

Gross Sin

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[0 : 0 0] And please take out your Bible, and this might take you a moment. Get on over to 2 Kings chapter 5, please. 2 Kings chapter 5.

And we're going to spend some time here in 2 Kings chapter 5. This is, I hope, a beautiful little preaching series through this one chapter of the Bible.

And we're going to approach it a little bit like how they do a TV series now, except it's a preaching series, in that it's going to have little episodes.

So our episode today is only covering the first verse. Yes. So 2 Kings chapter 5, verse number 1.

And Evan is going to serve us this morning. Naman, a commander of the army for the king of Aram, was a man important to his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram.

[1 : 0 5] The man was a valiant order, but he had a skin disease. Let's pray. Father, we are grateful for the opportunity to gather and to worship you.

Please help us to continue worshiping in spirit and in truth. Thank you for the dear friends who prepared throughout this week the order of service songs that will help us consider and reflect and be reminded of these truths that we're going to learn about together in your word.

Thank you for their preparation this morning. While some of us were probably still sleeping, they were up and preparing to serve us. Thank you for them. Please bless and encourage them and keep them faithful.

Thank you for those who are serving now in helping with the sound and with the slides. Please watch over us as we continue in this time. Thank you for this opportunity to consider a single chapter in the Old Testament and to take up this story of this man named Naaman.

Help us as we consider him to also consider our own hearts and to think about the ways that his story connects with our story.

[2 : 2 1] Thank you for the reminder that we have already had of your holiness and also of your amazing, matchless, infinite grace.

Thank you for loving us when we were so unlovely in our sin. Help us as we spend this time together now.

So, blessed Holy Spirit, please come and do work in our hearts. Cause repentance. Please stir up fresh faith.

Grant life. We look to you to do what we are incapable of doing. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. So, as I mentioned, I would like to tell you a story.

And this is a true story. It is not fiction. This is not like Lord of the Rings or Chronicles of Narnia or Harry Potter or Warrior Cats or Frozen or Curious George.

[3 : 3 0] It's not like any of those stories. This is a true story. This is also not a fable. Now, fables are great stories that teach us lessons.

Perhaps you remember the story of the emperor who was not wearing clothes. Or the story of the tortoise and the hare. And we retell this story because we want to teach things to one another.

This is not a fable. It is a true story. This is not a parable. Jesus told parables. Jesus used parables to teach his followers important things about the kingdom of God.

I hope that we learn things about the kingdom of God as I retell you this story. But it is not a parable. This is a true story.

And it's a story from scripture. A story that was recorded by a careful historian who was concerned about accuracy.

[4 : 41] More importantly, this is a story written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And that means that this story is, as Paul writes to Timothy, profitable.

It's useful. For what? For teaching and for rebuking and for correcting and for training in righteousness. A true story.

A story from scripture. This is an important story. Even though this story occurred 800 years before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus knew this story. And one time when the Lord Jesus merely mentioned this story.

It nearly cost him his life. But that's another sermon for a later episode. A true story.

[5 : 47] A story from scripture. An important story. A story about grace. Grace. What is grace? Grace is undeserved love and kindness.

That good behavior cannot earn. And bad behavior will not forfeit. This is grace. We see glimpses of God's grace in books like Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 2.

When we read this. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. That's grace. These people are walking in darkness.

They don't even know that they're walking in darkness. But God's light shines on them. That's grace. Undeserved love and kindness.

That good behavior cannot earn. And bad behavior will not forfeit. We see God's grace.

[6 : 57] We see God's grace in Romans chapter 5. Where we read this. God proves his own love for us. In that while we were still sinners.

Christ died for us. While we were still sinners. Christ died for us. What is that? That is grace. It is undeserved love and kindness.

That good behavior cannot earn. And bad behavior will not forfeit. Christ. Though he is not the most important character in this story.

The main character in this story is a man named Naaman. And Naaman is a Syrian military commander of the Aramean army.

He is a mighty warrior. He is at the pinnacle of his career. He reports directly to the king.

[8 : 01] That's a big deal. Isn't it? If you have a job. You know how important it is. Who you report to. And how far down the ladder that particular person is.

Naaman reports directly to the king. Naaman has a relationship with the Lord.

But get this. Naaman doesn't know it yet. Let's meet Naaman. 2 Kings chapter 5 verse 1.

Naaman commander of the army for the king of Aram was a man important to his master. And highly regarded.

Because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. Now Naaman is not an Israelite.

- [9 : 05] I've already mentioned. He's a Syrian. He is not one of God's covenant people. On the contrary.
- Naaman is an idolater. And he is the five star general. Of Israel's number one enemy.
- The number one enemy of God's people. Is Syria at this time. And Naaman is the commander of this army. But the Lord.
- The text tells us. Helps Naaman win victories. And some of those victories. Were over God's chosen people.
- In the northern kingdom. This is why I say that Naaman. Has a relationship with the Lord. But he doesn't know it yet.
- [10 : 11] But I suspect that Naaman knew something about the Lord. Here's why I suspect that.
- The commonly accepted understanding at that time.
- About gods. Lowercase g. Or deities. If you happen to be watching the Cinderella movie. The commonly accepted understanding about gods.
- Is that there are lots of gods. But gods are local. And so. As a result. They are limited. Because they are local.
- And so all you have to do. Is figure out where that god has power. Power. And if you just figure out. Where that particular god has power. Then you can manipulate that god.
- To get what you want. Or just avoid that place. Where that particular god has power. Now. We know that this is. The commonly accepted understanding.
- [11 : 08] Because there's a story about this. In 1 Kings chapter 20. Where the Syrian army. Has lost a battle. Up in the mountains. And we get this little insight.
- Into. What would you call this. Kind of the post-mortem conversation. Between the soldiers. And the king. And the generals. And so on. They're having a conversation.
- And they say. Well. We lost. Because we fought that particular battle. Up in the mountains. So the next time. We're just going to make sure. We fight the battle down in the plains.
- And then we'll have victory over them. Their god must be one of those mountain gods. So if we get down into the plains. It'll be better for us.
- This was the commonly accepted understanding. About gods. Now. Naaman may have thought.
- [12 : 04] We win these battles. Because I am a superior commander. We're winning these battles. Because my army is more well trained.
- Perhaps the Aramean army is more well equipped. All of these things. May be true. He may have been a superior military commander.
- His soldiers may have been. More well trained. His army may have been. More well equipped. But ultimately. It was the lord himself.
- The lord. Notice in your text. Yahweh. Who is directing. The military career. Of the five star general. Named Naaman. He has a relationship.
- With the lord. But he doesn't know it yet. Let me make two brief applications. About success.
- [13 : 15] Success. Success. Is God's gift. And not a reward. That you earn. Don't we see that here? Naaman's success.
- Though he may have thought. It was a result of his doing. It was ultimately. The lord. Who was giving. Him victory.

It spreads quickly. It kills slowly. Leprosy is incurable. There is no medicine, no cream, no ointment that can make you better.

And if you encounter a person with this skin disease of leprosy, you would be totally grossed out and run away.

But you wouldn't run away just because you are grossed out. You would also run away because leprosy is highly contagious. And so those who get leprosy need to be isolated.

[19 : 16] They need to be away from everyone else. Perhaps you remember being quarantined during COVID. It's like that except you don't get to be with your own family either.

You don't get to be in your own house. You have to be sent away to live with other lepers. Naaman is accustomed to success.

He is a strong leader. He is very familiar with being in charge.

And now he is experiencing a horrific, humiliating, and incurable skin condition that is spreading inside of his body but is utterly outside of his control.

Naaman's favor with his boss, the king?

[20 : 32] Irrelevant. Irrelevant. Naaman's military rank? Worthless.

Naaman's noble status in the regime? Meaningless. Naaman's accomplishments and achievements, his victories, none of them matter.

Not anymore. Naaman has leprosy. Leprosy will kill him.

And there is nothing that he can do about it. Through the human authors of scripture, God often uses things that we can see to teach us truths about things that we can not see.

Think about the way that Noah's ark teaches us about deliverance through judgment.

[21 : 57] It's something that we can see. This massive boat. And if you are in the boat, then you are safe. And if you are outside of the boat, you experience God's judgment and are destroyed.

Through the visual picture of the ark, God teaches us about judgment and about being delivered through judgment.

Think about the sacrificial system. Think about lambs. Isn't it true that if you're reading in the scripture and suddenly a lamb is introduced into the story, you're almost like, I know where this is going to go.

I know what's going to happen to that creature. Why is that? Because through the story of the Bible, God is teaching us something that sin requires a sacrifice and that lambs are an appropriate sacrifice for sin.

There must be blood in order for forgiveness. God teaches us through the visual, through the picture of the lamb, about the importance, the necessity of a sacrifice in order to receive forgiveness.

[23 : 20] So much so that in the New Testament, when Jesus shows up on the scene in John chapter 1, verse 29, the apostle John says, records for us, the apostle John records John the Baptist saying, behold the lamb of God.

And you're like, I know where this is going to go. I've heard this story before. I know what happens to lambs. Through things that we can see, God teaches us truths about things that we cannot see.

The same is true of how God in the scripture uses skin disease, the skin disease called leprosy. God uses leprosy as a picture, an illustration of sin.

Like leprosy, sin often seems insignificant at first. Perhaps you even think that you can manage your sin.

Maybe you do rationalization of your sin, mental gymnastics in order to make your sin seem not so bad. Maybe your conscience has begun making excuses for your sin.

[24 : 44] I'm just so exhausted. He started it. I didn't start this. He started it. She doesn't really know me. I'm lonely. I deserve this.

It's no big deal. No one is going to get hurt. Sin, like leprosy, seems insignificant at first.

But like leprosy, sin also spreads quickly. Doesn't it? It defiles the mind and it corrupts the conscience. It disfigures the personality.

It ruins the will. Such that sinners,! sinners, left to themselves, hate God, hate God's law, want nothing to do with God, think the life and death and resurrection of Jesus is a joke.

Sin, like leprosy, seems insignificant, but it spreads quickly. But as it is spreading quickly, it's actually killing you very slowly.

[25 : 53] From the inside out, destroying and defiling. Sin is a rot on the human soul. Like leprosy, sin is incurable.

Someone has said, and I wish I could give credit for this. It seems as though it's been, the words have been played with a little bit, so I'd be happy to give credit if someone wants to claim credit for this.

Sin is incurable. It takes you farther than you want to go. And it keeps you longer than you want to stay.

And it costs you more than you expected to pay. This is sin. And like leprosy, sin often leads to isolation.

Think of Adam and Eve in the garden, enjoying the presence of God. They doubt God's word, disobey God's command. And suddenly they realize their shame.

[27 : 07] Shame between one another that now causes isolation. Shame and guilt before God that causes them to run and to hide from the one they used to enjoy happy fellowship with.

sin ultimately leads to God needing to remove them from his garden, lest they eat from the tree of life.

Like lepers, like those afflicted with the skin disease, sinners are like the walking dead.

Ephesians chapter 2, Paul writes this, and you, you were dead. Now get this, right?

We don't want to be confused about this. Paul is writing to people who are dead or alive. They're alive, right? They are alive physically, or he wouldn't be writing to them.

[28 : 10] They wouldn't be hearing this letter being read to them from Paul. But he says, you were dead. You're alive now, but you were dead.

How does this make any sense? How could I have been dead before? Well, notice what he says. You were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world.

That's why I say sinners are like the walking dead. You are alive physically, but dead spiritually. Sin is rotting you from the inside out, spreading throughout your body, corrupting and defiling and destroying, rotting your soul.

You're alive physically, but dead spiritually. Paul writes this in Romans chapter 6, the wages of sin is death.

Now, maybe you consider yourself a good person. Hmm? At least better than others that you know.

[29 : 37] You're not the worst. I've been doing some things that work with averages. You're above average. Maybe your mama thinks that you are amazing.

And maybe your grandmother lets you know just how special you are, which my grandmother did every time she saw me. Every time. She must have known that I was a words of affirmation person.

Maybe your life is going smoothly and you are at the top of your career and you have received rewards and won accolades and you have earned titles and degrees and you regularly receive recognition from your peers.

Maybe, like Naaman, you are well paid and well accomplished and well respected. Unlike Naaman, you are not a leper, but you are a sinner.

And sin will destroy your soul just as surely as leprosy destroys the body.

[31 : 00] Like Naaman, your sin condition is incurable. There is no drug that you can take to make you well.

But I do have good news for you. Like Naaman, you have a relationship with God though you may not know it yet.

You see, like Naaman, God has interrupted your apparently successful life with some kind of hardship, some kind of suffering, some kind of grief or pain, and he is working to get your attention.

God has worked every event of your life to bring you to this moment in your life. Children, are you listening? He has worked every moment in your life to bring you to this moment when you would hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and be confronted with the reality of your sin.

You have a relationship with the Lord although you don't know it yet. God is seeking and searching for sinners.

[32 : 26] that's good news. Despite the grotesque effects of your sin, Paul writes to Timothy in chapter 1, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Are you a sinner? Then Christ Jesus came to save you. this is good news. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Here's more good news from 1 John chapter 1. We have already confessed this together. If you confess your sins, He, God, is faithful and righteous to forgive you of your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Do you see that word cleanse you from all unrighteousness? Here's an interesting little fact about leprosy. I already have mentioned that leprosy is incurable.

We don't read about leprosy being healed in the scripture. Do you know how leprosy must be dealt with? You must be cleansed.

[33 : 48] cleansed. Cleansed. Leprosy is incurable. Sin is incurable.

But it can be cleansed. How is it cleansed? It is cleansed through the life and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is Jesus your Savior? Have you trusted in Jesus? Have you had your sin cleansed?

You cannot remedy your sin problem. You cannot remedy your sin problem. Not by doing more, not by trying harder, not by being better, but if you will trust in Jesus, God will cleanse you from your sin.

God will take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. He will forgive your sin.

[35 : 05] You will receive God's grace. You will receive eternal life. You will receive the Lord Jesus Christ himself. is Jesus your Savior?

Have you been saved from your sin? Have you been cleansed? My brothers and sisters, through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, God has rescued you from the penalty of sin.

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. May this reminder of the cost of your salvation that Jesus came to save sinners, may this reminder of the cost of your salvation stir up fresh, sincere worship.

through the washing of the word and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, you are being delivered from the power of sin.

You have already been saved from the penalty of sin if you are a Christian. But through the work of the Holy Spirit, you are being delivered from the power of sin.

[36 : 33] sin no longer has control over you. And little by little the work of the Holy Spirit is making you more like Jesus and you are being delivered from the power of sin in your life.

So don't minimize your sin. Don't sanitize your sin. Don't rationalize your sin. Confess your sin. Own it.

Repent of it. seek amends wherever that is possible. I pray that this reminder of the wretchedness of sin moves you towards repentance and deeper faith in Jesus.

Saved from the penalty of sin, saved from the power of sin, hear this, Jesus will return. Do you believe that?

Jesus will return and on that day he will free you forever from the presence of sin. That's good news.

[37 : 48] Dear child of God, please remember that your father in heaven sees you right now, not in the grossness of your sin, but in the righteousness of your savior, Jesus Christ.

That's good news. Naaman will get the help that he desperately needs, and that help is going to come from an unlikely source.

peace. And Lord willing, we will meet the source of Naaman's help next week. Let's pray. Amen. good father.

We are grateful for your kindness and for your love. Thank you for seeking us when we were not seeking you.

thank you for setting your love upon us when we were rebelling in sin and enemies to you and to your law.

[39 : 20] Thank you that you have in your rich love and abundant love and rich mercy through the work of the Holy Spirit found us dead and breathed life into us eternal life.

Thank you for the message of the gospel and the great hope that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Thank you.

for rescuing us from the penalty of our sin through the death of Jesus on the cross and through his glorious resurrection.

Thank you, Holy Spirit, for delivering us from the power of sin day by day by day, breaking more and more of its oozy hold on our lives.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for interceding for us at the Father's right hand. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thank you for the good hope, the promise that we have of one day being free forever, even from the presence of sin.

[40 : 48] Until that day, would you remind your children that you see us not in the grotesque sin that we engage in, even as your children, but that you see us robed in the righteousness of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, as we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper, Father, would you please give us fresh awareness of our sin and our need of forgiveness and grant repentance where that is necessary.

We ask that you would do that here and as we leave this place, but here in this moment as we take this time to be quiet before you, to examine our hearts in preparation for the Lord's Supper.

Help us to do this sincerely. Father, your promise is true.

If we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We plead that promise.

[42 : 10] We plead the blood of our Savior, Jesus, acknowledging our great and ongoing need of your cleansing. Help us to be the kind of people who take this message of good news out of these walls and into the places where we find ourselves because we know, we know that we are surrounded by others who feel the hopeless, incurable devastation of sin.

Help us to give them the gospel, this gospel of Jesus. We ask all of this giving thanks in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.