social status or anything else, none of that is really of any use as far as giving us a place in the favor of God is concerned.

Only God can do that. And God does that when he brings us to know himself and brings us into living fellowship with Jesus Christ.

And it also reminds us, doesn't it, although obviously leprosy was very obvious, but nevertheless, let's also not lose sight of the fact that many people who may appear outwardly to a very little troubling their lives, underneath that may be a very serious concern or issue for them.

[ 31 : 45 ] We just never know what's happening in someone's life secretly. There are many people in our community. There may be some people in here today who are carrying a burden, carrying a weight, carrying something of a concern that they're not able to share with other people, but they can bring it to God.

We have to be careful in our relation with people. Maybe they're people who we regard as very grumpy or very distant or whatever. You just don't know what's in that person's life unless they tell you.

Well, here is Naaman, commander of the king's army in Syria. But he was a leper. And then he came across this girl who was a servant, a slave.

You can see how she became a slave to Naaman's wife. The Syrians on one of the raids, verse 2, had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel. And she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. And 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 then went and told the king about this.

[ 32 : 55 ] Now this is very interesting that this unknown, unnamed girl actually fits into such a central part in the whole process leading to Naaman's cure of his leprosy.

And it reminds us, doesn't it, that whatever way we come about to be in a certain place at any time, there are no accidents as far as God's placement is concerned.

Here was a girl who was actually brought on one of the raids of the Syrians, carried off, so that she could be a slave in this important man's house for his wife. But that's where God had placed her. God didn't approve at all of the way that she had actually ended up there. He didn't approve of the raiding party. He didn't give that as his mark of approval. But nevertheless, this girl is placed deliberately by God and his providence in this home without which they would not have heard of the Elisha who was the prophet in Samaria.

And so it reminds us that God's placement of us is always precise, always deliberate, always purposeful. Where are you today in your place of work?

[ 34 : 12 ] Who do you sit alongside? Who do you work alongside? Where are you in terms of your neighborhood or the street in which you live? Where are you in terms of people you interact with on a daily basis perhaps or on a regular basis?

Well, God in his providence has placed you there deliberately. And he's placed you there deliberately for his own sake. And especially today if you are a Christian witness to Jesus and to some extent we all are.

Otherwise, why are we here? Well, that's something that God is saying. That's why I've placed you where I've placed you. So that you can be a testimony to me. That you can tell about me.

that you can actually do this on an ongoing basis. And it's important of course too for our young people. They're in the Sunday school and Bible class today. Although some people some of them may be watching of course online as well.

But there are relatively young people here as well. And as our young people very often leave home and go to work on the mainland or study on the mainland. This is the kind of advice we always try to give them.

[ 35 : 17 ] Be true to Jesus. Be true to the values of God. Be true wherever you're placed. Wherever God's providence actually places you.

Be true to the things you've learned in your Sunday school. In your Bible class. In your church. Under the preaching of the word of God. And that's what he's saying to ourselves as well today.

Here was a little girl. And she was true to her faith. She was true to the religion she belonged to of the people of Israel. Israel. She spoke up with concern for this Naaman who actually owned her really as the person who was in charge of that household.

But she spoke up and said if only my Lord were with the prophet who's in Samaria he would cure him of his leprosy. So that's really one of the great great emphases that we have in our Christian life isn't it?

We come across different people different days different areas especially those we are with regularly. This is the business that we're in as far as God is concerned. Tell them about me he's saying.

[ 36 : 27 ] Tell them about where there is a cure for their sin. Tell them where there is a person who knows their situation where this saviour is to be found and what he can do for them. And so she spoke up and even though she's not named that's not important.

You may never be famous. We may never have prominence in society. We may never leave a legacy that will be thought about for many generations to come. That doesn't really matter. What really matters is that for the time that you and I have in this world and for the time that God enables us and leaves us with our abilities mentally and physically we are there for him. we are there to be his representatives to be his people to be his witnesses to be his church. It doesn't matter how old we are it doesn't matter how young we may be wherever God has placed us we are there for him and for his sake.

So here's the servant girl the slave girl and we come now to the godly prophet. verses 4 to 8 actually tell us of how things developed.

[ 37 : 44 ] Naaman went into his own king his own master told him about what this girl had said so the king of Syria said well you go and I'll send a letter to the king of Israel so he did so.

And of course Naaman took with him a whole lot of stuff that he was going to give to Elisha this was his this was his going to be Elisha's reward for what he was going to do for him.

He took all of these things that are mentioned there the money the changes of clothes and he took the letter as well from the king of Syria to commend Naaman to the king of Israel and when the king of Israel read the letter he was furious he tore his clothes and he said am I God to kill and to make alive that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy only consider and see how he's seeking a quarrel with me that's all the king of the king of Israel made of it and of course he was quite wrong.

that's why Elisha actually scolded him when he heard about this when he heard that he had torn his clothes that he had done this dramatic thing why have you done this?

let him come now to me that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel in other words Elisha was saying to his king to the king of Israel what on earth are you thinking about? do you think there is no God in this place?

[ 39 : 02 ] do you think God cannot cure this man? there is a man who is king and he's just lost his way he's lost his way spiritually he should immediately have said of course Elisha the man of God I'll send you I'll introduce you to him and he'll be able to help you and here is this man this king of Israel that's not what's on his mind he's looking after himself and his own interests and he has it in his mind the only reason that this name has come from the king of Syria is to actually be a plant in order to spy out in order to actually seek a quarrel an excuse for war well how wrong we can be how wrong our political leaders can be as well and how wrong we can be ourselves in our conclusions about things so that's how he came to meet Elisha and so in verse 9 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 now if you look carefully at the wording there it's very deliberately worded and it's really interesting how the detail is given to us

Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha there is this great man this famous field marshal in Syria and there he is with all his retinue with his grand accompaniment and there he's coming to Elisha the prophet of God in Israel and he stands at Elisha's door he doesn't dismount from his chariot he's expecting that this man Elisha will come out and have an audience with him all he's got to do is stand there and show his importance surely Elisha is going to recognize this is a really important man I'd better go out and talk with him Naaman doesn't do any such thing just leaves him standing there and he sends a messenger instead and the messenger says go and wash in the Jordan seven times and as Elisha's message is given to Naaman he

becomes absolutely furious he goes away in fact in a rage as you read later on in the passage in verse 12 why is he so angry why would a person be so enraged about a message that was to do with the healing of his leprosy what could cause such a reaction well two things two very closely related things

Naaman had come to Elisha with his own plan with his own idea of how he was going to be cured of his leprosy see what he's saying here verse 11 Naaman was angry and went away saying behold I thought that he would surely come out and stand and call upon the name of the Lord and wave his hand over the place and cure the leprosy there was the Naaman's own idea of what was necessary to cure him from his leprosy and it's all built into these two words I thought behold I thought that's your problem and that's my problem when it comes to our dealing with our sin our relationship with God how is it we think naturally just like Naaman I thought it's our own thoughts we want to focus on it's our own thoughts we want to stand on we have our own plan as to how our life should develop human lives sinful lives have their own idea as how things can be put right behold

I thought you go to the New Testament and you'll find the same thing many times just go to Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul and these words would fit very much into his own testimony as you find it in the likes of Philippians 3 which we looked at not so long ago and there was this man this very able man this teacher in Israel Saul of Tarsus Pharisee skilled in the Old Testament knew his Bible and he had his own idea of how he was right with God when many others were wrong his own ability his own keeping of the law his own obedience to God as he saw it that's what really gave him in God's sight gave him the kudos gave him the acceptance gave him undoubtedly the favor of God as far as he was concerned until Jesus met him on the way to Damascus and his plan crumbled

God crushed his plan he smashed it up because it was completely wrong and Paul would have said behold I thought I thought this was the way I was convinced this was the way I was convinced I was in the right but God had other ideas and Jesus soon destroyed Saul's own plan and Saul's own view of salvation not only did Naaman though come with his own plan he also came in his pride and the two things very often go together don't they almost inevitably go together our own plan as to how we come to be saved and our pride in standing on that plan and on that idea but you see what he's saying he was told go and wash in the Jordan seven times what does he say are not Abana and Farfar 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 you see what he's saying well Abana and Farfar apparently were very clear waters beautiful rivers whereas the Jordan very often brown and dirty brown carrying a lot of soil here is this man saying

[ 45 : 20 ] I'm not going to wash in the Jordan I've got Farfar I've got Abana back home and they're better than all the waters of Israel can I not wash in them and be cleaned you see his pride and his plan go together and it's his pride for this moment that just will not accept that the word that God has sent him through the prophet is actually superior to any of his own plans yes the waters of the Jordan may be dirty brown compared to the rivers of Damascus but that's where God is saying that's where you'll be cured and you know that's so often the case isn't it with the presentation of the gospel and the message of the gospel about Jesus Christ I thought we say in relation to that I thought that my own work would be enough that my own ability would see me through and aren't there just so many other ways along with the way that the Bible talks about when it speaks about putting your trust in Jesus and having Jesus exclusively as your savior are there not all these other ways are they not just as good are not these other religions just as good is secularism not just as good well God is saying you believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ and you shall be saved that's God's way that's so often what Paul is emphasizing in the likes of his letter to the Corinthians for example as he talks there about to the Corinthians about the wisdom of God as against the wisdom of human beings the wisdom of men and here he is saying that the Jews seek after wisdom so do the Greeks they are all after wisdom the way of wisdom the way of acceptance with God but we preach Christ crucified stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks a man who was crucified on a cross at Calvary rose from the dead three days later ascended to heaven that's the record of the gospel and yet our hearts unless God changes us will say no I can't accept that that just can't be right

I prefer my own way I thought it should be this way let me ask this question do you have a plan today and a pride that's keeping you from peace with God is your own plan and your own pride keeping you from peace with God from coming to know the way of salvation as God sets it out for

us have you discarded your own view have I discarded my own view as I am as a sinner fallen into sin and with my own ideas of how I should be living my life and be right with God have you have I discarded that and taken up instead God's plan in Christ because that's really that's really the essence of the issue isn't it just as Naaman so Naaman teaches us we need to discard our own view and our own plan and certainly our own pride and fall in with God's plan and God's provision in the Lord Jesus Christ verse 13 his servants came and said to him my Lord my father it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you will you not do it has he actually said do you wash and be clean you see what comes across from that is the sheer simplicity of God's plan the simplicity of what he's being told as against what he himself might have thought that's how it is with our salvation as well because God's method is the simple method we come to believe in Christ we come to give ourselves to Jesus we come to trust in him we come to accept him as he is as he's offered in the Bible and that's what God is saying you do that and you'll be saved but we invent the complexities we invent things that really complicate the matter don't we we want to find out more about this faith and what this faith is well that's alright once you're in Christ but don't actually try and complicate things in a way that keeps you from coming to Christ because very often the things that we persuade ourselves of and want to work through and say we can't understand very often they're just invented by us for the sake of avoiding obedience to Christ and obedience to Christ is very simply capitulating to him yielding our minds our lives to be ruled by him that's God's way and today if you've not yet come at least to make it known that you are a Christian that you want to serve the Lord I know that there are some of you here who give every indication in your life that you're serious about this spiritual business who give lots of indications that this is really where you'd want to be your life to be anchored in Christ and going on serving him don't be deflected from that don't actually be persuaded by someone who says it's not that simple it is that simple you trust in the saviour you come into the possession of salvation what could be more clear and simple than that don't complicate things in a way that prevents you coming to give your life over to

[ 51 : 53 ] Jesus and here is Naaman having heard the seven advice so he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan according to the word of the man of God his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean he did exactly as God required of him as the message from God through the prophet set before him you see God's way always works and I'm sure he might have said to himself well why didn't I do this in the first place why did I give myself all that hassle of anger and frustration and thinking that my way was best I should have done as just accepted his word to begin with and I could have saved myself all that hassle well of course but isn't that what life is like and there are many people who come to the Lord after a struggle after trying to work through the complications that they make for themselves and at the end of the day they'll say well why didn't

I just do it all that time ago I should have done it then and maybe you're here today maybe you've been just struggling struggling your way through complications that you're making for yourself coming to God and coming to know Christ as your saviour is concerned put the complications aside take Jesus at his word look to him and the truth of his word do what Naaman did accept it as it is and you'll find that that actually works perfectly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved it's not going to take away all the hassles of your life it won't take away all the difficulties it doesn't mean that the problems will just drift out of your life and from then all will be just like a constant summer's day you know that's not the case you know the devil will persuade you many ways or try to persuade you actually it's not in your gain it's not to your advantage to but it is there's no sign now of the leprosy as far as

Naaman is concerned notice what it says there his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child a marvelous description if you look at a baby child with that fresh skin with that beautiful look that's what Naaman's skin was like after he did what God required of him and that's what God will do for us too that's exactly how it will be when we give ourselves to God when we trust in Christ when we accept his way of salvation in Jesus life comes to be renewed remember how it is in the book of Proverbs and in this passage that I'm going to read it has a reference to not leaning on our own understanding go back to Naaman's own plan Naaman's pride also says be not wise in your own eyes here's the passage

Proverbs 3 verses 5 to 8 we'll close with that trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths be

not wise in your own eyes fear the Lord turn away from evil it will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones may God bless this word to us let's pray Lord our God we thank you today that your gospel sets before us the way of salvation so clearly Lord we know that there are many things in your word that we cannot fully understand that there are many things we need to work through in terms of increasing our knowledge of yourself of salvation and of ourselves but we thank you that that way of salvation is so clearly marked out for us to us

Lord help us today to do this and help us by your grace to discard the many reasonings that we find arising in our own sinful hearts and the many ways in which the devil tempts us away from trusting in you grant that we may come Lord to depend upon your word and that we may come and cast ourselves into your care hear us then we pray and be with us this evening and be with Scott as he leads the worship this evening grant him your grace Lord we pray and all of these things we seek with the pardon of our sin for Jesus sake Amen we'll sing now in conclusion this time in Psalm 51 Psalm 51 that's in the Scottish Psalter version it's on page 281 we're singing to the tune Walsall and it's verses 6 to 10 behold thou in the inward parts with truth delighted art and wisdom thou shalt make me know within the hidden part to thou with hyssop sprinkle me

[ 57 : 43 ] I shall be cleansed so yea wash thou me and then I shall be whiter than the snow of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the voice that so these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice all my iniquities blot out sin create a clean heart Lord renew a right spirit me within these verses 6 to 10 to God's praise behold thou in the inward parts with truth delighted art and with song thy child make me know within the hidden heart to thy with his thoughts make help me

I shall be cleansed soul yea wash thou me and then I shall be whiter than the snow of gladness and of joy fullness make me to hear the voice that soul these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice joy all my name may quiet he's brought out life aside from myself create a king heart lord bring you and my spirit me within

I'll go to the door just to my right here after the benediction now may the grace of the lord Jesus Christ the love of God the father and the communion of the holy spirit be with you now and ever more amen oh you you you