

The Word of Life Messenger

“Holding forth the word of life” Phil. 2:16

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THE BRAZEN SERPENT

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (John 3:14)

In Numbers 21 we have the account of how the children of Israel became discouraged on their journey when they had to take a route around the land of Edom on their way to the land of Canaan. They began to murmur and complain against Moses and God. The resulting judgment and deliverance by the power of God is a beautiful reminder to us of how Christ bore our judgment there on the cross. John writes “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (3:14-15). There was sinful rebellion by the children of Israel, there was sovereign judgment upon them, there was a saving remedy provided, and a satisfying remedy provided.

First, there was a sinful rebellion. The people became very discouraged because of the difficulty of their journey. They began to murmur and complain. They doubted God’s promises. The Scripture says, they said “Wherefore have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness” (Numbers 21:5). God had promised to go with them, provide for them and lead them to the land of Canaan. Now when things got hard, they began to doubt God’s word. Someone has said we would be a lot better off if we would “believe our beliefs and doubt our doubts.” How we need to be careful when it comes to doubt-

ing God and His promises. Not once has He or His word failed. Next, they detested God’s provisions. They said “our soul loatheth this light bread” (21:4). God had graciously provided for them manna to eat each day. Instead of being grateful for what God had provided them, they began to complain. Finally, they despised God and God’s prophet for the Scripture says “the people spoke against God and against Moses” (21:5). When one sours on God he will sour on God’s servants also. The problem was not with God, however, for He had graciously delivered them from bondage in Egypt, brought them through the Red Sea, destroyed the Egyptians, gave them water and food and supplied their needs. The problem was not with Moses for he was simply leading them by the route which God had directed him to go.

Second, there was sovereign judgment. Sometimes we act as if God will not act when we sin. We are grievously mistaken if we think that God will not deal with our sin. God sent deadly serpents among them to bite the people (21:6). This was a fitting judgment for their sin. Rebellion against a holy God always has consequences and rightfully so. This judgment was not only fitting, but fatal. The Scripture says “and many of the people died” (21:6). This is a picture to us of the consequences of our sin. The Bible says “the wages of sin is death”

(Rom. 6:23). Again, the Scripture says “and sin when it is finished brings forth death” (James 1:15). How little today do many think about the seriousness of their sin. The children of Israel came to Moses and said “we have sinned.” So today, if there is to be any deliverance from our sins, there must first be the recognition of the fact that we have sinned against God.

Third, there was a saving remedy. This remedy was appointed by God. The Scripture says “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 looked upon it, shall live” (Numbers 21:8). In like manner, the cross of Christ is the divinely appointed means of salvation. Moreover, the Christ of the cross is the only divinely appointed person of salvation. Luke wrote “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). John wrote “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:14-15).

This brazen serpent was informing to the people. Brass is a type of judgment and the serpent is a type of sin. Both used together show sin judged. The cross of Christ shows
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THE BRAZEN SERPENT

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our sin judged in Christ as He was made sin for us. He who had no sin, He who was perfectly innocent, took our guilt and sin upon Himself and bore the wrath of a holy God as our substitute. Our sin was judged in Christ. It was not overlooked or ignored.

The brazen serpent was enduring. The serpent was made of brass which would last. So the sacrifice of Christ is enduring. It never loses its value or power.

The brazen serpent was erected in a conspicuous place in the center of camp. Even so, the Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up from earth on a cruel cross that He might bridge the gap between heaven and earth for all that believe. Moreover, we as believers are commanded to go into the entire world and preach the gospel to everyone. We are to seek to make Christ conspicuous to all who will hear his glorious gospel.

Those who were bitten only needed to look at the brazen serpent to be healed. It was an easy cure for their snake bite. So also is the belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. One needs only see himself as a sinner deserving of God's judgment and see in the substitutionary death of Christ his only hope for the forgiveness of sin. Good works will not save, church membership will not save, and being baptized will not save a person. These all have their place in our life after we are saved. Participating in certain rituals or sacraments will not save, nor will coming from a godly family save. Only faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross will save. It is easy, but it is essential. All those who did not look died. They may have said "Oh that's just too simple," or "that sounds impossible or improbable; it's just not logical." So today many stumble at the simplicity of the gospel of Christ. It appears foolishness to them. However, Jesus said,

"If you believe not that I am He you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Paul wrote "Now to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). It is a simple message; it is received simply by faith; but it is an essential message. No one can be saved apart from faith in Christ.

All who looked at the brazen serpent in faith were healed. It was sufficient wherever a man was bitten. It was sufficient no matter how serious a person's condition was. It was sufficient no matter how many times a person had been bitten. It was sufficient whether the person was young or old, priest or not, slave or free. So the cross of Christ is sufficient to all who come unto Him. No matter how sinful we are, no matter how desperate our condition, no matter what our social class, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. Each person had to look himself; but each person who looked was healed. So is it with the cross of Christ; each person individually must believe, but each person who believes, who comes to Christ is saved. Notice also, that the person was instantaneously healed. The person didn't get well over a series of hours or days, but immediately. So also is the person who looks by faith to Christ instantaneously saved and made a new creature. Like John Newton he can say "Whereas I was blind, now I see." All who look to Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection for their sins receive a full, free, and complete salvation, are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, and are declared righteous and accepted before God. Such is God's grace toward His people.

Fourth, this remedy was a satisfying remedy. There was a new beginning; they journeyed toward "the sunrising" (Num. 21:11).

There was pure fresh water (v. 16); there was joy as the people sang to the Lord (v. 17); there was obedience for they dug their wells "by the direction of the lawgiver" (v. 18). Finally there was victory for God gave them victory over their enemies (v. 24-25). So is the salvation of Christ to every believer. Every person who is saved is made a new creature in Christ with a new heart, new desires, and a new attitude toward God. He has a new beginning for his sins are washed away by the blood of Christ. Jesus cried, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37). The Scripture says that He spoke of the Holy Spirit which He gives to all that believe on Him. The Holy Spirit leads the believer to joy in Christ (Phil.) and to obedience to Christ (John 10:27). Finally, there is victory in the believer's life over sin, self, Satan, and the world. The believer may stumble along the way, but he will hold us all the way, because "greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4).

How wonderful is the message of salvation. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Like the Israelites of old who looked at the Brazen Serpent and lived, may we also look to Christ and be saved. He is able to save all that come unto God by Him. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Have you looked to Him in saving faith? Are you rejoicing in the goodness of God?

- Larry Windham

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). This statement is from the words of Jesus as He prayed the great prayer of intercession to the Father for His children. Every child of God can take encouragement from this prayer. In this article, we would like to consider what the Lord taught on eternal life from this prayer.

Eternal life is the kind of life God has and the kind of life every child of God has in Christ Jesus. In fact this verse teaches us that eternal life is knowing God through the Lord Jesus Christ. To know Him is to be saved and to possess eternal life. To know Jesus is to know Him in regard to forgiveness of sins when you believe Jesus died, was buried and raised again.

The child of God has eternal life because of a past pardon or forgiveness. The word “pardon” is an Old Testament word that comes over into the New Testament in the word “forgive.” Because of the work of the Lord Jesus in the past, that is His redemptive work on the cross, the believer has forgiveness of sins. “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” (Romans 4:7). The apos-

tle John writes to believers in the epistle of I John “because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake” (I John 2:12). The word “forgiveness” is a word that has to do with Jesus putting away our sins through His shed blood on the cross. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). The word “remission” in this verse is the same word translated forgiveness. This teaches us that forgiveness takes place because of the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. We have forgiveness when we believe in Him, that is through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

We have eternal life as a present possession. We have eternal life now. We do not have to wait until sometime in the future to find out if we are saved. Jesus said in John 10:28, “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). When we come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we

are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a secure promise that we are eternally safe. “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13, 14).

Eternal life also has a future promise. God has saved the believing sinner through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Because of this we have eternal life as a present possession and we are guaranteed eternal life in the future. “For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (I Tim. 4:8). According to II Timothy 1:1, the promise of life is in Christ Jesus. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2). God is able to perform that which He promised (Rom. 4:21). “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)” (Heb. 10:23).

- Gladwin Carpenter

GOD’S GOODNESS

The goodness and mercy of God shall ever follow and overtake me while I follow the leading of the Good Shepherd who loved His sheep and gave Himself for them. And I will need both goodness and mercy for my journey; mercy to shield me from what I justly deserve, and goodness to provide me what I do not really deserve. And where will this journey finally end? It will end in the Father’s house where I shall dwell forever with fullness of fellowship with the

Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and all the redeemed of the ages. It will end in the new heaven and the new earth where there is no more sickness, no more sorrow, no more sin, no more death, only righteousness flowing like a mighty river. It will end in a place of indescribable beauty, bountiful blessings and provisions and fullness of joy. It will end in perfect worship of and enjoyment of our God and savior. And the last part of that verse reminds us that there shall be no

end to that blessedness for the Psalmists say “And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” God’s grace provides goodness and mercy all the days of my life here and sweetness of relationship and fellowship hereafter. How precious the blood of Christ should be to us. What great things He has provided for us who delight in the gospel of Christ.

- Larry Windham

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Notice

The North Central and Northeast MS Baptist Bible conferences will meet in conjunction with the Elliott Baptist Church annual Bible Conference on April 17 and 18, 2006. On Monday evening, April 17, supper will be served at the church at 5:30 p.m. The evening services begin at 7:00 p.m. with two speakers. The conference begins at 9:45 a.m. on Tuesday with speakers throughout the day. Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon. Supper will be served at 5:30 p.m. with the evening services starting at 7:00 p.m. The preachers will be selected from the floor.

Bro. Cecil Fayard and the Elliott Baptist Church invite you to this time of Bible study.

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THE THREEFOLD WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:7-11).

Here we have Jesus speaking to His disciples shortly before He goes to the cross to die, be buried and raised again. Jesus promises to His children the coming of the Holy Spirit to permanently indwell us. He reproves the world of the sin of unbelief (vs. 7,8), of righteousness and of judgment. Aren't you glad righteousness comes between sin and judgment?

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