

The Must of Christ Likening Himself to a Serpent

by Ian Paisley

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in the gospel and the promise of salvation through Christ, using the story of the serpent in the wilderness as an illustration.

Duration: 45:36

Scripture: Numbers 21:4-9, Matthew 6:33, John 3:14

Topics: "Salvation Message", "The Cross"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the simplicity of the gospel and encourages sinners to look to Jesus Christ for salvation. He uses the analogy of a look that brings back life and stops poison from destroying the body. The preacher urges listeners to ignore critics and blasphemers and focus on the cross, where Jesus bore the sins of the world. He then reads from the Book of Numbers, specifically chapter 21, verses 4-9, which tells the story of the Israelites journeying through the wilderness and becoming discouraged. The sermon concludes by highlighting the simplicity of scripture and the power of the gospel message.

Transcript

You'll find authorized versions of the Holy Scriptures in front of you in the pew. Pick up a copy of God's Word and let's have our reading. We only use the authorized King James Bible in our public worship services.

And you'll find a leaflet at the door giving our reasons for such. Do take a copy or copies of that leaflet. Why we hold to the authorized King James Bible and reject modern versions.

Get a copy and read it and be instructed. The first portion of Scripture we're reading tonight is in the Old Testament. It's in the book of Numbers.

The book of Numbers at the chapter 21. And at the verse 4 to the verse 9 we are reading the fourth verse of the 21st chapter of the book of Numbers. 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. 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.

And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people. And they bit the people, and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, we have sinned.

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 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. 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. Then turning over to the gospel of John. John's gospel at the chapter three.

The third chapter of John's gospel. And we are reading at verse nine. The ninth verse of the third chapter of John's gospel.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, that is to the Lord Jesus, how can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, aren't thou a master of Israel? And knoweth not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven. 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. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

Ending our reading at verse 17 of the third chapter of John's Gospel. And God will stamp with his own approval this reading of his own most precious word. I take the promised Holy Ghost, the blessed power of Pentecost, to fill me to the uttermost.

I take, by God he undertakes for me. And the people of God said, Amen. You may be seated.

John's Gospel chapter 3 and verse 14. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. Please notice the word must.

We have been given a series of messages on the must of our Lord Jesus Christ. I think this is the 18th and there are still more musts that we must consider. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

Every great Gospel truth, which the triune God of all the earth has revealed in his infallible word, is always expressed in very simple, typical expressions. And typical experiences in the scripture of truth. The simplicity of scripture is one of the miracles of divine inspiration.

God's word makes the way of salvation a simple thing. The simplicity of all simplicity is the exposition and revelation of the mighty Gospel that's contained in the Holy Scriptures. John's Gospel chapter 3 is especially unique in that sort of presentation.

A large number of types are messaged and typical speech is used. And they are presented here in John's Gospel chapter 3 in great simplicity, yet with tremendous power. Mr. Spurgeon, the greatest of all English preachers, said in a sermon once, Now, beloved, it is the same in spiritual language as it is in natural speech.

Nicodemus was but a child in grace. When Jesus Christ would teach him to speak concerning his kingdom, he did not talk to him in abstract words, but he gave him metaphorical words whereby he might understand the essence of the thing better than by giving him more abstract terms. When he talked to Nicodemus, he did not say anything about sanctification, but he did say, Except a man be born of water.

He did not talk anything to him about the great change of heart, but he did say, Except a man be born again. He cannot see the kingdom of God. He would not tell him much about the Spirit when he began, but he said, The wind bloweth where it listeth.

And when he wanted to teach him faith, he did not begin by saying, By faith we are allied to Christ and derive salvation from our living head. But he said, Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. And so the first religious talk of a converted man must all be in simple figures.

The epistles of Paul are different. They give us that pure teaching in all its strength, but the words of Jesus must first be applied to the sinner before he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit and understands the mysteries of the kingdom. And I believe these metaphors and these figures of speech are all important.

And as I come to preach tonight, I have a prayer in my heart. Oh, my God, who called me to preach this gospel, help me to preach it in sincerity and in truth. Let me have the same simplicity my master had.

How tenderly he spoke, even to the infants that were carried in their mother's arms. How tenderly he spoke in language which they understood. Suffer little children to come unto me.

Forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Now, in this text, we find that Christ took an Old Testament historical fact and he hung his sermon on the kneel of that Old Testament historical experience. And the first thing I would have you note is the serpents specified.

There are two serpents in this verse. There's the fiery serpents that bit the children of Israel and caused so many deaths in the camp of Israel. And then there was the serpent that was made by Moses, a replica of those fiery serpents, which was made at the command of God.

Was put on a pole, was carried around the camp. And all who were bitten and were dying were told to look to that serpent on the pole and they most certainly would be healed. The Lord Jesus took this man, a very religious man, and he took him back to the Old Testament, to the Pentateuch, to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

He took him back to that day when the camp of Israel, wandering in the wilderness, was attacked by the fiery serpents. Serpents. It was attacked because the children of Israel had turned their back upon their God.

And they came in anger and they spoke against God and His grace, His provision, His redemption at the Red Sea, and all that He had accomplished in feeding them day by day with the manna from heaven. And God was angry and He sent these fiery serpents to do something, to bite them and to put into them a

poison that there was no human remedy for. That brings us to the serpents specified.

Why were they called fiery? They were called fiery because when they bit the person, a fire arose within the body of that person. And that body was, as it were, incinerated in the poison that the serpent put into them. Secondly, we need to look not only at these serpents specified, but we need to look at the serpents bite identified.

The serpents bite, as I have said, inject into their body a fire which burned the inside out of the victim. Hence, they were called fiery serpents. That poison was a poison of death and no one in the camp of Israel had any remedy.

A poison that no man could cure of. The poison of the serpent is always unto death. Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

All the health skills which those children of Israel had learned in Egypt, couldn't help them now. Die they must and die they would. And so the tents became tents of death.

The wilderness became a place of graves. Numbers chapter 21 verse 6, much people of Israel died. Death along the rows of the tents of every tribe.

Much people dying. Many cleaves dug and much lamentation. And this attack by the fiery serpents increased in its philosophy and it added its speed.

And there was a harvest of dead men and women and boys. There's a lesson to be learned. First of all, rebellion against God brings judgment.

And secondly, the poison of the serpent has no human cure. And those who are poisoned by the serpent need divine intervention or they will most certainly die. It did not matter how high in rank was the person that was bitten.

It did not matter how good and holy they were ceremoniously and religiously. It didn't matter what powers they wielded among the twelve tribes of Israel. They fell before the curse of this death like anyone else.

Sin is no respecter of persons of death, has no knowledge of any aristocracy. There is no escape from this death, humanly speaking. As a result, the people came to Moses and they confessed their sin of rebellion.

And they rightly blamed themselves upon what was happening. And God in His great grace announced a simple way and we come to the serpent crucified. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

But whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Here we have the crucified serpent on the pole, uplifted as a type of our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, crucified on the cross. Now when Moses announced that there was a remedy, a God-given remedy for death, I am sure that when that remedy was announced, there was unbelief.

There were people who laughed and said, how foolish is old Moses making an image of the serpents that have destroyed us, putting it on a pole, walking through the tents, the stricken tents of dying men and women, and calling upon them to bring them for their beds and make them look at that serpent. And telling them if they looked, they would live. There were many who cried, this is a deception.

This is madness. This is contradiction of sense. Stuff and nonsense, I'm sure, came from many.

To think of it, that our intelligence is insulted, our intellects are insulted, our common sense is insulted, that if we look at a brazen serpent fastened to a pole, this deadly death will be taken away and we shall. The same attitude prevails today in this 20th century against the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Faithful gospel ministers who preach the simple gospel are laughed.

How could it be that a look would immediately bring back life and stop the poison destroying the body of its victim? I have a simple answer to the critics of the simplicity of the gospel. Try it and see. Do you want to know, sinner friend, can God save you now from your sin? Then look to Jesus Christ.

Put your fingers in your ears so that you no longer can hear the critics and the blasphemers of this gospel. Turn your eyes to the cross, the sin-bearing lamb of God, and look, and I tell you on the authority of the God that wrote this book, you'll live. And when 10 million trillion years are gone and in the glory land I meet you, you will say you were right then.

I looked and I lived. There's life for a look at the crucified one. There is life at this moment for me.

Then look, sinner, look unto him who has died, unto him who was kneeled to the tree. A great multitude of those Israelites looked, and every one of them that looked, they lived. I'm sure many of the critics that day laughed at the manner of salvation.

We have the tabernacle in our midst. We have all the ceremonial laws of Moses given to Moses directly by God in the Mount Sinai. Why can't we go and look at the brazen altar and the brazen laver? Why can't we go and look at the candlestick? Why can't we go and look at the table of the showbread? Why can't we go and look at the altar of incense? Why can't we go and look at the mercy seat? Why do you not bring us within the veil and show us the art of the covenant? God did not refer them to these relics.

God referred them to a serpent on a pole. Because that serpent was a perfect type of our Savior who was going to come and die for poor sinners upon the cross. Men say today, Jesus is no conqueror.

He's not a prince. He's not a king. He's only a poor peasant, and he himself died on that cross.

Again, I say to all critics of the cross, to all critics of the gospel, try it and see. Men and brethren, you are born in sin and shame and iniquity. And as you have lived your life, your sin has steadily increased, and your guilt has been added too.

And today you have to say, could my zeal know respite? No. Could my tears forever flow all for sin? Could not at all. But our Lord Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son, was born of the virgin Mary, lived out his life on this earth for one purpose, to take away the sin of the world.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. And on a terrible cross, in agony unknowable to anyone else that ever lived in this life, he died for our sins and rose again the third day, according to the scripture. If you turn away from your sins now and turn to him now, you will be this very instant saved forever.

You need to come and look to him. And when you come and look to him, you will be forever set free from your sin. The next thing we need to look at is the serpents rectified.

Those serpents had to be killed. They had to be slaughtered. Their awful poison had to be dealt with.

God showed them how to deal with them. And we have that uplifted serpent, which was a picture of him who would come and take our sins and our sorrows and make them his very own and die upon the cross. The crusade of death suddenly ceased.

The stranglehold of the death from the bites of these serpents was totally destroyed. The reign of terror collapsed. The awful dread that pursued every member of the tribes of Israel was destroyed.

The Lord wrought a great victory. Grace conquered the graves. The power of heaven vanquished the power of hell.

The agony of sin gave place to the victory of salvation. The whole nation looked and the whole nation lived. The terror-filled encampment was transformed into a triumphant, celebrating family that had been healed.

And joy and thanksgiving filled the praises of the people of God. Notice how in this verse that we were reading in numbers, that when they were healed, they marched with healing in the wings of the son of righteousness. They marched into the sunrise.

There is a verse in Malachi that says, But unto you that fear my name shall the son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings. And ye shall go forth and grow up as calves at the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicket, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet.

In the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts. So is also the promise to the New Testament church. For in Romans we read, The God of grace shall tread Satan under your feet shortly.

And as God tread under the feet of these stricken people, the awfulness of their poison, so God treads under our feet. Evil that he wrought, he works. The glory of grace deliverance that he works and breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free.

I picked up an old hymn book this week and there was a hymn by Toplady, the famous author of the hymn Rock of Ages. And Toplady wrote these words, Thou son of righteousness arise, shine glorious source of light, and with the brightness of thy rays now chase away the night. Confused and blind, though oft I am, and prone to go astray, bid me receive my sight, and I shall clearly see my way.

Impart a ray of heavenly light, pure fervent love inspire, and may the Holy Spirit aid and fan that sacred fire. The captive at thy word shall be from every chain release. The broken heart shall sing with joy, the troubled sea shall rest.

Let not my hopes be overcast with shadows of despair. Dark through my soul thy quickening be, and shine forever there. One final word, the serpent glorified.

The serpent in the pool was derided, it was scorned, it was despised, it was reviled, but it was glorified at the end of the day. The Lord Jesus Christ tonight presented in the gospel to man as derided, he is scorned, he is despised, he is reviled, but at the end of the day he is going to be glorified. Not one who had been bitten by a serpent and would have died, died, they were all healed.

Every one of them. None need perish, all may look for Christ has died. So Christ simply took this Old Testament incident and likened himself unto the serpent on the pool and signed up with his unchangeable must the promise as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted

up.

The bigwigs in the religious world today, speaking educationally, religiously and theologically, they laugh at this old gospel. They say that never happened. That was a figment of Moses' imagination if there ever was a Moses.

But I want to tell you the miracle of what happened in the wilderness is nothing to the miracle that has happened to men when they have looked to Christ upon the tree. The history of the change of men who simply looked and praise God they looked and lived forever and nothing could kill out the life that is hid with Christ in God eternal in the heavens. Ah, the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to us who are saved it is the power of God.

Yes, it is a simple gospel. A simple gospel of looking to Christ that saved and that's the only gospel. The just for the unjust has died on the tree.

That's my way to God. That's God's way. Instead of me is at the heart of the gospel.

Substitution is the foundation of the gospel's truth. Upon a life I did not live upon a day if I did not die another's life another's death I state by all eternal. The everyday work of spreading the gospel is to simply lift up Jesus Christ present him to sinners for by looking away from themselves and from religion and turning to him alone salvation is imparted to you.

Yes, look away from everything. Look away from everyone. Look away to Jesus alone sinner.

There is life. There is life. There is life for a look at the crucified one.

There is life at this moment for thee. At this very second you can be saved. Saved from hell.

Saved from death. Saved from the penalty of sin. Saved for heaven.

Saved for home and saved for all eternity. Through good report and ill report let us preach that Jesus Christ is alive for sinners slain. Look now sinner.

Look to Christ. Look to him bleeding on the cross for you. Remember the urgent invitation is today saith the spirit if you hear his voice harden not your heart the devil will tell you this salvation is not for you.

He'll whisper it in your ear. I would kneel that lie of the devil. The precious word whosoever opens the door to everyone.

Whosoever shuts no one out it includes everyone. Tell the devil that sinner and keep telling him and send him back screaming to the hell where he rightfully belongs. Jesus Christ has said whosoever.

Let no man say that doesn't mean whosoever. What Jesus said and what did he say? He said whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life. Christopher Ness the old Puritan expositor said some quaint things in his exposition and here is one that he said.

He said there were people there and they couldn't see properly because they'd been bitten by the serpent. The poison had taken its toll on their faculty of looking. But he said if they were only able to dart a little glance at the serpent and the pole they would live.

Half a grain of faith will carry you to heaven because it's not your faith that matters in its amount it is where your faith is placed that matters eternally. Little faith will make heaven as well as great faith. Great faith will go to heaven shouting singing and praising God.

Little faith will stumble there but little faith will still be there because men are not saved by quantities of faith they're saved by the person in which they put their faith. Oh I would say to you dear sinner tonight be like Peter cry out Lord save me I perish cry out like the Philippian jailer what must I do to be saved come humble sinner in whose breast a thousand thoughts revolve come with your guilt and fear oppressed and make this last resolve I'll go to Jesus though my sin hath like a mountain rose I know his courts I'll enter in whatever may oppose cross great I lie before his throne and there my guilt confess I'll tell him I'm a wretch undone without his sovereign grace I'll to the gracious Lord approach whose scepter pardon gives perhaps he may command my touch and then the supplicant lives perhaps he will admit my plea perhaps will hear my prayer but if I perish I will pray and perish only there I can but perish if I go I am resolved to try for if I stay away I know I must forever die I knew that in my heart and my soul the day I was converted I didn't know those words in poem but I knew them in my heart I if I go I am resolved to try but if I stay away I know I must forever die but if I die with mercy mercy soft when I the king of tribe this were to die delightful thought a sinner never die oh come to Christ this night we have not until this meeting ends we have not to take counsel with any man take counsel with God tonight and lift your eyes even they're weary with your sinning on your sight dispelled by the poison of sin lift your eyes look through the mist and the darkness to Calvary look to Christ behold his bleeding hands behold his wounded feet behold his ribbon side behold this thorn crowned brow look to the blood that's flowing and the Christ who is suffering look to his face for his eyes burn with the redness of his pain what is he doing he's putting away your sin by the sacrifice and by his stripes hallelujah we are seeing oh why was he there as a bearer of sin if in Jesus my sin was not laid oh why from a side flowed this sin cleansing blood if my dying my death was not paid I trust that tonight you will look and live and live forevermore let's bow our heads heavenly father we thank thee for thy word thy word is true and I thank thee tonight lord for the simplicity of the gospel we thank thee that we don't need the educational prowess of men we just need the simplicity to confess our sins and look to Christ in the hearts of men and women here unwashed and unready oh God may they be ready to come to Christ make them ready by the grace of God may there be a coming to the savior bless us now as we separate and bless those who remain for prayer and may the blessed presence of God fill our hearts and lives for Jesus sake amen and amen

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/15/SID15170.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ian-paisley/the-must-of-christ-likening-himself-to-a-serpent/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net