

Amazing Grace

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[0 : 00] You can take a seat, please, and take out your Bible, and you can turn on over to 2 Kings chapter 5. 2 Kings chapter 5, either in your Bible or your electronic device, if that's how you are doing that today.

I was thinking as we were singing that song that I'm grateful for the Psalms that are in the Scripture, and I'm grateful that we sing a lot of songs that are based on the Psalms, but I am also grateful that when we see His kingdom come, that we will not be required to sing in Hebrew.

But that said, hold that thought, just stick a pin in that for a minute, that said, Hebrew is beautiful for singing. If you ever want to go listen to something interesting, go look up Hebrew singing of the Psalms.

Very, very beautiful language, but I'm glad we don't have to know it in order to worship God today.

In order to worship the Lord Jesus today, we don't have to know Hebrew.

Because one day, every tribe and tongue and people and nation are going to be gathered together, and maybe we'll sing in the New Kingdom in English, or maybe we will sing all of us together in a different language.

[1 : 29] I don't know. But for today, we're grateful to sing in English. So thank you, friends, for serving us, and thank you for selecting those songs that serve us so well and prepare our hearts to worship.

But Corey is going to serve us this morning. We're going to start at 2 Kings 5, verse number 14. So we're just backing up one verse from the verses we're going to look at today.

This is 2 Kings 5, verse 14, and down through number 19. So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God.

And his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Then he returned to the man of God. He said, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him.

And he said, behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. So accept now a present from your servant. But he said, as the Lord lives before whom I stand, I will receive none.

[2 : 33] And he urged him to take it, but he refused. Then Naaman said, if not, please let there be given to your servant two meal loads of earth. For from now on, your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any God but the Lord.

In this matter, may the Lord pardon your servant. When my master goes into the house of Ryman to worship there, leaning on my arm and bow myself in the house of Ryman.

When I bow myself in the house of Ryman, the Lord pardon your servant in this matter. He said, go in peace. But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance.

Father, thank you for the privilege of having your word. Thank you for our brother Corey and his service to us this morning in reading scripture.

Please bless him and encourage him and keep him. Would you please also watch over our brother Tim as he is not feeling well today and has had some kind of an injury perhaps to his back.

[3 : 42] Please watch over him and give the doctors wisdom as they care for him today. Please raise him up in your sweet kindness and show him mercy. Would you please help us as we take time now to look into your word.

Please help me as I serve your people. Please give me clear thoughts and a soft tender heart to the work of the Holy Spirit. And please take out of my mind anything that would be unhelpful or distracting from this time.

As we continue in worship. Would you please help each of us as we sit under the preaching of your word. To listen, to understand, to believe, and to obey.

We ask this for your glory and our good in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. An instinct is a behavior that you are born with.

An instinct is a behavior that you're born with. I'm not sure if you have ever seen this, but you can look this up later. When honeybees shimmer.

[4 : 53] Have you seen this? There's all these honeybees and they're all together. And you can tell that they're moving a little bit. And then all of a sudden, they all seem to sort of flip at the exact same time.

It looks like if you take your hand and run your hand over one of those pillows that has sequins on it. Or a really kind of fluffy blanket that you get from Sam's Club or Costco.

And you kind of run your hand over and you can see that there's a slightly different color that it takes on. These honeybees look like this shimmering sequins on a pillow.

And they do this to protect themselves. They all, but here's the thing. They all do it in unison with one another. It's not like it's one guy, one little honeybee, and then it just spreads through all of them.

They look one color and then all of a sudden, they flip. And you can see them shimmer. And then they'll shimmer back. And they're doing it to protect themselves. This is an instinct.

[5 : 57] It is a behavior they are born with. I watched another video this week of a tailor bird. Do you know what a tailor bird is?

A tailor bird is a small little bird. It almost looks like a little sparrow. They're not large creatures. And the tailor bird sews its nests together.

Now, I wouldn't believe this if I hadn't seen it. But you can watch the tailor bird take these leaves. And he'll take his beak and puncture a hole through a leaf.

And then puncture a hole through another leaf. And then he'll thread some piece of grass or string that he found or a piece of wheat or flax or whatever.

And he'll thread that through these leaves and weave together, sew together a nest. Remarkable. It's like a doctor putting in sutures.

[6 : 59] That's what it reminded me of when I looked at it. Instincts. Behaviors that you are born with. In the plan of redemption, the Holy Spirit is the active agent, the active part, the active member, if I can say it that way, of the Godhead working in the new birth.

Working in the regeneration. That is the particular work of the Holy Spirit. And like a newborn baby who takes in a first gasp of air and then all of a sudden just cries for the very first time.

When the Holy Spirit gives a sinner life and that sinner breathes in for the first time eternal life.

Something comes out of that sinner. Some kind of an expression of faith. Lord, I believe. I believe in Jesus. I trust in Jesus.

This belief occurs, if I can say it this way, instinctively. This belief is a behavior that you are born with.

[8 : 21] When you are born again by the Holy Spirit, your first response is to have an expression of faith. I believe in Jesus. There is no learning required.

But aren't you glad that the Holy Spirit's work is not complete at the moment of regeneration? In fact, you might say the Holy Spirit is just getting started.

God's grace is not just for our salvation. God's grace is also sufficient for our transformation. The Holy Spirit works out more instincts of the new birth in every follower of Jesus.

When God miraculously restores Naaman's skin and cleanses Naaman's body, this reminds us of the new birth. His skin, his flesh, the scripture tells us, was like a small boy's skin.

It reminds us of the new birth. But God is not done with Naaman. In fact, you might say he is just getting started. And today, we're going to notice God's amazing grace working out in Naaman new behaviors that he has been born with.

[9 : 55] What a life-changing day this was for Naaman. He started this day as a leper with an incurable skin disease.

He's an idolater, an enemy at odds with God. He started this day an angry man because of the prophet's inattention and because the healing that he so desired did not follow his plan.

You ever get angry when life doesn't follow your plan? Me too. He's a leper. He's an idolater. He's angry.

And he is disgusted at the prophet's message. Go wash seven times in that filthy Jordan River. But now, as Naaman looks down at his new skin, it's almost like it is too good to be true.

His body has been cleansed from the inside out. And his body is a picture of an even greater cleansing that has taken place inside of his soul.

[11:10] We might expect Naaman to exit the Jordan River, dry himself off, and make his way back to Syria. After all, he has a wife and a king and other friends and family, I'm sure, who are worried about him as he has left them to deal with this leprosy.

He has other people that he wants to go and celebrate with. But instead, Naaman goes back to Samaria. Do you remember who's in Samaria?

It's the man of God. The man of God is in Samaria. I expect that Naaman has something to say to the man of God about this miraculous cleansing, about the leprosy that is gone.

But notice this as we look at verse number 15. Naaman doesn't even mention the leprosy. Verse 15. Then Naaman and his whole company went back to the man of God, stood before him, and declared, I know there's no God in the whole world, except in Israel.

Now we need to remember something about Naaman. He is an idolater. Up until that last, up until that moment, when Naaman came up from the seventh and final dip in the Jordan River, Naaman worships many gods.

[12:53] We know this also from 1 Kings chapter 20, that they had this messed up understanding of the gods, that gods could just be manipulated, you know? There were gods of the hills, and there were gods of the valleys, and you just had to figure out where you were, and what was going on, and then offer some sacrifice to that particular god, and you could manipulate that god, big quotey things, to get what you thought you wanted from that particular god.

Gods are local, and limited in their power, so you can manipulate them. We would not be at all surprised if Naaman were to add the god of Israel to his long list of gods.

That would make good sense to us, given the fact that a few moments ago, he was an idolater. You know the god of thunder, but let me introduce you to the god of filthy water, right?

It would make sense to us to add the god of Israel to his long list of gods, but instead, in front of his whole company, did you notice that in the text?

In front of his whole company, in front of his entire entourage, with no shame, Naaman makes this profession of faith.

[14:25] The gods that I used to worship, and the gods that I ignore because I didn't think I need to worship them, none of them are gods at all. All of the gods that I've ever known, there's nothing to them anymore.

I don't believe in them. I'm not going to honor them. Why? Because now I know. Do you see that in your Bible?

That the god of Israel is the only god in the whole world. What a profession of faith.

What a change has taken place at the new birth in Naaman. Who taught Naaman this? Who taught Naaman that he should give up all of his other gods?

Who taught Naaman that he shouldn't just add the god of filthy water to the bottom of his list? Who taught him that? Well, no one taught him that. He didn't need to be taught this.

[15:36] The Holy Spirit gave him new birth, and that new birth came with new instincts. Naaman now has the assurance of things hoped for.

He has the conviction of things not seen. Hours ago, Naaman was leprous and idolatrous and angry and arrogantly disgusted by the man of God's command, and now he is grateful.

Verse 15 at the end. Therefore, please accept a gift from your servant.

But Elisha said, As the Lord lives in whose presence I stand, I will not accept it.

Naaman urged him to accept it, but he refused. In Acts chapter 8, there is an interesting story about a man who is a magician.

[16:49] His name is Simon. Simon tries to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit, and at first glance, it sort of looks like that's what's happening here, doesn't it?

That Naaman wants to somehow repay Elisha for what has happened to him, to make a payment for this miracle.

But I want you to notice that Naaman understands that this is what? A gift. He's not trying to make a payment.

He is not trying to buy. He says, please accept a gift. He wants to honor Elisha.

He wants to have gratitude for what Elisha has done. Now, I suspect that Elisha could have justified accepting a gift from Naaman.

[18:00] Being a prophet is not typically associated with a lucrative career. And so, I'm sure that there were ways that Elisha may have been able to justify receiving this gift from Naaman for the good of the ministry.

Right? For the good of the ministry. But instead, Elisha declines this gift and he makes this solemn oath as the Lord lives in the presence of the Lord as though the Lord were standing here himself. I will not accept this gift. This is a solemn oath. And notice also that as Elisha responds to him in verse 16, Elisha uses the personal name of the Lord.

Do you see it there in your Bible or on the screen? Lord in all caps? When we see that in Scripture, we should remember this is pointing us to a particular translation of the name of the Lord, Yahweh. This is the name of the covenant. These, when you see this in your Bible, you can just think covenant. Something here in the context is supposed to remind me of God's covenant, God's steadfast love, the people and their failure to keep the covenant, and God's care for them anyway.

[19:38] When you see this in your Bible, when you see Lord in all caps, remember covenant. What is it that Elisha testifies to us through this solemn oath and through using the Lord's personal name, Elisha testifies that salvation is absolutely free.

And that sinners are saved by grace through faith. And that faith is a gift not to be bought or sold. And that belief is a behavior that you are born with at the moment of new birth.

This is what Elisha testifies by declining this gift. I love Naaman's response in verse 17. Naaman responded, if not, if you're not going to accept a gift, please let your servant be given as much soil as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will no longer offer a burnt offering or any sacrifice to any other God but the Lord.

did you notice how Naaman refers to himself? He calls himself your servant. Not just once, five times in these few verses.

There is zero chance Naaman thought of himself as Elisha's servant earlier that day when he is standing in front of Elisha, waiting for Elisha, in front of Elisha's door, waiting for Elisha to come out, stand with him, wave his hand, call upon the name of his God, and heal him of his leprosy.

[21:26] Zero chance that Naaman considers himself Elisha's servant. Something has changed inside of Naaman.

This five-star general from the ruling power of the day now considers himself a servant of the prophet in Samaria.

The whole picture has been flipped upside down. Naaman, who used to be proud and arrogant and angry and disgusted at the prophet's words to him, now all of that pride has been replaced by new birth behavior, humility.

Notice first how Naaman refers to himself, but notice secondly how Naaman refers to God. Notice this, Naaman picks up on how Elisha refers to the Lord.

Earlier, when Naaman shows up at his door and he tells Elisha that he is not going to worship any other God, that there is only one God in all of the whole world, Naaman uses the name Elohim for God.

[22:42] God. It's a general term for God, but now when he hears Elisha refer to God as the Lord, look what Naaman does.

Naaman starts referring to the Lord that way as well. How interesting. This is how God's covenant people refer to him as Yahweh, as our Lord, as the covenant keeping God.

Naaman refers to himself, Naaman refers to the Lord, and then notice how he reconciles these two things. How he thinks of himself, now a servant, how he thinks about the Lord as the covenant keeping God of his people.

How is Naaman going to close this gap? Well, he has already acknowledged the first commandment, that there is no other God, and now he also already instinctively knows the second commandment, that he ought not to bow down and worship any other gods.

So Naaman asks Elisha for a gift of dirt. I love this. You won't receive my gift, and you testify to the freeness of what I have received, and so Naaman goes all in and says, okay, I'm going to ask for more.

[24:11] You won't take my gift, then please give me another gift. And he wants two dirt loads, two mule, two dirt loads, two loads of dirt to put on his mules.

I couldn't get those words ordered correctly. To put on his mules to haul back. How fascinating. Remember how this story started? With a raid.

Syrians are used to just showing up and taking whatever they want. It's like a construction around town, and you just show up and take a couple loads of dirt. Don't do that. That would be stealing. That's what I'm telling you. He's used to just showing up in Israel in these raids. That's how this story started. Just take whatever you want. And Naaman says, no, I'm not going to take it. Would you give it to me as a gift?

And he also doesn't want to buy it. Naaman's new birth instincts are already having an effect on him. He wants to receive more of God's kindness.

[25 : 16] Please give me two mule loads of dirt. Isn't it interesting that just a few hours ago, Naaman was disgusted by the thought of the filthy Jordan River.

And now he wants to take some of that same dirt back to Syria with him so that he can build an altar in order to worship the one true God of Israel.

Who told Naaman to build an altar? Well, we are not sure. But he seems to instinctively know that using an existing altar, an altar that he has previously used in order to worship false gods would be inappropriate and would desecrate the name and the character of the one true God of the whole world.

It's true. The one true God does not and will not share his glory. Now, let's be clear about this. Naaman doesn't need dirt from Israel in order to worship the God of Israel. But this dirt will be a continual reminder, not only to Naaman and his family, but to others who come and see him worshipping.

[26 : 41] It'll be a reminder of where, or rather, from who, this restoration and this cleansing, this new birth that he has received, where did that come from?

That came from the God of Israel. Israel. I brought back some dirt, almost like a souvenir, so that I don't forget where I was when my skin was restored and my body was cleansed.

Naaman's first request, two mule loads of dirt, but he has a second request. He is leaning hard into this grace thing. Verse number 18. However, Naaman is speaking.

In a particular matter, may the Lord pardon your servant. When my master, the king of Aram, goes into the temple of Ramon to bow in worship while he is leaning on my arm, and I have to bow in the temple of Ramon, when I bow in the temple of Ramon, may the Lord pardon your servant in this matter.

Hmm. Some read this verse and question Naaman's credibility. You are still going to go into the temple of a false god?

[28 : 27] You wouldn't. You wouldn't. How dare you? Some question Naaman's credibility.

And some, way wiser than me, have noted that the Hebrew verb that Naaman uses here, rather the Hebrew verb that this particular story uses to record what Naaman says here, this Hebrew verb does not have a present tense.

It only has a past tense. And so some scholars say, perhaps Naaman is thinking about the past, and he is saying, I need to be forgiven for what I have done in the past.

One author says, perhaps that cuts off the knot rather than untangling it. And I think that's maybe true. I'm not sure that that's helpful. Let's think about this for just a moment.

Naaman describes his usual, his typical behavior. He goes into the temple of the false god in order to assist his master in some temple ritual.

[29 : 44] And he has these new birth instincts. He has a sense that bowing in the temple will be prohibited. That it is not the behavior of one who worships the one true and only god of the whole earth.

And so Naaman seeks forgiveness as if he is saying this, when I go and do this thing that I am going to do, when I go and do this thing, I will not be worshipping.

May the Lord forgive me for what it looks like when I go to serve my master and to support him as he goes before the false god.

I think Elisha's response helps me to believe this is a careful way of thinking about this.

Look at how Elisha responds in verse 19. So he, Elisha, said to him, go in peace.

[30 : 57] in his most recent visits to the temple of the false god, if Naaman's boss, the king, had risked his life doing so, he would have been leaning on Naaman's gross, infected, contagious, leprous arm.

Naaman is there to support the king, to serve the king as the king bows and carries on this pagan ritual. But think about the very next time, the time that Naaman has in mind when I go into the

temple to support my master, the king.

Think about the next time that Naaman accompanies the king into the temple. And his master, the king, is leaning on Naaman's arm, an arm that is now strong and smooth and free of leprosy. king. And king ben-hadad will have to acknowledge this block of carved rock that I am bowing down to did not and could not provide healing to my servant Naaman.

man. This healing did not come from this lifeless, powerless idol. King ben-hadad will have to acknowledge this healing, the healing of this strong, clean, whole arm that I am leaning on.

[32 : 58] This healing came from the God of Israel, the only God in the whole earth.

I wonder if Elisha offers this blessing with a bit of a twinkle in his eye. Because Elisha knows that every time Naaman goes into the temple of a false God, he is not going for a worship gathering. Naaman is going for an invasion. Do you see that? Naaman is invading the kingdom of darkness. And Elisha knows the gates of hell will not prevail against it. With restored skin and a cleansed body, Naaman's presence right there in the temple of the false God proclaims this truth.

There is no God in the whole world except in Israel. Elisha's blessing to Naaman is not just a goodbye.

[34 : 25] This is God's blessing on Naaman mediated by God's prophet. This is a benediction. Go in peace.

Go in shalom. Go in goodness. You have been cleansed. You are restored. You have been reconciled to God. You are at peace with his prophet and with his people.

You Naaman are whole. What a life changing destiny defining day for Naaman.

He is a receiver of amazing grace and this grace is working out new birth instincts. Faith humility worship forgiveness.

Are you a receiver of God's amazing grace? Have you received God's amazing grace? Do you have the behaviors of a follower of Jesus?

[35 : 33] Behaviors that are given to us at the moment of new birth? Do you have those behaviors? What keeps you from coming to Jesus this morning? What keeps you from following Naaman's example and leaving behind all of your pride on the shore so that you can leave behind there in those filthy waters those bloody waters so that you can leave behind in the fountain filled with blood all of your sin and all of your guilt because Jesus paid it all.

What keeps you this morning from trusting in Jesus? Listen again to the gospel summons from Acts 16:31 believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Followers of Jesus as Paul tells Titus in chapter two the grace that saves us is also the grace that is training and transforming us.

you can try to break your bad habits on your own. You can try to clean up your thoughts.

can try to stop lusting, to stop cheating, to stop swearing, to stop coveting, to stop being hurtful to your siblings. You can try to stop doing all of these things.

[37 : 12] you can try to stop taking the Lord's name in vain. You can try to do all of these things in your own strength.

As Ms. Swift sings, you can take a miracle move on drug, but the effects are temporary.

this is true for us as well. We can take some kind of moment and clean up ourselves, try to fix ourselves, make our lives better, do more, try harder, be better.

We can do those things for a while. But I promise you that the effects of that kind of miracle move on drug will be temporary.

Instead, you can continue to receive, to receive God's grace, like we spoke about in our call to worship this morning, and like we saw name and demonstrate, what can I do?

[38 : 26] What can I give back to the Lord for all that he has given to me? What is the answer? I will continue to receive the cup of salvation.

I'll just continue to receive more and more and more of God's grace. You can ask the Holy Spirit to renew and to awaken and to bring to maturity the instincts of the new birth.

And as Naaman was confident before his whole entourage, perhaps amazing grace will stir up inside of you and train you to say with Paul, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps as Naaman was humbly grateful, amazing grace will train you to worship more sincerely, to worship more wholeheartedly, to worship more passionately, to worship more consistently, to glorify God, not only here when we gather for worship, but as we leave this place and go out into all of the places where God places us.

Perhaps as Naaman looked to the Lord for forgiveness, amazing grace will train you to receive and to rest in the forgiveness of sin and the righteousness of your Savior Jesus so that shame loses its grip because you are increasingly assured of being made whole, fully loved, eternally accepted, wonderfully delighted in, and as a result, child of God, you are a devastating threat to the kingdom of darkness.

[40 : 26] Like shimmering honeybees and like a sowing tailor bird, the Holy Spirit gives followers of Jesus behaviors that we are born with, instincts of the new birth.

Let's go before the Lord together and ask him to reawaken, to renew, and to bring to maturity these amazing gifts of amazing grace.

Let's pray. Father, we are so humbly grateful to be recipients of your amazing grace. We are so thankful for the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are so humbly grateful for the great price, Lord Jesus, that you paid to redeem and to reconcile hopelessly lost sinners to yourself.

We were so gross with sin, and yet you have cleansed us by your bloody death on the cross. And now we are recipients not only of amazing grace, but of righteousness, mercy, love, peace.

[41 : 53] Thank you for your good kindness to us. blessed Holy Spirit, thank you for granting us life. Thank you for the gift of faith.

Thank you for stirring up in all of your children, all of your people, that gift of faith that results in the response and expression of belief in Jesus.

Jesus. Holy Spirit, we humbly ask, even as we testify and declare what is true, we believe, but help our unbelief.

Stir up fresh faith in your people today. Thank you for the gifts of grace. We ask all of this, giving thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.