



# SUNDAY SCHOOL JULY 6, 2025

Prayer:

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## Old Testament

### 2 Kings 5:1-14

#### NAAMAN IS HEALED OF LEPROSY

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from a skin disease. Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife.

She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease."

So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said.

And the king of Aram said, "Go, then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments.

He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his skin disease."

When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his skin disease? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel."

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house.

Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean."

But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?"

He turned and went away in a rage.

But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

So, he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

#### OVERVIEW

2 Kings 5:1–14 tells the remarkable story of **Naaman**, a powerful Syrian commander afflicted with **leprosy**. Despite his status, he is unable to find healing—until a captured Israelite servant girl points him toward the prophet **Elisha**. Initially insulted by the simple command to wash in the Jordan River,



Naaman eventually complies and is miraculously healed. The passage explores themes of **faith, pride, obedience, humility, and divine grace** offered beyond national or religious boundaries.

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **Placement:** This story is part of the Elisha cycle in 2 Kings, chapters 2–8, showcasing Elisha's prophetic authority and God's power working through him.
- **Theological Emphasis:** The text emphasizes that **God's healing and power are not limited to Israel**, foreshadowing the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan. It also contrasts **human pride** with divine simplicity.
- **Literary Themes:** The narrative juxtaposes **worldly power (Naaman)** with **spiritual authority (Elisha)** and highlights how **humility and obedience** unlock God's blessing.

#### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Syria and Israel:** Naaman is from **Aram-Damascus (modern-day Syria)**, which had frequent military skirmishes with Israel during the 9th century BCE. Despite this conflict, the story humanizes a Syrian figure and portrays cooperation.
- **International Diplomacy:** The king of Aram sends a **letter of request and tribute** to the king of Israel—a diplomatic action showing how disease was not just personal but also political.
- **Leprosy:** In the ancient Near East, leprosy referred to various skin conditions and carried both **social stigma and ritual impurity**, especially in Israelite culture (cf. Leviticus 13–14).
  - *See Addendum on Leprosy.*
- **Servitude and Power:** The unnamed Israelite girl—a **captured servant**—ironically holds the key to Naaman's healing. Her role critiques power structures and emphasizes the value of the marginalized.

#### HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Estimated Date:** Likely occurred during the **9th century BCE**, during the reign of **King Joram (Jehoram) of Israel** (ca. 852–841 BCE).
- **Prophetic Era:** This aligns with the ministry of **Elisha**, who succeeded Elijah and served during a politically tumultuous period involving frequent wars between Israel and surrounding nations like Aram.

#### SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

- **Naaman's Leprosy = Our Inward Brokenness**  
Just as Naaman's leprosy marked him despite his success, many today carry invisible burdens—**mental illness, pride, isolation, or spiritual disconnection**—despite outward success.
- **The Servant Girl = The Power of the Voiceless**  
In Grant County, this might echo **the overlooked wisdom of youth, minorities, or the economically disadvantaged**, whose insight or faith often goes unnoticed.
- **Washing in the Jordan = The Call to Simple Faith**  
Elisha's command seems beneath Naaman's dignity. Likewise, people today often dismiss simple acts—**prayer, service, forgiveness, or community engagement**—because they don't match our expectations of grandeur or control.
- **Pride as a Barrier =** In both ancient and modern contexts, **pride can block healing**. For instance, some may resist **asking for help from a food pantry, mental health services, or a church group** in Grant County because of shame or a culture of self-reliance.



- **Healing from Unexpected Places** = God's grace often shows up **outside expected channels**—whether through secular resources, unexpected neighbors, or unorthodox ministries.

#### SUMMARY

2 Kings 5:1–14 recounts the healing of Naaman, a foreign military commander, who is cured of leprosy not through power or payment, but by humbling himself to follow the prophet Elisha's simple instructions. Initially prideful and offended, **Naaman's transformation begins when he listens to servants and chooses obedience over arrogance.** His healing demonstrates that **God's mercy transcends borders, status, and expectations.** The story invites readers to consider how healing—personal, communal, and spiritual—often comes when we **submit to faith, heed the wisdom of the marginalized, and release our ego.**



## New Testament

### Galatians 6:1-6, 7-16

#### DO WHAT IS RIGHT NOW

My brothers and sisters, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted.

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves.

All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.

Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

**Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow.**

If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh, but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up.

So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith. See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand!

It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who try to compel you to be circumcised--only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh.

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation is everything!

As for those who will follow this rule--peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

#### OVERVIEW

Galatians 6:1–16 serves as Paul's final appeal to the Galatian church, urging them to **live out their faith through humility, accountability, generosity, and reliance on the Spirit rather than the law.** He encourages believers to gently restore those caught in sin, share burdens, remain humble, sow to the Spirit, and boast only in the cross of Christ. The chapter ends with a powerful assertion: the new creation, not circumcision or law, is what matters.

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This passage is part of Paul's concluding letter to the Galatians—a letter written to counter Judaizers who insisted Gentile Christians must follow Jewish laws (like circumcision) to be saved. Galatians as a whole is a defense of **justification by faith** and **Christian freedom**.

- **Verses 1–6** focus on **community ethics**: how to treat those who stumble, how to bear one another's burdens, and how to be accountable for one's own actions.
- **Verses 7–16** transition to personal responsibility and spiritual investment, emphasizing that what we "sow" in the Spirit leads to eternal life, not what we accomplish through religious performance.



## HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Galatian churches were located in what is now modern-day Turkey, a Roman province influenced by both **Greco-Roman culture** and **Jewish diaspora communities**. These churches were being infiltrated by **Judaizers**, Jewish-Christian missionaries who claimed that Gentiles had to follow Mosaic Law to be true Christians. This legalistic pressure created division and confusion in these young Christian communities.

Politically, the Roman Empire tolerated Judaism as a legal religion but was suspicious of new, unregistered movements like early Christianity. This made unity and mutual care within the church crucial for survival and witness.

## HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Date:** Around **48–55 CE**, likely during or just after Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13–14).
- **Audience:** Gentile Christians in the **Galatian region** (either northern or southern depending on scholarly debate).
- This period marks an early stage in the development of Christian theology—particularly as it relates to **grace vs. law**, and **Jew vs. Gentile unity**.

## SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

**Metaphorically**, Paul's message in Galatians 6 is about **reaping what we sow**—not just in a personal moral sense, but in a communal and spiritual one. The emphasis on bearing one another's burdens and not growing weary in doing good becomes a **blueprint for healthy church life**.

### Modern Application:

- In **Grant County, Indiana**, where many churches are closely tied to small, tight-knit communities, this passage challenges congregants to look beyond individual salvation and ask: *How are we walking with others, especially when they fail or suffer?*
- In places where **congregational divisions, pride, or judgmentalism** sometimes threaten Christian unity, Paul's call to humility ("if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing...") speaks volumes.
- His reminder to **do good to all people, especially the family of faith**, could apply to **local food pantries, community gardens**, or efforts to help people in poverty—not as charity, but as mutual burden-bearing.
- Paul's rejection of **boasting in the flesh** applies to modern "Christian performance"—where church success is sometimes measured by attendance, building structure or tithing rather than service and transformation.

This passage encourages a **"non-performative" faith**—one focused not on outward shows of religiosity but on quiet, enduring commitment to one another and to the way of Christ.

## SUMMARY

Paul closes his letter with pastoral counsel:

- **Verses 1–6** urge believers to restore the fallen gently, carry each other's burdens, remain humble, and take responsibility for their own conduct and generosity.
- **Verses 7–10** emphasize the spiritual law of sowing and reaping—what you sow into will bear fruit in time. Therefore, keep doing good, especially within the community of believers.



- **Verses 11–16** contain Paul’s closing rebuke of the legalists. He contrasts their boast in circumcision with his own boast: the cross of Christ. For Paul, only the “new creation” matters—not religious ritual, but inner transformation.

His final word of peace is a blessing on those who follow this principle: “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God.”



## Addendum

### Leprosy

#### Biblical Leprosy

- Leprosy appears most notably in **Leviticus 13–14**.
- It didn't refer to what we now call **Hansen's disease** (the modern clinical term for leprosy) alone, but rather a broad category of **skin conditions**, which could include:
  - Psoriasis
  - Fungal infections
  - Vitiligo
  - Chronic eczema
  - Possibly even mold/mildew on fabric or houses (Leviticus 14:33–57)

#### Modern Leprosy (Hansen's Disease)

- Caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*.
- Slowly progressive disease that damages **nerves, skin, and mucous membranes**, especially of the hands, feet, and face.
- Spread through extended contact, but **not highly contagious**.
- Now **treatable** with antibiotics (since the 1980s).
- Disfigurement often results from **lack of pain sensation**, leading to injury and infection—not the disease itself “rotting” the body.

#### Why Was Leprosy Such a Big Deal in the Bible?

##### 1. Ritual Impurity

- Leprosy made a person **ceremonially unclean**, meaning they couldn't participate in worship or live among the community (Leviticus 13:45–46).
- They had to **live outside the camp**, tear their clothes, and shout “Unclean!”—a form of social and spiritual quarantine.

##### 2. Fear of Contagion

- Ancient cultures lacked understanding of disease transmission.
- Isolating people was a **practical survival strategy**, especially in tightly packed nomadic camps or towns.

##### 3. Symbol of Sin or Divine Judgment

- Leprosy was often viewed as a **punishment for sin or pride**:
  - **Miriam** was struck with leprosy after challenging Moses (Numbers 12).
  - **King Uzziah** developed leprosy after offering incense unlawfully (2 Chronicles 26:16–21).
  - It symbolized **internal brokenness made visible**, like sin showing up on the skin.

##### 4. Opportunity for Divine Mercy

- Stories of healing (like Naaman's in 2 Kings 5 or Jesus healing lepers in Luke 17) reveal that **God's mercy overcomes exclusion, shame, and disease**.
- **Healing lepers was a sign of messianic authority** (Matthew 11:5; Isaiah 61:1).

#### In a Metaphorical Sense:

Leprosy in scripture often symbolizes:





- **Sin:** something that separates us from others and from God.
- **Shame:** a visible marker of inner pain or disqualification.
- **Isolation:** the pain of being cast out or left behind.

### Grant County Application:

- Consider how people today live in **social or emotional isolation**—addiction, mental illness, poverty, incarceration, homelessness.
- Like biblical lepers, they may be **avoided or labeled**, and feel they must shout “Unclean!” in different ways (e.g., “I’m not good enough to come to church”).
- The Church, like Elisha and Jesus, is called to **draw near**, offer healing, and **restore dignity**.

### Summary

Leprosy in the Bible isn’t just a skin condition—it’s a potent **symbol of brokenness, exclusion, and the need for restoration**. Its healing points to the radical grace of God, who restores what others reject. Whether in ancient Israel or modern Indiana, the message is the same: **no one is too far gone for God’s touch**.

### Who Was Elisha?

**Elisha** (Hebrew: meaning “My God is salvation”) was a prophet in the **northern kingdom of Israel** during the 9th century BCE. He was the direct **successor of Elijah**, chosen by God and anointed while Elijah was still alive (1 Kings 19:16, 19–21).

#### 1. Disciple of Elijah

- Elisha was called by Elijah while plowing in the field, indicating he came from a working-class or agrarian background.
- He followed Elijah closely and witnessed Elijah being taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2).
- Upon Elijah’s departure, Elisha received a “**double portion**” of Elijah’s spirit, symbolizing both inheritance and prophetic authority. In ancient Israelite culture, a “**double portion**” was the **legal right of the firstborn son** (see Deuteronomy 21:17).

#### 2. Ministry of Miracles

Elisha’s prophetic ministry is marked by **numerous miracles**, often focused on compassion, healing, and justice—more so than Elijah’s often confrontational style. Some key miracles include:

- **Purifying a spring** (2 Kings 2:19–22)
- **Multiplying oil** for a widow (2 Kings 4:1–7)
- **Raising the Shunammite’s son** from the dead (2 Kings 4:32–37)
- **Healing Naaman’s leprosy** (2 Kings 5)
- **Feeding 100 men with 20 loaves** (2 Kings 4:42–44)
- **Floating an ax head** (2 Kings 6:1–7)

These stories show him as a prophet deeply involved with ordinary people, as well as a national figure advising kings.

#### 3. Political Role



Elisha played a critical role in guiding Israel during a volatile time of political and military conflict:

- He advised **King Jehoram of Israel** during wars with Syria.
- He had prophetic interactions with **foreign leaders**, including Naaman, demonstrating God's power extended beyond Israel.
- He anointed kings (Jehu in particular), showing his role in shaping political leadership.

### Elisha's Prophetic Style vs. Elijah's

Elijah	Elisha
Bold, confrontational	Pastoral, miracle-working
Challenged kings directly (esp. Ahab)	Worked within the system
Public prophet of fire and judgment	Quiet prophet of healing and provision
Lived more in the wilderness	Lived among the people

Elisha shows that **God works through both thunder and whisper**, through both dramatic confrontation and compassionate care.

### Elisha's Legacy

- Elisha continued to be **respected after death**—even his bones were said to raise a man from the dead (2 Kings 13:20–21).
- He became a symbol of **healing, faithfulness, and prophetic continuity**.
- His ministry foreshadows some of the **miracles of Jesus**, especially healing and provision.

Elisha in a modern context—like in Grant County—he's a great example of someone **firm in faith yet gentle in spirit, empowering the marginalized** (like the servant girl in Naaman's story), and **offering practical help in hard times**.

### Elisha and Jesus: A Side-by-Side Comparison of Miracles

Miracle Theme	Elisha (Old Testament)	Jesus (New Testament)	Notes
<b>Healing the sick</b>	Healed Naaman's leprosy (2 Kings 5)	Healed lepers (Luke 17:11–19), the blind, lame, etc.	Both showed healing extended to outsiders and the marginalized
<b>Raising the dead</b>	Raised the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4:32–37)	Raised Jairus's daughter, widow's son, Lazarus	Both demonstrated power over death
<b>Feeding multitudes</b>	Fed 100 men with 20 loaves (2 Kings 4:42–44)	Fed 5,000+ with 5 loaves and 2 fish (Matthew 14)	Echoes God's provision; both show abundance from scarcity



Miracle Theme	Elisha (Old Testament)	Jesus (New Testament)	Notes
<b>Multiplying provisions</b>	Multiplied a widow's oil (2 Kings 4:1–7)	Turned water into wine (John 2), fed multitudes	Both emphasized God's care in daily needs
<b>Power over nature</b>	Made an ax head float (2 Kings 6:1–7)	Calmed a storm (Mark 4:35–41), walked on water	Shows God's dominion over the natural world
<b>Prophetic insight</b>	Knew enemy plans supernaturally (2 Kings 6:8–12)	Knew people's hearts (John 1:48, Luke 7:39–40)	Demonstrates divine knowledge
<b>Blessing the humble</b>	Honored the faith of a servant girl and a foreigner	Praised the faith of Gentiles (Matt. 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10)	Both upended social norms of privilege
<b>Posthumous power</b>	His bones revived a dead man (2 Kings 13:20–21)	His resurrection brings eternal life	Symbolic of life beyond death

## The Spirit of Elisha in the Life of Jesus

### 1. Elisha's Mission:

- Ministry focused on **healing, provision, and advocacy**
- Close to the people, often helping widows, servants, the poor

### 2. Jesus' Mission:

- Fulfilled the law and prophets (Matthew 5:17)
- Mirrored many of Elisha's actions—but with broader, deeper reach
- Brought spiritual wholeness, not just physical healing

### 3. Key Lesson: God's Power Is for Everyone

- **Naaman's story** = outsiders are included
- **Grant County parallel:** How do we react when “unlikely people” show deep faith or find healing?
- Miracles are often paired with **obedience, humility, and faith**

### 4. Apply to our Lives:

- Who are the “servant girls” today—those overlooked but holding truth?
- Are we willing to take a “dip in the Jordan”—to obey even when it seems foolish?
- How do we live out “miracles” through community service, healing words, and shared faith?

## Shared Themes of Today's Scripture

Both **Galatians 6:1–16** and **2 Kings 5:1–14** (Naaman's healing) connect powerfully around the theme of **pride**—especially **how pride resists grace** and how spiritual maturity means learning to **submit, serve, and sow humility** rather than self-importance.

### 1. Pride vs. Humility



- **Naaman** is a powerful commander, used to control, hierarchy, and honor. When Elisha tells him to wash in the Jordan, he is insulted—it offends his pride. He expects a dramatic healing, not a humiliating act in muddy water.
- In **Galatians 6:3**, Paul writes, “If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.” The gospel offends pride because it demands humility—admitting need, weakness, and dependence on God.

**Connection:** Both Naaman and Paul confront a human tendency to elevate self. Pride blocks the movement of grace. Healing (Naaman) and spiritual growth (Galatians) only come after pride is laid down.

## 2. Restoration Comes Through Submission

- Naaman is only healed after **submitting** to the lowly act of washing. He has to listen to a **servant girl** and be persuaded by **his own servants**.
- Paul encourages believers to **restore one another gently** (Gal 6:1) and **carry each other’s burdens** (v. 2). Restoration isn’t flashy. It’s **slow, mutual, often messy—and grounded in humble submission to each other**.

**Grant County angle:** In small towns where reputation, self-reliance, and keeping up appearances can hold sway, this message of **quiet, mutual, Spirit-led care** over ego-led posturing is deeply relevant. Both passages say, “*Let go of status; lean into trust and community.*”

## 3. True Strength Looks Like Vulnerability

- Naaman had to become vulnerable—sick, naked, humble in foreign land—to receive healing.
- Paul urges the Galatians not to compare or compete but to **bear burdens** and **sow to the Spirit**, which often means taking the lower road, not the spotlight.

**Modern metaphor:** In a world (and church culture) obsessed with being right, strong, or admired, both passages reveal that **true spiritual health is found in humility, mutual support, and quiet obedience**.

## 4. What You Sow Matters (Not What You Show)

- Naaman came with **gifts and expectations**. He tried to “buy” healing with prestige.
- In Galatians 6:7–9, Paul says: “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” The emphasis is on inner integrity and long-term fruit, not external display.

**Application for today:** Especially in rural or reputation-conscious communities, there’s a temptation to “perform” religion or charity. But God honors authenticity and quiet obedience—like a servant girl’s witness, or a believer gently restoring another.

## Final Thought:

Both Naaman and the Galatians were being asked to do something hard: to lay down their pride. Naaman had to take off his armor and bathe in muddy water. The Galatians had to stop boasting in religious performance and start walking humbly with one another. The path to spiritual healing and strength is the same today—it’s not found in prideful displays, but in humble, Spirit-led surrender.