

Defined by the Pursuit

8.31.25

Message 4

Cast of Characters

2 Kings

2 Kings 5:19b–27 (CSB)

GEHAZI'S GREED PUNISHED

After Naaman had traveled a short distance from Elisha, ²⁰Gehazi, the attendant of Elisha the man of God, thought, "My master has let this Aramean Naaman off lightly by not accepting from him what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him."

²¹So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and asked, "Is everything all right?"

²²Gehazi said, "It's all right. My master has sent me to say, 'I have just now discovered that two young men from the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them seventy-five pounds of silver and two sets of clothing.' "

²³But Naaman insisted, "Please, accept one hundred fifty pounds." He urged Gehazi and then packed one hundred fifty pounds of silver in two bags with two sets of clothing. Naaman gave them to two of his attendants who carried them ahead of Gehazi. ²⁴When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the gifts from them and deposited them in the house. Then he dismissed the men, and they left.

²⁵Gehazi came and stood by his master. "Where did you go, Gehazi?" Elisha asked him.

He replied, "Your servant didn't go anywhere."

²⁶"And my heart didn't go when the man got down from his chariot to meet you," Elisha said. "Is this a time to accept silver and clothing, olive orchards and vineyards, flocks and herds, and male and female slaves?"

²⁷Therefore, Naaman's skin disease will cling to you and your descendants forever." So Gehazi went out from his presence diseased, resembling snow.

1. Not all servants are faithful.

A. The writer of Kings is goes out of his way to communicate who it was that Gehazi served.

²⁰Gehazi, the attendant of Elisha the man of God"

1. That's a lot of adjectives to make the point.
2. Elisha WAS the man of God, the greatest living prophet.
3. And Gehazi was the attendant and servant of this man.
 - a. But there is more to it than this:
 - b. Gehazi was the successor of Elisha.
 - c. By serving the prophet well, he was in line to be the next major prophet of Israel.

B. Faithful service is always a part of God's process.

1. If you can't be faithful as the assistant to the prophet, you can't become the prophet.
2. If we are not faithful where God has us now, we will not be faithful where God wants to place us tomorrow.
3. We will always fail to the level of our training.
4. Faithfulness is a daily decision.

C. For Gehazi, his true colors had been leaking.

1. He was rude to the Shunamite woman.
2. He was unable to heal the dead son in 2 Kings 4.

3. There is evidence scattered through the stories that Gehazi was not living up to his calling.

- a. He had the call of God.
- b. But he was lacking in character.
- c. That lack came to the forefront when the opportunity for his greed came to his front door.

2. As the Lord lives...

A. Elisha has just healed Naaman, the commander of Israel's enemy.

1. Naaman came prepared to lavish wealth upon the prophet.
2. If Elisha had taken the money, these gifts would have made Elisha and his servant wealthy.
 - a. The time they were living in was a time of famine and hardship.
 - b. The schools of the prophets wouldn't struggle for financing.
 - c. God's people would have benefited at the expense of the enemy.
3. Elisha said, "NO."
 - a. It was not the time for that.
 - b. The glory and reputation of God was at stake, so Elisha would not receive the gifts.
4. Gehazi didn't like this.
 - a. Gehazi's true character was no longer leaking, it was pouring out.
 - b. Notice what happened next:

2 Kings 5:20 (CSB)

²⁰ Gehazi, the attendant of Elisha the man of God, thought, "My master has let this Aramean Naaman off lightly by not accepting from him what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him."

B. Gehazi used spiritual language to cover up his greed.

1. He knew what the Lord was saying, because Elisha said it.
2. But Gehazi didn't like it, so he swore an oath.
3. Gehazi is hiding his greed behind the Lord's name.

C. Christians are tempted to abuse spiritual language.

1. I often hear this as a pastor, because who can argue with the phrase, "the Lord told me...."
2. I see people refuse correction or discipline and excuse their rebellion by saying, "the Lord told me to leave."

D. Just because you put God's name on it, that does not mean that God approved it.

1. Sometimes we are guilty of counterfeiting the will of God:
2. We sign God's name to decisions He didn't lead us to make.
3. We credit God with failures that weren't His.
4. We use His name as the ultimate trump card, the greatest of bluffs.

E. When, truth be told, we are lying to ourselves and to the Holy Spirit.

1. When we use the name of the Lord to cover our sin, we are blaspheming God.
2. That's what Gehazi was doing: in the name of the Lord, he will correct what Elisha messed up.
3. This decision to pursue what Elisha had refused changed Gehazi's life and lineage forever.

The Pursuit of the Forbidden.

"As the lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him. Gehazi pursued Naaman."

A. Gehazi wasn't tricked, deceived, or led into sin.

1. He chased it.
2. He pursued it.
3. He ran after it.
4. In a culture where adult males didn't run because it was shameful, Gehazi RAN AFTER Naaman.

B. What motivated Gehazi to pursue the gifts of Naaman?

1. A lack of honor.
 - a. If he had honored the man of God, he would have trusted Elisha's response.
 - b. Elisha didn't want people to misunderstand:
 1. The gifts of God were not for sale.
 2. Naaman walked away from the encounter healed and a follower of God.
 - c. Gehazi valued the gifts above the anointing.
2. Gehazi felt like he deserved some of the reward.
 - a. "I deserve this" is not the heart of a servant.
 - b. "I earned this", is not the heart of a follower of Jesus.
 - c. "I need this" tempts us to pursue what God has placed off limits.

C. What are we pursuing?

1. Gehazi chose what was forbidden at the expense of what was already his.

2. He traded favor with God for favor with man.
3. He thought he could have what the world offered and still become the next man of God for Israel.
4. Gehazi chose to PURSUE the gifts of Naaman instead of the anointing of Elisha.

The right thing, at the wrong time, is the wrong thing. VS

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2 Kings 5:26 (CSB)

²⁶“And my heart didn’t go when the man got down from his chariot to meet you,” Elisha said. “Is this a time to accept silver and clothing, olive orchards and vineyards, flocks and herds, and male and female slaves?”

A. Three times Gehazi lies.

1. The first time to Naaman, and he gets away with it.
2. The second time is to the servants helping him carry the riches and hide it.
3. But he could not get away with lying to the Man of God.

B. Gehazi’s poor character and sinfulness that was leaking in earlier stories is now gushing out.

1. Any action that requires us to lie to justify is sin.
2. Gehazi is running in sin, and it keeps compounding.

C. Was the wealth of Naaman wrong?

1. No, there was nothing inherently wrong with it.
2. In fact, it could have done a lot of good.
3. But there was something about the time that led Elisha to say no.

D. In your spiritual walk, there will be decisions you make based on the Lord’s timing.

1. Job or business opportunities, relationships, and even ordinary decisions that seem to make sense.
2. But there is something in your spirit that tells you no.
3. You can't explain it and don't fully understand it, but something feels off.
4. In those moments, if we reject the witness of the Holy Spirit, we will make terrible decisions.

E. Elisha had said it was not the time to accept these gifts.

1. Gehazi had the fear of missing out.
2. The result?
3. Naaman left the prophet healed.
4. Gehazi left the prophet diseased.
5. The encounter that saved Naaman ruined Gehazi.
6. "One man goes away healed because of his obedience, while the other man, indeed the one who should have known what matters most, walks away with leprosy."¹
7. One man walks away with salvation, the other walks away lost.

. Was Gehazi a failure or a success?

A. The last picture we have of Gehazi is in 2 Kings 8.

1. 7 years have gone by between 2 Kings 4 and 8.
2. Gehazi has been fired as the servant of the prophet and has found a job with the king of Israel.

¹ Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, vol. 8, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 274.

3. Gehazi is serving in the court of the king of Israel, telling the stories of God's workings through Elisha.
4. Then she walks in.

2 Kings 8:4–6 (CSB)

THE SHUNAMMITE'S LAND RESTORED

⁴ The king had been speaking to Gehazi, the attendant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me all the great things Elisha has done."

⁵ While he was telling the king how Elisha restored the dead son to life, the woman whose son he had restored to life came to appeal to the king for her house and field. So Gehazi said, "My lord the king, this is the woman and this is the son Elisha restored to life."

⁶ When the king asked the woman, she told him the story. So the king appointed a court official for her, saying, "Restore all that was hers, along with all the income from the field from the day she left the country until now."

B. The last time these two met was back in chapter 4.

1. The son had died, and Elisha brought him to life.
2. Now, Gehazi testifies one more time of God's power through Elisha and the woman's hospitality and faith.
3. In Jewish tradition, Gehazi is still viewed as one of the most wicked of people in Jewish history.ⁱ

C. Why is Gehazi in the presence of the king of Israel?

1. Because Gehazi had traded the prophet's anointing for the king's blessing.
2. He traded the mantle of the prophet for the robes of earthly kings.
3. He preferred the riches of the king's court over the power of the prophet's call.

D. Naaman went back to the king, and he was ok?

1. Naaman was born to serve alongside a king.
2. He was in his element, his calling, and purpose when he was serving in the army of Aram.
3. He was built for this, created for this, and so after his miraculous healing, he went back to where God had placed him.

E. But Gehazi was born to serve a prophet.

1. JOHN BEVERE in X: "Elisha served Elijah and received a double portion of what was on Elijah's life. But years later, Elisha's servant who was next in line to walk in the prophetic gifting lost focus on what was important and pulled away. He became a leper and left the service he was originally called to. A new servant, who was not named, was moved into his place to assist Elisha."

2. Gehazi ended as an advisor for the king, but missed out on the power of serving the God of Israel.
3. For some, it would be a promotion, but for Gehazi, it is a sad end to a complicated life.
4. The last picture we have of this man, we see he only had stories from the past instead of living what God was doing.

What lessons can we learn and apply to our lives from 2 Kings 5?

Apply:

1. Don't use spiritual language to cover up your sin.
 - a. Hiding behind the Lord's name is blasphemy.
 - b. Let your yes be yes, and no be no.
 - c. Ask yourself:
 1. Is this feeling from God or is it my own personality and opinion? Both of them are ok.

2. Am I attaching God's name to something that He hasn't approved, spoken, or desires?

c. Don't hide behind spiritual language, and don't justify your bad behavior with a Scripture verse.

2. Major decisions are the results of daily decisions.

a. How did Gehazi fall from being a successor to the prophet to one of the most hated people in Jewish history?

b. It happened a by daily decisions.

1. He lied to himself about his motives.

2. He resented the people receiving the miracles.

3. He stopped honoring the man of God.

4. He let the intrusive thoughts win, and that led him to missing what God had planned for him.

c. Moral failure is not inevitable.

1. But we must remain connected to Jesus every day.

2. We must lean upon His grace and mercy, not our merit.

3. He is the one who enables us to live victoriously and according to His will.

d. We must remain faithful every day.

1. And if we fail, remember that today is the day of salvation.

2. There is no better time to ask the Lord to forgive you and to empower you to live for Him

3. We pursue what we desire.

a. Gehazi desired the wealth of Naaman, so he pursued it.

b. Not only did he pursue, he caught it.

c. But the price attached to that pursuit was far higher than anything he imagined.

1. Gehazi's reward is to receive from Naaman...the sickness which began the general's search in the first place.²

2. Gehazi and his descendants were to be cursed with the skin disease.

d. We are defined by what we pursue.

1. Jesus told us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

2. The Kingdom of God is the only thing we can pursue and not be disappointed.

e. Everything else fails.

1. Wealth fails.

2. Health fails.

3. The dopamine, the comfort, the pleasure all fail.

4. All of these pursuits leave us disappointed.

5. But try Jesus, He never fails.

4. Don't trade the prophet's anointing for the king's blessing.

- a. It's possible to do all the wrong things and people look at your life and call you blessed.

- b. That could be said of Gehazi in 2 Kings 8.

1. He ends it in the presence of the king.

2. He traded the pain of the prophethood for the pleasure of the palace.

1. Gehazi went from staying in the guest house of a Shunamite to staying in the guest house of a king.

² T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, vol. 13, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1985), 61.

2. He traded the caves of Gilgal for the closets of the palace.

3. But Gehazi is a failure, because he ended up where he wasn't supposed to be.

c. If God has anointed and empowered you to do something, to do anything else is failure.

This conference between the king and Elisha's former servant is most interesting. Presumably, Gehazi had found some kind of refuge at court after [p 101](#) his deceit of chap. 5. There is no reason to place this episode earlier than chap. 5, since it is quite possible that by this time Gehazi had been cured of his leprosy (so Skinner, 314). Jewish tradition did not deal kindly with Gehazi (cf. *Comment* above on 5:20–27). This incident demonstrates the widespread interest in the activities of Elisha even during his lifetime. To assume that the prophet was dead by this time (so Gray, 529; DeVries, *Prophet against Prophet*, 120–21) is unnecessary. There is no hint of this in the story.³

³ T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, vol. 13, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1985), 100–101.