

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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A little over a month ago I was finishing up my yearly exam with my cardiologist. The young lady who was scheduling next year's visit was looking at the details of my medical record when she made this comment concerning my date of birth. *Well, it looks like you'll go over the cliff in January!* I guess she saw the puzzled look on my face and added, *I assume you're going on Medicare.* Now, from time to time, whenever I'm feeling the effects of the aging process colliding with my human condition, I've thought about being *over the hill*, as they say. But *over the cliff*...seems a little extreme and quite sudden.

I've been pondering lately what it means to be an earth bound creature. No matter how much greatness a person attains, whether measured by riches, or power, or status before others, we are creatures that were created from the earth, and destined to return to the earth. So says the Lord of all the earth.

The nations of people were divided a long time ago by God. And human beings have been contending for the piece of ground they inhabit for a long time. Sometimes wars are fought and people are vanquished. The victims are assimilated at best, and destroyed at worst. Powerful nations have produced powerful people. But the reality remains; we are all earth bound creatures with earth bound problems. Naaman was a man like that. He was a powerful military commander, a man of valor, but mightily afflicted.

Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper. (2 Kings 5:1)

What can happen when a great man with a great problem meets a man who represents a great God? The Biblical account records that on one of Aram's military raids into the land of Israel, a little girl was taken captive and wound up serving in Naaman's household. Observing her master's private misery, she offered a solution. She knew a man of God who lived in the land of Israel and believed God's power was upon him. The prophet's name was Elisha. So Naaman, desperate in his leprous condition, appealed to his king, who then petitioned the King of Israel. When the King of Israel got the message, he was distressed because he did not have the power to cure this man and feared warfare with Aram as a result.

When Elisha heard the news, he asked that the warrior be sent to him. Naaman rejected Elisha's remedy. He was offended and enraged because Elisha would not meet with him...he only sent word. After all, we all have our pride, and Naaman had his. But Naaman's servants intervened and the captain did what the man of God had told him to do. Miraculously, his leprosy became his history!

*15 When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him, he said, "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel; so please take a present from your servant now." 16 But he said, "As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing." And he urged him to take it, but he refused. 17 Naaman said, "If not, please let your servant at least be given **two mules' load of earth**; for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord. (2 Kings 5:15-17)*

Naaman came to know the presence and power of the Lord of all the earth. Things were different in the land of Israel, where the Living God lived. He was so impressed that he transported the earth of that place back home to his place. He envisioned that he would be a worshipping witness of the God of Israel, even in a place of pagan idolatry. He became a secret follower in what is now known as Syria's land.

Now what does this mean to you and me? It seems to me that we are all creatures of the earth. When the Lord God Almighty created man, He formed him from the dust of the earth, breathed into him the life of His Spirit, and Adam became a *living* soul. *The souls of men dwell in houses of clay*, says Matthew Henry. After the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, His Spirit came to inhabit human houses of clay. We all are creatures of God, but sadly not all are children of God. When a human being is born of the Spirit, the Living God comes to live within us. The Word of God says that if we will receive Him, and believe Him, we can be given the right to become children of God.

So, if Spirit-filled believers are living in this land of pagan idolatry, do the pagans see a different kind of people? Does your house of clay reflect a different God residing within? Will you be willing to be as compassionate as the servant girl serving in the household of Naaman? Do you know this Great God is the remedy of humanity's greatest problems? The soul will not rest in the grave if the Lord is our destiny.

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam