

Title: Look and Live
Text: Numbers 21: 4-9
Date: February 23, 2014
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Numbers 21: 4: And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. 5: And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is* no bread, neither *is there any* water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6: And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. 7: Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. 8: And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9: And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

The people were bitten by serpents. They were dying. They were without hope.

The LORD told Moses to make a serpent out of brass—the likeness of the cause of their death. A serpent was biting them so the Lord said make serpent of brass and lift it up before all.

The LORD said, “it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.” Those who looked in faith believing God lived!

I. THE PEOPLE WERE BITTEN BY SERPENTS AND DYING WITHOUT HOPE

How did this begin? **Numbers 21: 5:...the people spake against God, and against Moses.** Moses represents the law; God gave the law through Moses; he represents the law.

Sin Against God

In the garden—in the beginning—in Adam—we sinned against God, we sinned against his law

What was the result when they spake against God and his law? **Numbers 21: 6: the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, [these serpents represent sin, they represent the curse pronounced by the LORD] and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.**

When we sinned against God in Adam; we broke God’s law in Adam. Sin entered in—like these serpents and the venom entered the people. We came under the curse and condemnation of the law. But it was not *much* people that died, in Adam *all* died.

1 Corinthians 15: 22: For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Application: Someone says, “I don’t want God to condemn me for something someone else did! I don’t want to be represented in another.” Sinner, yes you do! That is our only hope. Just as all who Adam represented died so all who Christ represented shall live!

So here we have established our problem: all have sinned against God, all have sinned against God’s law, all have come under the curse and condemnation of God and his law. And we have another problem? God is just. He will by no means clear the guilty. How then can God save a sinner? How can God be merciful to me, the sinner, and yet remain just?

II. THE LORD TOLD MOSES TO MAKE A SERPENT AND LIFT IT UP.—Numbers 21: 8: And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole:...v9: And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole,...

Eternal Provision

Who provided the answer to our problem? The LORD did! In eternity—before sin entered in and death by sin—God the Father had already solved the problem we would face. God knew how he could remain just and yet show mercy to sinners like us. How so?

A Serpent of Brass

What was it the LORD told Moses to make? He told Moses to make a serpent of brass. He told him to make a serpent in the likeness of what it was that was causing the death. He told him to lift it up on a pole. The Lord Jesus tells us this pictures him.

John 3: 14: And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Those Christ came to save were flesh and blood—so Christ was made flesh. (Rom 8: 3-4) Sin caused Christ's people to die—Christ was made sin. (2 Cor 5: 21) His people fell under the curse of the law—Christ was made a curse for us. (Gal 3: 13) Christ said, "I **must** be lifted up" and he was lifted up—crucified on the cross.

Why was it a must? By Christ being made sin and coming under the curse, God was just to execute justice on his Son instead of his people. And because God executed justice on Christ instead of his people, God satisfied his own justice. The law is satisfied: Moses lifted it up, like as the law put Christ on the cross; but now the law is satisfied! Now God is just to show his people mercy. That is why it was a must that Christ be lifted up on the cross.

Since all the work is finished of justifying his people—what is left then for you and I to do to have this salvation from our sin? Nothing!

III. GOD TOLD THEM TO LOOK AT THE SERPENT AND PROMISED THEY WOULD LIVE—Numbers 21: 8:...and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. AND WHAT GOD PROMISED GOD DID—Numbers 21: 9:...and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

What Faith Is

Those who look to Christ in faith shall live. Faith is believing God. When they looked at that serpent, they showed they believed God. Faith is believing Christ-crucified is all my salvation. They proved that in a look. We prove it by believing on Christ. Faith is believing Christ-crucified is my **only** salvation—when they looked to that serpent, and nowhere else, that is what they confessed.

What Faith is Not—Mr. A.W. Pink gave 7 things they were not told to do. Let me point out these things which they were not told to do.

One, they were not told to produce their own cure of healing their wounds. Many preachers today—great minds, doctors of divinity, impressive men—are telling sinners they must make their own cure by something they do. Those who seek spiritual relief by such means are like the poor woman mentioned in the Gospel: she "suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse" (Mk 5:26).

Two, they were not told they would be healed by ministering or serving others who were wounded. This is huge in our day. Most today are busy doing works of charity, expecting that by giving relief to others, they will counteract the deadly sin which is at work in their own souls.

Illustration: What good is it for one to jump into deep water to rescue a drowning man if he cannot swim himself! Sinner, you can't swim yourself; you are a sinner yourself; you are dying yourself; you are unable to deliver yourself; helping others like you will not help you.

Three, they were not told to fight the serpents. Sinners in our day are being told to fight their sins. Sinner, you can't stop your sin, sin is what you are; sin is all that is in the believers old man of flesh—but suppose you could—suppose from this day forward you never sinned again. What about the sins you already sinned and your sin-nature? If you could stop sinning today—you are still guilty and in need of Christ; still need to be born of God and created anew! Crusades against intemperance, profanity, vice, never improve society, only make society worse. And they never bring a single sinner one step nearer to Christ.

Fourthly, they were not told to make an offering to the serpent on the pole. In our day, many are told they must produce some sort of payment in return for their healing. For example: Preachers beg sinners to “Give their hearts to Jesus” or to “turn over your life to Jesus.” We don't have a heart or a life unless God gives us one. We have nothing with which to give God that God did not give us by his free grace. If you do something for someone and they pay you back in some way then what you did ceases being a gift. Instead, it becomes a service they bought from you. Likewise, grace ceases to be grace if any price is paid for what it brings.

Five, they were not told to come down to Moses and pray at a mourners bench. This exact form is not as prevalent in our day. But the principle is. Many preachers urge sinners to go through an outward form, a show of repentance: like walking an aisle, answering a few questions they ask and saying a prayer. Then tell sinners they are saved. **AW Pink said,** “They tread the clean side of the Broad Road” for awhile. But as Christ said, “ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” (Mt 23: 15) Now he's lost but thinks he's saved. God alone can give faith and repentance.

Six, they were not told to look at Moses. They had been crying to Moses—Moses represents the law. The law was given for one reason.

Romans 5:20: Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.

Romans 3: 19...that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Galatians 3: 24: Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25: But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

God took their eyes off Moses, and commanded them to look at the brazen serpent. Why? Salvation is “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5). Sinner, Christ is the Righteousness of God, the Righteousness of the Law. And Christ is the end of the law for everyone that believes on Christ. Get this: those who rest in Christ have not only fulfilled the law, established the law through faith in Christ who established the law for us, but we cannot be charged with breaking the law because God justified us.

Romans 8: 33: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 34: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Another thing, Moses also represents a man, a preacher—sinner, not the will of your flesh flesh, blood-kinship, not the will of any other man can save you. Those who believed in John's day, “were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (Jn 1: 13)

Seven, they were not told to look at their wounds. Some look to their sins to produce repentance. Can you produce something right by looking at something wrong? Do you produce heat by looking at the snow? Or light by looking into the darkness? Sinner, you will never repent from your sins UNTIL you look in faith to Christ!

Zechariah 12:10: And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Faith is the beginning of all godliness. Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. When you look to Christ, you look away from self; when you believe Christ, you repent from all else.

Eight, this is common in our day—somehow Satan has gotten sinners to put confidence in their looking—in their faith. You hear people saying, “Well, at least I’ve got my faith.” God does not tell us to look to our looking. He says look to Christ. He does not tell us to “Believe in our believing.” He says, “Believe on Christ!”

All these things are deadly. But sinners are being taught that salvation is in these things. If you believe you are saved by anything you have done, you are mistaken. We may believe ourselves to be Christ’s—but if we are looking anywhere other than Christ—then we are mistaken: be it an experience, good works, repentance, faith, feelings, resolutions, baptism, anything else.

CHRIST IS ALL AND IN ALL! LOOK AND LIVE!

Amen!