

Behold, I Thought

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[0 : 00] Now, please turn back to 2 Kings chapter 5. I want to highlight verse 11, 2 Kings chapter 5, verse 11.

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.

Two words in particular in this text that I want to use to address you this evening. The words, I thought.

But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, Behold, I thought. Now, I am perfectly aware that this passage has four main parts to it.

These four parts may be four separate sermons. They may give a preacher four particular points for one sermon. We can easily enough see how it breaks up.

[1 : 18] We have the faith of that little girl from Israel who said to Naaman's wife that there was a cure to be found if Naaman would go to Israel to find it.

That's one aspect of the chapter. Another aspect is the healing of Naaman himself. And then there's a third aspect, which is a very interesting one, and one that I would like to look at more closely on another occasion just for my own edification, is Naaman in the house of Rimmon.

That would be a very interesting study, I think. And then we have that fourth aspect there. We've got the hypocrisy and the lies of someone you wouldn't have expected it from, the Elisha's servant, Gehazi.

We have those four main points. So I'm just pointing out I do know what the chapter is about. But in a sense, I want to leave, I want to refer to the chapter here and there in the address that I want to give to you.

But I'm not looking at it in what you would call maybe an exegetical way of looking at the whole passage as such. But there is something here in the text that I have highlighted to you that can stand out on its own from the rest of the important things that's found in the chapter.

[2 : 44] And it is this theme that we might call that God doesn't work according to our notions. Naaman thought, at least at the prophet and thereby the prophet's God, that he should work in a certain way.

I thought, he said, that it should be in this wise. And so that's my theme this evening. Because we can all fall into that trap of thinking that we know how God is going to work.

And so I want to speak to you this evening under two main headings. First of all, and this gives me a little chance to give a little bit of testimony and background perhaps to my own experience, which I hope will be helpful to others maybe that are seeking the Lord.

The first point I would say this, that I thought that it would have been otherwise. And the second point that I want to speak to you under and in which I would want to bring out perhaps the gospel a little better or more pointedly, is that I thought that if I planted a feather in the ground, it would grow a chicken.

Now we'll come to that presently. But firstly, I thought that it would be otherwise. And what do I mean? Well, I mean this in terms firstly of the gospel.

[4 : 14] That I thought that all good people went to heaven. Now it might be that's how you're thinking tonight. Any Christians in here tonight won't be thinking that way.

Not now anyway. But maybe that's the way they did think. And maybe there's some here tonight to hear the gospel afresh. That's maybe the way that you're thinking.

That surely if I'm good, I keep my nose clean as it were. And I don't break the law. I'm not a robber. I'm not a murderer. I'm a good living person.

I keep the law. The law of the land and so on. And maybe you say that I'm trying to keep maybe even the Ten Commandments. You say I'm a good person. Well, surely good people go to heaven. And the thinking that you have if you're thinking like that is that on a 0 to 100 curve that you're somewhere up there about 70 or 80 percent perhaps.

[5 : 11] And you're thinking, oh, well, that's good enough. It is pretty good actually in terms of human standards. But you're thinking God is going to give you some leeway here.

He's going to cut you a little slack. And he's going to say the day that you die and you come up before him and the day of the judgment that he's going to let you go into heaven because you're a good person.

That's what I thought. I thought it would have been otherwise. But I heard the gospel. And I knew then that it was different. Because I can't go into this with you this evening.

But for one reason or another, I found myself back in church. And maybe you found yourself back in church tonight. Maybe since your Sunday school days perhaps as it was in my case. And you heard now.

You're going to hear differently. And I heard differently because I thought I was as good as an ex-man. And I was going to go to heaven. If there was a God anyway. If there was a God, I'm as good as anybody else.

[6 : 11] But then I heard the minister preach. And I was in the Church of Scotland, a faithful preacher of the gospel. And he was saying that our none, that our righteous, no, not one.

He wasn't saying it. The Bible was saying it. And he said you need to be born again to get into the kingdom of heaven. I became angry. Naaman here thought it was going to be in a particular way. And when it didn't go in a particular way, he too became angry. We'll leave that aside for this now. Because even as Christians, we can think that things are going to go in a particular direction. And once I was converted, what I mean by that is that once I got over my anger, just like Naaman here in a way, once he got over his anger, he said, well, I'll just do what the prophet said I ought to do.

And when he did that, he was cleansed. And when I got past my anger and said to myself, well, let's do it the way that the preacher is telling me to do it, to ask Jesus into my life.

[7 : 17] Let's do it this way. And it's only then that I discovered the truth and I repented of my sin. I don't mean that I felt anything particularly dramatic in that.

For some that it is. And I think actually initially I was expecting there to be a blinding light, a Damascus road experience, as they say. I'm wise enough to know now that I would say that perhaps as high as 90% of people who are Christians don't have any dramatic experience at all. And as far as I'm aware, the only man that ever had a Damascus road experience was Saul, the man that became the Apostle Paul. I don't mean that others don't have special experiences, but by and large, the gospel is simply about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and to be cleansed. It's as simple and it's as straightforward as that, the ABC of the gospel. Yes, there are difficulties in the word of God, but not in terms of the gospel.

God, in his wisdom, has given us this in an ABC form. If you repent of your sins and believe that Jesus Christ has died in your place, you shall be saved. So once I was converted, I then thought the Christian life is going to be an easy one.

[8 : 42] Now, of course, I wasn't foolish. I was working in a distillery for 17 years, seven of those years as a Christian. There's an interesting question perhaps for the young people later on.

But I was there with 40 other men, 45 other men. And I knew, especially initially, once I had said I'd been converted, that there was going to be a bit of fun and games, that there was going to be a bit of ragging.

I knew that. I wasn't so foolish. But nevertheless, I thought that things are going to be plain sailing. I thought that it was going to be otherwise. But no, Jesus asks us indeed to count the cost about becoming a Christian.

That's part and partial of it. Maybe that we will have an easy course in life, but we have to be prepared for difficulties along the way. And then, when the Lord was turning me towards the ministry of some kind, I didn't know where it would be as such.

But when the Lord was working in my heart and through other people's heart to speak to me about what about the ministry, I thought I was going to be a Church of Scotland minister. I thought it was going to be otherwise.

[10:02] You see, our thoughts are not God's thoughts. His ways are not our ways. He doesn't work according to our notions. And do we not all plan out a map for ourselves?

There's nothing necessarily wrong in that. It's very good. There's young people here. You'll be thinking maybe some of them are a particular age. You've got to think about what kind of exams you've got to take, hires and standard grades, and what might lie beyond that.

It's only good and proper that we do that, that we plan things out for ourselves and how we think things might be. And the distillery that I was working in went down to a four-day week.

And my father had a market garden. And I thought that I was going to be running a garden center for the rest of my life. I would leave the distillery. There were those Christians who were wanting me to for particular reasons, as you might imagine.

And this seemed to be the way. Indeed, I got a grant from the Highlands and Islands Development Board, as it was called then, and a loan, and started it part-time. I thought this is the way to go.

[11:13] I was doing all right, I thought at it. But the Lord came and said to me, No, that's not the way that it's going to be. What a heartache to even give the grant back to the HIDB, the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

I gave them back the loan, and I gave them back the grant, and a letter of an apology for wasting their time. I thought that they might send the 2,000 pounds back, but no.

But the Lord had other plans for me, and we have to be obedient to the Lord. We think how things are going to go. We heard a testimony at one of the fellowships today of, well, forgive me, Aileen, but Aileen was saying about when Colin went back to the army, she said, This could never happen. But God doesn't work that way. He leads us, and we must be obedient to where He wants us to be. We might have thought it was going to be otherwise. And sometimes when we are expecting a straight road in our lives, providence perplexes us.

There are things that we simply cannot understand or fully understand. That is so in this congregation, surely at this time at the loss of loved ones and loved workers in the fellowship.

[12:40] Why has that happened? You expect all people to die. You don't expect young people to die. And these things perplex us, and we wonder, Where is God speaking to us here?

What's happening here? And things don't always work out. The way that it runs contrary to our dreams and to our forecasts, and the way that we think it should be.

And it can leave us baffled. And perhaps there's someone listening to this tape, or this CD as it now is probably, who's ill at home, and they're thinking, why am I ill at this time when the church needs me?

Another may be saying, well, why am I in poverty? Or I don't have much money at a time when the church needs financial resources, and so on. Others might be thinking, well, why am I a widow? Why am I a widower? Another might be saying, why have I not been given more talent? More talents that I may serve the Lord in a greater way than I'm capable of doing at the moment.

[13:46] Why does the minister not see things the way that I see them? Or vice versa? A thousand times a thousand, we could say we thought it was going to be otherwise, and especially perhaps in terms of the gospel, in terms of the things of salvation.

We thought that we could be saved eternally by being good. But that's not the way God works.

Because even those who are good will admit, unless there's something wrong with them, they will admit that there's nobody perfect.

They will say, oh, I'm not perfect, but I'm pretty good. But they will at least admit that they're not perfect. You will admit that you're not perfect. But to get into heaven, you have to be perfect.

That's the problem. And there's nobody perfect, except Christ, or God. But Christ, as the man came into this world to live that perfect life in our place, that we would trust in what he has done in our place.

And by trusting his sacrifice on the cross, that he would take away the crime of our sin, and take away the offense that we've caused, God, because of our sin, even if it's a small sin, even if we've broken the law of God, in one point, we've broken it all.

[15:13] And we have. And if we're honest with ourselves, we will admit that. And if we admit that, we're not good enough for heaven. We need a savior. We thought it was going to be different.

But this is God's way, not our way. And Naaman is coming here, and he's saying, I thought I could be cured in another way. But he couldn't be cleansed until he went God's way.

And maybe too, in looking at this chapter a little further on here, we can be a bit like Gehazi, the servant, who had dreamed of making a bit extra money on the side, leaving morals aside, and principles aside.

And we can, we've got to be very careful about how we are in this world, and how we view riches, for example, because riches here corrupted this man.

And this man was even a man, a servant of the prophet of God. It's hard to believe the way that he went, and the lies that he told, and seeking after the riches of this world.

[16:23] You'd hardly credit it. We must watch for that. I must watch for it. You know, it's a bit ironic, actually, but we're celebrating our centenary this year, the centenary of our church building.

It's ironic, because the only thing that we want to do with the church building is to get a bulldozer and knock it down. It's falling down of its own accord. And you know, one night I had a dream. I dreamed the perfect crime. I broke into the local bank of Scotland, and I got away with it. But I was robbing the bank for a good cause.

We've got 320,000 so far for our new church build, but we need double that. I left some money in the bank in this dream, but I took about 400,000 pounds in this dream, and I took it away.

I said, Lord, it's for a good cause. We must watch our dreams, you know. We can sin in our dreams. Does that maybe speak to anybody here this evening?

[17:29] Maybe we think we live a good life, but what about our dreams? I think I repent more often about my dreams than perhaps the things that I may do or not do in my actual waking hours.

I pray often in going to sleep at night, Lord, keep me away from dreams. And this dream of riches, we all have it, do we not?

Or have had it. You know what my dream was? Eight score draws on a Saturday night. That was my hope. I was a Rangers Pools agent.

That was my hope. That somebody would win, and they would give me some money. You know, there was a Pools winner just down the road in the village of Och in the Black Isle.

I didn't know them. They've moved on since I went there, but I'm told they won the Pools, and it was the greatest disaster that ever happened in their lives.

[18:29] It ruined their lives. And Gehazi here was dreaming of riches, and it ruined his life. Now, don't get me totally wrong here.

Let us thank God for rich Josephs in the New Testament church. We need them, and they need to be prayed for. And maybe we don't pray enough for those who are rich in terms of the world's goods, that they would use their money wisely in the cause of the gospel.

What an onerous thing it is to be a Christian with wealth. And you know, when I was a young Christian, when I read this chapter for the very first time, the very first time that I could realize that I was reading it with any meaning anyway, I thought that Elisha would take the money.

I thought he would take the garments, the silver, and the gold. What I hadn't grasped was that Elisha was already rich in God. He didn't need those riches.

And what we sometimes have to come to realize also, that God can use our poverty to make us rich.

[19:46] That is, to use our poverty at a natural level to make us rich spiritually. So not to be dependent upon material things.

Sometimes he works that way with people. We thought it would be otherwise, but that's the way that God works sometimes. And sometimes for those who are unwell physically, that God uses that to make them well spiritually.

We thought it would be otherwise, but that's the way that God sometimes works. And besides, in Elisha, taking nothing from Naaman, the healing of Naaman, which made Naaman rich in God, is seen to be all the more of the unmerited grace of God.

And at the spiritual level, God can use the likes of poverty to enrich us and so on. And often he draws near to us himself, or we are able to draw near to him, by him driving us further and further away from the things that we would put our confidence in, our confidences in.

We thought it was going to be otherwise. Even our prayers are often answered in a different way to the way that we thought they were going to be answered.

[21:04] Now I'm quite sure if I asked every Christian here this evening if that's true of their experience, they would say yes, that it is. We asked for something in prayer and we expected it to happen in a particular way, but it didn't.

But nevertheless, I'm sure if I also asked were you blessed through the way in which God did come to answer your prayer, you would say, yes, you were. You were fed.

We expected to be fed by an angel, but we were fed by a raven instead. But we were fed. God did answer our prayers, but perhaps not in the way that we expected.

The Lord works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. But then secondly, and I trust I can maybe be more pointed with regard to the gospel under this second point.

I thought that if I planted a feather in the ground, it would grow a chicken. Well, you won't take that quite literally, will you?

[22 : 08] But it's the way that I was thinking in terms of the gospel. That's how I began the first point. That I thought that I was going to be cured or that if there was a God, I would get to heaven because of who I was.

And I would be as well to have planted a feather into the ground and expected it to have grown a chicken. And we're all prone to our own preconceived ideas of the way of salvation.

Man indeed has been given a great mind. It makes you wonder if he hadn't fallen into sin, what his mind truly would have been like without it becoming a fallen mind.

But even although man truly has a tremendous mind, there seems to be no end to his enterprising inventions.

But man cannot invent a way of salvation. Oh well, yes he can, but at least what I mean is that he can't make a way of salvation that will work.

[23 : 13] yes, he invents various ways, but that's just like man planting lots of feathers into the ground and coming up with a whole host of, forgive the pun, but foul schemes which are absolutely useless because God alone through Jesus Christ is the only one and the only way whereby we can be saved.

Not through our notions, not through false hopes or false religion, but through the one whom the Father has given into this world in his love, the only begotten Son, through his perfect life, through his perfect death, through his resurrection that gives us justification, that this is the only way and the only name under heaven by which we can be saved.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by me. And so we are exhorted to follow Christ, not to invent ways of salvation that cannot work, but to follow the way that will work, the only way that is given that will work.

And you know, when I first heard the gospel, as I said, I became angry because as I saw it, as I thought about it, I am as good as the next man. But Naaman here, you see, could have become as angry as he liked.

He could have gone ballistic and it wouldn't change the fact that the only way that he was going to be cured from his leprosy was to go to the Jordan. It didn't matter how angry I became.

[25 : 06] It didn't matter how angry this man would become. It didn't change the facts. The facts are there is this one way given unto man by which to be saved through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if we could invent a way whereby we could save ourselves, then what's the point in God giving us the Bible? What's the point in having a Bible that points us to the only way?

What would be the point in the Son of God saying, here am I, send me into this world that I may live this perfect life and die on the cross and make a way of...

There would be no point to that if we could save ourselves. But we can't save ourselves. And that's why we see how God is love. That he sent his Son into the world to provide a way whereby we can be saved.

Now, a fellow, of course, might come up to me and say, wait a minute, Sandy, but I've got faith. I've got faith in this feather. You know, one day, Sandy, this feather is going to become a chicken.

[26 : 13] A fellow might say that to me. After all, believe it or not, there are people who believe that scales have become feathers, that cold blood of reptiles have become the warm blood of birds, that four limbs have become two legs and two wings, that the heavy bones of reptiles have become the light honeycomb bones of birds.

There are people who believe that monkeys have now split the atom, have landed on the moon, are working a desktop publishing package, and are printing newspapers.

newspapers. There are those who believe that fish have learned to say cock-a-doodle-doo. Yes, there are people who believe that.

That's what I mean. They're planting feathers in the ground, expecting them to grow chickens. And this fellow comes to me and he says, and this fellow could be Dawkins or somebody along that nature, and says, given enough time, this feather will become a chicken.

I have a faith that, well, someone might say, come and say to me too, maybe somebody here who's got a feather or two planted away somewhere, come and say, I've got faith.

[27 : 44] I've got faith that God is going to let me into heaven because, not just because of who I am, but because of my works, my merits, my baptism.

He's going to let me into heaven because of my rosary beads, perhaps. That's the way some people think, you see. I quite believe there are some who have faith that the Buddha that they bought in B&Q; is going to let them into heaven.

They've got it out in their garden. I think it's going to protect their house or something. They're planting feathers in the ground and thinking that that's going to do them some good. God does, of course, indeed ask us to have faith.

It's not faith in anything that's an idol. It's not even faith in legitimate things like baptism. It's faith in Jesus Christ only because this is God's way.

It's not man's way. God is not going to bless our schemes and our false religion. God isn't even going to consult us on how we think we could be saved.

[28 : 57] Beggars can't be choosers. It's God's way or no way, Jose. But faith in Christ is no step in the dark. Planting feathers in the ground and having false hopes.

But, of course, many people will say that's Christianity. It's a step in the dark. You hear it all the time, nearly, in one form or another, through the media or whatever.

That Christianity is a step in the dark. And one, I would say that one thing that I try to put over to my own congregations in the time that I've been a minister is that that is a lie.

Faith is not a step in the dark. It's a step into the light. It's a step into the knowledge that God has given to us of the way that he has given a way where man can be saved.

I like Francis Schaeffer's illustration. I think it's helpful in this that he has two mountaineers coming down a mountain. One's a little ahead of the other, 15 minutes ahead of the other, shall we say.

[30 : 04] And he's able to go over this slight chasm between one part of the mountain and another. And he waits for his friend to come so that he can warn him about this chasm.

But the mist comes down all of a sudden. And so he starts calling out to his friend to be wary of this chasm. And the friend comes to the chasm. And the man who has already crossed over the chasm shouts over to him, just jump.

It's only about two feet or so and I'm here. Now that's a step. A step out or a leap out. But it's not into darkness.

Even though he can't see where that ledge is for the mist. It's not a step out into darkness. It's a step out into knowledge because his friend has told him, I'm here.

The ledge is there. It's only a two feet jump. Just jump and I'll catch you. And Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. He's on the other side. And he's calling to us and he's telling us about this chasm.

[31 : 10] And he's telling us about the way that we can cross over it. And the gospel is about that. It's not a step in the dark. We have one who has already crossed over.

I know in my own family, well I know my wife's sister in particular, she'll say, oh Sandy, if only someone would come back from the dead, I'll believe.

I said, Helen, somebody already has come back from the dead and you still don't believe. We need to have faith in him who has risen from the dead.

In verse 11, Naaman thought that Elisha would come out to him, this great Syrian commander. And men want a way of salvation that will gratify them and mercy be shown to them as if it was their right.

See that, how he doesn't go into Elisha, he expects God's mind to come out to him. He stands back and he expects it all to happen by right. But we have no rights with God, none.

[32 : 20] We must simply believe God's word which says, go and wash. Wash in the eternal blood, in the blood of the Lamb to give us eternal life.

Believe in the perfect atoning blood of Jesus. Naaman, the great warrior, was offended and we can be offended at the thought that we are dirty.

We can't be offended. I was offended. And you know that's a trouble sometimes with morally upright people and church going people with respect. You go to them with the gospel and they say, that's

not for me.

What about the heathen? you go to the people of Fort Rose and they say, what about the people in Madras Street in Inverness? What about going with that message to Nidri?

It's not for us, I'm a good living person. I'm going to church. I was baptized, you know. That cleansing born-again business, I thought that was for drunkards of this world.

[33 : 30] And yes, it is, but not only for them. This man here is coming to Elisha initially and he's saying, I'm a mighty man of valor, you know. I'm a military genius.

His heroism has saved his nation. Naaman possessed nearly everything the world could offer, if not everything the world could offer.

But for all of his valor, for all of his heroics and his genius as a military campaigner, for all of his wealth and all of his fame and all his popularity, none of it could cure his leprosy.

You know this, the lowliest slave in the nation of Syria would not have swapped places with Naaman. Why not? Because he was a leper and there was no cure.

for leprosy. And if you haven't got the cleansing of Christ, then there's no one in their right mind would take, would swap places with you.

[34 : 43] There's only one cure for sin. Now I don't ask you to believe anything I say just because I'm the minister. Throw my words to the four winds.

if I speak with my own authority, if my message isn't God's message, but if my message is God's message, then trust yourself to Christ and to no other.

And if you believe that, do not throw my words to the four winds, but to accept them as the very truth of God. It's God's plan of salvation, not mine.

Jesus died instead of sinners. He suffered that I or we may never suffer the consequences of our sin or our sinful nature. The just in the place of the unjust, whosoever believes in him shall indeed be saved.

There's no other plan, there's no other way, there's no other name under heaven by which men, women, boys and girls may be saved. No matter what we think, to the country.

[35 : 57] Now I guess that we, well we all know that a feather will never become a chicken. And I guess that all of us here tonight know only full well that man's way of procuring salvation is just as hopeless.

But, and I say this in a sense in a church context, from Romans chapter 2 and verse 4, I'm almost finished. Romans 2 and verse 4, Paul is speaking to the Jews.

And so it's very applicable to us today because they were the religious people of the day. We could say we're the religious people of our day. And he's saying to them, you have received the kindness of God.

You have received the tolerance of God and the patience of God. And I'm speaking probably to people tonight who have received the same benefits as the Jews received.

people who grew up perhaps under a godly mother, grew up in the Sunday school perhaps under the scriptures, and have a heritage, and maybe have had infant baptism, and had all those privileges like the Jews had.

[37 : 07] And Paul was warning them, don't hold these things that are your privileges in such a way that you use them in contempt of God's kindness and his tolerance towards you.

He's given you these things as blessings, but as the text says, it's to bring you to repentance. Not to make you think I'm alright with God. That was a trouble with many of the Jews.

They thought they were already there. They thought that because God had chosen them as a nation, that they were already there. Our father is Abraham, our king is David. We don't need this gospel of Christ.

And that's a danger for you and me if we have been brought up in the church. We think we've already made it. we're going to be alright. That's to hold in contempt the kindness of God towards us and the privileges of having a heritage, of having godly grandparents or parents and the scriptures before us all our lives perhaps.

But if you don't do anything with it, what good is it to you? It's to bring you to repentance. That God gives these blessings. tomorrow.

[38 : 17] Don't leave things off to tomorrow. We can so easily leave ourselves off and giving ourselves to Christ. Tomorrow is the devil's motto. The words I thought is the foolish farmer's motto.

Remember him? He thought, well I'll build my barns and I'll put all this great harvest into these silos and I'm going to be rich. And God came to him and said, fool, your soul is required of you tonight. If you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts. Now let me actually finish now with a story, an illustration.

The story is told of a king who had several jesters. In the days when there was no TVs. Entertainment was after a banquet perhaps would be jesters would come in and do various acts. And this king had a favorite jester. He sent for him one day and he said to him, Jester, you're my favorite jester and I want to reward you. And I've had this special jester stick made.

[39 : 35] I've had it commissioned. It's got some gold on it and some precious jewels and things like that. It wasn't meant to be used. I don't think. It was just a mark of affection from the king to his favorite jester.

Jesters would have sticks, a jester stick for throwing up in the air and juggling around and that kind of thing. And the king said to the jester, if you ever find a bigger fool than you, jesters were foolish, you see, played the fool.

If you ever find a bigger fool than you, give him the jester stick. A few years went by and the king lay on his deathbed and he sent for the jester.

Jester appeared and he took his king's jester stick along with him. And the king said to him, said to the jester, I'm going away.

They both knew the king was dying. That's the way the king put it. I'm going away. Oh, where are you going? said the jester. Oh, I'm going away to a far country.

[40 : 42] And the jester said, Oh, my majesty, he said, have you made any preparations for going away to this far country? And the king said, no, I've made no preparations for this journey.

And you know what the jester did? He handed the king the jester's rod, the jester's stick, and said to him, I have now found a bigger fool than I, because, O king, I fooled with the things of the natural, but, O king, you have fooled with the things of the spiritual.

Let no one ever say to us that we're fools along that lines, but that we would believe the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may, with Naaman, say, I thought, but unless we, like Naaman, turn away from our own thoughts, turn away from our own foolishness, we will, on the authority of God's word, we will perish eternally.

Jesus himself makes that perfectly clear, that there is this place of the gnashing of teeth, where the worm dieth not, and the flame never goes out.

That's his words. We need salvation from that, and our goodness is not enough. We need his goodness. And the ironic thing is if God asked us to do something great, in the sense of, well, you'll have salvation, if you climb Mount Everest, we'll be all off to Nepal, and we'll be climbing Mount Everest to win salvation.

[42 : 25] So why should we stand back at the simplicity of the message that we have here? Why should we perish at the simplicity of the message, as we shared it with the young people earlier, John 3, 16, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be eternally saved.

Wash, and be thou clean. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do give thanks again for the gospel, for the clarity of it in the scriptures, believers, and we pray that none of us would be so foolish to think that we can do without it, that in and of ourselves that we're good enough to go to glory.

Help us each one indeed to name the name of Christ, and to have the understanding of what the gospel is, that you have sent one to be our substitute, and to pay the price for our sins, to set us free from our sins, to give us life eternal, and to even bring us out of slavery and into adoption, the adoption of sons and daughters in Christ, that we have the privilege then of saying, Abba, Father, adopted into your family and to have the assurance of life that shall never end, that your presence will be with us now and throughout all eternity.

So speak to us, we pray, and follow this message with your own blessing, and wherever the gospel is proclaimed, that many would have the understanding of it, and they make their way to the only way of salvation, to the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and in faith.

And we ask it in his precious name and to his glory alone. Amen.