

Prayer 3

While reading a book the other day I was directed to John 3:14 - 15.

This took me to Numbers 21:4 - 9.

From all of this came some prayer thoughts.

In Numbers 21:4 - 9 we read of a time when the Israelites, as they often did during their journeying in the wilderness, complained against God and Moses. Their complaints included lack of bread and water, and they expressed their disgust at the food God had provided for them. In short they complained to Moses, **“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert?”** [Numbers 21:5a]

Are we like the Israelites? -moaning and complaining about our circumstances to God, then when he brings us out of those circumstances we moan about the new ones he has put us in. In short, are we never happy with God’s provisions, always wanting more? Such an attitude resulted in the first recorded sin. God had supplied everything that Adam and Eve could ever want, but Eve fell for Satan’s trick and believed that God might be holding back something better from them! [cf. Genesis 3]

In our current crisis are we blaming God, are we moaning about being in lockdown, or are we thanking God for keeping us safe in this crisis, for giving us time to do many things we have always wanted to do but never found the time to do them? Are we thanking him for his promises never to leave us, never to forsake us, but to be with us **“always, to the very end of the age.”**?

[cf. Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 15:5b); Matthew 21:28]

In the passage in Numbers, God’s anger broke out against the people and he sent venomous snakes amongst them. The result: many deaths. The people asked Moses to intercede on their behalf. God granted Moses’ request. He told Moses to make a snake, put it on a pole so that if anyone was bitten by a snake they could look up to the snake (made out of bronze) and live.

So what is the connection with John 3:14 - 15? Jesus told Nicodemus, **“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.”**

If you looked at the snake in the wilderness you would receive physical healing, and be saved. BUT if you look to the Son of Man, crucified for you, and believe in him you receive not just physical health but spiritual health, and you will be saved and live eternally with God.

A pattern emerges

Can you see the pattern that emerges from these incidents?

In Numbers the people rebel against God but God also provides a way out for them.

In Genesis Adam and Eve reject God's way for them but, even as he removes them from the Garden of Eden, God shows his mercy and makes clothes for them.

In John we see God providing a way out for sinful people. God in Christ will take their penalty - death - for their sin on the cross, and offer them eternal life.

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is a righteous and just God. BUT he is also love; he is compassionate; he knows our weaknesses; he wants us to be in an intimate, loving relationship with himself.

So when we rebel against God, when we moan and complain about his treatment of us, he still loves us and has given us in Christ the way back to himself. Why? So that we can live with him eternally: enjoying eternal life on this earth and in glory.

Let us:

- thank God for being love, and loving us;
- repent of our sin against him and seek and receive his forgiveness in Christ;
- live for him and for him alone, as living sacrifices [cf. Romans 12:1 - 2];
- intercede with God for our nation during this crisis, asking him to break the hold this virus has over us;
- ask God to bring us out of this crisis with a far deeper love for him, and for each other.

Let us ask God to continually deepen our faith in him through Jesus Christ.

In all we do let us give him alone all the glory!

Yours in Christ,

Douglas