

New Birth

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[0 : 00] 2 Kings chapter 5, and we have a handful of verses for us today to be read. Actually, we're just going to look closely at one verse, but in case you weren't here last week, or if you need to get caught up, I'll give you a couple of verses, extra context, and Amy is going to serve us this morning.

2 Kings chapter 5, starting with verse number 9 and down through verse 14. 2 Kings chapter 5, verse 9 down through 14.

So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of Alashia's house. And Alashia sent a messenger to him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you, and you will be clean.

But Naaman was furious and went away, and he said, Behold, I thought, he will certainly come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and wave his hand over the sight and cure the leprosy.

Are Abana and Tharpar, the rivers of Damascus, not 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.

[1 : 09] Then his servants approached and spoke to him, saying, My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says, Do you wash and be clean? So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, in accordance with the word of the man of God.

And his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Father, thank you for your word. Please help us as we turn our attention to it.

Help us to listen and understand, to obey, to believe. Blessed Holy Spirit, please come and give guidance and direction in this time of preaching and sitting under the preaching of your word.

We ask that all that is said and done would honor you. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are our rock and our fortress, and it is our privilege to have your word and to now have this time to look at it together.

We ask all of this, giving you thanks for your great kindness to us. In Jesus' name, amen. Do you remember the last time that you threw a temper tantrum?

[2 : 23] Maybe for some of you that was this morning. And if that was you this morning, then during the time of communion, for sure, there's an opportunity for you to repent, but you could do that right now as well.

What do they call it? What do you call it in your house when someone is throwing a temper tantrum? I suspect we have different words for it. Throwing a fit.

Yep. A hissy fit. Sometimes we might say that. What else? What do you say in this household here? You don't ever throw fits? Oh, you throw fits.

That's what you call it. A pitch a fit. I think if you're from the south where the marches are moving, that's what you might call it down there, right? You pitch a fit. Maybe you flip out.

You may say, well, you're just flipping out. You need to chillax, I think is what the kids say.

Something like that, right? Now, adults, we are much more dignified and skilled at sanitizing our sin.

[3 : 21] And so we might call it something like losing our cool or having a meltdown or maybe a brief emotional outburst of frustration. These are just euphemisms.

You're throwing a temper tantrum. But we like to sanitize our sin. I wonder what you are like after you throw your temper tantrum. What is sort of the mood in your household after someone has thrown a temper tantrum?

Maybe there is, I don't know, some sadness or some grief, some reflection at what has happened in the household and how it's been disrupted a little bit.

Maybe if you were the one throwing the fit, maybe you are a little pouty. I don't know if that ever happens in your house. Maybe you're moody, kind of crabby.

We might even say petulant, kind of rude in your responses to those who are perhaps coming to appeal to you. I suppose this is especially true if you don't get your way, you know?

[4 : 31] If you throw a fit and you get your way, then maybe your response is more relaxed. But if you throw a fit and you still don't get your way, then what?

However you might feel after throwing your temper tantrum. I wonder if that's how Naaman feels during the three to four hour trip from the city of Samaria to the Jordan River.

He has 20 or 30 miles or so to think about it. It's from here, give or take, to Barnesville. He's got time to think about as he's bouncing along in his chariot.

What his day has been like so far. The fit that he threw. And the fact that he did not get his way, that his wise, careful servants convinced him that he ought to do what the man of God has commanded him to do rather than leave without being cleansed.

I suspect Naaman may be brooding for every one of those 20 to 30 miles. I just don't get it. I came all the way from Samaria, all the way from Syria, and he won't even come out of his house and greet me.

[6 : 01] I thought he was going to come out and stand with me and wave his hands over my leprosy and that he would call on the name of the Lord his God and I would be healed.

And instead, he sends out a messenger. Go wash seven times in that Jordan River. Who does he think he is anyway?

Doesn't he know who I am? How dare he give me a command? The nerve of that guy.

The Jordan River is so filthy, I'm going to be dirtier after washing in it than I am going in. But I do also have to wonder if perhaps Naaman was reflective on the second half of Elisha's message through the messenger.

Do you remember the promise? Your skin will be restored and you will be clean.

[7 : 13] I wonder if Naaman couldn't shake that second half of the message, holding out this promise yet to come. What if?

What if that promise is real? What if after going down into that filthy river, I might come up cleansed of this horrible leprosy?

What if? Elisha's message to Naaman, it reminds me of the gospel. Sometimes we say that the gospel is an invitation and that is true.

The gospel is an invitation. But I think more precisely, the gospel is a divine summons. Children, do you know what a summons is? Young people, now that we have some who are teenagers, young people, do you know what a summons is?

A summons is an order from the court that notifies you that you have been accused of a crime and orders you when and where you need to show up to answer for what you have done.

[8 : 32] That's a summons. If you don't obey a summons in our country and you say, I'm not showing up, usually, usually, you don't get away with that.

Usually, if you don't show up when the summons tells you when and where you need to show up, then whatever crime you have been accused of, you will be considered guilty of that crime.

The gospel is an invitation, but I think it is more precisely a divine summons. Jesus says, come. That is an invitation, but there is authority in those words as well.

Do you remember the command and the promise that Naaman receives? Go wash, and you will be restored. Do you remember Paul's command to the Philippian jailer?

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, Acts 16, and you will be saved. This message that Naaman must be reflecting on reminds me of the gospel.

[9 : 51] Why do we need to be saved? Because we have sinned. Why do we need a savior? Because we are guilty before God.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, certainly is an invitation, but it is more than that. It is a divine summons. And the summons of the gospel comes with a very severe warning.

We find one such warning in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. Paul writes this, when he takes vengeance when he takes vengeance with flaming fire on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

Do you see why I say it is an invitation, but it is more of a divine summons? It is an order to believe the gospel. It is an order to humble yourself and submit to the authority of the King of Kings.

What is stopping you right now from believing this gospel? What is stopping you right now from responding to this divine summons?

[11 : 17] Maybe you say, well, I need more proof. I need more evidence. I have more questions that need to be answered. Could I invite you to be like Naaman and to consider the second half of this divine summons?

What if the promise of the gospel is real? What if you could walk out of here today confident that your sins are forgiven?

That before God, you have a right standing. What if? What if? Would you listen to me like one of Naaman's servants?

If he had asked you to do something big, difficult, hard, wonderful, and amazing, wouldn't you do it? How much more? How much more when he asks you to do something simple?

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And you will be saved. Why not believe this gospel? Why not submit yourself to this divine summons and then ask the Holy Spirit, like all faithful Christians regularly do, Lord, I believe, but would you help my unbelief?

[12 : 41] What a sight this must have been. the five-star general of Syria with his entourage of dignitaries and servants and officials, chariots, they are all parked next to the murky waters of the Jordan River.

But I want you to notice this, that obedience to this command requires humility. Naaman cannot just park his chariot next to the Jordan River.

That is not the command. That is not obedience. His obedience requires humility. He's going to need to get down out of his chariot.

And he's going to need to leave behind all that represents his rank and his status and his authority and his position. All of the accoutrements that made him who he is as a person.

He's going to have to leave that all behind. He's going to have to leave behind all of the gold and all of the silver and the wonderful changes of clothing that he has brought.

[14 : 04] He's going to have to leave behind his expectations for what this healing ought to look like. He's going to need to silence his skepticism.

Skepticism that is reminding him of purer, cleaner waters back in Syria. And as Naaman trudges towards the water, I suspect that even his outer robe must be left behind.

none of this is of any value here. None of this is of any value here. Not if healing is going to happen. None of this, none of his rank, his status, his wealth, his position, his authority, none of that is going to participate in what is about to happen.

Naaman brings nothing with him into this water other than the leprosy that makes this trip into the water necessary.

[15 : 21] Obedience requires humility and humility, friends, leads to faith. Look down in your Bible and notice verse number 14.

So Naaman went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times according to the command of the man of God.

Humility leads to faith. Notice this, he is not going here because his servants have been reasonable with him. He is not going here because he has followed diplomatic protocol and this is the protocol that he ought to follow.

He's not going here because he is submitting to the authority of the king of Israel. He is going here according to the word of the man of God.

This is faith. Naaman grabs hold of the promise of restoration and cleansing and he pulls that promise into the present and then he acts right now as though that promise is true.

[16 : 47] He gets himself down off the chariot leaving it all behind on the shore down in that water seven times.

Do they still call those bobs if you're taking swimming lessons? Still call that doing bobs in the water? I don't know exactly what it may have looked like but I suspect it was something like that.

He is going down under the water of the Jordan River seven times. He obeys the command of the man of God.

Why? Because humility leads to faith. And though it is not always immediate faith in God always eventually receives the promise of God.

And that's true here. Look at the second half of verse number 14. Then his skin was restored and became like the skin of a small boy and he was clean.

[18:07] Do you have any calluses on your body from working?

Maybe the bottoms of your feet? I suspect most of us have calluses on the bottoms of our feet. Some of us have calluses on our hands. Not me because I type for a living. So I don't have a lot of calluses on my hand.

Some of us have scars. I do have a couple of fresh scars on my fingers from the events of Christmas morning this year at our house. Do you have scars on your body?

I know some of you adults have wrinkles because I also have them and age spots we have them. Naaman had them too.

Naaman had the battle scarred body of a valiant warrior. But when Naaman comes up from his seventh dip in the murky Jordan river every wrinkle is released.

[19:15] How does that sound ladies? Every open wound is healed. Every scar gone. Every disfiguring effect of leprosy reversed.

his faith receives God's promise of restoration and cleansing.

Naaman is whole. He is whole. His skin is like the skin of a little boy.

boy. Amy's translation said. A little child. A small boy. Boy. I hesitate to use this, but there is no more perfect scenario in a sermon than this.

His skin is like a baby's butt. It's the perfect application. It is as though his body has been reborn.

[20:26] In John chapter three, Jesus has a conversation with a prominent leader. A religious leader. And Jesus makes a very remarkable statement to this man, Nicodemus.

In spite of all of his learning, in spite of all of his religious law keeping, in spite of all that he thought he was as a leader and a teacher and a man and a representative of God's people, in spite of all that he thought that he was, Jesus says this to him in John chapter three and verse four.

Sorry, verse three, Jesus replied, truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

And Naaman, or sorry, Naaman, and Nicodemus, the other guy with an N, Nicodemus replies this way, how can anyone be born when he is old? Nicodemus asked him, can he enter his mother's womb and be born a second time?

This is a good question. This is a logical, reasonable question to what Jesus has said. You're telling me that I need to be born again.

[22:00] This does not make sense to me. Am I to go back inside of my mother in order to be born again? And I love how Jesus, I don't know if Nicodemus intends for this question to be rhetorical.

Am I supposed to go back into my mother's womb? I don't know if Nicodemus intends for this question to be rhetorical, but Jesus takes it with grave seriousness.

And Jesus does not correct the application that Nicodemus has made. He only adjusts Nicodemus' context.

Jesus says this in verse 6, whatever is born of the flesh is flesh and whatever is born of the spirit is spirit. This is Jesus correcting Nicodemus' context.

The application is correct. You do need to be reborn, but not physically reborn. You need to be spiritually reborn.

[23:16] And then Jesus continues this way in verse number 8. The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear it sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going, so it is with everyone born of the spirit.

How can these things be? Asked Nicodemus. And notice Jesus' words in verse 10. Are you a teacher of Israel and don't know these things?

Jesus replied, aren't you one of the premier teachers of Israel and you don't know these things?

No, I don't know for sure, but I suspect that Jesus has in mind 2 Kings chapter 5. And he's saying, how have you forgotten that story?

Don't you remember that day when the wind blew over the Jordan River? And a leper comes up from the water for the seventh time.

[24:36] And he is reborn. Have you forgotten that story? being born again is spiritual.

But in 2 Kings chapter 5, Naaman gets as close as anyone ever has to being reborn physically. His skin is reversed. Scars, wounds, wrinkles, calluses, all of it reversed, returned to the skin of a young child.

I wonder if Naaman pinched his new skin, you know, to see if he was awake. How did he respond?

How did Naaman respond to this amazing moment? Well, we don't know. Because 2 Kings is a historical record, and so we don't have a lot of those emotional pieces given to us.

[25 : 51] But let me ask you, how would you respond? respond? How would you respond if your fatal, incurable, horribly contagious, and grossly disfiguring disease was gone, and your skin was like the skin of a young child?

How would you respond to that? No wounds, no scars, no wrinkles, no leprosy, just the fresh, pure, supple skin of a child?

I suspect that Naaman responded with hooting and hollering and splashing in that filthy Jordan River because he was so thrilled.

like Naaman, responding to the divine summons of the gospel requires humility.

Whatever you think you deserve, whatever you think you have earned, whatever you think you are entitled to, humble your heart and leave all of that on the shore.

[27 : 02] whatever plans you have for being right with God, whatever your idea of salvation looks like, whatever your skepticism tells you about not needing a relationship with God, whatever your pride argues about making your way to God on your own without applying the precious blood of Jesus, leave all of that on the shore.

Come with nothing. Come with nothing. Come empty handed so that you can grab hold of God's promise of salvation.

I believe in Jesus. This is the first cry of the newborn heart. Followers of Jesus, I wonder if you would revel in these two wonderful truths.

First, Jesus does not follow us in humility. We follow him. We follow him.

Jesus left behind the glory that was rightfully his with the father. father. He didn't consider it something that he needed to grasp hold of, to cling to.

[28 : 34] He made himself nothing. He came in the form of a servant. He took a body weak like ours. Jesus. Jesus also trudged into the Jordan River to be baptized, not because he needed to repent, but to identify with sinners like us in our sin.

He is our humble, faithful, gracious, merciful high priest, and he calls you to abandon your pride and to follow his beautiful story arc of humility.

The second truth for you to rebel in, child of God, you are whole. You are whole. This is the blessed assurance that we sang about this morning.

God may give you 10, 20, 50, some of you young ones, 70 more years to grow in grace, but just like Naaman was instantly completely whole, at the moment of your spiritual new birth, you are instantly and completely righteous before God.

This is good news. Your relationship with God cannot be more secure. It cannot be more eternal because it's not about you.

[30 : 09] It's about Jesus and what he has accomplished on your behalf. In spite of your sin, in spite of your weakness, in spite of your failure, in spite of all of your doubts that continue to linger in your mind, know this, faith in God always eventually receives the promise of God.

God is faithful who promised, as we read about in Hebrews. He who began a good work in you will carry it out until the day of the Lord Jesus.

If God has mercifully given you new birth, could I invite you this week not to keep that to yourself? I mean, if you are as excited as we suspect Naaman may have been at the thought of receiving a new body, we should be no less excited than him.

Hooting and hollering and splashing around, as it were, willing to tell anyone who will listen, could I tell you how Jesus made me whole?

in spite of his temper tantrum, God shows Naaman mercy and his surprising faith receives the promise of new birth and now Naaman wants to tell someone about it.

[31 : 49] But you're going to have to wait for that until next week, Lord willing. Let's pray. good father, we are so grateful to be together and to have this opportunity to reflect for a few moments on the new birth.

Thank you for this picture of Naaman and the grossness of his sin and this miraculous miracle that he received.

not because of anything that he did or didn't do but because you called him because you granted him new life.

father, we are so grateful to see this miracle and to recognize it pointing us to our new birth. Thank you for your kindness to grant us life when we were dead in our sin.

Thank you for your grace that has begun a good work in us that you will see all the way through to its completion.

[33 : 03] with our brother, the apostle Peter, we can say, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to his abundant mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope. We are so grateful.

Father, we recognize that even inside of our hearts, those who have been reborn, that there are places where sin continues to linger, there are areas of doubt that continue to creep in, we have worry that overwhelms us and anxiety that causes us to dread the future and insecurity that makes us respond differently than we wish we did in the present.

You know our hearts. You know where there is pride that needs to be humbled. You know where there is hurt that needs to be comforted and healed.

Would you please give us courage to respond to the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts as we take a few moments to prepare to receive the Lord's Supper. Father, we're grateful for the words of the Apostle John.

[34 : 39] If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Thank you for the cleansing power of the blood of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is in his name that we pray. Amen.