



The Southeast Sower

The Cross and the Serpent (Jim Deason)

*The Southeast
Church of Christ
meets at:*

35 Walnut Ct.

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone:

330.628.7432

SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study:

10:00 am

Worship:

10:50 am

6:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study:

7:30 pm

“The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So the people came to Moses and said, ‘We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us.’ And Moses interceded for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.’ And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he live.” (Num. 21:6-9)

Set near the end of Israel’s wandering in the wilderness, this story is a vivid illustration of how God cannot and will not abide with sin. He punishes evil. Yet, even in God’s punishment for

sin, grace is seen in that He also provided a means of healing. Moses was commanded to erect upon a standard a serpent of bronze so that, when the people were bitten, they could look upon it and be healed.

John 3:14-15 compares this event with the cross of Jesus. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whosoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” Through the years, the comparison between the bronze serpent and the cross has been the basis for many sermons and articles. There is nothing new here; only a reminder of encouraging and comforting lessons learned. First, let’s consider the bronze serpent.

The Bronze Serpent

The plan to heal men by looking upon the bronze serpent was God’s, not man’s. Neither Moses nor the best physicians of Israel could have developed

this method of healing, for it was nothing short of miraculous. They *might* have considered some salve, surgery, or the consumption of herbs, but all such would have been ineffective and resulted in death. This was God’s plan and the *only* plan that resulted in life.

No doubt, people were healed from every age, gender, occupation, and social status; young, old, rich, poor, priest, slave, or shepherd. The serpents were no respecter of persons as they slithered through the camp. In the same way, healing was available.

God’s plan worked. It did not matter where a person was bitten, how many times he might have been bitten, or how serious his condition may have become by the time he looked upon the bronze serpent. God’s plan never fail. They are simple and effective. One didn’t look upon the brass serpent, only to

as interesting as this story might be on its own, it is John's comparison to the cross that brings home to us its power (John 3:14-16). Lessons found here are filled with encouragement and hope.

The Cross

Like the healing found in the bronze serpent, the cross is God's plan to save man from sin. This plan originated not in the foolishness of men, but in the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18-23). The cross itself is the focal point of history (1 Cor. 15:1-4), and God's only means of redeeming man (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

The way of the cross is available to all (2 Cor. 5:14-15; Heb. 2:9; Gal. 3:28-29). It is not a white, middle class, American thing. The cross is available to all who call on the name of the Lord without regard to age, gender, social status, or nationality.

The blood of the cross is powerful enough to cleanse even the vilest of sins (1 Cor. 6:9-11). It can cleanse no matter how many times a man has sinned (cf. Mt. 18:21-35). God is not the one who limits forgiveness. And it will cleanse no matter how serious one's condition in sin may be (1 Tim. 1:12-16). The gospel of the cross has the power to reach even the hardest of hearts, but only if one will yield to its power.

Two Important Lessons

Just as the story of the brass serpent, there are two important lessons we need to remember about the cross. First, *God's plan is simple*. There is nothing complicated about it. Healing is easy to find at the foot of the cross (Mt. 11:28-30). Instead of a look,

healing comes by obedience to simple commands (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38).

And finally, *God's plan never fails*. Sometimes, as possible in the case with the brass serpent, men may fail to follow the plan and die, but the plan never fails. No matter who you are, no matter where you're from, no matter what you've done, if you'll look to the cross and obey the gospel, you can be cleansed. Are you heavily burdened with a load of sin? Why not let Jesus remove that burden?

("Biblical Insights," May 2015, pg. 6)

Neglecting God's Power To Save! (Vernon Teagarden)

How foolish it would be for a farmer to spend much time and effort in preparing soil and planting his crops just to lose them to neglect. In order for crops to be ruined they do not have to fall prey to a hurricane, tornado, flood, hail, fire, or invasion of insects. No, just simply neglecting the crops will lead to their destruction. Why before you know it, the weeds take over and choke the very life out of what might have been a bountiful harvest.

So it is when it comes to the salvation of one's soul. In short, one does not have to commit fornication, adultery, murder, robbery, or be the vilest of criminals to be lost. No, all one has to do is simply NEGLECT (ignore) the gospel of Jesus Christ, God's power to save (Rom. 1:16). The Hebrew

writer states, "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how will we escape if we NEGLECT so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him" (Heb. 2:2, 3, NKJV).

Most calamities of life are caused by simple neglect; and I venture to say, that most souls will be lost for the same reason! "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest we drift away" (Heb. 2:1)

Food For Thought

"A CHURCH BUILDING IS ERECTED, NOT FOR THOSE WHO WOULD COME FOR THE HOT COFFEE AND DOUGHNUTS, BUT FOR THOSE WHO COME 'HUNGERING AND THIRSTING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS.'" (Eugene Britnell)

Things To Remember

Those recovering from surgery:
Linda Gibson and Martha Shackleford

Our shut-ins: Pat Shane, Ger-eva Knight, and Delores Otto

Our Gospel Meeting; September 13—18 with brother Jason Hardin