

## 2 Kings Chapter 5

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Welcome. Welcome particularly to those of you who are visiting us. And we've got some special visitors with us who we'll find a little bit about in a moment or two. But if you're visiting, if it's your first time with us, then we do welcome you especially in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the verse on the screen behind us to help us think about who it is we're coming to worship reminds us that God has said himself, or rather is written because God has said that, as surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before me, every tongue will acknowledge God. When God says something, when he writes something down, it's because he wants us to know it's certain. It's written down, not just in stone, but written down by the very Word of God. And we know that this is the truth. And whoever we are, there will come a time in our lives when we will either acknowledge and bow and worship and come to know the living God and his love and care for us in Jesus. Or the Bible says clearly there will come a day when this world is brought to an end. And even those people who've never known God or rejected God or ignored him will bow before him and acknowledge that he really is the God who made us and provided for us and created us and who loves us. And the one wonderful thing is, as Christians, this is what we know already. We already gladly say, Lord, you're my

God. And through Jesus Christ, we bring our praise. And our first song is going to come up on the screen. Reminds us that Jesus is Lord and that his name is a name worthy of praise. So let's stand and sing as we sing on the screen. Jesus is Lord.

Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord.

God's art. seelenis to taste the living bed.

Jesus is Lord, who joins the straits for stars and planets. Yet in his midst the way the sun is crowned.

[ 2 : 57 ] Jesus, the man who washed our feet to all our suffering, became a guest to bring salvation's land.

Jesus is Lord, who serve his glorious deity, the leave and death with worship's king.

Oh, God. The price is paid, the ships are loosed and we're forgiven. And we can run into the arms of God.

Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord, the shout of joy, and cry for language, as he returns every year as Lord.

and every eye, and every heart will sing his glory, the judge of all will take his children home.

[ 4 : 20 ] Lord, please be seated. Amen. The wonderful name of Jesus is the name by which we are called upon to come to God.

And Jesus said, if we ask anything in his name, it shall be given to us. So let us come to God in prayer together. Let us all pray. O Lord, our God, our Father in heaven, we want to thank you for the name of Jesus.

It means so much to us because it's not merely a name, certainly not a swear word, certainly not just a name to be uttered thoughtlessly. It's a name which you yourself gave to your own son when he came into this world.

You told Mary and you told Joseph that the child born to Mary should be given that name Jesus, that name which means salvation, rescue, deliverance.

We thank you that in coming into this world, your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to bring to us life everlasting, the forgiveness of sins, rescue from hell.

[ 5 : 32 ] O Lord, we thank you that in Jesus we find ourselves a wonderful Savior an amazing, glorious, incredible, indescribable person, one whose love for us knows no limit, one whose love for us has been demonstrated to the fullest extent in that, in his kindness to us.

He not only came into this world, he not only became a human being amongst us, but he went especially and purposefully to die in our place on that cross in Jerusalem. those years ago, and though it seems to be such a long time ago, we thank you that it was the very climax, the very central event of history when God himself dealt with the problem which has separated men and women and God for all of history. We thank you it was there at the cross that you took our sin and you punished it fully and completely. You removed the curse as it were of sin of that evil, that selfishness, that pride, that greed, all those things which pollute, corrupt, destroy and mar this world and life that you've given to us. We thank you that there in Jesus our sin was dealt with once and for all so that we could be completely, fully, absolutely, totally, forever forgiven and that we could be brought into that living, life-giving, joyful relationship with yourself. [ 7 : 06 ] We thank you oh Lord our God that it was because of your great care and love for us, the people that you have created and made in your own image, made that we might know you, made that we might enjoy you, made that we might live for you and experience you day by day in our lives.

It was because Lord that grand design as it were that you had was ruined by our sin that you in your loving kindness came to put things right and Lord we thank you that for every single person whoever we are whatever our past whatever Lord our struggles whatever our difficulties whatever our pain we thank you that for whoever looks to you whoever puts their faith in you in your son the Lord Jesus you promise forgiveness and you promise and give life and you make us new creations you make us new people and Lord you bring us into the embrace and the warmth and the unending love of a heavenly father oh Lord our God we pray that this morning though we may be weighed down with concerns or anxieties or fears or difficulties Lord if we know this love if we know this wonderful relationship with you then Lord we have so much to praise you and thank you and adore you for help us to lift our eyes again to see that in Jesus is everything and more besides than we could ever wish or desire or dream of and help us oh Lord as we come to bring our praises to you open our hearts and our minds we pray when we especially come to your word speak to us those words of life speak to us oh Lord wherever we are Lord that you might lead us into your truth for we ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ our saviour and our king Amen well we're going to read together now from our bible and if you'd like to find in your bible the old testament book of two kings and chapter 5 and if you've got one of the red church bibles it's page 371 page 371 the church bible two kings chapter 5 if you've brought your own bible with you can I just add my thanks as well to those who were there at the work day it was a good time of fellowship together we're planning another one before we have the week of mission and again please be praying for that that week of mission in May and please if you can come along and help and if you aren't able to come along and help on a work day we know several folk have been able to come and help during the week and we've appreciated that doing jobs and if you're able to help during the week or another time apart from that then have a word to Martin he'll gladly give you some work to do and because I know that you've all got so much time on your hands and you're also sitting there twiddling your thumbs watching daytime tv going mad that you'd love to have something to do so please do come and offer your services in that way whatever it may be even just for a little while so let's read together two kings and chapter five and we're going to read the first nineteen verses again that's page three seven one now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram he was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded because through him the lord had given victory to Aram he was a valiant soldier but he had leprosy now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel and she served Naaman's wife she said to her mistress if only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria he would cure him of his leprosy Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said by all means go the king of Aram replied I will send a letter to the king of Israel so Naaman left taking with him ten talents of silver six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing the letter that he took to the king of Israel read with this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy as soon as the king of Israel read the letter he tore his robes and said am I God can I kill and bring back to life why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had

torn his robes he sent him this message why have you torn your robes make the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel so Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house

[ 12 : 03 ] Elisha sent a messenger to him go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed but Naaman went away angry and said I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy on Otabana and Farpar the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed so he turned and went off in a rage Naaman's servants went to him and said my father if the prophet had told you to do something great would you not have done it how much more then when he tells you wash and be cleansed so he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times as the man of God had told him and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God he stood before him and said now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel so please accept a gift from your servant the prophet answered as surely as the Lord lives whom I serve

I will not accept a thing and even though Naaman urged him he refused if you will not said Naaman please let me your servant be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry for your servant will never offer sorry will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other God but the Lord but may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing when my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he's leaning on my arm and I have to bow there also when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon may the Lord forgive your servant for this go in peace Elisha said and we'll stop there so we're reading from 2 Kings chapter 5 if you remember that's page 371 if you have a Bible to hand it will be helpful for you to turn there I don't know when the last time you went to the cinema was or what you went to see but do you stay at the end of the film and watch all the credits go up or do you shoot out most people of course as soon as the final scene is over you don't often get the end anymore but the final scene is open and the credits begin to roll almost immediately people tend to get up the lights go on people tend to walk out and leave the theatre but of course there's still several minutes left of the film to roll as hundreds of different names with job titles and so on Key Grip and Carpenter and all these sort of things catering they all roll up the screen before us people who were vitally important to the making of the film but just completely unknown to us of course there's the big stars they begin don't they the first the big stars the actors and then you'll get the producer and the director and those important people but there's those hundreds of names I imagine if you were one of the people who had been involved in the film whatever your role if you were in the cinema watching that you'd wait wouldn't you at least until your name came up if not to the very end of the credits as well when we read in the Bible there's some big names big stars aren't there in the Bible that almost everybody's heard about at one time or another people like Jonah and the great fish and Job and his patients and Daniel and the lions and Noah and his ark they're the big stars the big names but actually there are many thousands of names in the Bible or many thousands of people in the Bible in fact who did incredible things who God worked through and used and yet we know virtually nothing about them some of them in fact we don't even know even their name and here in 2 Kings chapter 5 we meet such a person a person who we don't know the name of them but they were used by God to do wonderful things and the chapter as you've read with me was quite an incredible chapter it talks about one of the big stars of the Old Testament Elisha the prophet he really was one of the number one prophets of God in the Old Testament certainly the number one prophet of his day prophet was someone who was God's particular instrument one through particularly God worked to speak his word and to guide and lead the nation and through his prayers and through his faith in God God had done marvellous things amazing things for individuals and for groups and in fact for the whole nation the whole of the people of God who were Israel and here we read about one of those amazing events how through Elisha this army general this man Naaman we're told is healed of leprosy an incurable disease we don't know how far it spread but it was one of those diseases particularly then as maybe even now which made people an outcast of society made people considered to be almost unworthy of any contact socially or anything like that but more than that we see how through Elisha this man not only is healed of this leprosy this incurable disease but we also see him coming to a real faith in the Lord God in the true God a real trusting believing in the God that he didn't believe in or trust in before and there's people in the story there's not only Elisha of course and there's Naaman and there's various

servants but also there's there's some big names there's the king of Aram and the king of Israel they were two of the most influential men of their day powerful men of their day and then there's this one other person we're going to think about this person who has a much more important role in seeing Naaman healed and seeing Naaman come to faith this person isn't a king this person's not even a general or a soldier they weren't in a place of power they weren't they didn't have any influence they weren't rich they weren't a prophet and they were considered really of any importance whatsoever in fact as we'll see in a little while this person probably was at the very bottom of the lowest part of the scrapings of the barrel of society you couldn't get any lower less important less influential than this person now why are we going to be thinking about this person in a moment well because as we thought last week we are now ten weeks away from the mission this evangelistic campaign this week of mission in one sense in the town where we are seeking to reach people and share with people the wonderful good news of Jesus Christ and as I said last week and we thought last week we as individuals not just as a church together but as individuals have been given this great commission this great this great charge as it were command as it were from Jesus to every Christian and it's found there in Matthew 28 go and make disciples of all nations and we looked at reasons last week why we may not do that some people don't do that sometimes it's because in some churches there's no longer a belief in the reality of hell and the reality of the need for Jesus to rescue and to save and for people to come to faith in him there's no longer a belief in a day of judgment and yet we saw that clearly that's what Jesus taught that's what Jesus truly tells us that we are sinners and that we must face judgment before God we can't escape from that except that we put our faith in Jesus as our saviour but we looked at why sometimes even as Christians who believe in these things we don't share the gospel we don't talk to people about being a Christian because we're afraid we're afraid of what people say to us how they respond whether they'll reject us whether they think we're crazy fanatics whether they'll ostracize us of course we know that in other parts of the world there is far more real physical danger to be had for being a Christian than in the UK but even so fear

can be a hindrance to us so this morning and the next few weeks what I want to do is and what I hope is that in spite of our natural fears and apprehension about speaking to people about Jesus or inviting them to events that we will actually be encouraged and emboldened by the example of those people that we read about that God has used before particularly those people here in the Bible ordinary people ordinary everyday people who God worked through to the salvation to the rescue to the coming to faith of others people who are not the big stars not the Elishas as I say or the Elijah or the Noah or the Jonah and so on but the unknown heroes the unsung heroes of the Bible which there are many many thousands so what do we think here what do we think what do we learn here what encouragement is there here from this first unsung evangelist who teaches us and helps us to share Christ with the lost world

[ 21 : 15 ] I wonder if you guessed who this person is you meet her there in verses 2 and 3 we read there verses 2 and 3 now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel she served Naaman's wife she said to her mistress if only my master could see the prophet who was in Samaria he would cure him of his leprosy so this is the first of these unsung heroes this young girl this young slave girl to the wife of Naaman and the first thing we need to recognize here she is the most unlikely of messengers she's the most unlikely of messengers that God would use when we think about God working through people and using people we think of dynamic people charismatic people we think of people with great personalities people with great influence think of people in the past like William Wilberforce a member of parliament who was moved by and used by God to abolish slavery think of the great preachers of the day like C.H. Spurgeon and filling massive thousands and thousands

Billy Graham and others like this we think these are big people important people influential people greatly skilled people we can't possibly imagine that God could use me or you that God could work through us that God would choose to use seemingly unlikely messengers insignificant messengers the opposite and when we come to this young girl that's exactly what we find we find that God is working in a person who really was the very opposite of important as I said before just think about this first of all she's young and not only in our day but in her day to be young meant that you were inexperienced that you were you were really sort of you know not all that useful in society you hadn't learned and developed skills and so on this girl probably was only in her early teens not even 16 years old I imagine she was a very young girl secondly we realised that she was a girl and that

of course particularly in that society and even up until recently and even perhaps in some parts of the world today is second class to a boy so she's a girl and she's young so she really is discounted as being of any influence or good then she's also a slave that means she's got no possessions she's got no rights she's got no position she's just a tool in one sense in the household to do jobs and work she is just at the bottom there and also she's a foreigner she's somebody from a different country she's not from Aram is she?

she's from Israel so she's in a different country she speaks a different language she's got a different religion everything works against her being a person that would have an influence upon the king and upon important people in society in Aram yet she is the key person that God works and uses to bring Naaman to a place of healing and saving faith now look at your own life for a moment what can you say about yourself that's good maybe lots of things maybe you have lots of experience and education and maybe you have a position as a teacher or you have a position in society as a community leader or you have a position in a family and you've got all sorts of things going for you but I think that on the whole most of us are not in that position most of us we would look at ourselves and say well I'm just one amongst thousands I'm just one amongst the seven billion I'm never going to have a book written about me I'm never going to have a film made about me I'm never going to be somebody of a celebrity or important I'm never going to have anything really influential to do in fact we may feel quite the opposite of being able to be used by God we feel very inadequate God cannot possibly use me perhaps you may be somebody who's very young still at school or at college or somebody who is still experiencing the things of life and you say well I can't be I just don't know enough I'm just not in a position yet I'm just still so young and of course for many of us here it will be the opposite I'm just too old I've had my time when I might have been useful to God but not anymore I'm just too old humbug rubbish according to God's use of this young girl think about it Naaman met with the king of Israel the king of God's people the king who was supposed to be the spiritual leader to guide and to educate and to influence the nation that they might follow God when he meets with Naaman he gets the chance to speak to him he tears his clothes and has a paddy doesn't he oh he's just trying to cause trouble with me he's just trying to pick a fight with me how am I supposed to be able to do anything how different the faith of this young girl she might say well God can't work through me because I'm quiet I'm shy I don't have any influence I don't have any authority I don't have any in my view skills abilities I'm not good at speaking remember Moses when the Lord came and spoke to Moses right we need to go back to Egypt and you're going to set my people the millions of people free from slavery and I'm going to speak to Pharaoh through you and Moses goes you can't use me I've got to stutter I can't speak properly I can't do it it's natural for us to feel that way it's natural for us to feel that we are inadequate but the reality is this is that God in his great wisdom in his great understanding decides chooses purposes actually to work in and through ordinary unimpressive people here's what Paul writes about the

[ 27 : 33 ] Christians in Corinth brothers and sisters think of what you were when you were called in other words when you were called to come and follow Jesus not many of you were wise by human standards not many were influential not many were of noble birth but God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are God delights to work through to use to choose to save the ordinary the unexceptional and there's a method if I can put it this way to what appears to be his madness why doesn't God save great people great influential powerful leaders of the world why doesn't he save them so they can speak and proclaim and declare well because there's a method in one sense to what appears to be his madness because it goes on to say so that no one may boast before him the trouble is that within the human heart within the human condition of course there is always that desire to be seen to be great or to be thought to be somehow exceptional or to be thought to be somehow important or impressive you see God desires to receive the glory and the honour that is rightfully his and if he takes and uses a young girl a young slave girl a young foreign slave girl to bring about the salvation and the healing of this great army general then nobody's going to say what a great girl she is oh she's amazing she's incredible look how gifted and talented no they can say this can only be a work of

God this can only be God at work speaking and using even her to bring this man to faith in himself so when God uses you and I he chooses to do so because no one can say oh well it's because

Peter is such a great this or great that or because Frederick is such a great this and great that no wonder people are becoming Christians when they can do these things and they can perform these incredible acts and so on and so forth people will have to say this has got to be God who's at work because these are just ordinary people these aren't exceptional people it must be God who is at work so whatever you are whoever you are there is nothing that prevents you from being used by God to be the means by which others may come to faith in him but she wasn't just an unlikely evangelist was she let's just look at this look at the situation she's in she's in the most unlikely of places whereby she can serve God she was really somewhere she just didn't want to be did she she was somebody who didn't she didn't want to be in Aram she didn't want to be in the house a servant of the king of Aram's general Naaman we're told there in verse 2 that raiders from Aram had gone out and taken her captive

God was using her when she was far away from her home far away from her family far away from everything that she knew and sometimes we read things quite flippantly we don't think about it here's a young girl who's gone through the trauma of kidnapping that's what's happened remember remember reading about what happened in Nigeria in Boko Haram a few years ago came in into that school and kidnapped those 200 young girls this is something that's happened to her we remember how shocked we were and trauma that's an awful thing this is a young girl who's been through that possibly having seen maybe even her parents killed or other people killed when these armed men raided her village and took her maybe others as well into captivity into slavery and now she's in this house amongst strangers people who don't speak her own language no doubt she's had to adapt and have to learn speak another language not her mother tongue she's surrounded by people she doesn't know she's in a land where a strange false religion is taking place these false gods of worship not the true God that she'd been brought up to know and trust in and there in that situation the worst situation the wrong situation God uses her works through her and leads a man who would never otherwise have heard the gospel of God to faith do you think that you're in the wrong place do you feel that at times do you feel that you're in a place you just don't want to be this I don't want to be in this working environment I don't want to be with these people who are who are curse or are crude and are rude and and unpleasant I don't really want to be in this situation where I'm where I've just got nobody around about me to support me and I feel alone may even be that we feel God can't possibly use me where I am in this in in this marriage that I'm in and it's a struggle and it's a trial and it's hard

God can't even use me in this church I'd rather not be in this church let's be honest I'd rather be in my own church where I was where I grew up or where I came from we can feel that we can feel that and we can be so caken up with being in the wrong place that we forget that actually we're maybe feel like we're in the wrong place but God is able to use us because we're in the right time we're there in that place at this time as such a time as this for the work that God has for us to do it may not just be physically that we're in the wrong place it may be in our lives a time a wrong time of our lives this is a time when now all my my children have left home and perhaps even I've been widowed and perhaps I you know this is just the wrong time my life is as it's just not right it's not as I want it to be well surely we can emphasize we can sympathize with this young girl yet here she is in the midst of the most awful situation the situation that surely she almost feels as if God has abandoned her where are you God I trusted in you and I lived in Israel amongst your people and you've let me be kidnapped and you've let me be put as a slave how can you allow this to do me she could have turned her heart against him but no she hasn't clearly because whenever she gets the opportunity she speaks and points to him God has a purpose for her didn't she dream of going home if only I could be back home in Israel back with my family didn't she perhaps even plan think of a great escape perhaps that she looked at ways in which she might be able to escape and get away or hope that perhaps her family or some army from

Israel would come and rescue her we may struggle with where God has placed us but let's not make any mistake where God has placed us we may struggle with that we may find it hard it's not going to be easy to be where God wants us to be all the time there are easier times and there are harder times but even when we're in the harder times we're in the hard places that is where God still wants to still desires to use and work through us he hasn't abandoned us he hasn't forgotten us he hasn't lost his plot as it were for our lives or plan for our lives he can still use us and still will use us to reach others and it may well be dear friends that he has placed us exactly in that place because we alone are the ones who are able to reach those people rather than planning her escape or dreaming of where she would like to be dear friends rather than planning your escape rather than

think dreaming of where you would like to be rather where you are ask the Lord to use you in this time in your life in this place in your life Lord use me right now right here because think about it here's Naaman he's the commander of the armies of the king of Aram Aram is a country where they were at war with Israel they were they were not what you call friendly they were very hostile to one another we see that by the bands of raiders that went across and things like that and later on in the in in two kings a war takes place between them and all sorts of things it wasn't the it wasn't the perfect situation for God to use it wasn't as if everything was set up perfectly she thought well this is just right this is just great because

[ 36 : 26 ] I'm in this place where I can be so influential I can do so much it seems like everything mitigates against that but there she is and God has put her there because God does not make a mistake in the life of a believer he never will he never can even if we get it wrong which we do at times there's no mistake with God and there's nothing and nowhere that we can be where God cannot bless us use us and work in the hearts and lives of others too as well as ourselves so she was really a very unlikely messenger she was in a very unlikely place for God to use her but then there's one last thing here and this is important too she had a very unlikely message when you think about what she said it doesn't seem to be very powerful you know again often we look at people and we say well this person with great great missionary great evangelist would really be used by God because they've got all this experience for a world champion or they were an Olympic sportswoman or whatever they may be and then we also look and say oh they've got all the answers haven't they they know their Bible inside and out and they know exactly how to answer people and speak to people and they they know exactly what people need to hear and how to present and lay out the gospel in the right way and so on and I don't know any of those things I'm only a young Christian or or I'm somebody who hasn't had that good

Bible study or teaching so I should really just shut up and never say anything in fact we may even think that the only time I can speak to somebody about Christ is if I can tell them the whole story so when I get a chance I'll just give them the whole lot I'll tell them everything about Jesus and his and his virgin birth I tell them all about his death on the cross and propitiation and atonement and I tell them all about the day of judgment I gotta tell them all about repentance I tell them all about I've got to get it all in and if I don't give it all in if I don't get them all the way through from Genesis to the second coming then I've failed to tell them the gospel so we get ourselves all worried we get ourselves all concerned have I given the correct message have I put it in the right way have I look at the message that this young girl gives it just sounds too weak doesn't it it's too weak to lead Naaman to faith in the Lord surely if only my master would see the prophet who's in Samaria he would cure him of his leprosy the name of the

Lord isn't even they even mention God she doesn't even say God will heal him if he goes to Israel or the Lord God of Israel she doesn't mention his sin and about him worshipping false gods she doesn't talk to him and say you need to repent of your of your of the way you've lived and the way you've acted and you need to turn away you need to put your faith in God doesn't say any of those things she doesn't even speak to Naaman himself does she speaks to his wife and says if only it's not like he should go just give tell him look get him across to Israel because there's Elisha he's a prophet of the Lord and he'd be healed if only he would go if he thought about it how on earth could these simple words ever lead to Naaman's healing and salvation how because God was doing the work see dear friends our words are only effective and powerful because they're enabled by the Holy Spirit of God that's where the power lies not in us and we may think that that our words are too insignificant we may think our words are too weak we may think we don't know enough to really do anybody any good but one word of truth is far more powerful than a thousand words of error just one word just a simple sentence like this you see when we speak for God we speak about the things of the Lord when we speak to people and it may simply be almost a question it may simply be have you thought about this it may be I find comfort in God I like to can I pray for you it may be any myriad of number of things in the situation in which we are that God is able to use because they are seeds that are planted in the minds and hearts of others which when we speak faithfully with love for the lost and we pray as well and water those seeds then we find that God can produce and does produce often a very great and wonderful harvest remember we read in 1 Corinthians about Paul saying about the weak and the foolish that God uses he says this as well just a little later concerning himself in chapter 3 in verse 6 when he talks about the task the work that he was doing in the church he says I planted the seed referring really to God's word

Apollos watered it but God has been making it grow so neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything in other words anything great or marvelous or spectacular only God who makes things grow see when the Apostle Paul you think well if only Paul was around today if only Paul this great apostle this missionary church planter who's who spread the gospel over the whole of the Mediterranean really he was here if only we had a poor and we see great marvelous wonderful things happen because he was such a clever man such an eloquent man this is what Paul says about himself when he went to Corinth and began to tell them about Jesus he says this I came to you chapter 2 verse 3 I came to you in weakness and with great fear and trembling hold on this is the apostle Paul the miracle worker the powerful that sounds like me weakness and trembling my message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words but don't we need them no clearly not but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power through the weakness and trembling of Paul as he goes to

Corinth as he goes afraid of what is going to happen what reception he's going to receive as he begins to blurt out and tell something of Christ amazing things happen in the lives of people and there is a church that is planted and there is a con there are many people who converted and come to faith now think again dear friends about ourselves compare and look at yourself and this young girl look at her character look at her nature look at her position look at who she is there's nothing about it to say that here is a soul winner here is a great evangelist but God used her think about the circumstances of her life and your own where everything is wrong in one sense it's all out of sorts it's not as it should be and yet in that place in that position in one sense in the in the in the the depths as it were of difficulty was there that God used her and where are you at this moment maybe not in the depths but things may be tough or you're struggling or there's that time of life in which you feel as if you have passed your cell by date and think of the message that she had to bring is it an incredible message of God is it like one of the Psalms that speaks about the God being glorified at all creation and how every knee will bow to him no it's a simple thing about where he can find some help for his leprosy if God is able to and he surely did use this young girl and with all of her hindrances baggage problems and so on why on earth do you think that God cannot use you why on earth do you think that somehow God is limited because you're actually so much worse or so much in a much more difficult situation or so much less eloquent than her then you see the problem the problem is this we looking at ourselves we're seeing that we're thinking that the onus is upon ourselves to see people come to faith in

[ 44 : 41 ] Christ when the onus is upon God incredibly the privilege he's given us is that we might share and speak and be signposts that we might be just those who sow seeds in people's lives to see them come to faith but it's God who does the work as long as we look at ourselves and look at the inadequacies and the inabilities that we have in the situation we find ourselves we shall always be afraid we shall always be timid we shall always hold back but when we lift our eyes to him and see that he is the power he is the strength he is the one who is able to work even through me then actually fears will disappear our courage will come and we shall indeed in his strength and in his grace speak to people and be part of that incredible journey of faith whereby they come from complete ignorance of his love to a wonderful accepting of him and trust in him the power is not from ourselves it's not within us to bring one person to

Christ but wonderfully God works in us and through us I'll close with these words again of Paul for 1 Corinthians because they're so important he says this it is because of him because of God that you are a Christian in Christ therefore it is written let the one who boasts boast in the Lord in other words the one who has confidence that their confidence be in the Lord well let's pray together before we sing our final hymn O Lord our God you are the God who longs and delights and rejoices when people come to know you come to know you for who you are come to know you for the God who made them come to know you for the God who loves them come to know you as the God who came into the world to rescue and save at great cost to himself the God who ever lives the God who never leaves or forsakes the God who is the very answer to life itself and all its questions and Lord we thank you that you have chosen us and saved us not only that we might enjoy the blessings of what it means to know you but you've chosen and saved us that we might share and tell others be part of that journey of you working in them and bringing them to faith in yourself too Lord we don't we we want to lift our eyes and and put our confidence in you instead of being afraid and fearful because we look at ourselves and you know us better than ourselves and you know what a complete shambles we are but Lord we thank you that you've chosen to work in us and

through us so that the glory so that the honor so that people might say this is not the cleverness of this person or the intellect or the convincing nature of this person this is God at work this is a reality of his spirit opening hearts and minds and lives and again we do pray Lord we cry to you for those whom we love those who are on our hearts those who are dear to us who still do not know you and still have not bowed the knee to you Lord we cry to you please oh Lord work in their hearts the seed that we've sown Lord we pray that you would cause to grow and Lord we pray that there may be many who who have heard just a few bits and pieces some have heard the whole story that Lord their hearts may indeed be be so pulled as it were so drawn Lord by your Holy Spirit that they just have to say yes Lord there is no other God and there's no one I want to worship there's no one I can trust apart from you the living God so help us again we pray in the run up to this week of mission use us we pray even this week each one of us maybe just a word here or there a word in season use us we pray and give us Lord confidence in you for we ask it in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen