

## Lift Up Your Head By Josh Parsley

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. John 3:14,15

John chapter 3 is probably the most well known chapter of the Bible. Many seem to rush through the chapter, pause at verse 16, and then rush through the rest of it. There are so many truths in this chapter that need to be mulled over and mused by modern Christians. So many of us have heard basic truths so many times they we never really think of the implications or the deeper meaning of it. This is what is commonly called a truism. In this short space here I'm going to labor to show a few characteristics and outcomes of faith.

First, let's look at some background information about this serpent of Moses so we can assimilate it into our thinking of faith. If we don't understand what he is speaking of in these verses, John 3:16 means nothing, for this is the very illustration he uses to show us what is needed to "not perish." Looking back to Numbers 21, we can see that Israel was blessed by God in that they won a battle and were on their way toward the Red Sea. As they were walking they began to be impatient, not only with Moses, but with God Himself. Being impatient usually stems from a self centered mindset in which you are demanding to get what you want, rather than trusting God. This is in distinction with a Godly urgency where the motive is for God's glory, rather than yourself. As they went in this self centered mindset, God gave a manifestation of His wrath against sin in the form of serpents. These serpents attacked the disobedient. Israel cried out to their mediator, Moses, and God told Moses to lift up a bronze serpent on a pole. Whoever looked upon it was healed

Before we look at this faith, it would be good to remind us of something. Israel had, at minimum, heard of God's goodness. They were not a people who were ignorant that God could deliver. The book of Romans teaches us that men cannot believe unless Christ has been preached. Can you believe in something you have never heard of? Of course not. The first thing we see about converting faith is a desire to be delivered from sin. One of the first things Israel did when these serpents came is say, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." An obvious fact is that if they didn't know it was possible for God to forgive their sin, they wouldn't have asked. Surely they would have put things into their own hands and tried to correct their sin if this knowledge wasn't there. Their cry for mercy presupposes a hope that mercy is possible.

As I said, the first aspect is a desire to be delivered from sin, but there is more to this. Consider the atmosphere they were in. It was completely chaotic, serpents were everywhere, and people were going down every moment. Fathers, mothers, children, and everything they had was effected by their sin. It sounds strikingly similar to today. Have you ever been around a snake or wild animal? Would you have even considered taking

your eye off of it for a moment? Probably not, you wanted to do everything you could do to protect yourself. But this was the very opposite of what God required them to do. They had to lift their eyes upon this serpent on a pole and away from the live serpents all around them! God demanded that they put down their guard and defense and look to his solution. They had to turn away from their sins, turn away from the consequences of it, and look to God in their helplessness trusting in his solution. This was not a mere glance but a fixation of one's self to the power and deliverance of God. There is also somewhat of a paradox in this. This gazing toward the serpent reminded them of the very sin they committed and the penalty of it. How could it not? The very thing they fear, the serpents, is the very thing they gaze upon for deliverance. And so it is with the Cross. The very thing we fear, death and God's severity, is the very thing that fills our mind when we consider the Cross. Oh! The wisdom of God was surely manifest in the Cross.

If a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live. This is the immediate outcome of faith. Many things in the Christian life are a process, but certain things are not. This healing didn't take years, but only a moment. The very moment a person's being is directed toward Christ in that moment salvation is wrought. This healing put them in a place where they were before their fall. The rest of the chapter shows them singing songs of praise and winning battles. We must never take our eyes off of Christ and we will be changed. Or as the scripture says, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor 3:18)"

Let us be like Abraham who "lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold (Gen 22:13)" the very thing that saved him from shedding his own son's blood was in sight. Or like Rebecca who "lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. (Gen 24:64)" Or David who said "unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. (Psa 25:1)." We must be like the disciples who "when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. (Matt 17:8)" lest we be like the rich man who "in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments. (Luke 16:23)"