



## Sermon, Sunday August 22, 2021 “The Spirituality of Gratitude”

**SCRIPTURE: Numbers 21:4-9** <sup>4</sup> From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup> 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 we detest this miserable food.” <sup>6</sup> Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

### **Introduction: The people of Israel against the Lord and Moses.**

Due to the Lord's grace the people of Israel escaped from their long slavery in Egypt. However, the reality that the Israelites faced after the Exodus was difficult. The Israelites had to go through a rough road in the wilderness to get to the land of Canaan. The Israelites wanted to finish their difficult journey and reach Canaan quickly. However, they encountered unexpected difficulties while they were living in the wilderness. The Edomites would not allow the Israelites to cross their land into Canaan. So the Israelites had to go around Edom to enter Canaan. This situation was not what the Israelites expected. They wanted to quickly enter Canaan and end their wilderness life. The people of Israel were very quickly disappointed.

The Israelites complained about the Lord and Moses. **“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?” (Numbers 21:5)** Also, they complained that the manna, their daily bread in the wilderness, was a miserable food.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says: “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”**

The reason the Lord has given us this verse is that we should live by it with gratitude. The faith the Bible teaches us is based on trust, and relying on, and obeying the Lord's promises.

However, whether it is the Israelites in the Bible or us living today, there are many cases where we do not live according to our faith. And when our faith is broken, we grumble and complain. Therefore, in today's text, the Israelites' grumbling and complaining are expressions of unbelief in the Lord.

Today, through the story of how the people of Israel were saved with a serpent of bronze, I hope you will realize how precious our faith in the Lord is. We may find temporary gratification when we live according to our instincts and selfishness, but without faith in Jesus no one can have eternal life.

First, let's take a look at how precious the grace the Lord gave to the Israelites in their wilderness life was.

### **Body: The Lord who gave the people of Israel manna and saved them with a serpent of bronze**

#### **1. The Lord gave manna to the hungry people of Israel**



The Lord took care of the Israelites in the wilderness. He also provided for the physical needs of the Israelites. So, when the people of Israel had no food to eat in the wilderness, manna was given to them. The Israelites ate the manna the Lord had given them with thanksgiving. However, the attitude and heart of the Israelites toward the manna that the Lord gave to them changed. Manna, a precious and grateful gift of God's grace to the people of Israel, became miserable and insignificant food.

However, manna is not a miserable food. The manna that the Lord gave to the Israelites is a food that will rot and become inedible if they are greedy and try to collect and store it. So, manna is the daily bread that the Lord gave to the Israelites. Manna is also food that makes us realize what it means to depend on the Lord. It is a medium that keeps us from forgetting the grace of the Lord and tells us what kind of faith we need.

Therefore, in today's text, the change in the Israelites' attitude toward manna shows that the Israelites' trust and faith in the Lord had been broken.

If we are losing appreciation for the little things in our daily lives, we should examine whether we trust the Lord or not. And we must be able to restore gratitude in our daily lives.

The Lord sent poisonous serpents among the Israelites to bite them in order to restore their dark spiritual state.

## **2. The Lord who saved us with a serpent of bronze**

The Lord sent poisonous serpents to the people of Israel to bite them in order to restore the gratitude they had lost. A poisonous serpent is a common type of snake living in the wilderness, and once bitten by one, proves fatal to life. However, the difficulty the Lord gives to the people of Israel is not to kill them, but to make them repent and save them.

Because of the difficulties caused by the poisonous serpents, the people of Israel ask Moses to pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from them.

As a result, the Lord tells Moses how to solve this problem. The Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live."

But, what is the meaning of these actions? Look at the words of Jesus in John 3:14-15. "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life."

The story of saving the people with a serpent of bronze in the book of Numbers today shows us "a model of Christ who died on the cross." The Lord commanded Moses to make a poisonous serpent and set it on a pole to heal the Israelites from being bitten by poisonous serpents. Jesus died on the cross to atone for human sins.

Be sure to remember! Only Jesus is the way to healing and restoration from the sins of mankind and the sins of this age. And faith is trust, relying on, and obeying the will of Jesus on the cross.

Therefore, no matter how busy, difficult, or complicated our daily life may be, let's not give up or take lightly the value of faith that we should keep. There is a well-known hymn titled, "**I'd Rather Have Jesus**" (*lyrics on page 3*). I hope that the lyrics of this hymn will become a true confession of our faith.

## **Conclusion: Let's live by the Spirituality of Gratitude.**

Now let's summarize today's sermon. **Deuteronomy 8:16 says: "He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you."**



This verse makes clear why the Lord gave manna to the people of Israel. The Lord wants us to live humbly. Also, the Lord wants us to value His grace.

Like the people of Israel in today's text, if we forget gratitude and stand in against the Lord, we will also be tested because of this. Of course, the Lord is with us on this journey of testing.

There is no one in this world more merciful and just than the Lord. Do you think so, too?

Please don't forget The Lord does not turn away from us as we walk in the wilderness by faith, but He grants us salvation and abundant grace. So let's not change our heart and attitude toward the Lord according to circumstances, but trust the Lord. In so doing I hope we will restore the spirituality of thanksgiving to the Lord and bear abundant fruit.

## I'd Rather Have Jesus

[Jim Reeves](#)

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold

I'd rather be His than have riches untold  
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land  
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand

Than to be the king of a vast domain  
And be held in sin's dread sway

I'd rather have Jesus than anything  
This world affords today

I'd rather have Jesus than worldly applause

I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause  
I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame  
Yes, I'd rather be true to His holy name

Than to be the king of a vast domain  
And be held in sin's dread sway  
I'd rather have Jesus than anything  
This world affords today

