

**Articles and Sermons :: Look and Live****Look and Live - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2008/3/9 18:32**

And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah. 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, 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 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.

(Num 21:1-8)

One might ask, "What was wrong with the way?" The trouble was that they had been there so often before. It was the same old Red Sea they had crossed so many years before and the same old Mount Hor where they had made such high vows and resolves. It seemingly had all come to very little at that point. They were in the same thirsty desert, eating the same old manna, following the same old Moses from disappointment to disappointment. If we're honest, we have all known this feeling in our own hearts.

But what years of wasted life it takes for us to see the truth! Instead of blaming themselves they all got together to blame something, or someone else. The unspoken thought behind it all is that God has failed to keep His promise ("Christianity does not work, it has not met my expectations, and one has to be realistic."). We blame our leaders for not making things happen, we look at our circumstances as impossible, we give up reading the Bible because we struggle to get meaning from it.

Something different had happened at this point. We don't read of blame being placed on God, or the manna, or Moses, or the wilderness. Suddenly, every man's eyes were on himself, and his own desperate, immediate need of healing. To refuse to face the trouble or the remedy now would mean swift death. The whole thing appears to be a terrible tragedy but it had actually become their greatest blessing-their only hope of life. It turned their eyes upon their poisoned selves, and straight out in desperate hope on Jesus. Placing blame at this point wasn't going to be of any help. The drama was now to be acted out between the dying sinner and the ready Savior, all else is forgotten, and when we come to this point something always happens.

The truth is that sometimes we are so stubborn and blind that it takes crushing disaster to get us to turn our eyes on Jesus. God loves us too much to withhold such disaster, if we will only look and live from the jaws of death then God will bring us to the jaws of death, so that He may raise us up again, and the valley of weeping becomes a well.

The people were at a point of deep crisis. They had been through these temptations before and had admitted their sin before but this time God revealed a truth that they had never grasped before. Every dying man who looked away from himself and to the serpent on the pole, lived. It is as though they said, "that serpent that bit me and poisoned me; it is there, lifted up, dead, nailed to a post, and it has no more power over me. The cause of my deadly sickness has been taken away, lifted up in death, and will never again afflict me." So life and health and peace would flow through the body of that man, he would look and live.

It was a brazen serpent that was lifted up on that pole, and brass in the Bible speaks of judgment. God's judgment and my judgment passed irrevocably and finally on the sin spoiling my life. We have agreed to pass a death sentence, and the death sentence has been carried out.

Crucifixion is a long and painful process, a lingering and agonizing death, from the moment the condemned man's hands are nailed, to the moment when he breathes his last. It is the same way with my crucified self. There comes a

moment when I yield mentally to the crucifixion of my old self with Christ and accept the principles of the Christian life, after which there may ensue, perhaps must ensue, a period of tortured, struggling life.

We will not come down from the Cross; we seek the lowest place and give up our rights and deny ourselves. But our spirits are worn down and we are on the verge of breakdown. We are consumed by our hurt pride, our struggling jealousy, our wounded self-love. At first they struggle to live, then at last they are weary to die. What is the point of it all? Probably that before we can hate ourselves enough to jettison ourselves to death, we must know ourselves as we truly are.

This crucifixion brings out the very worst in us; there is no veneer of respectability or hypocrisy left on the crucified man. But oh! How the old man will cry out to live. Never before have we guessed the depth or strength of sin in our lives until we yield them up to crucifixion. It is not the realization of what we must do that appalls us, but the realization of what we are; the coming to light of that life which struggles at all costs to live.

There wasn't an evil passion that existed that wasn't brought to light in the wilderness journey of Israel. From the moment they set out on their journey from Egypt, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, the serpent was still writhing, struggling to live, weary to die.

How long? We cry. For each it is different, each must fully see, learn, and accept. For some it comes quickly for others a lifetime of struggle persists. But the lifetime struggle is not God's will, for He purposed our peace, and the power of the new Resurrection life of Jesus which can only operate after the final death sentence has been passed and continues to be passed, moment by moment.

One item of particular note here is the new power. Having dealt with the plague of their own hearts, they could now start claiming territory for God. With the inner conflict resolved, they could throw every ounce into the conflict round about them; there was a new peace and a new warfare, and they were victorious every time. Their journey was a pageant of victory. They had to fight for every foothold; they were often weary, wounded, and perhaps afraid; but oh their joy of it all! The strongholds were falling and the enemy was giving way, and it will always be so because the great enemy has been conquered once for all, and his stronghold routed, when the Lord was crucified, and the serpent was lifted up.

This is the divine remedy, it is marvelous in our eyes.

Re: Look and Live - posted by sojourner7 (), on: 2008/3/9 19:35

When the Son of Man and Lamb of God was lifted upon the cross of scorn, shame, reproach; there God displayed His infinite love, mercy, and wisdom!!

"Glory to God the Father!! All praise to Jesus the Son, the Christ!! The work of the cross justifies me by His amazing grace. The work of the cross sanctifies me with His precious blood. The work of the cross saves me by His wonderful love. The work of the cross redeems me at a great price."

FULTON J. SHEEN