

Look to the Cross

John 3:14-21

Introduction

We can look to nature to see God, to get a glimpse of Him. We can see His power in the mighty ocean, His beauty in the sky at sunset, and His majesty in the stately mountains. This is what the Ball Brothers say in their song, *Look to the Cross*. But they go on to say that all that pales in comparison to seeing the power, beauty, and majesty of God in the cross. But when you stop to think about it, a cross has no power; it's just two pieces of roughhewn lumber. It has no beauty; it's an instrument of death. It has no majesty; it's a place to execute criminals. However, since Jesus died on a cross, it's become a symbol of the power, beauty, and majesty of God.

The Serpent in the Wilderness

Jesus reminds us of our Old Testament lesson, the story of Moses and the bronze serpent. It began the way most of the stories of the Israelites begin, with the people complaining. There's no food and water in the wilderness, and the people are tired of manna. So, the Lord sent snakes that bit the people and many of them died. When Moses interceded for them, God told him to make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. He was to lift it up in the middle of the camp. And anyone who was bitten, could look at the serpent and live. There was no magical power in the bronze serpent. When the people looked at it, that was an act of faith. They believed God, that He would heal them, and He did, because of their faith. Complaining shows a lack of faith; looking to a snake out of obedience shows a presence of faith.

Lift up the Son of Man

Jesus is saying that He is like the serpent. When He is lifted up, people who are sick and dying, can look to Him and be saved. One difference is that while the serpent was a *symbol* of God's power, Jesus is the *Source* of saving power. What is the same is that when people look to Him, they are looking in faith, looking to God for their salvation. Jesus isn't talking about sickness and healing of this body. Anyone who looks to Him in faith receives eternal life. This is what it's all about. Like the snakes, sin brings sickness and death. Faith in God brings forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

"When I Am Lifted up ..." (John 12:32)

This verse also points us to what Jesus said in **John 12:32**, "*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*" How was the Son of Man lifted up? He was lifted up on the cross to die. So, when we look to the cross, we're not just looking at two pieces of wood used as an instrument to torture and kill criminals. We look to the cross in faith, just like the children of Israel looked to the bronze serpent in faith. We believe in the promise of God that Jesus died for the sins of the world. But it's not just about accepting the crucifixion of Jesus as an historical fact. It's about believing that Jesus died for *me*, for *my* sins. If we look to the cross, believe that Jesus died there for me, we have eternal life. That's what it means to be saved by grace through faith.

The Means of Grace

God has given us something else to look to in faith and receive salvation. He's given us the gift of Communion. The bread and wine are just bread and wine. But when the Word is applied to them, they become the host of the body and blood of Jesus. When we receive His body and blood in faith, believing the words, *His body given for you* and *His blood shed for you*, our sins are forgiven, and our faith is strengthened. **LOOK TO THE CROSS**; look to Christ and live.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
