

2 Kings 4-5 - Miracles of Elisha

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

2 Kings chapter 4. This is a great chapter. It's a collection of brief narratives. Some of them, I guess, aren't quite as brief, but all about the ministry of the Elisha in Israel.

It is interesting, isn't it, that we're in Kings—1 and 2 Kings, which would suggest to you that it's all about the kings of Israel and Judah, yet there's all these chapters when we get to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha where we're really just talking about what's going on in their ministry, the miracles, the prophetic words and so forth. But this is what we have.

So beginning in verse 1, here's our first narrative. It says:

“Now the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord, but the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves.””

Stop there, please, just for a moment. You probably know that in ancient Israel, debt was frankly one of the major causes of slavery. When someone owed a debt that they could not repay for whatever reason, it was common for a creditor to say: Well, I'm going to take some of your family members and they will come and work for me and they will work off the debt.

Actually, under the law of Moses, this sort of thing was allowed. However, there were two stipulations that God gave to the nation of Israel through Moses. Number one, they were not to be treated as common slaves. When you were using a fellow Israelite to work off a debt that was owed, you could not treat them like a common slave. And secondly, they must be released from that debt at the beginning of the seventh year. They could work for six years, but at the beginning of the seventh year, the debt must be forgiven and the person must go free.

Israel was in a time of apostasy right now in this section of time that we're reading here in 2 Kings. We don't know how closely the people were following the guidelines that had been given through Moses. Most likely, they were being ignored. Most likely this woman was distressed because she wasn't sure if she would ever see freedom for her two sons again. And so she cries out to Elisha,

and she remembers the widow of a man who had been part of this prophet's group.

It says in verse 2:

“And Elisha said to her, ‘What shall I do for you? Tell me; what have you in the house?’ And she said, ‘Your servant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.’ (And it was probably a small jar.) ³ Then he said, ‘Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, (and what he means by vessels are jars) empty vessels, and not too few (in other words, don't just get a few of them; get a lot of them). ⁴ Then go in and shut the door behind yourself and your sons and pour into all these vessels. And when one is full, set it aside.’”

And so Elisha gives her some instructions. Interesting that a part of those instructions is to go into the house. After she collects all of these, borrows all these vessels from her neighbors, she's to go into the house—and notice, close the door.

I think that's interesting in light of the fact that we see Jesus doing very similar things when He raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus. It says He went in with just a couple of His disciples and kept everybody else out. When Peter went in and raised Dorcas from the dead, he went in alone. He put everybody out and he went in there to pray for her and so forth. And this is a common sort of a thing. God is not a sideshow to entertain.

So he says: Go in and close the door, and begin to just pour what you've got in that jar, begin to pour it in these empty vessels, and when one of them is full, just set it aside and keep pouring.

And it says in verse 5:

“So she went from him and shut the door behind herself and her sons. And as she poured they brought the vessels to her. ⁶ When the vessels were full, she said to her son, ‘Bring me another vessel.’ And he said to her, ‘There is not another.’ Then the oil stopped flowing. ⁷ She came and told the man of God, and he said, ‘Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on the rest.’”

I like this story because it's a great reminder of what the Lord can do even when we have just a little. What do you have in the house? I don't have any of those. Well, okay. I got this jar; has a little bit of oil in it—and presumably olive oil. It was used for a lot of things back in those days, and probably was worth more to

people since it was used for burning candles, for cooking, and for all sorts of other things. But it's just interesting to me that what the Lord can do when we take what little we have, and we give it to Him, and we surrender it to Him.

Many of God's people, even right here in this room, I'm sure, can testify to what the Lord has done when they have given to Him, yielded to Him what little they have, and particularly what the Lord can do through financial providence.

There was a time when Sue and I, when we were pastoring a church up in Washington—and funny the expectation sometimes we put on the Lord. We heard of a need from some people, and we decided together to give some money, and just to devote it to the Lord to give some money to these people.

And I remember at the—I was a much younger believer at the time; you'll have to forgive me for that—but I remember at the time thinking that because we did this, because we gave this gift, just any day now, God's going to back up the dump truck right to our doorstep and just pour it on. I was disappointed when it didn't happen right away, and I remember feeling a little bit discouraged about it. Yeah, I was even pastoring at the time – and probably shouldn't have been, but that's another story.

But then we went through this situation about two years later where we went through a time of real leanness. That's the best way I can describe it: financially lean. I mean, really lean. For a period of about two years the amount of money that we had coming in was pretty meager, and frankly, it wasn't enough to really supposedly take care of our needs. But we decided for one thing, we were going to continue to be faithful to the Lord, to honor the Lord with what God had given us.

We continued to do that during that season, but I didn't recognize it until we got to the end of that season – and you rarely do when you're going through it. We got to the end of that season of great leanness and realized—we started looking through the books, and just looking over the thing, and like, wow—and it was almost like we couldn't figure it out. How did God do that? How did He take care of us? Not only did we pay our bills, not only did we pay—we were renting back then, living in an apartment, but we had bought a car when I first started at Bible college, and we paid the thing off during the two years. As we looked back on it, we couldn't really even figure out how we did it. It was like, how did that happen?

I determined in my heart that God's faithfulness comes to us in ways that we often least expect. We have an expectation that we're going to do this and God's

going to do that, and in so doing, we put God into our expectations and expect Him to perform. But God is so much bigger than our expectations of His performance. I had long forgotten about just this gift we gave, or whatever, and just moved on with life, and whatever, but we saw this supernatural, providential care for our lives that we could only chalk up to the supernatural work of the Lord. God is so able to take whatever little we have to offer.

And I want to encourage you that if you are not honoring the Lord with your wealth, I want to encourage you to do it. If you think for a moment that I've got an ulterior motive to have to say—asking you to give to the church, then give somewhere else, find somewhere else to give, find some mission, find some group, find some people, some friends that are in need or whatever it takes. But just begin to honor the Lord with what He's given you. Honor the Lord with the first fruits.

That's, in fact, what the Word has to say. Let me show you a passage from the book of Proverbs. It says in Proverbs 3:9 – I'm sure you're aware of this passage:

Proverbs 3:9-10 (ESV)

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

Now, listen, I understand that this promise is given during a time of the Old Covenant. I understand that, but it also conveys a biblical principle that we see even in the New Testament – and that principle is one of simply sowing and reaping. What a man sows so also shall he reap.

There is an important principle that transcends covenants, frankly, and the timing of God's dispensations with His people. We see in this passage that if we will honor the Lord—and that's the key to the passage—honor the Lord with the first fruits of what He has given you. Give some back; find a place to bless the kingdom of God back, and see what the Lord won't do.

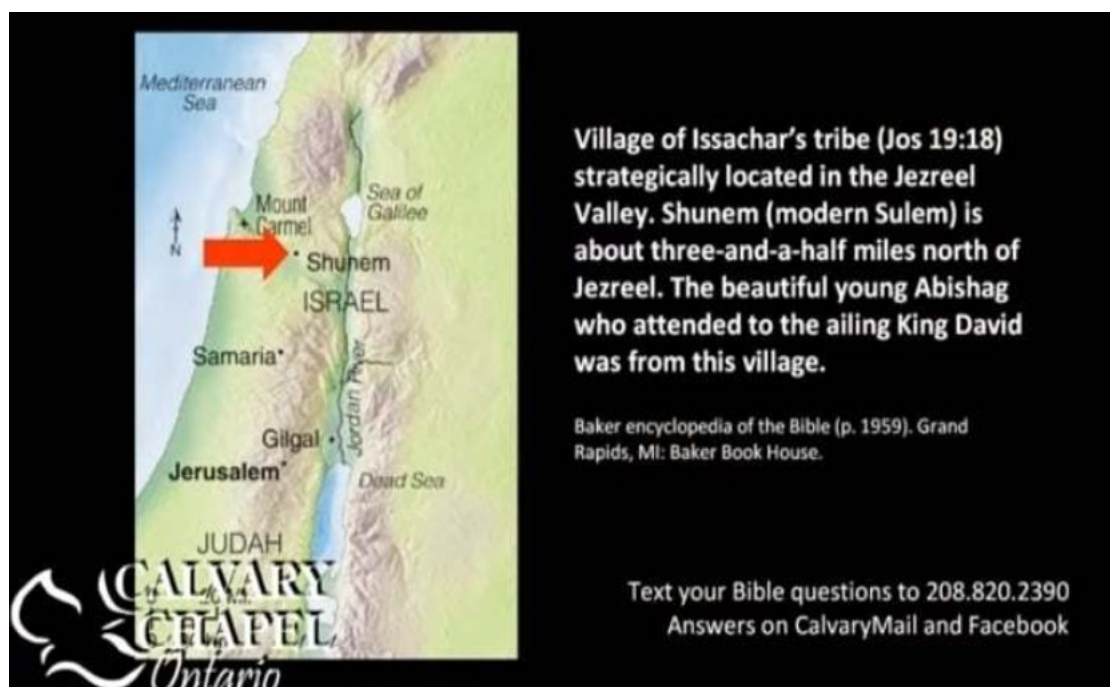
He challenged Israel with that same thing in Malachi: See what I'll do. Just test me in this, and see if I don't just bless you beyond your imaginings. Important thing to keep in mind. A lot of people struggle with the area of giving. They say

—some people will even say: I don't know if I can afford to do that. I don't know if you can afford not to. I think just being faithful is an important thing to keep in mind.

Let's go on to the next story here. It says:

“⁸ One day Elisha went on to Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to eat some food. So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food.”

And by the way, let me put on the screen here so you can see where this is — where Shunem is.



There's an arrow pointing to the village of Shunem. You can see it's in that northern part of Israel. You have some information there that tells you that it's the village within the tribal allotment that was given to Issachar. It was strategically located in the Jezreel valley. Shunem, or modern Sulam, is about three-and-a-half miles north of Jezreel. And we also remember that the beautiful, young Abishag, who attended to the ailing King David—remember when he couldn't get warm?—was actually from the village of Shunem. So that gives you a little idea.

Notice you can see to the north and to the left a little bit there from Shunem, Mount Carmel, which is where Elisha would go to spend time with the Lord. And then south, Gilgal is essentially where Elisha appears to have lived. So you can get a sense of where those things are.

Verse 9, it says that this woman— you'll remember that it says she was a wealthy woman:

“And she said to her husband, ‘Behold now, I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way.’¹⁰ Let us make a small room on the roof with walls and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there.”

So here's a wealthy woman recognizing as she does that Elisha is a man of God who is genuinely serving the Lord. She comes to her husband – and they have means, so she says: Hey, let's build another little room up on the roof.

The roof of homes in the Middle East at that time were flat, and most people would actually go up on their roofs to do things. It was actually used almost like a patio—what you would consider a patio today. People would go up there just to be up and outdoors. But in this case, the woman is asking to build walls and to, obviously, put a roof on there so that the man has a place to stay.

And so what she's doing is she's showing hospitality. The Bible talks a lot about hospitality. If you ever do a search in your Bible just for the word, hospitality, you'll find that it's there a lot. Do you know that when Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus and gave the qualifications for an elder, an overseer, a pastor, he said they need to be able to show hospitality?

Interesting, isn't it? It's a lost art today. We're very privatized in our society, and there's such a plethora of hotels, motels and so forth that it's really not something we have to do much. But there's obviously something to it. The Lord speaks a lot about being hospitable.

Verse 11 says:

“One day he came there, and he turned into the chamber and rested there.¹² And he said to Gehazi his servant, ‘Call this Shunammite.’” When he had called her, she stood before him.¹³ And he said to him (interesting that Elisha speaks to Gehazi to have him speak to the Shunammite woman; now he's going to address her more personally, but for right now he's going through Gehazi), “Say now to her, ‘See, you have taken all this trouble for us; what is to be done for you? Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?’” She answered, “I dwell among my own people.”

And that is to say, I'm not alone. I have enough family around me and community around me that they give me the support that I need, and I'm without need in that particular area.

“¹⁴ And he said, “What then is to be done for her?” Gehazi answered, “Well, she has no son, and her husband is old.” ¹⁵ He said, “Call her.” And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway. ¹⁶ And he said, “At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son.” And she said, “No, my lord, O man of God; do not lie to your servant.” ¹⁷ But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her.

¹⁸ When the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. ¹⁹ And he said to his father, “Oh, my head, my head!” The father said to his servant, “Carry him to his mother.” ²⁰ And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon, and then he died. ²¹ And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door behind him and went out. ²² Then she called to her husband and said, “Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again.” ²³ And he said, “Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath.” She said, “All is well.” ²⁴ Then she saddled the donkey, and she said to her servant, “Urge the animal on; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you.”

Interesting, isn't it? Obviously, the husband is out of the loop on this thing. He doesn't probably see anything all that serious about his son having a headache. So he just tells one of the servants: Just take him up to the house and his mom will take care of him. And while he's out working in the fields, the boy literally passes away on his mother's lap, so she takes him up to set him on the bed of Elisha and decides to set out to go look for Elisha. But when she tells her husband to have a servant get a donkey ready for her and he asks her why she's going, she doesn't tell him.

And this is something you're going to see as we go on and read the rest of this narrative: that she is not going to let anything stand in the way of her getting to where she needs to go.

Verse 25:

“So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi his servant, “Look, there is the Shunammite. ²⁶ Run at once to meet her and say to her, ‘Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the child?’” And she answered,

“All is well.” ²⁷ And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came to push her away.

But the man of God said, “Leave her alone, for she is in bitter distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me.” ²⁸ Then she said, “Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me?’” ²⁹ He said to Gehazi, “Tie up your garment and take my staff in your hand and go. (The idea of tying up your garment means get it out of your way so you can move quickly.) If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not reply. And lay my staff on the face of the child.” ³⁰ Then the mother of the child said, “As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So he arose and followed her.”

Once again, do you see the determination, do you not, of this woman? Gehazi comes to meet her. Is all well with your husband? You? Your child? She even says to Gehazi: All's well. I am going to get to the man of God; I'm going to get to this person. And then finally when Elisha sends Gehazi with his staff, the woman says: Well, that's fine. He can go, but I'm going to stay by your side. I'm not going to delay. Elisha obviously gets up, but—

“Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life. Therefore he returned to meet him and told him, “The child has not awakened.”

³² When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. ³³ So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord. ³⁴ Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. ³⁵ Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. ³⁶ Then he summoned Gehazi and said, “Call this Shunammite.” So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, “Pick up your son.” ³⁷ She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out.”

What an amazing story. What a crazy story. It reminds me of the story that we read in the Gospels of the woman who suffered from internal bleeding and yet who pushed through the crowd just to touch the hem of Jesus' garment, knowing that if she did so she would be healed.

We see in both of these women this similar determination to just get what they needed, to get what they wanted. And I often wonder to myself, I wonder if we put that determination into prayer, what do you suppose our prayer life would look like? If we had the determination of the Shunammite woman, or the determination of the woman who had the bleeding issue, what would our prayer lives look like, if we said I'm not going to let anybody stop me from doing what I am setting out to do?

Notice that she said to her servant, hey, listen, don't keep this animal back. We are going for it. And when somebody comes up to talk to her: I'm fine, everything's fine. She's not going to talk to anybody except the source. And I just have to think that if we laid that determination before the Lord in prayer, there's something very challenging about the idea of praying until you have a breakthrough.

I can't tell you how many times somebody has said to me: Yeah, I prayed about that. Didn't work. Didn't work. I'm kind of like: What didn't work? Well, I didn't get what I wanted. I didn't get what I asked for. Sigh.

First of all, prayer is so much more than that. But second of all, what happened to the idea of persevering in prayer? Well, how long— we live in this day of instant gratification. I want to go through the drive up of prayers God answers to, and I just want to get what I want, and let's get on here, let's just move on with this thing.

How many—I've told you guys many times, if you ever need an encouragement about persevering in prayer, boy, I tell you: Well, first of all, go through the Scriptures. Jesus has a lot to say, told some stories about persevering in prayer, knocking on the door in the middle of the night to your friend, the woman who went before the unjust judge, right? I mean, those are some great stories to remind you and I about prayer.

But the autobiography of—say it, yeah, George Müller. I've told you guys about that several times. I remember the first time I read that book, I was like, you got to be kidding me. He'd be—it's written like in journal form, day 367 of praying for this thing. Who does that? Who prays every day for a year or two for something? We pray once; we go, oh, that didn't work. But he didn't stop. And I remember the first time I read that, I was so humbled and thought, oh, that's what persevering in prayer is. You don't give up.

You hear about some people keeping a prayer journal in the same way, like writing down their prayer requests. I've always thought, gee, if I did that, I

might disappoint myself, if I don't get the answers I'm looking for. I've been praying for this for a long time.

How long is too long to pray for something? How long is too long? I've heard stories of women who prayed for their husbands for 30 years and considered that their ministry because they had an unbelieving husband. Prayed 30 years for the man, and then you hear about some— just before he dies, he accepts Christ as his savior. And that was her ministry 30 years! Well, was it, was that too short or too long of a time to pray for someone's salvation? It all depends on how we look at it, but it's all that determination. Pray until you have a breakthrough. Pray about it until the Lord shows you what's going on.

I'm not saying that every time you pray, you're going to get exactly what you want. Paul persevered in prayer for God to take the thorn out of his flesh, and eventually Jesus said no, but at least he got an answer. At least he got the understanding that, oh, there's a redemptive purpose for this thorn that's in my flesh. He's doing it to keep my feet on the ground and to keep me from becoming conceited. Oh, okay. Well, then at least he could walk forth in the peace of knowing that God has a purpose in this thing. But he persevered in prayer.

Verse 38, it says:

“And Elisha came again to Gilgal when there was a famine in the land. And as the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, “Set on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.”(We're going to find that Elisha was often concerned about making sure people ate.)³⁹ One of them went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and cut them up into the pot of stew, not knowing what they were.”

That's not the guy you want making dinner, by the way. When you say to the cook, what's in the stew? And they go, I don't really know, you want to go eat somewhere else. Yeah. Sue tells me it's rude to ask anyway. So there you go. I'm trying to learn that lesson.

“⁴⁰ And they poured out some for the men to eat. But while they were eating of the stew, they cried out, “O man of God, there is death in the pot!” And they could not eat it. ⁴¹ He said, “Then bring flour.” And he threw it into the pot and said, “Pour some out for the men, that they may eat.” And there was no harm in the pot.”

This is a pretty amazing story. You can tell probably I take pretty seriously what I eat and what's in it. But this really speaks of faith because they're like— ah, this guy cut up some poisonous gourds and threw them in the pot and stirred it all. All right, guys, chow time – and they start eating. We don't know how they recognized; we don't know if somebody got sick; we don't know if somebody just recognized the gourds that were in there and went, oh, these are poison, or whatever. Elisha says: Here, bring me some flour. He sprinkled some flour in there, and they just worked it in. He goes: All right, it's good now.

What would you say? I'm going to McDonald's. I mean, even McDonald's — well, forget it. But you know what I'm saying? That takes faith to sit down and say, okay, the stew is good now because Elisha says so. He put some flour in there. I mean, I don't know of any purpose of flour to undo poison or whatever. But anyway, praise the Lord. God just works supernaturally in accordance with their faith.

Here's another one. Verse 42:

“A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And Elisha said, “Give to the men, that they may eat.”

So this food is given to Elisha, and he says— remember he's with the other men of the prophets, so he says: No, not just for me; let's distribute this among the men.

“⁴³ But his servant said, “How can I set this before a hundred men?” So he repeated, “Give them to the men, that they may eat, for thus says the Lord, ‘They shall eat and have some left.’” ⁴⁴ So he set it before them. And they ate and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.”

Obviously, this reminds us of what Jesus did on a couple of occasions, right? Feeding a multitude of people. Isn't it interesting that Jesus came to do these very things? These stories were known by the people of Israel, and they knew about Elijah and Elisha and all of the incredible things that took place in the Old Testament, in the Hebrew writings. And here comes Jesus now, and He's doing these same things that they've been reading about all their lives.

But I want to also focus for just a moment here on Elisha's heart. Somebody brings him some food, and he says: Let's just, let's distribute it to the men. He's willing to give it away. He's willing to give it away.

And I wonder: Would I be willing to have done that? But it did bring up a proverb that I wanted to show you that actually speaks to this. Proverbs chapter 11 says:

Proverbs 11:24-25 (ESV)

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.

And again, you're dealing with a biblical principle here that transcends covenants and dispensations. It is a principle that stands the test of time. Listen, you give and you're going to receive.

It says here that the man who—there's one who gives freely, and he gives what he has, and that he grows even richer. He's enriched even though he gives what he has away. Then there's the stingy man who's afraid to give what he has, and he comes to nothing because he's held onto things tight.

2 Kings. It says, “*Naaman, commander of the army—...*” I'm sorry, chapter 5. We were already in 2 Kings. You knew that.

Chapter 5:

“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, but he was a leper.”

Stop there for just a moment. Let me just remind you that Syria was a perpetual enemy of Israel and Judah. They constantly were in battle against them and often victorious against Israel and Judah. No doubt Naaman probably was responsible for some of those campaigns against Israel.

Yet I want you to notice something that it says here in verse 1. Did you notice who gave Syria the victory? Did you notice that? Now remember, the Syrians are pagans, and yet it says that the Lord had given victory to Syria.

God is the God of all nations, regardless of whether they recognize Him as such or not. God is sovereign. And that's something we need to remember. God is

sovereign. We look at a nation and we call it a godless nation. Do you think that means God can't work in that nation? You think that means that the one true God has no ability to work through their leaders or work through their army or work through their whatever? God is able. We see here that this was happening.

But for all the victories that Naaman had chalked up in his years as the commander of the Syrian army, we're told one horrible reality about his life. He was a leper, and that basically means that he had a disease of the skin.

Verse 2 says:

"Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." ⁴ So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." ⁵ 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 clothing. ⁶ 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."

An awkwardly worded letter – and that's exactly how the king took it. You'll notice in verse 7:

"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."

⁸ 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? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ 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." 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. ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, 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."

That's what human pride does to you. It makes you dumb. I mean, this is the best offer he's had all day. Go and dip seven times in the Jordan and you'll be clean. But see, he's a commander who is very, very popular. I mean, the king thinks very highly of him that you'll notice that it referred to him as a man of valor, which is a title that was given to David and his men. But this is like the only man in the Old Testament, gentile man, for whom this title is also given—a mighty man of valor. He's used to getting the kudos of the people, and people probably bow when he goes by, and he's well-known. He's a very popular man.

So he goes to the prophet Elisha. Elisha doesn't even come out of his house. Can you see Naaman coming with his whole entourage standing at the door of Elisha's house there in Samaria? Elisha knows why he's there and stuff, so he sends Gehazi out to talk to him. Yeah, here's a message from Elisha. Just go dip yourself in the Jordan seven times. You'll be clean. Yeah, have a good day. See you. The man is incensed, and so he turns to leave with his leprosy. With his leprosy.

Notice what his servants say to him; verse 13:

“But his servants came near and said to him, ‘My father (obviously a reference of just respect) 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’?’”

I mean, he's getting it—they're getting him to recognize—Listen, he's not saying you can go dip yourself in any river and you'll be clean. He said go wash in the Jordan and you will be clean. Listen, they're trying to get him to realize—Naaman, people don't go wash in rivers and get over their leprosy, okay? That doesn't happen. It's not an issue of cleanliness. It's a disease, and you can't get over it by jumping in the river. If you did, everybody would go dip in the river. Do you understand what's been said to you today? Do you understand that God is offering you a miraculous cure for this thing? Will you not do it? Will you not—and this is the question, really; it's being unspoken: Will you not humble yourself and do it?

Reminds me of the Gospel. We get offended by the Gospel when somebody comes along and says: Repent of your sin and you will be saved. You'll be forgiven of all of your sin if you just come to God and confess it and repent. Oh, that offends us. We don't want to hear that message.

So Naaman thought better of the whole thing. Verse 14:

“So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and (look at this) his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

Isn't that interesting? God didn't just clean him up; He gave him soft skin, right? Isn't that great? God always goes over what we expect. I think that's just very cool.

And then it says:

“¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company (so there's this entourage with him), 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; so accept now a present from your servant.” ¹⁶ But he said (and this is Elisha speaking), “As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none.” And he urged him to take it, but he refused.

¹⁷ Then Naaman said, “If not, please let there be given to your servant two mule loads of earth (or if you will, dirt and stone), for from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the Lord. ¹⁸ In this matter may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon your servant in this matter.” ¹⁹ He said to him, “Go in peace.”

Stop there for just a moment. What is Naaman asking here? It's an interesting thing. He's come to the realization that there's no other god—although in Syria there were probably a plethora of gods, and Rimmon appears to be one of the chief deities of the Syrians. But he's come to understand that there's only one god of heaven and earth, and it's the Lord God that just healed him of his disease.

And so he says to Elisha: Listen, when I am helping the king doing my civic duty and I'm going into the temple of his god and he bows down to worship his god—and apparently the king at this time was aged and needed help getting down into that posture and then getting back up again—he says, when I have the king on my arm and he goes to bow down before his god and I bow down with him, please pardon me because I am not worshiping Rimmon. I will only worship the Lord God for the rest of my life. But just know this, I'm only doing my civic duty. And Elisha says, *“Go in peace.”*

Isn't it interesting? Now, if this were some Christians who Naaman would have asked this, oh they would have just bent his ear, big time. Now listen here, partner. You even walk step foot in that temple of Rimmon anymore and you're cursed of God. And they would have been very strict and very stern. But Elisha knew better. Elisha knew that it's the heart that matters. It's the heart that matters. And so he was able to say to Naaman, *"Go in peace."*

There are things, aren't there, that you and I may be called to do on the outside people may criticize us for but they don't know the heart. They don't know what's really going on in the heart. And that's one of the reasons it says in the Scriptures that we're not to judge another man's servant. It says: Who are you to judge another man's servant? To his own master he rises or falls.

We pretend like we can see into people's hearts and know what's there. We don't have any ability to do that. God can do that. I can't. I'll tell you that. I have no ability to see in your heart unless, of course, the Lord shows me something very rare. We got to be very careful about being judgmental in a situation like that.

And I like the fact that you see this grace even in the Old Testament where Elisha says: Hey, go in peace. Listen, I know you're just doing your civic duty. You're not worshiping this god, Rimmon. I know that your heart has been changed forever, so we're not going to worry about it.

Okay. So we are in verse 19? Yeah, verse 19:

"But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, ²⁰ Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, 'See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him.'"

²¹ So Gehazi followed Naaman. And when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, 'Is all well?' ²² And he said, 'All is well. My master has sent me to say, 'There have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets. (And I don't have a thing in the refrigerator.) Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'" (And we're going to go out and buy some food, or whatever the case might be, because we've got some hospitality we need to offer here.) *²³ And Naaman said, "(Oh yeah, exactly.) Be pleased to accept two talents." And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and laid them on two of his servants. And they carried them before Gehazi.*

²⁴ And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed. ²⁵ He went in and stood before his master, and Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?"

Gehazi should have known right there his goose was cooked – good and cooked. And so he lies.

"And he said, "Your servant went nowhere." ²⁶ But he said to him, "Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants? ²⁷ Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." So he went out from his presence a leper, like snow."

So the leprosy that had clung to Naaman was now on Gehazi; and not just Gehazi, but notice, on all of his descendants as well.

When Paul the apostle wrote to Timothy in his first letter, he warned him of men who he said had been robbed of the truth, who actually came to a place of believing that godliness was a means of financial gain. And Gehazi is one such man in the Old Testament who actually allowed himself to be seduced by this whole idea of financial gain. He turned to dishonesty and deceit in order to get those things; but he learned in a very painful way that God's gifts are not for sale and we are not to profit from those sorts of things.

Now, please understand this passage isn't saying that money is evil. Nor is it saying that God's servants shouldn't receive money to live on. As you'll recall, under the law of Moses, the people were to set aside a tenth of their earnings and bring it into the storehouse so that the Levitical priests would have food to eat. Also, the priests were to receive money portions of the animal offerings that were offered at the altar. That was for them and their family to live on because the Levitical priest had not been given land of their own. So please understand what is being said here. Paul even wrote later and said that the hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crop.

So we're not saying that servants of the Lord shouldn't be taken care of. What the warning is against here is evil and greed entering into the equation and all the things that we do to possess things that this world has to offer.

I want to end with one final passage from the book of Hebrews that I want to show you this evening. The writer of Hebrews— and I like how this is worded in the NIV; it says:

Hebrews 13:5 (NIV84)

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

When God has said something to you and I like that, “*I’m not going to leave you. I’m not going to forsake you,*” what reason do we have to allow the love of money to begin to take over our hearts and minds? Because it’s basically a refusal to believe what God has promised you and I that he would take care of us and that he would never forsake us. God will not forsake his people.

David wrote toward the end of his life in one of the Psalms. He said: “*I was young once and now I’m old, but in all my years, I have not seen the righteous begging bread.*”

He meant for those who are in right standing and trusting in the Lord, I’ve not seen them begging bread; I’ve not seen them come to that place where God wouldn’t take care of them. In other words, what he was saying was I’ve never seen God not being faithful; I’ve never witnessed a breach of promise as it relates to God’s faithfulness. And I believe that with all my heart. I really do.

God is faithful all the time. So you and I don’t need to worry about being greedy.