



THE LORD'S FLOCK GROWTH DIGEST

PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES

Embracing Our Cross

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In John 3:14-15, Jesus said *“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”* In saying this, Jesus was referring to an event described in Numbers 21:4-8. At that time, while traveling along the route to the Red Sea from Mount Hor, the Israelites, despite experiencing God’s protection and support that enabled them to defeat the Canaanites became impatient and spoke against God and Moses. As a punishment, God sent poisonous snakes among them. Many were bitten and died. Upon realizing their offense against God, the people asked Moses to pray for them so that the deaths due to the snake bites would stop. So Moses prayed for the people. What happened next is described in Numbers 21:8-9. *‘The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.’*

It may seem strange that Jesus was comparing Himself to the bronze snake that Moses mounted on a pole. This is in fact a form of typology^{Notes 1 and 2} that symbolically connects that event in the Old Testament to the most significant event in the New Testament. Anyone who looked at the snake and believe that they would be cured because God said so, lived. Similarly, anyone who looks at or learns about Jesus on the cross and believe in Him shall live; shall have eternal life. This is stated in John 3:16 by Jesus, Himself. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

That act of looking at and believing carries something more than what the eyes can see. For those who were bitten, looking at the snake brought them to the realization of why they were bitten by the snake in the first place; they sinned against God. By believing in God against whom they sinned and following His instructions, they ived. Similarly for us, looking at Jesus on the cross reminds us

that the cross is meant for us because of our sins. Our sins are like snake bites that can kill us and deprive us of eternal life. Specifically, there are seven deadly sins that can kill us. They are pride, sloth, gluttony, lust, greed, envy and wrath. Knowing that these are very serious sins in the eyes of God is our first step towards renewing ourselves.

That cross upon which Jesus was nailed was ours. We should be on that cross, but Jesus took our place so that we will live an eternal life. What we need to do now is believe in Jesus and embrace that cross because only by doing so we will realize what we have done against God and the price that Jesus paid for our salvation. Drawing strength from that cross we are embracing, we are now ready to be His disciples by taking up our own smaller crosses and following Him..

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”
- Matthew 16:24

We are so blessed that our God is so eager to save and give life rather than to condemn and punish. Instead of treating us as rejects, as we truly are, He offered us the gift of acceptance and forgiveness wrapped in the package of salvation bought by the blood of our Lord and Savior. How great is our God!

Note:

1. Typology refers to the prefigurement or foreshadowing of characters or events in the New Testament by characters or events in the Old Testament. In Romans 5:14, Paul specifically mentioned one example of this typology when, referring to Jesus, he stated *“Adam is a type of the one who was to come.”*
2. It is said that the secrets in the Old Testament are revealed in the New Testament. There are many of these typologies in the Bible. Discovering them while studying the Bible makes one see how God has always been in control and how grand God’s plan is for His creation.

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