

Look and Live

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References: **Numbers 21**, Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-15; John 3:16; Romans 3:23; Romans 10:17; Isaiah 53:5; Hebrews 12:2; Acts 16:31; Matthew 11:28; Matthew 23:33; 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Introduction

My father asked how many of you spoke Chinese, I put my hand up. And my young lady in front of me looked at me sort of strange, and I said, "Ni hao, ni hao ma." And she, "Whoa!" But that was it. That's all I know.

Good to be here. It's good to be in the Family Bible Hour. This morning we had a good time in the worship service. Just spent, oh, it was what, just about an hour worshipping the Lord. It wasn't enough, but that was okay. Then we talked about the lions in the Bible. And we went through how that Jesus is the Lion of Judah. And how that if you know Jesus as your Savior, you can be like a lion. You can be bold. You can be protective. And so on.

Now, as you know, I'm going through the whole Bible. I'm going through all the different animals. And I'm having a lot of fun with this. Yes. And I'm hoping that you were blessed. The last time I was here, I spoke on ants. Remember? Remember all the ants crawling around here? And there was one extra. Deacons got after me after the meeting, they said, "We have no ants there." No, I was just kidding, of course. But we talked about ants, and then we talked about eagles, and today it's going to be very interesting. I don't like that picture, but there's no children here, so I'm not going to worry about it.

We are going to say, what does the Bible say about serpents, snakes? The Bible has lots to say about snakes, and if snakes weren't in the Bible, I wouldn't talk about it. But my title of my sermon is Look and Live. Now, some of you will never understand what that means, because as I said this morning, I was at a camp yesterday, up at Anvil Island Bible Camp, and we talked about a few stories, Bible stories, that people have never heard about them. But we're going to talk about a story in the Bible later on, as we go along, and that if you look, you lived. And it's a snake story.

But there's lots of stories in the Bible about snakes. Snakes and serpents appear about 80 times in the Bible, generally symbolizing deception, sin, and evil. That's why I don't like the

subject. But we have to talk about the whole Bible. And it's in the Bible. It talks about the craftiness of a serpent in Genesis chapter 3. They represent both divine judgment, such as the viperous snake in Numbers chapter 21, rose when raised on a pole in Moses—a symbol of healing, and foreshadowed Jesus crucified. It's a wonderful story. And you know why I like the story? Because it's true.

So let's see what the Bible says about snakes. Matthew says in Matthew 23:33:

[Matthew 23:33 NKJV]

Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were sometimes called a brood of vipers because they were, we say, a ruse. I don't know if that's French or Spanish, Gloria. Is that French or Spanish? French. Oh, it's French. Okay. Anyway, that means, well, we said, you know, the sneaky. Serpents, temptation, deceit. And yet, it was a paradox of healing. So it goes the whole spectrum.

And when you study the Bible, and how many times have you studied about snakes? I've never really gone into it. But I've spent 20 hours in snakes. I've listened to sermons by Dr. Jeremiah, by Billy Graham, by John Piper. I've listened to YouTube. I've read messages. And I was blessed and challenged.

And I have a few snake stories in my own life. And I don't like snakes in general. They're creepy. I remember one time I was working at Jolly Bay. We started a camp in Argentina. And I was building a dormitory for children to sleep. And there was a big stump. And I was working with what they call jubilados, which is retired people. And we were working there and a snake came crawling out of that stump. So, of course, I—and I killed it. Sorry. Probably politically not right. But anyway, I got rid of it because it was a camp for children. And to make a long story short, I said to the men at that work party, I said, "We have to take that stump out." And you know what they said to me? "Loco, you're crazy." See, we didn't have this—we're talking back in 1985—we didn't have backhoes and tractors and all that. And to take a stump out like that would probably be a week of hard work. To make a long story short, I took it out. I killed nine snakes. And three of them were a la cruz. That means there's in the back of the head, there's like a cross. And if they had bitten me, I wouldn't have been here today. I would have been with Jesus.

Snakes. Let's look at a couple of verses. Let's look at a couple of verses here. I won't read them all. "People came to Moses and said, 'We've sinned when we spoke against the Lord

and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.' So Moses prayed for the people." That's in Numbers 21:7. Numbers 21:6: "Then the Lord sent viper snakes amongst them. They bit the people and many Israelites died." And many, many. I'm not going to read them all. There's so many of them. But this particular story is very interesting.

This story is the children of Israel. They've been left in Israel—they left Egypt. They were in slavery for 400 years. And they left. Pharaoh finally let them go. There was an incident. I won't go into it all. But there they are. We think a million and a half, maybe more, of people living. And they're walking through the desert. And they're complaining. People are complainers. And they were complaining. And they were complaining against Moses. And they were saying this about Moses and that about Moses and the other thing about Moses. And the children of Israel were very nasty, very mean, very cruel, talking about their leader negatively. We're not to talk about our leaders negatively.

Now, I'm not going to talk politics today because I wouldn't be invited back. But I don't talk negatively about our politicians. I pray for them. Pray for our politicians. Amen. They need our prayers. We need the practice. So let's pray for the politicians, and not just criticize them, but the Bible says pray for those in authority over you.

[1 Timothy 2:1-2 NKJV]

¹ Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

So it's my responsibility not to say this, that, or the other thing. My responsibility is to get down on my knees and to pray for the politicians. Well, the children of Israel didn't do that. They criticized and criticized their leader.

So my message goes like this. Look and Live. Three points. I always like a three-point. The first point is **the poison of sin**. We're talking about poison. We're talking about sin. Sin is a poison. It kills. It corrupts. It wrecks. It ruins. Whatever word you use, sin is terrible. We're going to talk about the poison of sin.

Then we're going to talk about **the provision of salvation**. Because of sin, God has provided a way out of it. I am a child of God today. When God looks down here, He doesn't see Ron Edgecombe. Thank God for that. He sees a guy covered in the blood of Christ that Jesus died on the cross of Calvary. Now Ron can look up and Ron can have abundant life

even though he's a sinner. But I'm saved by grace. God provided salvation. We're going to talk about the provision of salvation.

And then **the power of faith**. Faith is a very interesting subject. I have had so many people—I'm talking hundreds over the last 40, 50, 60 years—say, "Oh, Ron, I wish I had the faith you have." And I tell them, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

[Romans 10:17 NKJV]

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Get in the word of God. If you want the faith that I have—and I have faith that you wouldn't believe in, I don't understand, but I believe in God. I believe the Bible. And so when I sort of get a little flimsy, whimsy, dimsy—how did you translate that one? Oh, they're not translating that. When I get wishy-washy—I can't translate that one. But anyway, when I go the wrong way, I sin. But when I stick with the word of God, when I stick with Jesus—and He's always there, He's with me 24/7, just like we said today, that lion cub is here, and that animal there wants to eat that cub—no, the lion is here and he's ready to protect his little cub. So is Jesus. Jesus is ready to protect us.

So we're going to talk about the power of faith. And if you don't have faith, I want to talk to you. And you don't have to buy me a Starbucks or Tim Hortons—if you want to, that's okay, there's a Starbucks over here—but I would love—my wife with me—we've got nothing on this afternoon, no, nothing on this afternoon. So I would talk to you. I would like to show you that faith from the Bible is not that hard.

Let's get into a thing now. I'm going to try to read this. Let me see how can we do this without making too many errors. See, English is my first language, but I have three or four in my head, and being dyslexic and having a few other different problems... Anyway, they traveled so on along the route to the Red Sea to go around Edom.

[Numbers 21:4-8 NKJV]

⁴ Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. ⁵ And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." ⁶ So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. ⁷ Therefore

the people came to Moses, and said, "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." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."

That's where I got my title. It wasn't very hard: Look and Live.

[Numbers 21:9 NKJV]

⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

That's the story. Now, it wasn't to worship. They weren't to worship. Some people say, "Well, Moses made an image for people to worship." No, no, no, no, no, no. It was just to look and live. It was not an idol. We are not to—that's why I like coming here. Because I look here and I say to her, there's no statues here. Why are there no statues here? Because the Bible says we're not to have statues and worship statues. And this pole with a snake on it was not an idol. They weren't to worship. They were to look and live. To look and live.

Jesus:

[John 3:14 NKJV]

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

This was an illustration in the Old Testament about what was going to happen in the New Testament. When Jesus was lifted up on a pole, a cross, and He died. And if we look to Jesus, we will live. If the people of Israel looked to the snake on the post, they would live. I hope that you will look to Jesus if you haven't. And if you have looked for Jesus, share this message with somebody else. Roy does a good job of putting all of this on tape and that. Have your friends listen to these messages. Listen to them yourself. I sometimes get online and listen to the messages myself because I need it. We all need it. But everyone who believes may have eternal life.

Jesus, as Moses, was lifted up the serpent in the wilderness:

[John 3:14-15 NKJV]

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

[Acts 16:31 NKJV]

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Sounds easy, doesn't it? We're going to talk about that as we go along.

The Poison of Sin

The poison of sin. Sin is so real. It's real in all of our lives. Even though, as I said this morning, we are like lions. We can have the power of a lion, but we don't take it. We have it. There it is. The poison of sin.

The people murmured against God and Moses. Because of their rebellion, fierce serpents entered the camp and bit the people, and the poison spread quickly, bringing death. We are not to talk against those in authority. If you're not in agreement, how many times in my life I've said, "Look it, bro, let's have a McDonald's hamburger. You pay, and let's talk about what you said last Sunday." Sometimes I'm right. Sometimes I'm wrong. But I do it in love. I do it in compassion. I don't talk to Fulano, Mangano, Sedano. In English, I guess, the Joneses and the Roys. Anyway. You talk to the person. You don't criticize them. You don't put them down. The people of Israel were putting Moses down, putting God down.

Sin works the same way. It enters the heart, corrupts the soul, and separates man from God. Sin, S-I-N. I put it in red there. It's terrible. I hate sin. Sin works the same way, the same way as the venomous snakes bit them and they died. Sin's the same thing. If we don't get rid of that sin, we're going to die. But we can get rid of the sin. Jesus took the sin on the cross. He took my place, your place, on the cross of Calvary so that we will have eternal life, that we won't die spiritually. The Israelites would die physically, but we will die spiritually if we live in our sin and don't ask God to forgive us our sins and take His provision.

Here's a new example:

[Romans 3:23 NKJV]

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

When I was 10 years old, I'm up at Anvil Island in the Bible camp. I was on my third mother, my second father. Lived in I don't know how many different houses, went to how many different schools. I did go to Sunday school for three years, and they talked about me being a sinner. I never killed anybody. Come on, maybe in my mind I did—I'd like to kill that guy! I never really stole, maybe a cookie or something, but I realized that this is me. "For all—all of us—have sinned and come short of the glory of God." I mean, simple as that. It's simple but it's profound. It's the most important thing you can realize in your life, if you don't realize it already. You are a sinner. I am a sinner. There's no other way out. Jesus is the way. It says in the Bible, there's one mediator between me and God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sin. The serpent bite at Eden brought spiritual death to humanity, Genesis chapter 3. In the Garden of Eden, that snake, that ruse, that sneaky, that deceitful snake, in a sense, bit Eve and Adam, and sin—and the poison of sin—still affects every person today. People say to me when I'm telling them about Jesus, "That's not fair because Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, they sinned." I said, "It's not my fault." Yeah, but God has provided. By one man, sin came into the world. By one man, the Lord Jesus Christ, we can be redeemed from that sin. You can't say it's not fair. God's fair all the way.

Listen, many people do not realize how deadly sin is. Now, culture, they can excuse it. "Oh, that's just a little thing, don't worry about it. Everybody's doing it. Whoopee!" Or they'll say, "Oh, Ron, that's not really sin. That's just a little white sin." There isn't any black or white sin. They're all sin. Sin is sin. Sin. And we can't excuse it. We can't paint over it. We can't redefine it. This is what the world—and the world also celebrates it. "Whoopee, it's party time. Let's sin. We only have one life to live. Let's sin. Let's party." So the world tries to paint over it.

We're having a lot of trouble today, the whole idea of marriage and living together. And I'm not going to talk on that right now. And even in my family, people say, "But they're just living together." What does the Bible say? If I say it out loud, I might go to jail. You know what I mean? You can't talk about sin anymore, any place here. You can't excuse, you can't redefine, and you can't celebrate sin. But sin still destroys hope, peace, joy, and fellowship with God.

I am one of the most happy people in the world. Sure, I've had problems. Come on, now. I could tell you problems all day long. But I don't dwell on them because I have so many

positive things. Christ has been beside me. He's helped me. He's guided me. And He's always there to help me.

So sin still destroys hope, peace, joy, and fellowship with God. Just as Israel could not cure themselves, we can't save ourselves through religion, works, or morals. I used to like the expression that I sometimes—when I'm teaching ESL, I get in big trouble because you can't pick yourself up by your bootstraps. I don't know how you translate that in any language. But you know, you can't save yourself. Thank you. You can't redeem yourself. Sure, you can take a conference on how to better yourself. You can take a conference on how to do this or how to do that. You can go to a doctor, a psychologist, a psychiatrist. You can even take pills for it today, or AI will help you. But the only way out of your sin is Jesus. One way, and only one. And yet, it's side-to-side. I'm on the inside because Jesus called me, and I saw from Scripture when I was 10 years old that He was the only way out.

And people are looking for so many different ways out. You know, that snake bite—I've never been bitten. I've had everything else, but I've never been bitten by a snake. But they tell me a person bitten by a venomous snake may look healthy for a moment, but death is already working internally. Sin is often invisible before it becomes visible. Isn't that interesting? You get bit, everything... and that's like sin. We can put a facade on. We can put a happy—"I'm so happy, I'm just so happy!"—but inside I could be rotten. But God sees the inside. He wants to work from the inside out. But we'll go into that as we go on.

So that's the poison of sin. Are you with me? You picked up what I was dropping, and I'm not going to drop that snake because that snake was put up there by Moses to save the Israelites. They had to look and live. Jesus was brought up on the cross, and all we have to do is look and live.

The Provision of Salvation

The provision of salvation. God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and lift it up on a pole. God provided one remedy for everyone. There isn't two remedies. There's only one remedy for sin, and that's Jesus. You can take all the pills and all the ointments and all the sprays that you want to, but you can't get rid of the disease of sin. As you get older—and I know I'm 81, I look 71, thank you very much—but I've taken so many sprays, so many pills, so many ointments for physical problems, but for spiritual problems, there's just one pill. And I would say that reverently. That sounds kind of one-way, and that's Jesus. Jesus is the way. Yes, that is the way.

The cure was not medicine, effort, or ceremony; the answer was God's provision. You can go to conferences, you can read the Bible—if you don't put it to work in your life, if you don't

believe it, it won't help you. I could read this all day long, but we have to obey. Trust and obey, there's no other way. Believe in Jesus. We have to look to Jesus, and He's the one that's going to take care of us.

Jesus connected this story directly to Himself in John 3:14 and 15. Christ was lifted up on the cross so the sinner could be saved. Look to the Lamb of God; that's the only way. It says in the Bible:

[Isaiah 53:5 NKJV]

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

The cross is heaven's provision for humanity's poison. I don't have a cross around my neck. I appreciate people who do. And I love people who have crosses around the neck with Jesus on it. You know why? You know why? Because I'll say, "Excuse me, I thought you were Catholic." "I am Catholic." I said, "Is that the cross?" "That's a cross." I said, "But Jesus isn't on the cross. He rose from the dead. So why don't you take Jesus off the cross and put Jesus in your life if you haven't already done it?" You go into people's homes in Argentina or Quebec, and there's a beautiful, beautiful cross with Christ on it. And I say to them very gently, caring, and lovingly, "Oh, I thought you guys were Catholics." "We are." "Well, Jesus isn't on the cross. Do you know where Jesus is? He's in my heart. Jesus rose from the dead. He died." I know that's kind of corny, I guess, to some people, but God uses it.

The cross is heaven's provision for humanity's poison. The application here is God always provides what man cannot produce. God always provides what man can't produce. Man cannot produce a remedy for sin.

Noah had an ark. See how God protected? He offered the ark to all of those people. And just a handful went into the ark. All the others drowned, but God provided a way. God always provides a way.

Israel and the Passover lamb—remember that one? If you took the lamb, you killed the lamb, and you put it here, here, here, and here, there'd be no problems. All you had to do is sacrifice a lamb, put the blood on the lintel and on the doorpost, and you would be safe. God provided a way.

The wilderness had the bronze serpent. God provided a way. God always provides a way.

The world has Jesus as the way. Salvation is not earned; it is received by faith in God's provision. He provided the ark, He provided the lamb, He provided the serpent, and He provided Jesus. And all we have to do is believe that. Because that's biblical. That's biblical.

When the Israelites were bitten, they had tried herbs, bandages—human bandages—remedies, but none worked. Only God brought life. Today, many trust philosophy, self-improvement, but Christ saves. I can go to all the conferences on self-improvement, but it won't help me out of my sin. Jesus is the only way. People say, "But my way is better." No, no, Jesus' way is the better. My way, we see no value, nada—it's not worth anything. But God's way, not my way, God's way.

The Power of Faith

The people had to look at the serpent. The power was not in the bronze itself, but it was believing and obeying God's Word. Let me read that to you. It's up there. I want you to see it. I want you to hear it. The people had to look at the serpent. The power was not in the bronze serpent—just a stick in the ground, bronze, and the serpent bronze—it was believing. It was faith in what God had provided. God has provided Jesus, and it's the faith in Jesus. It's not necessarily the cross, but it's the person on the cross. It's Jesus. He's awake.

A dying Israelite would look and live immediately. The thief on the cross looked at Jesus in faith and was saved that very day.

[Hebrews 12:2 NKJV]

looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Look and live, dear friend. Look and live. And if you're a Christian, I still say look and live. Have joy. If you don't keep looking, you're going to be the most miserable person in this world. I have a lot of Christian friends my age. "I've done that, Ron. I've been there. I don't go to church anymore. I don't need the church. I don't need Christians. I've done it, I've been there, I've gone there." Yeah. Anvil Island? No, forget it. No. They're miserable, miserable people. I'm sorry. And many of them have turned to drugs and to liquor to keep them happy.

Look and live. Salvation. Faith is more than seeing physical eyes. It's trusting with your heart. It's with your heart man believes. It's an inner thing that shows on the outward. I do what I do today because inside of me has been taken care of.

Some Israelites may have doubted. I'm sure they did. Some Israelites: "This looks too easy. Look and live. Come on, Ron. Just look at Jesus, believe in Jesus, and I'm going to go to heaven? Baloney! Garbage! That's not true." But it is true. I remember a story in the Bible—it just came to my mind. Remember the fellow who was sick of leprosy and he had to bathe himself in the river? And he said, "That's too easy. I'm not going to do that. It's a dirty river. I want to go to a cleaner river." Remember that story? I won't go there, but that's in John. Some people say it's too easy. It's too easy, it's too easy. It's not too easy. Yet those who obeyed lived. The Bible still sounds simple. Repent, believe, look to Christ. But God honors faith. Faith. Just believe. Believe.

I mean, I go down to Union Gospel Mission, Central City Mission, Harbor Light Mission. I've seen it all over the world. People with nothing—nada, rien, nothing—they believe in Jesus and you see them rise. They see them rise. Miracle after miracle I've seen. And I've seen many people who have frowned on Jesus and they've gone nowhere.

I was a lifeguard. Thirty years, I saved lives, yeah, physically. But sometimes I wasn't politically correct because I'd grab them by the hair and pull them out. I didn't do this, did none of them. Anyway, thirty years I was a lifeguard at Camp Jollibee, Camp Rocher, Camp Bautico, Camp Anvil Island, Camp Imadine, Morning Star, all of those. And when a person is drowning and they need rescue, they do not need a lesson on swimming. They need a Savior. And that's what I'm offering to you today: a Savior. Jesus is the Savior. Jesus can save you from drowning in your sin. He's there. He's saying:

[Matthew 11:28 NKJV]

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Come on. Come on. Come on. It's just like when Peter was drowning. Jesus stretched out His hand, and that's what He wants to do for you today.

Likewise, sinners do not merely need improvement. They need salvation. After salvation comes improvement. I don't know if you smoke here. I have a lot of other bad habits. I don't smoke. And people say it's bad to smoke. And when I'm talking about Jesus, I never tell them not to smoke. Who am I? I'm sorry. I'm not the Holy Spirit. But I tell them to come to Jesus, and when Jesus comes into the heart, the Holy Spirit will show them that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and that smoke is bad for the temple.

Remember one time, one fellow got saved, born again, believed—a friend of mine. I learned—oh, it was wonderful. He went to a certain Catholic church, and everybody said, "Ron, why

didn't you tell him to get out of the church?" I said, "Holy Spirit was there." He was there for six months in the Catholic church witnessing for Jesus. Many people came to Christ. Finally, he came out. So my thing is, first tell people about Jesus before you try to correct them in their lifestyle or way of living. Tell them about Jesus. Jesus will help them after they've accepted. He gives us the Holy Spirit. He gives us discernment in the Bible.

Conclusion

The wilderness story is not merely history; it is prophecy and invitation. The poison reminds us of sin. The provision points to Christ. The power teaches us to believe.

The message today really is: look and live. Look away from self. Look beyond religion. Look unto Jesus and live eternity. What, kind of dramatic? You got the picture.

[John 3:16 NKJV]

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

I hope that you will. Time is up. I hope that you will look and live. I hope you will. You have bad habits and all those things. I have them too. God's working on me. I'm under construction right now. I should carry a sign around me: "Under Construction: In Progress". But the initial step of faith I did, and I'm hoping I'm growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Father God, we thank You once again for these wonderful people sitting, listening. I just pray, Heavenly Father, that You might speak through what has been said, speak through Your word. Show us, Heavenly Father, we have to look to live. We thank You, Heavenly Father. It's so ugly to live without looking, but we have to look to You. Guide, direct, and bless. And we'll give You all the praise and glory and adoration that You deserve. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.