

## Faith in the Home

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Numbers 21:4-9/John 3:14-21

"God's Plan, Lifted for Us to See and Lifted Up for Us to Believe"

Condemned to be the wilderness for 40 years, the Israelites continued to grumble against God and His servant Moses. Their complaining, grumbling, distrust of God happened over and over again. It happened even though they had witnessed and received miraculous deliverance from Egypt and were given victories over nations that opposed them. Well, if those blessings were not enough to silence complaints and invoke trust, God also brought His wrath on His people to discipline them. He wanted them to repent back to them. But although God's discipline brought repentance it was always fleeting throughout the 40 years wilderness exile. So, to drive His people back to Him, God sent fiery serpents to strike at his people. Once again, they cried out for help. Moses prayed for them and for an answer God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and place it on a pole.

This pole was not some magic trick or form of witchcraft. Moses was instructed to raise it up in the air and to tell those inflicted with snake bites to look upon the bronze serpent and receive deliverance from God. It was matter of looking on the snake with faith in God, and His promise. It was the serpent that deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden. It was serpent's that struck God's sinful people in the wilderness. It would be "the serpent" in the Garden of Eden that would bruise the heel of our God, and yet out God would crush that serpent's head when He died on the cross for our sins.

That is why many of the Church Father's professed a belief that the serpent on the pole would have formed the shape of a cross. Jesus Himself, in a meeting with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, said, "Just as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man, be lifted up, so that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life." Jesus proclaimed that Moses raising that bronze serpent, foreshadowed His own death on the cross.

Throughout the Bible, exile away from the promised land that would be our home, is a recurring theme. We are not in our heavenly homes. Peter in his first letter addressed the Church as the elect exiles. We are elect because we have faith, but we are exiles because the fallen world is not our home.

We want a variety delicious food. We want water to come out of that facet when we turn or lift the handle. We comfort in our homes, if not luxurious comforts. No matter how blessed we are even

as elect exiles, we are often impatient towards God. We irrationally act to take control because in our minds, God is too slow to act. Yet, there God is lifted for us to see on the cross. When we sin, the Holy Spirit reminds us of what Jesus did for us on the cross. We see the image of the cross, and we remember. When we see the cross we believe. We are saved on account of our faith in Jesus Christ.

***What are some applications that we can draw from this text?***

1. The Israelites distrust and unbelief was irrational because they saw with their own eyes what God had done for them. However, we really are not any better than them. Put yourself in their place and imagine being on a hiking/camping trip for 40 years where water wasn't always present and the food was the same. Think of the times you complained over lesser things. We cannot rationally say that we would do better.
2. This is why we need grace. Thank God, Jesus gave us grace in abundance. He also gave us faith to believe.
3. The Israelites desire for a better place to live was inherently sinful. We desire our eternal home with Jesus. The sin is not trusting in God to sustain, provide, and satisfy our needs while we are exiled in this fallen world.
4. The theme of wilderness and exile, and the desire for a promise land foreshadows our desire to be in our heavenly home and in Christ's new creation. Our home we are waiting for is in the physical presence of Christ, where sin no longer exists.
5. God tells His story again and again throughout the Scriptures. It is all about Jesus. To be holy, free, joyful, and forgiven you need Jesus Christ.