

Healing the Serpent's Bite

The Present Truth – November 28, 1901.

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If the Israelites had believed God, they would soon have been happy in Canaan. But last week we learned how they shut themselves out of that beautiful country, by their unbelief.

Then because they had to stay in the wilderness, and the way was hard and rough, they spoke against Moses and against God. They forgot that they were keeping Moses out of the Promised Land, and that they had grieved the Lord by their failure, after all that He had done for them. They spoke as though Moses had been the cause of all the troubles that they had brought upon themselves and him.

God had not forsaken the people because of their sin. When they would not go into Canaan, He still cared for them and protected them. He fed them with manna from heaven, and gave them water from the rock to drink.

The land where they were was full of serpents, but God had kept them from biting His people. But when they murmured against Him and against Moses, He withdrew His protecting hand for a moment, that the people might be brought to see how much they owed to His care.

Then the fiery serpents "bit the people, and much people of Israel died. 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.

"And 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.

"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."

This was another beautiful Object Lesson before the children of Israel, through which God was teaching them the Gospel.

Jesus explained it when He said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

So the uplifted serpent was a type of Jesus Christ, who was lifted up on the Cross, that we might look and live.

It was a serpent, the thing which had bitten the people, that was lifted up. You know that the serpent is used in the Bible to represent Satan. It was through the serpent that he first tempted man, and brought sin into the world. And he is spoken of as “that old serpent called the devil and Satan.” Are you wondering how then this could be a type of Christ?

It is because “He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us.” He took all sin upon Himself, that He might destroy and make an end of it. As we look to the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see the death of sin, the destruction of Satan. We see His power to “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

And as death comes only through sin, when sin is destroyed and made an end of, death also will be no more. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” So through looking to the Cross of Jesus, we see that we may be wholly delivered from sin, and freed from the power of death, “that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives.”

It was believing and obeying the Word of God that saved the people. There was no healing power in that serpent of brass, yet all who obeyed God and looked to it were saved. The poison of the serpent lost its power over their bodies. Those who doubted, and would not look because they could not understand how it could do them any good, died.

Not looking at their grievous wounds, and mourning over their sad condition, but looking away from themselves to the uplifted serpent, saved the people.

We have all been bitten by the deadly serpent, and the poison of sin is working in us to bring everlasting death. But God has made a way of escape for every one of us. The Son of man has been lifted up, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Then we must not waste time looking at ourselves and mourning over our sins. We must look away from ourselves to our uplifted Saviour, and sin will lose its power over us, and the new life of Jesus will fill us with His own perfect righteousness.