

The Gaze of the Soul

Numbers 21:4-9

Then the people of Israel set out from Mount Hor, taking the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom. But the people grew impatient with the long journey, and they began to speak against God and Moses.

"Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" they complained.

"There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this horrible manna!"

So the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many were bitten and died.

Then the people came to Moses and cried out, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take away the snakes."

So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD told him,

"Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!" So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to a pole.

Then anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed!

1. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6)

⁴ Then the people of Israel set out from Mount Hor, taking the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom. But the people grew impatient with the long journey, ⁵ and they began to speak against God and Moses.

- The Lord did not want them to contend with the descendent of Esau. (*Deuteronomy 2:4-8*)
- What did Israel want?
- They wanted the Promise Land but they despised the journey with God.
- They did not see the purpose of the journey; God was walking with them, He was their God and they were His people, such a special and beautiful relationship.
- They were not interested in God; they only wanted the land flowing with milk and honey.

⁵ and they began to speak against God and Moses. “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?” they complained

- God delivered them from Egypt and now they questioned the very act of deliverance.
- They questioned the motive of God, in delivering them.
- They belittled God’s great act of deliverance, which once they were very grateful.
- The Lord delivered them because of His covenant. He called them His people and He was their God and now they ask why?

"There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this horrible manna!"

- Much of the quarrelling and dissatisfaction came because of their appetite for better things.
- Their appetite was not for God or to know God; their stomach was their god.
- God provided food for His people in a place where food is scarce and He provided water, but it was never enough or sufficient for them.
- In the face of challenge and when trouble came they became ungrateful, they forget everything God has done for them and they complain.

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Israel Complains

- They didn't believe God cared for them and could meet their needs.

Aaron and Miriam Complain

- They didn't believe that God had chosen the right person (Moses).

The Spies Unbelief

- They did not believe that God was powerful enough to help them conquer the land. They did not believe in His promise.

Korah Rebels

- He did not believe in God's choice of leadership: Moses and Aaron

Numbers 14:11

*The LORD said to Moses, 'I have done many great things on behalf of these people. But still they reject me. **They refuse to trust me.***

Here they did not turn to God for help but bitterly complained against Him and Moses. Why would they not turn to God and cry out to Him? In the past God had always answered them like when they were in Egypt. Moreover, before the occurrence with the snakes, they did cry out to God and he heard and answered them.

Numbers 21:1-3

When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the road to Atharim, he attacked the Israelites and captured some of them. Then Israel made this vow to the Lord: "If you will deliver these people into our hands, we will totally destroy their cities." The Lord listened to Israel's plea and gave the Canaanites over to them. They completely destroyed them and their towns; so the place was named Hormah.

6 So the Lord sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many were bitten and died.

God had been protecting Israel from wild beast and other threats in the dessert, Perhaps poisonous snakes were a feature of the land and God lifted His protection, God allowed Israel to experience what life was without His grace and protection.

7 Then the people came to Moses and cried out, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take away the snakes."

Now they acknowledged that God was their protector.

Now they acknowledged that Moses was their leader and his intercession was important.

So Moses prayed for the people.

Moses was faithful and God was true to His covenant in-spite of all the terrible things they accused Him of.

8 Then the Lord told him, "Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!" 9 So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to a pole. Then anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed!

In spite of sin and rebellion God made a way for His people to be healed. Jesus was the way for us. In-spite of our sin and rebellion God has made a way for us.

There were many occasions that the Lord was angry, however He still showed them mercy while ignoring their wrong doing.

Moses

- Calling
- Believed half-heartedly.
- In challenging times continued to obey and believe (even when he struggled)
- Grateful
- Knew His God.

Israelites

- Calling
- Did not believe.
- In challenging times complained and rebelled.
- Ungrateful
- Did not know their God.

Moses was called to be the spoke person of God; to deliver Israel and he took his calling seriously. He did struggle initially; he was uncertain of himself, he stuttered and was not confident. However he obeyed and did what God asked him to do; meet Pharaoh and tell him 'to let my people go.' There were many times he was challenged in leading Israel in the desert, he felt frustrated and overwhelmed (*Numbers 11:10-14*), but he continued to obey and believe.

Israel was also called; God told them that they will be His people and He will be their God. However they took this lightly, they were not excited to know about this God who rescued and saved them or to journey with Him. In fact they despised the journey with Him, they were more interested in themselves (their wants and their desires), getting to the Promised Land and food (their appetites).

2. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

The "assurance of things hoped for" is a description of what true faith already has: the possession in the present of what God has already promised and has brought to pass. It is having confidence in God's saving work done in the past, and therefore a hopeful assurance that God will act in the future. The substance of faith is in remembering God's faithfulness in the past, so that we might trust in God's goodness for our present, and in a future that is yet to come.

Assurance doesn't come in well-ordered circumstances or trouble-free living. Nor is assurance found in having a rational answer for every question. Assurance comes in relationship with a trustworthy God who fulfilled promises in the past and who will fulfill them in the future. Faith is grounded on God's faithfulness demonstrated in Jesus Christ

While we often focus on the bad things that are happening around us, faith directs our gaze to see God's work going forward in the midst of crisis and chaos.

- God had assured them when they were still in Egypt.

**Exodus
6:6-8**

- God made a covenant with the Israelites on Mount Sinai

**Exodus
19:5-6**

- God gives them instructions and His plan for the conquest of the Promised Land

**Exodus
23:20-33**

God assured them, He made a covenant with them and He told them of His plans for the conquest. Above all of this, the Israelites had seen numerous wonders that God had done in Egypt and throughout their journey into the desert as well as in the desert. However they still did not trust Him.

What or who was the gaze of their souls upon? Was it upon themselves or their troubles or perhaps their past because it was definitely not upon their rescuer and savior. It was a sad ending to the many who did not believe; they never saw the Promised Land.

3. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. (Hebrews 12:2-3)

Moses raised a bronze snake on a pole as a cure for a punishment due to disobedience and the rebellious attitude of the Israelites. Those who were doomed to die from snakebite could be healed by obeying God's command to look up at the elevated bronze snake and by believing that God would heal them if they did.

In *John 3:14* Jesus says that just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Similarly our salvation happens when we look up to Jesus, believing He will save us. God has provided this way for us to be healed of sin's deadly bite. As the wounded Israelites looked to the brazen serpent we too must look from all other things to Jesus. "Fixing our eyes on Jesus" reminds us of the hymn written by Helen H. Lemmel:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.*

Faith is a continuous looking, gazing, fixing and beholding of the heart at the triune God for the rest of our lives: "behold the Lamb of God." Israel looked with their external eyes, our believing is done with the heart; we believe when we fix our eyes on Jesus, when the gaze of the soul is upon a saving God.

Psalm 34:5

Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.

Psalm 123:1-2

*To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!
2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he has mercy upon us.*

Looking to Jesus, gazing at Him helps us be focused on His truth, His love and His amazing grace. He is "the author and perfecter of our faith." the forerunner who has entered the heavenly sanctuary and has opened "a new and living way" for us that leads us to this sanctuary. He perfects us who place our trust in Him; He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

Fixing our eyes on Jesus is challenging because there are many distractions, however when we choose to be committed to live in this way Jesus will help us shape this desire within our souls. When we look to Christ we stop seeing ourselves, the things we have tried to do by our own effort and by our own strength begins to get done because it is God who is working in us to will and do. The secret communion between us and Christ is continuously growing; we live a life of repentance and are fully committed to Him. The inward habit of looking to Christ begins to develop within us enabling us to be looking at Jesus while our outward eyes are seeing the scenes of this passing world. God will be our dwelling place in this passage of life and we would have found lives ultimate goal.

The Land of Promise is not to be obtained by strength of hand, **but by the soul that lives in the will of God**. Even when we are rebellious and unbelieving, God does not forget nor forsake us. He knows our walking through the great wilderness which we have chosen. Through all the forty years He goes with His people as their fellow-pilgrim. Even under such circumstances they lack nothing that is necessary to a complete and blessed life.

Prayer Items

May the Lord help us to fix our eyes on Him in our lives journey.
May the Lord help us to trust in Him in all situations
May we hide His Word and promises in our hearts and believe in them in all circumstances.
May our faith in Christ grow each day as we continue to live in His presence.

Church

1. To be steadfast in our pursuit of God's call over our lives.
2. God will continue to shape our lives according to His Word.
3. An intimate desire to be in His presence, in prayer and worship.
4. Salvation for our family members.
5. We may reach out to the lost and see many come to Christ.
7. We may grow in love and unity in Christ.
8. Ministries: Life Explorers, Redeeming Roses, Destiny Kids & Teens, Sunday School, Lifeline, Life Seeds, Worship Team, Pulpit Ministry & Church Leadership.

Healing

Tabitha's mother (Rachel)
Francis (recovery from surgery)
Suba (headaches)
Dan Federanko (surgery)
Joshua, Eunice & family (Praise God)

Malaysia

1. God will deliver us from this pandemic.
2. Covid-19 – healing and recovery (physical, mental and economically).
3. Compassion: people in power and with resources will show compassion and love towards those who are in need.
4. Racial reconciliation.
5. Justice and Mercy
 - The poor, oppressed, foreigners, widows and orphans.
 - Pray against the works of greed and corruption.
8. Leadership and good governance
9. The Church will be God's instrument for unity, integrity and racial harmony.

