

GOD'S SIMPLE TRUTHS (01).

November 23, 2008.

Introduction.

The Bible clearly teaches that God is omniscient, that is, He is the all-wise God with all or perfect knowledge. *1Sam.2:3* says, “the Lord is a God of knowledge.” In *Job 37:16* Elihu describe God as “one perfect in knowledge.” *1Jn.3:20* says “God ... knows all things.” In *Jer.29:23* the Lord said, “I am He who knows.” God knows all things actual, that is, all things that exist and all things that happen. *Heb.4:13* says, “there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” or “before whom we must give account.”

1Chron.28:9, “The Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts.” *Psa.44:21* says, “He knows the secrets of the heart.” In *Psa.139:3b-4*, the psalmist said, “You ... are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all.” *Psa.103:14*, “For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.” In *Matt.6:8* Jesus said, “Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” *Dan.2:22*, says, “He knows what is in the darkness.” In *Isa.46:9-10* the Lord declared, “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done.”

Isa.40:13-14 asked the following questions : “Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught

Him knowledge and informed Him of the way of understanding?" The obvious answer to every question is **"no one"**.

In *Rom.11:33* we read, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" The word "depth" points to the inexhaustible magnitude of God's wisdom and knowledge. "Unsearchable" speaks of that which cannot be searched out. "Unfathomable" speaks of that which cannot be tracked down. The combination of these two words points to the complete impossibility of any one of the human race being able to penetrate the mind of God. Paul wants you to understand the utter impossibility of you ever understanding fully who God is, what God knows and what God is doing.

This is the same point that is being made in *Isa.40:28* which says God's "understanding is inscrutable." The idea is that God's wisdom, knowledge, understanding and insight are unsearchable, that is beyond our wisdom, knowledge, understanding and insight. In *Isa.55:8-9* the Lord said, "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts'." In *1Cor.1:25* Paul wrote, "the foolishness of God is wiser than men."

The infinite complexity of God's wisdom and knowledge is seen in creation. Despite all the advancements in science and research capabilities, man has only scratched the surface in understanding the so-called simplest things in creation. The vastness and orderliness of the universe is incomprehensible to man. The intricacies that exist in the human body continue to astound the most brilliant minds in our world.

Take for example the human eye. I know very little about the eye. But I did a google search and found the following : your eye has over **120** million rod cells. It has **6** to **7** million cones. The lens of your eye changes shape to focus over **100,000** times a day. Your eye has a **200** degree viewing angle and can see **2.7** million colors. It can also

relay an impressive **72 GB** of information to the brain every second. This information does not exhaust what is known about the eye.

Now Brethren, this God of all wisdom and all knowledge has condescended to accommodate us and reveal Himself to us in ways we can understand. In the matters regarding our souls, our eternal salvation and the things God requires of us, God has spoken to us very simply and clearly. Beginning today I want to do a brief series of sermons I have entitled “**God’s Simple Truths.**” Today, I begin with the message of the gospel God has given to us.

I). God’s Simple Gospel.

Please turn to *2Kings 5:1-19*. (**read**). The story before us is a very interesting one. Naaman was no ordinary human being. He was head of the army under King of Aram or Syria. Naaman’s fame and valor is set before us in three brief descriptions : he was a great man before the king; he was highly respected; he was a valiant warrior who had won many victories in battle. But there was one thing wrong in Naaman’s life. And that one thing compromised everything about Naaman. He was a leper.

He was a great man before his king, but he was a leper. He was highly respected in his country but he was a leper. He was a valiant warrior but he was a leper. This leprosy marked him and characterized him. In your dealings with Naaman, the thing you saw, first and foremost, was his leprosy.

What was this leprosy? When we think of leprosy, we conjure up frightening images in our minds. But in Biblical times leprosy was not only what we know as Hansen’s disease. It is evident that the leprosy Naaman had was not Hansen’s disease. Neither was it contagious. If the disease was contagious Naaman would have lost his job and denied all access to the king. It seems clear that Naaman’s leprosy caused a whiteness on his skin. The judgment that the prophet Elisha pronounced against his servant, Gehazi,

for his greed was, “the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.’ So [Gehazi] went out of his presence a leper as white as snow.” (vs.27).

Whatever the specifics of the disease, it is obvious that Naaman was very conscious of it and that it affected him socially and in other ways. Note vs.5. The little girl said, “I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy.” The verb “cure” also means “to be readmitted into the community”, that is, into the social life of the community. (cf. *Num.12:14-15* “received again”.)

Naaman is great but he is a leper. There is no one in his country who could help him. Even the gods he worshipped could not help him. Naaman was also a Gentile, one who was outside of God’s covenant community of Israel. But God had a plan for him and God was graciously at work in his life. Naaman did not know the Lord who had revealed Himself to Israel. Naaman had absolutely no interest in the Lord God of Israel. And Naaman did not know that he had victories in the battles he fought because the Lord was giving him those victories.

In God’s providence Naaman had in his house a little girl from the land of Israel. This little girl would have been a young girl of marriageable age, that is, over **14** years. She was captured by the Arameans and Naaman brought her to his home. She became a servant to Naaman’s wife. One day she spoke up about her concern for her master and told her mistress that there was a prophet in Samaria who could heal her master. Naaman quickly told the king what the girl said. The king promptly wrote a letter and sent Naaman to the king of Israel.

Naaman traveled to Israel as any man of great importance would do in his day. He came with servants, horses and chariots. And he came with a very valuable gift : ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes. In the time when Naaman lived the value of this gift would have been over five million US dollars.

He came to the king of Israel and handed the king the letter. When the king read the letter he went into a state of shock. He interpreted the letter as an attempt by the king of Aram to provoke a war with the nation of Israel. The king of Israel was an idolater but he knew that the power to heal belonged to God alone. What's worse is that the king of Israel was actively opposing the worship of the God of the prophets in the camp of Elisha. At times he was even seeking to kill them. The king of Israel was in a serious quandary and he knew it. He also knew he had no way out of this quandary.

Elisha's Intervention.

Vs.8 tells us that the prophet Elisha heard what was happening and he sent word to the king asking the king to send Naaman to him. Elisha's message was, "Now let him (Naaman) come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman came to Elisha's home. Could you imagine the excitement that must have run through that village where Elisha lived? Many of the people there, both young and old, would be seeing a chariot for the first time. Naaman's chariot would not have been an ordinary chariot. Here came a military dignitary of the highest order with servants, quite likely his security team, horses, and chariots. A few of these chariots would have been loaded with wealth completely unknown to these poor villagers.

When Naaman arrived the scene that unfolded was astounding. Elisha did not even bother to stop doing what he was doing. He did not come out to greet Naaman. He just sent a messenger to Naaman with the following message, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean." Naaman reacted with furious anger. *"That's it! That's it! This man did not even have the courtesy to come out and greet me. At the very least I thought he would come out and perform a religious ceremony, and call on the name of the Lord, and wave his hands all over the place and then cure me. I thought he would come out in his religious robes, ringing bells, burning incense, chanting incantations, maybe offering some kind of sacrifice to his God, put me to kneel*

down, pour some kind of religious potion over me, pray over me, maybe even slap me a few times.”

Naaman expected Elisha to do the things the prophets of his false gods would have done. If you think I added *“even slap me a few times”* for entertainment value, listen to Paul. The Corinthians were pretending to be wise, even wiser than Paul, when they embraced the false teachers and their teachings. And they were subjecting themselves to all kinds of madness at the hands of these false teachers. Paul wrote in *2Cor.11:20*, *“For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.”*

In his great fury Naaman’s personal and nationalistic pride surfaced. He felt insulted by Elisha’s action. Great man that he was, he expected to be treated better. Naaman saw himself as a great man who happened to be a leper. Elisha saw him as a leper who happened to be a great man. Naaman wanted to be healed but he wanted to be healed on his own terms. He wanted to pay for the healing. He wanted the healings to be carried out with religious pomp and ceremony. And if the healing required that he bathe in a river, he would choose his own river. He certainly would not subject himself to the bathing in the muddy waters of the Jordan when there were far better and cleaner rivers in his own country.

The Servants’ Intervention.

At some point Naaman’s servants intervened. I am sure they would have waited until they saw their master’s anger subsiding. And they spoke with him very carefully and very disarmingly. Their logic was also irresistible. It was irresistible because the Lord was dealing with Naaman and the Lord made their logic irresistible. **Roger Ellsworth** wrote, *“Naaman’s disease was so very dreadful and health was so very desirable that he would not have hesitated to do “something great” had the prophet required it. Why should he refuse to do something simple?”*

At this point Naaman capitulated. He needed healing. His country could not help him. His king could not help him. His gods could not help him. The prophets of his gods could not help him. His wealth and dignity could not help him. So he humbled himself and decided to obey the message of Elisha. He went down to the Jordan river and began dipping. We are not given any details here, so let us use a bit of sanctified imagination. He dipped once and nothing happened. He dipped twice and nothing happened. He dipped a third time and nothing happened. I could see proud Naaman looking up at his servants, anger welling up and shaking his finger at them very threateningly. *“Keep in mind, if I am not healed you all will have hell to pay.”*

He dipped a fourth time, nothing happened. He dipped a fifth time, nothing happened. *“This is ridiculous,”* he declared. *“I am getting out of this stinking river.”* His servants are very nervous at this point and they quickly began pleading, *“Master, only two more dips remain. Please, we beg you, keep on dipping.”* So Naaman dipped the sixth time and once again nothing happened. The servants are trembling now. They could see their heads being chopped off.

Finally, after a pause that seemed like eternity, Naaman dipped the seventh time. And the word of God says, *“his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.” (vs.14)*. A loud cheer went up from the trembling and crying servants. And Naaman is stunned. He is not moving. He is just standing in the muddy Jordan and running his fingers through the water and tears flowing down his face. Finally his servants say to him, *“Master, you can come out of the water now.”*

The Return To Elisha.

Naaman got out of the water and returned to Elisha. This time, Elisha came out to meet him. And the Gentile Naaman made an amazing confession of faith in the God of Israel. It is clear from the entire conversation with Elisha that Naaman is converted and humbled before God. This time Naaman is not trying to pay for his healing. The request, “so

please take a present from your servant” is literally, “please take a blessing from your servant.” You blessed me. Now please let me bless you. Note carefully how Naaman described himself : “your servant”. He was no longer the arrogant valiant warrior from Syria. He was now “your servant”.

Elisha refused the gift because he could not take credit for the Lord healing and saving Naaman. Naaman, on his part, is planning to return home and build an altar to worship the Lord. But he wants soil from Israel to build his altar. He no longer views Israel with contempt. He also said to Elisha, “your servant will no longer offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord.” (*vs.17*).

The Gospel’s Simplicity.

Now Brethren, there are a few important points to be noted from this account. *Firstly*, Naaman was a Gentile and outside the covenant community of God’s people. *Secondly*, he had a disease which no one could heal but the Lord. *Thirdly*, the message for healing was astoundingly simple and without cost. *Fourthly*, the only cost for Naaman, if I may use the word “cost” was humility and obedience. What we find in this simple picture is an illustration of the gospel’s simplicity.

This morning, if you are not a Christian, if you are not saved, you are a sinner and outside of the covenant community of God’s people. In the words of the apostle Paul, you are without God and without hope in this world. (cf. *Eph.2:12*). As a sinner you are sick, desperately sick. *Jer.17:9* says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else, and is desperately sick.” Your sickness is sin. *Rom.3:23* says “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” “**All**” means you. You have sinned. You are a sinner. You have fallen short of God’s glory. And having fallen short you are in a free fall into hell. You are a sinner because you were born with this dreadful disease called sin. (cf. *Psa.51:5*). The disease of sin is far more deadly than the disease of leprosy. Leprosy will bring upon you physical death. Sin will bring upon you eternal death.

There is nothing you can do that can cure you of this sickness. There is nothing any person in this world can do for you that can cure you of this sickness. Many in this world are making promises that they can cure this disease called sin. But Jesus said they are thieves and robbers. (cf. *Jn.10:8*). Paul said they are liars, deceivers and servants of Satan. (cf. *2Cor.11:12-15*). If you believe these liars and their false messages, you will die in your sins and end up in hell.

There is only one person in this world who has the cure for your disease of sin. That person is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The O.T. prophesied that He would come into this world for this very purpose. *Isa.53:5* says, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening of our well-being fell upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." You are inflicted with the disease called sin. You are desperately sick with this disease. And what is the only cure? By Christ's stripes you are healed. How do you receive this cure for your disease of sin?

The Bible answer is very simple. Only the blood of Jesus that flowed from those stripes has the ability to wash away your sins. *1Jn.1:7* says, "the blood Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sins." Paul wrote in *1Cor.6:9-11*, "do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, not adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, not the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." Note what Paul said first on his list, "but you were washed." It is the blood of Christ that washes away that terrible list of sins. The obvious fact here is that Paul's list was not exhaustive because he was focusing on the sins that marked the people at Corinth.

How can you get your sins washed away? By repenting of your sins and putting your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you and change you. Jesus said in *Lk.24:47* "that

repentance for the forgiveness of sins [must] be proclaimed in His name to all the nations.” The book of **Acts** shows us that the apostles faithfully preached the gospel of repentance of sins and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why do so many today reject this simple cure that God has given to us in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? **Roger Ellsworth** wrote, *“The answer is that the gospel offends them. It violates their wisdom and dignity. It doesn’t take into account their riches, social standing, or education. It says all without exception are in sin, and it further says there is nothing we can do to earn or deserve salvation. We are entirely dependent on the grace of God. We want to come before God with Naaman’s shekels and changes of clothing, and have Him accept us on the basis of who we are and what we have done. But just as Elisha ignored Naaman’s wealth and dignity, so God refuses all our attempts to stand before Him on the basis of our own merits or accomplishments.”*

The Bible says, “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (**1Cor.1:18**). Paul added in **vss.23-25**, “we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” The world sees the gospel as foolishness and as an archaic message. One liberal English theologian recently declared that the gospel is a message of divine child abuse.

The amazing thing about those who reject the gospel is that they are no different to Naaman. They are willing to make all kinds of sacrifices, however difficult or expensive, to get a cure for their sin disease. They are willing to go on difficult pilgrimages. They are willing to eat, drink from and bathe in so-called holy rivers that are filthy. They are willing to punish their bodies in the most astounding ways. They are willing to sacrifice all kinds of animals. They would listen if you come before them with all kinds of hocus pocus religious ceremonies and incantations. They would believe if you tell them lies, if

you teach them doctrines that are totally irrational. But the simple gospel is too simple and too cheap. They believe it is too good to be true. They believe that if it is for real, it cannot be free.

Naaman's cure was designed to humble him and compel him to obey a nobody who did not pander to his self-importance and inflated ego. This is how God has designed the gospel. He designed it to look foolish. He designed it to humble the one who would believe. He designed it to compel your humble obedience to His gospel commands. He designed it in a way that it does not cater to your self-importance and inflated ego. The gospel says the king and the beggar, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the pure virgin and the harlot, the homosexual and the heterosexual, the hard worker and the thief, the moral and the immoral, the corrupt and honest, the priest and the layman, are equally sinners and they must receive the cure for their sin disease in the same manner.

Today, if you want your sin disease cured, you must be washed in the blood of Jesus. Today, if you want forgiveness for your sins, you must believe that this forgiveness is only found in Jesus and you must repent in the name of Jesus. Today, if you want eternal salvation for your soul, you must believe in Jesus, you must put your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can save you. He alone must save you. You must come before Him empty-handed and receive from Him the free gift of salvation.

Other Lessons.

Brethren, in closing this study, there are a few other lessons I want to point out. **Firstly**, I want you to take note of the sovereignty of God's grace. The Lord Jesus pointed to this in *Lk.4:27*. He said, "there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." It was not a shortage of lepers in Israel that caused God to grant healing to Naaman. It was because God, in His sovereign grace, chose to heal Naaman. The same is true in the

conversion of every sinner. The same was true in your conversion. Examine your conversion very closely and you will see God's sovereign grace written all over it. The Bible makes it clear that your salvation in Christ begins with God, is carried out by God and it will be completed by God.

Secondly, I want you to note the message of hope in this story. Naaman was an idol worshipping Gentile. He was an enemy of the covenant people of God. He did not deserve anything good from God's hand. Yet God reached out to him with mercy. Naaman did not know that the girl he captured and made a slave in his house would be God's means of bringing him physical healing and eternal salvation. If you are thinking, who am I that God should save me? Who am I that God should look upon me with grace and reach out to me with mercy? Your answer is : who was this Gentile leper called Naaman that God should look upon him with grace and reach out to him with mercy? If you are a nobody, you are in good company. In God's eyes, Naaman was a nobody. In God's eyes we who are saved were all nobodies. Every time I think about how God looked upon me with grace and reached out to me with mercy I am totally overwhelmed. In the story of Naaman there is a story of hope for you.

This brings us to the **last** lesson which I want to state as follows. God's instruments in this world are "not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are." (*1Cor.1:26-28*).

As a Christian, regardless of how you view yourself, you have the responsibility to spread the message of the gospel of God's grace in Christ. As a Christian, regardless of how you view those who reject the gospel, you have the responsibility to share with them the message of the gospel of God's grace in Christ.

This is the vitally important lesson we learn from the Israelite girl who was captured and enslaved in a strange land. **Paul House** wrote, *“Despite her captivity, she is not bitter nor unhelpful. Rather, she shares what she knows about the Lord and the prophet out of concern for Naaman and her mistress and desire to see God’s glory magnified. In this way she acts like Daniel, Mordecai, Ezra, Nehemiah, and other exiles who care for the spiritual and physical well-being of their conquerors.”*

The NIV Application Commentary says, *“In this remarkable account, God is at work to demonstrate that the world is His and that all who live in it belong to Him (Psa.24:1). Naaman the Aramean is of concern to God, not because he suffers from [leprosy] but because God cares about the worship of Arameans as well. God chooses the small things of this world to confound the wise, the weak things to confound the mighty (1Cor.1:27). Naaman, the potent Aramean, is reached through a captive of one of his mighty campaigns. All the forces of intimidation are present for the young Israelite maiden. She has no support group of her own; she is in a household expected to be contemptuous of her faith; she is in the lowest possible social status; she has no right to express any of her opinions and might expect serious consequences for so doing. However she cannot be silent; in voicing her faith, she puts in motion a chain of events that brings about an entire change of life.”*

This Israelite girl has set for us an example of faithfulness to God in a hostile environment. She is a teenager. She is a captive. She is a slave. She is living in a strange land. She is living in the home of the most formidable man in the land after the king. She is living in a home of idol worship. She has every reason to capitulate to her circumstances and forsake God. Yet she remains faithful to the God she was raised to love, fear and obey.

She has set for us an example of trusting in God when she had no human arm to lean upon. She has no mother or father to turn to. She has no youth leader or youth group to

turn to. She has no elder or synagogue leader to turn to. She has no female friends or counselors to turn to. She is alone. She has only God to turn to. So she turned to God and put her trust in Him.

She has set for us an example of faithful gospel witness to a people hostile to the gospel and who saw themselves and their gods as superior to the Israelites and the Lord. In those days when nations went out to battle, their battle was more than a battle between two armies. Their battle was also a battle between the gods of the nations. The victorious army would declare their gods to be greater and stronger and their nation as a superior race. This Israelite girl was a captive. In Naaman's eyes, her God was too weak to help her. What Naaman did not know was that her God sent her into Naaman's house to help him.

Wherever God has put you, He has put you as a gospel light and as a witness unto Him. Are you shining brightly as a gospel light and are you being a witness unto God by the manner of your life, by your words and, as God gives opportunity, by the sharing of the gospel? Your life and your words must be the platform upon which you must stand to share the gospel. The gospel is a message of change. If your life is not demonstrating gospel change you would have no basis to share the gospel. If your life is inconsistent with the message of the gospel, your life would silence your gospel witness. Jesus said in *Matt.12:34*, "the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." If your words are not showing that the gospel has changed your heart, you will have no basis for sharing the gospel. If your words are inconsistent with the message of the gospel, your words or speech would silence your gospel witness. Far too many professed Christians today are silent when it comes to sharing the gospel, not because they are afraid but because their inconsistent lives and their words have silenced them.

Has the example of this young Israelite girl put you to shame this morning? Is her example a rebuke to you, an encouragement you and a challenge to you? Young people, has this fourteen year old put you to shame by her examples of faith, trust, godliness, and gospel witness?

A simple girl shared a simple message that brought a great man to simple faith in Christ and salvation for his soul. Think about that.