

Disruptive Pride

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[0 : 0 0] can have a seat. Thank you, friends, for serving us faithfully today and throughout this week as you prepared. I was thinking about those last couple of songs that we sang together, and the last verse of the We Will Feast song, at the end of it, it has the word shalom. And sometimes we hear that word, and it's used when we want to say peace. We think of shalom as peace, as a greeting, a Hebrew greeting. They might just say shalom to one another. And that word has this sermon series title. That's the idea behind shalom. Not merely peace, but wholeness, being whole, and being healthy, and the broken things restored, and the ruined things made new. And then we sang that adaptation of Psalm 107, which I just love because it has such clever, helpful lyrics bringing that psalm into words that we can be familiar with and enjoy singing. And the chorus of it talks about a safe dwelling place and a feast of joy and gladness. That's shalom. That's what followers of Jesus are looking forward to, wholeness, and health, and restoration, and a renewing of all things. Because Jesus is going to make all things new. And that's not even our sermon for today. But Jesus is going to make all things new.

I hope you're on over to 2 Kings chapter 5. 2 Kings chapter 5. Emily is going to serve us this morning, and she's going to start reading at verse number 4. So we're not going all the way back to the beginning like we did last week. We're picking this up now, this story. I gather that you're probably familiar with some of it. So we are picking up the story in 2 Kings chapter 5, verse number 4. And Emily is going to read down through verse number 13. So Naaman went in and told his lord, thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel. And the king of Syria said, go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel. So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, when this letter reaches you, know that I have sent you Naaman, my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy.

And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, am I God to kill and make alive that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me. But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean. But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Barpar, 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. But his servants came near and said to him, my father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you. Will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, wash and be clean? So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God. And his flesh was restored, like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for the goodness of it.

Thank you for the clarity of it. Thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit so that we can read it and understand it. Would you please help us as we spend time now in your word together?

[4 : 19] Help us to listen. Help us to learn. Help us to understand. Help us to believe. Help us to obey the things that your word teaches us. Help us to see our Savior, the Lord Jesus, again this morning, and to be delighted in him and all that he has done for us. Would you please help me to preach your word faithfully? Help me to have clear thoughts. Please take away anything that would be unhelpful or distracting, and just leave those things that you have for us today. We ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks. Amen. After we dropped Chloe off at Boyce College this fall, Lois and I left the campus, and you drive just a little ways, not all that far, and then you make a right turn, and then you merge onto a highway. And so we merged onto this highway, and we were anticipating merging onto interstate, and we were actually traveling over to see some of Lois's family in Kansas City. And so we were anticipating merging onto this particular interstate. And as we approached what we believed was going to be merging onto this interstate, we noticed that the signs all said that there was a detour. Do you know what a detour is, kids? When certain roads are closed, and you can't use them, and you have to take different roads. And so we're like, whoa, we don't really know what we're doing. I don't like that stress. I don't mind driving, but I don't want the stress of not knowing where we are, any of those things. Lois is very good at navigating, but of course, like she wasn't anticipating this detour. And so what did we do? We followed these signs, and we just followed the detour signs. And we followed, and followed, and followed, and then we came, and we were at the exact same place where we were before, looking at the sign for interstate, and realizing that interstate has a detour. We can't get on it. But the detour signs had just looped us around, back onto the same road.

Last week, we noticed that Naaman's slave girl is credible. And we noticed that Naaman is desperate.

And most importantly, we noticed that the Lord is at work. And these, I didn't really think about this enough until this last week when I was thinking about writing the questions for discussion. These three things are a powerful combination for the gospel, aren't they? A credible witness, a desperate listener, and God at work. So what happens? Surprising faith. Naaman's wife believes. Naaman himself believes the little girl. And the king of Syria, of all people, believes the little girl as well.

But as our story continues, something inside of Naaman threatens to detour him from his destination.

Something is going to distract him from the object of his faith, which is the God of Israel.

[8 : 08] Following diplomatic protocol and following the established chain of command, Naaman and his entourage appear before Israel's king, Joram. And this seems like a positive step, right? Naaman is there before the king of Israel.

He has gold and silver and gifts of clothing. He is ready to pay whatever price is necessary for this out-of-network medical care. King Joram, we noticed last week, must have certainly known about Elisha. By this time, Elisha had already performed many miracles.

He had parted the Jordan. He had multiplied the widow's oil. He had even raised a little boy, a young child, from the dead. Surely, King Joram must have known, but he has no faith.

Similarly, didn't the religious leaders in Jesus' day know that he had walked on water? Didn't they know that he had multiplied a little boy's lunch? Didn't they know that he had raised Lazarus from the dead? Oh, they did know those things.

And in spite of knowing those things in their heads, they made plans to hand over Jesus for crucifixion. See, merely knowing facts about Jesus, knowing what Jesus did is insufficient for salvation.

[9 : 59] Jesus himself says in John chapter 3 and verse 16, whoever believes in me will not perish. Not whoever knows the most about me, not whoever knows enough about me, whoever believes in me will not perish, but have eternal life.

Do you believe in Jesus? Or like King Joram, are you still without faith?

Although you know lots of things about Jesus. So, unfortunately, King Joram offers Naaman no help, no hope, and no blessing.

But this step in God's sovereign sequence of events is not at all wasted. Because whatever happens next, Naaman knows this.

It didn't happen because I followed diplomatic protocol. Because I've already done that. It didn't happen because I followed the chain of command and I finally got to someone at the top who could make this happen.

[11 : 14] Because I did that. And it didn't happen because I brought all of the money that I could muster. Because I did that. And it didn't get me the healing that I needed.

His trip to the King of Israel is not a wasted trip. Not in God's sovereign sequence of events. I wonder, do you like secrets?

Do you like secrets, Bennett? You do? Do you like to tell secrets or do you like to keep secrets? You like to keep secrets. That's good to know. Good to know.

Who else? Owen, you like to tell secrets or do you like to keep secrets? Neither. Owen is anti-secrets. Elam? You like keeping them because it means you didn't start the secret.

That's good. Anybody else want to weigh in on their secret keeping or telling? Do you want to know something interesting? You cannot keep secrets from the prophet in Samaria.

[12 : 21] There is no keeping secrets from Elisha. He is a man of God and he hears about how King Joram has responded to Naaman and I expect that Elisha is disappointed and yet not surprised that the son of Ahab and Jezebel would respond this way.

In a moment of crisis, King Joram is self-centered rather than God-focused and he looks at his difficult circumstances without the perspective of faith and so he can't see what God is doing, how God is moving, and who God is drawing to himself.

King Joram is a hindrance to Naaman, sadly, not a help. And yet there is something still inside of Naaman that will be a more diverting detour to his faith.

Look at chapter 5 and verse 8. When Elisha, the man of God, I love that. When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, can't keep secrets from him, he sent a message to the king.

Why have you torn your clothes? Have him come to me and he will know there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house.

[14 : 10] I want you to notice what Elisha did not say first. Notice what he did not say. He did not say, send him to me and I will heal him.

Elisha is going to heal him. That's a little spoiler. But Elisha doesn't say that. Elisha says, send him to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.

I think this is significant. Physical healing is not Naaman's ultimate need. Remember, sin will destroy Naaman's body just as surely as the leprosy, sorry, sin will destroy Naaman's soul just as surely as leprosy will destroy his body.

Healing, physical healing for his body is not his ultimate need. And Elisha knows this. Naaman's ultimate need is the salvation of his soul.

He needs to know and believe in Elisha's God. The God of Israel. The God of the prophet in Samaria.

[15 : 44] And so here comes Naaman and his whole entourage and they arrive at Elisha's house. It must have been quite a scene. Certainly the most important person who has ever shown up at Elisha the prophet's house.

An entire entourage. Dignitaries from a foreign country. And Naaman has a small fortune to spend and he is ready to do business with the prophet.

This is the moment Naaman has been waiting for, isn't it? This is the moment that he has been looking forward to and preparing for and maybe even dreaming about.

And we have too, right? I mean, it's been four weeks. Enough talk. Let's get on to some miracles. Well, not so fast. Verse number 10.

Then Elisha sent him a messenger. who said, go wash seven times in the Jordan and your skin will be restored and you will be clean.

[16 : 58] Naaman and his entourage just had an audience with the king. And at Elisha's direction, they have come to his house and they are all there now.

ready for the prophet to do his thing. And the prophet is a no-show. He doesn't even honor Naaman with a personal greeting.

Instead, Elisha sends a messenger out to give him a message. But this is an important message. Go wash seven times in the Jordan River and your skin will be restored and you will be clean.

Notice how this message has both a command and a promise. Do you see that in your Bible or on the screen? Go wash seven times in the Jordan River.

There's the command. And here comes the promise. Your skin will be restored and you will be clean. Command with a promise.

[18 : 21] But rather than obeying this simple and yet humbling command, rather than trusting God to deliver on his word through Elisha, Naaman throws a temper tantrum.

I think it must have been a doozy. Look at verse number 11. But Naaman got angry and left saying, I was telling myself he will surely come out, stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and wave his hand over the place and cure the skin disease.

Aren't Abana and Farpar the rivers in Damascus better than all of the waters in Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be clean? So he turned and left in a rage.

He throws a little temper tantrum. Except he's an adult so it's a big temper tantrum. See, Naaman has an agenda.

He has a plan for how this healing should occur. He is expecting to be treated like a five-star general from a foreign country.

[19 : 57] He thinks he's entitled to that. He expects that Elisha will meet him personally. It's almost like a photo op is what he's looking for.

Do you get a sense of that? I thought that he would come out and stand. It's kind of like how we would think about a photo op. And then wave his hand over me.

Naaman does not want the prophet's message from the Lord. Do you know what Naaman wants? He wants a genie.

He just wants his wish to be granted. He wants a fairy godmother who can change all of his circumstances all in a moment and just give him the perfect life.

Naaman wants a wizard, someone who can say the magic words and make his disease go away. But since the prophet is not going with Naaman, Naaman assumes then the power must be in the water.

[21 : 18] I mean, if the prophet's not going to go with me, if he's not going to be my genie or my fairy godmother, he's not going to do those things for me, then the power for this healing must just be in the water.

And if the power is in the water, why did I have to come here? And why do I have to dip in that water, which is filthy? With these wounds, I'll probably end up more sick, not better, and we have better rivers.

Remember, Naaman is used to manipulating his small g double quotes gods. He's used to just manipulating his idols and getting what he thinks he wants from them by just doing something.

Do you hear the pride in Naaman's heart? Wash seven times in the Jordan River?

That would be so humiliating. In front of my men? In front of this entourage? If a bath is all is necessary, why did I bother traveling here?

[22 : 40] If we just needed some water, I know where there's better water. Narrator voice. God heals, not water.

Naaman suddenly sounds like King Joram, doesn't he? And he sounds like Frank Sinatra.

He is saying the things he truly feels and not the words of one who kneels. Naaman says, I want this healing, but I want it my way.

Naaman's angry response reminds me of Cain when God did not accept his offering.

Do you remember looking at that last fall? God does not accept Cain's offering because he offers it without faith and Cain gets angry and God speaks to Cain and he warns him that sin is ready to pounce.

[24 : 02] Do what is right and you'll be accepted. Well, Naaman's servants, the same servants who I suspect have had enough faith not to talk him out of this plan to come to Israel now try talking Naaman into being reasonable and that's in verse 13.

But his servants approached him and said to him, my father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?

How much more should you do it when he only tells you wash and be clean? If the prophet had said to you, in order to be clean, you must clean up your life and stop hurting people, if the prophet had said to you, you need to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, if the prophet had said to you, give me all of your money that you have, if the prophet had said to you, you need to walk on hot coals, or if the prophet had said to you, you need to go on an epic quest for the holy grail, if the prophet had said to you, you need to walk 500 miles and then walk 500 more, you would do it gladly, if the prophet said, you need to do three good deeds a day, father

Naaman, you would do it and you would do it gladly, why would you hesitate when he offers you this one command with a promise, go wash and your skin will be restored and you will be cleansed, this is a good question, Naaman is blessed by wise servants, Elisha's command with a promise reminds me of another message to a pagan Gentile, perhaps you remember this from Acts chapter 16, they said, they being Paul and Silas, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, do you see it there again?

The command, believe in the Lord Jesus and the associated promise and you will be saved, not you might be saved, not maybe you'll be saved, not if you say the right words or do the right things, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, a simple and yet humbling command, and you will be saved, a beautiful promise.

- [27 : 48] What keeps people from believing in Jesus? What keeps you from believing in Jesus? Jesus? It's not because the command to believe is too difficult.
- It's not because the command to believe requires you to know pages and pages and pages of seminary level knowledge about the Bible.
- It's not because the command is too difficult. And it's not because the promise is inadequate. You will be saved?
- There's no inadequacy in that promise? Who wouldn't want that promise? So then what is the problem? What keeps people from believing in Jesus?
- What keeps you from believing in Jesus? I think the number one thing that keeps people from Jesus is pride.
- [29 : 01] Pride is like Lois and I trying to leave Louisville and knowing where our destination is and yet being looped around by this detour back onto the same road where we started.
- Pride does that in our hearts. It takes our eyes and our attention and our affection off of God and detours us around back onto ourselves.
- And maybe we even see the object of our faith. We maybe even have some understanding of the truths about Jesus and yet pride just keeps us stuck over and over again in this detour loop that we can't break out of.
- Not only is pride like a detour, pride is also like plaque that builds up inside of your body's arteries, clogging, clogging your arteries because you eat too much fast food.
- fast food. I'm going to have fast food for lunch. You eat too much fast food and that fast food and that salt, all of that is clogging up your arteries.
- [30 : 30] And what is going to happen? The blood can't flow the way that it should because your arteries are all coated with built up thick plaque. this is not a medical diagnosis.
- I'm just telling you an illustration. Pride is like that but not in our physical heart. Pride is like that in our heart, in the real you.
- It's like plaque building up inside of your heart such that God's grace is disrupted from flowing through and to and out of you.
- I say this on the basis of Peter's writing in 1 Peter chapter 5. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- skill skill skill in Sodom and Gomorrah.
- [32 : 05] Ezekiel chapter 16. Now this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom. She and her daughters had pride. Plenty of food and comfortable security but didn't support the poor and needy.
- They were self-centered, focused on their own needs, so loaded up with pride that they couldn't see the hurting people around them, loaded up with pride that they couldn't submit to God's commands.
- Think of the story that Jesus told about the Pharisee and the tax collector. I love this. I'm gonna read it because it's so wonderful. This is from Luke chapter 18.
- Jesus told this parable to some who, notice, trusted in themselves. Their hearts were thick with the plaque of pride.
- They trusted in themselves that they were righteous and they looked down on everyone else. Two men went up to the temple to pray.
- [33 : 21] One, a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself. I'm so glad Jesus gives us this story because we would never write it this way, would we?
- The Pharisee, the guy that you thought was the most religious person that you knew, prays like this, God, I thank you that I am not like other people.

I'm not greedy or unrighteous or an adulterer or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of everything I get.

Every time he opens his mouth, it's just a pride detour back onto himself. What about the tax collector? The least religious one, likely in the minds of the disciples.

The least likely to be one who would be believing in God. Jesus says, But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven, but he kept striking his chest saying, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

[34 : 39] I tell you, this one went down to his house justified. He has a right relationship with God rather than the other.

Because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted. How is pride detouring you away from the object of your faith and looping you back again and again and again into self-centeredness?

How is pride thickening like plaque in your heart and threatening to disrupt the flow of God's amazing grace?

We spot pride so quickly in others, don't we? And we even spot obvious pride in ourselves. I want this. I deserve that.

I am entitled to this. I'm better than you. I'm more important than you. I'm stronger than you. I'm smarter than you. I'm more attractive than you. All of these obvious forms forms of pride.

[36 : 08] But what about when pride takes a more subtle form? What about pride that looks like stubbornness, that refuses to admit wrongdoing?

What about pride that makes you unable to empathize with others and you refuse to listen to those who are desiring to give you counsel because I already know all of this?

What about pride that looks like a lack of gratitude? gratitude? Because you feel entitled to all of the good things that are coming your way?

What about pride that looks like defensiveness when I am unwilling to consider that I actually might be the problem right now?

What about pride that looks like a persistent need to control every situation and your fingers, metaphorically speaking, are just white knuckle because you are holding on to everything with such a tight grip, refusing to trust the object of your faith?

[37 : 37] that's pride too, isn't it? What about pride that looks like looking down without grace on Christians who hold different doctrinal positions than we do?

My brothers and my sisters, Jesus frees you from the power of pride. pride no longer needs to rule over your life.

On the cross, Jesus shattered pride in all of its obvious and subtle forms. And for those in Christ, the Holy Spirit is in the business of removing detour signs so that we stop looping around on these detours of pride and coming back to the same place and instead we are able to see the object of our faith, the Lord Jesus.

And not only is the Holy Spirit removing detour signs, He is also performing spiritual angioplasty. Did I get that one right, Jenny? Spiritual angioplasty.

He is going in, blowing up a balloon, and pulling back out all of that junk that's in there. He's dealing with the plaque that is built up in our hearts, that plaque of pride that needs to be removed so that, so that, grace flows freely and abundantly.

[39 : 21] God's grace, that life-giving, sin-cleansing, power-filling grace.

So good. So necessary. We're so desperate for it, aren't we? God's grace has been abundantly evident in Naaman's life.

He listens to his wife. He believes the slave girl. He received encouraging support from the king.

He gathered all of the resources that he needed and assembled an entourage to make this trip to Israel. All God's grace. He traveled safely there.

He could have died on the way. He travels safely there. He tolerates King Joram's lack of faith without lopping him off at the shoulders and heading back to Syria.

[40 : 27] That was grace. He receives a simple but a humbling command with a promise. That's grace. And he has servants who are faithfully guiding him towards obedience.

It's all grace for Naaman. will his pride detour him from God's promised healing?

Will the plaque of pride be too thick inside of his heart and will it disrupt the flow of God's grace? Next week verse 13.

Let's pray. good father thank you for your kindness. Sweet Jesus we are so humbled by your grace.

Thank you for loving us when we were unlovely and thank you for shattering the power of sin on the cross. thank you that when death and hell and our adversary the devil thought that you had been defeated you turned the tables once and for all and you destroyed the one who has the power of death and now Lord Jesus conquering king you hold the keys of death and Hades we revel in your victory over our sin.

[42 : 11] Blessed Holy Spirit please do business with our hearts help us not just as we take time to reflect and to consider the sin of pride but also as we leave this place of worship and go out into our normal lives please in your kindness make us sensitive to areas of pride both obvious and subtle we need your help give us courage to receive those who might come to us whether that is a spouse or a friend or a co-worker or one of our children or a parent give us courage to receive counsel from those who love us and care for us when they are trying to help us see where the plaque of pride has built up would you please help us as we take a few moments right now and prepare to receive the Lord's

Supper father thank you for your word to us from Romans chapter 8 that we started with this morning there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus give us a fresh sense of your grace and your forgiveness and your goodness to us in Christ help us as we seek to be faithful in following you in Jesus name we pray amen amen amen