

Discovering Your Problem & God's Solution

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So this past Friday, I was driving home from church and I saw two cars very close to each other with the same sticker. The sticker was a, a, a snake wrapped around a pole. I remember as a kid growing up, there was a drug store that had this same symbol, a snake wrapped around a pole. It's a symbol associated with medicine, It's a symbol for healing. And I'd bet those two drivers in those two cars probably have some connection to the medical field. Now, do you know what that symbol refers to? Do, do you know what hospitals and ambulances and pharmacies are pointing to with that symbol, a snake wrapped around a pole? I'm gonna answer that question in minute. But for now, I want you to remember John chapter 3, which is where we just read from.

This is a conversation Jesus was having with a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus came to Jesus with questions. He didn't even know he had, but Jesus knew he had them because chapter 2 verse 25 says that Jesus knows everything about everyone because Jesus is God. Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He's a zealous teacher of God's word. And he was on the Sanhedrin, which was the Jewish supreme court. So he, and, and on top of all that, he's part of the, a very wealthy family. So Nicodemus has it all, money, respect, good works, influence, heredity. In first century, Judaism, you don't get much higher on the social ladder than Nicodemus. I mean if anyone is gonna be a shoo-in for heaven, it's gonna be him. But Jesus looks at this exceedingly good man and says, verse 7, "Nicodemus even you, you must be born again."

And with those five words, Jesus shatters his entire religious paradigm. You mean my ethnicity doesn't get me into heaven? Nope. You mean my position in society, that won't do it either? Nope. You mean my good works as a zealous committed teacher of the Bible, that's not gonna get me into heaven? Nope. Verse 3, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." All of that, it was the stuff that people trusted in back then to get them into heaven. But interesting, it's still what people trust in now. I'm a good person. I come from good stock. I'm part of the elites. I, I do good things. I wanna see good things happen in the world. Surely a heart like mine belongs in heaven. Surely I'm gonna go there when I die. Why? Because most people believe heaven is about human achievement.

Ask people, "Are you gonna go to heaven when you die?" and listen for their answer, "I'm a good person. I'm trying. I go to church. I, I give to charity. I fight for what's right. I'm, I'm not as bad as other people." What this does is it reveals a, a fundamental flaw in our thinking about death and the afterlife. We think heaven is about trusting in ourselves, our accomplishments, our own essential goodness. And if for some reason we don't believe in any of that nonsense and we die and we realize, "Oh, I was wrong." And we stand before God, the thing we will default to in that moment before God will be our resume of good works. "Yeah, yeah God like, like f- f- forget that I didn't believe in you at all. But look at all these good things that I did. I should be here."

Heaven, however, is not about who you are or what you are, what you've done, or what you think should be done in this world. Heaven is not about human achievement at all. Heaven is about divine accomplishment, heaven is about God doing something to you and doing something for

you. Your achievements, your resume of good works, your good intentions mean absolutely nothing for heaven. Hear me. Absolutely, positively, nothing. Heaven is about something being done to you. Titus 3:5 says that, "God saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy." Mercy must be done to you. Mercy must be shown to you. You cannot earn mercy. Heaven is about also something being done for you. Galatians 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us."

1 Thessalonians 5:10, Jesus "Died for us, so that whether we are alive or dead, we might live with him." Romans 5:8, "God shows His love for us. And that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Heaven is about divine accomplishment, something God does to you and, something God does for you to save you. Now in saying all of that, you do have a responsibility to respond. The message to the non-Christian just the like Jesus message to Nicodemus, is you can't buy your ticket into heaven. You cannot earn your way into heaven. You cannot do a single thing to get yourself into heaven, but you are responsible. You are required to respond in the way that God says you must respond.

So to a man Nicodemus that didn't understand what Jesus was saying about how to go to heaven, and to 21st century people that really don't get it either, our text today will help you discover your problem and God's solution to your problem. What is the problem that keeps you out of heaven and what is God's solution to the problem that will show you how to go to heaven? All of that is in our text. Every one of us has a problem. It's the same problem. That problem that keeps us out of heaven. And Jesus illustrates both our problem and the solution with a reference to the old Testament. So keep your finger or your little ribbon here and turn to Numbers 21. Numbers 21.

If you got a Bible from an usher, Numbers 21 is on page 143. If you didn't get a Bible from an usher, I don't know what page it's on in your Bible. But I can tell you this if you get to the book of Genesis, just go three books to the right. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. Now this text in Numbers 21 has been called bizarre. It's been called absurd. Other people dismiss this text as superstitious myth and legend. But Jesus said about this text, John 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." That means the event that we're gonna read about right now, the, the players involved, the location, the incident itself, all of it, Jesus sees as real and factual. He assumes that what I'm about to read is history, not fantasy.

When the text says verse 4, "From Mount Hor they set out, by the way to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way." Now this event takes place, this is after the rescue from Egypt. This is after the Red Sea and all the plagues and all of that. You've got about two million people or so, leaving Egypt on their way to the promised land, right? And so there they are, they're on their way. But this is a time that we're reading about in Numbers right now, that the Old Testament often refers to in later parts of the Bible. And when this time in Israel's history is referred to, it's almost always referred to as the time when Israel rebelled against the Lord.

And this text begins with rebellion. Notice, "God's people became impatient". And that impatience was not confessed. It was not repented up. Instead, verse 5, "The people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. For there's no food and no water. And we loathe this worthless food.'" Oh, their impatience comes out and it comes out pretty, pretty starkly. It comes out first in slandering God and slandering Moses, His prophet.

Second, it comes out in doubting God's word. Remember God says to them, I'm gonna rescue you from Egypt. And I'm gonna take you into the wilderness in order to kill you. That's what He said, right? No, He said, I'm gonna rescue you from Egypt. I'm gonna take you to the promised land, where you're gonna be safe and secure and satisfied. I'm, I'm gonna take care of you. I'm gonna take you from Egypt to the promised land and they go, No, no, no. I don't believe you anymore. I don't trust you anymore. You brought us out here to die. So they're doubting God's word. They're slandering God. And third, their impatience comes out and complaining about how God is providing for their needs. Notice again, verse 5, this worthless food that they loathed, this food was what? This food was manna from heaven. This was heavenly food that fed two million people every morning in a place where there is no water and there is no food. This food came from heaven as a gift of God's grace to these rebellious people, and their response is, "I hate this stuff."

Other passages, "We had it better in Egypt. Let's go back." Well, it's easy to look at that, look at their heart. You know, I mean, imagine what their heart is like, that they hate food from heaven. But I wonder, have we ever spoken against God like they did? Have you ever used God's name as a cuss word or disregarded something the Bible says. Have you ever doubted God's word on an issue? You ever complained about how God takes care of you? If we're honest, their rebellion is, is all too familiar to us, isn't it? God responds to this rebellion with punishment, verse 6, "Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people so that many of peop- many people of Israel died." Can you imagine the horror in the hearts of two million people as they're invaded by countless poisonous snakes? Can you imagine the horror if one poisonous snake was in this room right now?

Take the panic and commotion and the screaming that would happen in here and multiply it by two million people, and you've got what it was like in this moment. Panic, commotion, screaming that would've been horrendous. People running around terrified. Snakes coming into your home, biting you, biting a family member. Then the convulsions and the misery and the torment as the poison feels like fire spreading through your body. The fear that, that you could be next if you're not careful. So you're looking everywhere. You, you're living in constant anxiety. And then friends start dying, family dies. Father's, mothers, bury kids. Kids bury parents. Husbands saying goodbye to wives. This is utterly horrifying.

And you might be thinking, "What a cruel God. like this is, this is so harsh, poisonous snakes for a little impatience and gratitude and a little blasphemy. I mean, come on, seriously." Well, listen, this punishment wasn't too harsh. This punishment was the right thing for God to do. Why? Because it is good and right for God to punish sin. See when sin goes unpunished, when, when we see on the news, criminals getting away with their crimes. When we see criminals being set free, we get ticked, don't we, "That's not right." We say, "Where's the justice?" We ask. That's what we say, unless the crime is against God. Then we think, "Shouldn't ever be punished. Nope, God has to be merciful. If he's not merciful, then he is not good."

No, no, no, no, no, because God is good, because God is Holy, He must punish rebellion. He has to, or He is not good. And He does so with fiery serpents. Fiery because their bites likely cause the sensation of fire all over the body before inflicting certain death. I know it's the end of verse 6 again. It wasn't a few, but many people died. The Bible does say, Ezekiel 18:4, "The soul who sins shall die." And Romans 6:23, "The wages, the paycheck for sin is death." So have you ever considered, have you ever considered the fact that the breath you took after your last sin was a

gift of God's mercy to you? Why? Because the soul who sins shall die and you didn't die. That we take another breath after we sin is mercy.

Well, the fiery punishment caused the people to recognize their rebellion. And this is where we see what Jesus was referring to in John 3:14, where he says verse 7, "And the people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned for we've 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. And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole. And everyone who is bitten when he sees it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live."

This historical event is what the medical field is pointing to with their image of the snake pole. The people looked at the snake and they were instantly healed. Notice the people don't take matters into their own hands and try to fix it themselves, but what did they do? Verse 7, they owned their rebellion. They cry out in dependence to God for a solution. Now they had their own solution, "Uh, take those snakes away, God." But God in His sovereignty provided His solution. He, he, we went with his plan, which was Moses, put a snake on a pole, lifted up really high for everybody to see. And that solution actually fixed their problem. All they had to do was look at the snake. All they had to do was trust what God said, and healing was guaranteed. Now turn back to John 3.

As you consider this text in numbers, 21 for yourself, you've gotta start with yourself where numbers 21 starts with the Israelites, which means point **1) Admit You Are A Rebel. Point 1) Admit You're A Rebel.** Rebellion is defiance, disobedience against a rightly established authority. And guess what, that rightly established authority is the God of all creation. That authority He expresses through His word. And when He is the authority, that makes us rebels, Numbers 14:9 says, "Do not rebel against the Lord." Anybody keep that command? Anybody? Psalm 107:11 warns people not to rebel, "Against the words of God." Anybody, e- e- ever look at a passage and go, "Ah, I'm not gonna do that. I'm gonna do what I wanna do. That's called rebellion. Daniel 9:5 characterizes rebellion as turning away from God's commandments and rules. Think about that. Here's God's command, here's God's rule, and you go "Duly noted." And walk away. Ever done that? Lamentations 1:18 says that it is right for God to punish people who have, "Rebelled against the Lord." It's right for him to do so. See, we should have the commitment of Joshua 22:29 on our lips and in our hearts at all times, where it says, "Far be it from us that we should rebel against the Lord." Far be it for me to ever rebel. And yet we've rebelled thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of times. And to the rebellion God, to the rebellious, God promises punishment, and even says, Isaiah 66:24, that rebels will live forever in unquenchable fire. That's justice.

But we don't like to think about ourselves as rebels. We like to think of ourselves as nice. We like to think of ourselves as good. We like to think of ourselves as generous, selfless, trustworthy, compassionate, even cool. Like that's how we like to think about ourselves. It hurts our self-esteem to say that we're rebels. I mean, say it to yourself in your head, "I am a rebel against the God of the universe, making me His enemy. Not those other people on TV, not those other people on social media. Me, I am His enemy for my rebellion." Easy to say that? Probably not. Why? 'Cause we're good people, we're not rebels.

No, rebel is what we are in relation to God. We are rebels against Him, against His authority, against His word where He graciously says to us, "Here is what's best for you. These rules, these,

these, these commandments, these ideas, this is what's best for you." And we go, "Pff, Whatever. I'm gonna do what I wanna do." That's why over the years, I, I characterize sin as giving God the middle finger. Even though I get, I've gotten emails and I've gotten connect cards that say, "That is so offensive. You should never say that." That is exactly what sin is. It is looking at the God of the universe, holding up your hand and giving Him the middle finger and saying, "You are not the boss of me. I do what I want to do here." That's rebellion.

Sin is defiance against His authority. And when we defy him on any issue, no matter what it is, we are rebels, enemies of His. So question, are you able to admit that? Are you able to own that? Are you able to see yourself not in the best possible light, but in the truest possible light, which is seeing yourself in light of who God is. He is Holy, you're unholy. He's good, you're sinful. He's right, you're wrong. He's pure, you're impure. He's loving, you're selfish. Can you admit it about yourself that when God says, go right, you go left. And when God says do this, you say, "No, I'm gonna do that."

The problem that keeps you out of heaven is rebellion, it's sin and all have sinned. All have fallen short of God's standard for heaven. To say you're not a rebel to, to not own this, to say you have no sin, is to deceive yourself. Why? Because everyone has turned away from God's way to follow our own ways. There's not a single person alive that's righteous before God. There's no one on earth that does not sin. But friend, please, please admit this truth about yourself. Own it. You are a rebel. So am I. And when you do, when we, when we own this, this whole Christian thing will begin to make much more sense. Look at verse 14 again, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." Now we know why he did that. It was their rebellion, "So must the son of man be lifted up."

Jesus says to Nicodemus, this historical event in Numbers, 21, it's an illustration of God's solution to the problem of all rebellion. And that solution is Him, the son of man being lifted up. So what does that refer to? When was Jesus lifted up? Well, John 12:32 gives us a clue when Jesus says, "I, when I'm lifted up from the earth will draw all people to myself." And then John, the author explains what Jesus says by adding this, verse 33, "Jesus said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die." So Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, "Hey," chapter 3, verse 9, "I know you don't understand this. I know you're asking the question, how can all of this be?" "Well, Nicodemus, here is the answer. I must be crucified. That's the only way people will be given a new birth. It's the only way people will be born again as to enter heaven." I must notice the text. Verse 14, "I must be lifted up."

This isn't optional. Jesus must be lifted up on the cross. It necessary. It was essential. There's, there's no other way. God's predetermined plan demands the cross. God's character demands the cross. God's goodness and justice demands the punishment for sin that happened on the cross. God's mercy demanded that there be a substitute for rebels to take the punishment instead of them, and that happened on the cross. God's love demanded that Jesus be that substitute for sinners on the cross. God's prophecies in the Old Testament demanded the cross. His promises in the Old Testament demanded the cross. The types and illustrations like the sacrifices in the Old Testament demand the cross. The gravity of human sin demanded the cross. The penalty for sin, which is death demanded death on the cross as payment for sin. The cross is essential. It is necessary. Without it, there is no solution to our rebellion.

So after admitting that we are all rebels against God, let us point 2) **Consider God's mercy.** **Consider God's mercy,** when God and rebels meet, His response will either be justice or it will

be mercy. Mercy is God showing rebels a kindness they don't deserve in light of their rebellion. Let me say that again. Mercy is God showing rebels a kindness they don't deserve because of their rebellion. Mercy is withholding punishment for crimes committed based simply on His kind, compassionate and merciful character. And mercy goes one step beyond that. Mercy is Jesus being lifted up on the cross and saying, "I will take your punishment for all of your sins, instead of you receiving that punishment in hell." This is why James 5:11 says, "The Lord is merciful." Daniel 9:9 puts rebellion and mercy together when God is worshiped with these words, "To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him."

The thing rebels need most is mercy. And Ephesians 2:4 says, "God is rich in mercy to those who rebel against Him." What does that mean? That means however you have rebelled against God, my arm won't stretch far enough. God's mercy stretches all the more. Did you see God's mercy in Numbers 21? Think about it. The Israeli's rebellion brought God's punishment, just like ours does. Their punishment was physical death while ours is eternal death. God provides the way of escape from physical death, namely the snake on the pole. And God mercifully provides the way of escape from eternal death, just His son on the cross. The snake is lifted up on the pole, Jesus is lifted up on the cross. The snake was a symbol of God's wrath for their rebellion. The cross is a symbol of many things, one of which, it's God's wrath for our rebellion.

And both the snake on the pole and Jesus on the cross are God's merciful solution to human rebellion. One, a specific moment of rebellion at a specific time in history, 3,500 years ago, the other is the merciful solution for all rebellion, for all time. Think about it. Did God have to be merciful? Did God have to give people the way to escape the punishment they deserved for their rebellion against Him? Answer is no, He didn't have to. He could have like we do with criminals all the time, He could have said, "No, I'm not gonna give you a way to escape. It is right for you to be punished. Punishment is what you deserve for your crimes. It's what you deserve for your rebellion against me." He could have given all of them justice. He could give all of us justice and He would not do anything wrong. But instead He shows rebels, mercy.

Think about it. The Israelites admitted their rebellion. Remember they came to Moses and said, what? "We have sinned. We've sinned for we've spoken against the Lord and against you." What did they do? They admitted in that moment, we're rebels." They owned it. They even named their rebellion specifically. And what does God do in their response to their sin? What does God do in response to their repentance? What does he do in response to them owning their rebellion? He shows the mercy. Remember Jonah? 40 days, Nineveh is gonna be destroyed. And the people of Nineveh heard God's word. They believed it to be true. They repented. They owned their rebellion. And what did God do? And destroy Nineveh anyway. No, he showed them mercy. Mercy is always how God responds to people who own their rebellion.

So you consider that God promises mercy to rebels. He shows mercy to rebels, rebels who admit that they're rebels. Rebels who are done with the excuses, the justifications, the explanations. To all who own their rebellion, God shows mercy. He was merciful to Adam and Eve when they sinned. The text says, "And the day they ate the fruit, they would die." And they lived for like 900 more years. He was merciful to Peter when he denied Jesus three times. After three years of walking with Jesus every single day, he pretends like he doesn't even know him. God shows him mercy.

He was merciful when he saved a guy named Saul who was a terrorist against Christians, arresting them, murdering them. And he saves him and he renames him Paul and sends him all

over the world, telling people about Jesus, the merciful solution to their sin. Yes. God gives justice to rebels, but listen, you don't have to receive justice, you can receive mercy. But you ask, "How? How can I receive mercy?" Well, it's not just our rebellion and God's mercy that's in Numbers 21, but how you, how I, how anyone can receive mercy, is there too. Look at verse 14 again, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." We know why he did that, their rebellion, "So must the son of man be lifted up." We know why now he did that, our rebellion, "That whoever believes in him may have eternal life." Your problem is you're a rebel. God is merciful to rebels.

He's merciful because he provides the solution to the punishment you deserve for your rebellion. He provides it, you don't. And what he provides is Jesus or the way I put it for point 3) Look to Jesus and live. Look to Jesus and live. Look to Jesus meaning believe in him, trust him that he can save you from the punishment you deserve for your rebellion. And guess what? He actually will. He will save you. When you believe in him, he will rescue you from the punishment you deserve for your rebellion and he will give you eternal life.

Now, when we hear eternal life, that's not just life that doesn't end, it's way more than that. This phrase, eternal life, is life of the age to come, it's life in the kingdom. It's God's life. It's Divine, supernatural, spiritual life. It is the life of God giving you life. It's the life of God as your life. That life cannot ever be destroyed because it's God's life and it can be yours, forever. John 3:16, "This life will not perish." And it's not something that you're gonna have one day, so I'm waiting to have eternal life. No, look at the text, verse 15, this eternal life is something that you can have present tense, right now.

Listen closely to how Jesus talks about eternal life. In John 6:40, he says, "This is the will of my Father that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life." To look at the snake meant no death. It meant the restoration of physical life. To look to Jesus means no spiritual death, because to look to Jesus means eternal life. "Wait," you might be saying, "That's just too easy." You're right. It is easy. But just 'cause it's easy doesn't mean it's cheap or false. Mercy is free, but it's not cheap. It cost Jesus his life, and it'll cost you whatever it is that's keeping you from looking to him right now. The Israelites bitten by the poisonous snakes, wasn't hard for them to be healed, was it? All they had to do was what? Look. Numbers. 21:8, "Everyone who is bitten when he sees the snake, shall live."

They just looked at the snake, believing what God said would happen when they looked, and they were instantly healed. Death is avoided. For you friend, death can be avoided. Eternal death can be avoided. Look to Jesus and live, "Wait," you might be saying, "That's absurd. Just believe in some criminal that died on a cross 2000 years ago. And, and, and somehow that whole death thing means I can have eternal life. That's ridiculous." No, it's brilliant. Think about it. Imagine the Israelite bitten by the poisonous snake, the fire shooting through his veins, the agony, the, the helpless feeling of your life slipping away and you can't do anything about it. Your vision getting cloudy, your eyes closing. You're about to sleep the sleep of death, only to hear that there's a solution. Look at the snake and you will live. Like so many other people, look at the snake and you'll live. And you say, "That's ridiculous," and die. Would anybody in that moment do that or would they say, "I'm gonna trust what I hear. I'm gonna look. All these other people are getting healed, I will too.

To reject Jesus because you think it's ridiculous is to make yourself God's judge. And it's just to rebel against Him even more. Please don't doubt the word of God like the Israelites did. Don't

perish in your rebellion when the remedy is being held out to you in this very moment. Look to Jesus and live forever, "Wait," you might be saying, "Sure, I'm a rebel, but I'm not as bad as many people I know that call themselves Christians. I don't need this." Oh yes you do. That's like saying, "I know I have cancer, but I don't have it as bad as other people do so I'm gonna be fine." No, you won't. The issue is not how rebellious you are or how rebellious a person is. The issue is, are you rebellious?

You might be a great law-abiding citizen, the question is, have you rebelled against God even once? Romans 6:23, again, "The paycheck for sin, even one sin, is death." That's why everybody dies 'cause everybody sins, "But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus for all who believe." You can be healed if you are rebellion. All your sin can be forgiven. Look to Jesus and live forever, "Wait," you might be saying, "I can stop rebelling on my own. I can be a better me, I don't need Jesus for that. I can do that. I'll be just fine."

See, the problem is not becoming a better person after the snake bites you, right? The poison is there, it's in you. The poisonous bite of sin has placed its venom in you. You're going to die whether you become a better person or not. That's like saying to the doctor who tells you, "You're going to die tomorrow." And with your weak breath, with, with your, your weak voice, you say, "I'm gonna exercise now (laughing) I'm gonna eat better. I'm gonna beat this."

You're not gonna beat this. But there is one who did beat this. There is one who did beat sin. There is one who did beat death. There is one who did beat hell, and his name is Jesus. He can heal you. He can set you free. Look to him and you will live forever, "Wait," you might be saying, "I have my own way to heaven. I don't need this solution. I, I can do it my way." Uh, no you can't. Can you imagine the people, "Idiots over there, look at them looking at some stupid snake. No, I've got my own medicine right here, cures other things, I, I'm sure it'll cure this too. I'll be fine. I, I, I I'm gonna be okay. I'll take this instead." No, you'll be dead.

Did the text say there were many ways to be healed from the snake bites? No, the word, the, the, the text did use the word many, but it was used for what? How many people died? Many. And there was only one way, looking to other, anything other than the snake meant certain death. See, God determines the solution to our rebellion, not us. To suggest that we have a solution other than God's solution, is even more rebellion. God's one solution, "Is look to Jesus and you will live forever." "Wait," you might be saying, "I like my snake. I know it bit me, but we're friends now. I forgave him." "I don't wanna give the snake up and be healed."

Now I know that's like ridiculous to think an Israelite would've said that, but people say that about Jesus every day, "I know you want me to believe in you Jesus, but I don't want to give up my sin. I like it. Makes me happy. Makes me feel like I'm in charge. Makes me feel loved. Makes me fit in with people that I like a whole lot more than I like you, Jesus. I'm good with my sin and I'm good without you. Sorry."

No, friend. You'll be sorry. When you find that rebellion promises the world and delivers nothing. You'll be sorry when you realize that the sin you refuse to give up only destroys you while Jesus only and always wants what's best for you at all times. I mean, who would trade even eight decades of the pleasures of sin for suffering conscious, agonizing, never-ending torment? Who would make that trade? Answer, millions of people, many of which maybe within the sound of my voice right now. Fiery serpents are nothing compared to eternal fiery hell.

The sin that sounds like freedom is really slavery and its insanity. So own the rebellion, own it and then look to Jesus and you will live forever, "Wait," you might be saying, "Instead of looking at the snake, I'm gonna kill the snakes. Yeah, I'm gonna, I'm gonna get other people to help me. And we're, we're gonna all go kill the snakes. That'll be a good thing. That's gonna help many people too if we just start killing the snakes." Well, I mean you're right that it would be good to kill the snakes and it would help other people to kill the snakes. Killing the snakes though, won't fix the problem that you've been bitten and you're gonna die.

See all your good works are fine. Your good works will help a lot of people I'm sure. But your good works can't save you from the penalty that you deserve for your rebellion. And it can't save them either. The best, the greatest, the most loving help you can give someone, is what I'm trying to give you now. Look to Jesus. He's the only one who can truly help with your rebellion. He will forgive you. He will give you eternal life. Just look, just look. All the Israelites had to do to be saved was look. They didn't have to do something good. They didn't have to help someone else look. They didn't have to make, make their own snake. They didn't have to go through some ritual or ceremony. They didn't have to do anything, just look.

That's why this is a perfect, brilliant illustration for Jesus to use. There's nothing for you to do. Jesus lived the sinless life. Jesus died as a payment for sin. He received God's punishment for your rebellion. He was raised from the dead to show that God is pleased with his work on the cross to save sinners. Jesus did it all. You just look, just look, it doesn't take effort to look. Doesn't take intelligence to look. It doesn't take money or fame or power to look. None of that can even help you look. All of that very often is what keeps people from looking. But listen, you don't even need eyes to look, just look to Christ. Believe in him. That is it. And you will live forever.

His death on the cross is enough to rescue even the worst of sinners, which means that it is enough to save you. You say, "Is his death really enough for me?" Yes it is. You say, "Is he really willing to save even me?" You don't know what I've done. If you knew what I did, you would want nothing to do with me. "And if that's true about you and you're a sinner pastor, then what does that say about Jesus?" Look at verse 15 again, is he really willing to save even you? Yes, he is. Verse 15. What is that word? "Whoever, whoever believes in him may have eternal life." Whoever, means you. You can be forgiven for all of your rebellion. You can be freed from slavery to sin. All your sin can be washed away. All your sin can actually be replaced forever by Jesus Divine and perfect righteousness. You can be adopted into God's family, no longer His enemy.

You can become a son, a son who, who receives the inheritance that only Jesus deserves. And a son who will be loved as if you were Jesus himself. Don't you want that? Deep down, don't you know that you need him. Jesus' death on the cross is a gift of God's infinite mercy offered to you. So look, look to Jesus and you will live forever and ever, and ever. Let's pray.

Jesus, in this moment, the preacher feels helpless because we, we all see the truth right here. And yet I wanna jump into everybody's heart and make everybody respond. And I can't, I can't. And so in this moment, I've done my job and I just leave it in your hands. And I ask you for those of us who heard this message and thought these are good reminders of things that I already know, may these truths cause worship and gratitude for everything you did to save us from our sins. And may these truths cause us to live for you. Good works, never earn salvation, killing all those snakes would not save a single person from the poison of, that was in their veins. But, but our

good works are the result of salvation. And so may these truths motivate us to live for you. But for those who are, are within the sound of my voice, who, who hear this and are even having trouble with the first point, may you show them how wonderful you are, and may you show them how wonderful the gift of mercy is. So that whether it is in life or in death, we will be able to sing, "It as well with my soul," because of you Jesus. It's in your name, I pray. Amen.