

How Revival May Continue

by Roy Hession

Roy Hession's sermon explores how to sustain revival by recognizing our ongoing struggles with sin and looking to Jesus as our remedy.

Duration: 43:33

Scripture: Numbers 21:4, John 3:14, Romans 8:1, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 9:22, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of revival and how it can continue in our Christian lives. He refers to a story in Numbers chapter 21 where the Lord Jesus himself relates it to his own sacrifice for the world. The speaker emphasizes the importance of looking to Jesus and living in his victory. He also shares a personal story about experiencing jealousy and how he found forgiveness and life by looking to the Crucified One. The sermon emphasizes the finished work of Jesus on the cross and encourages listeners to humble themselves before the Lord.

Transcript

Well now, I want to take a subject that I believe is going, should be helpful to us as we come to the end of this particular series. The going on in whatever new blessing we've received. Or if you like, how revival may continue.

If we've known a reviving of our Christian lives, how we can go on in that. How it needn't be a fading experience. And I want to turn to Numbers chapter 21 at verse 4. Here is an incident in the Old Testament, which I think you might have read and largely passed by as not very significant.

Just one of the various stories and miracles that took place in the Old Testament. Had not the Lord Jesus picked up this very story and referred it to himself and told us that there is a picture of me and what I've done for the world. Therefore, when you turn back to this story with new interest.

Well now, the story is recorded in verse 4. And the children of Israel journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea to compass the land of Edom. And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God and against Moses.

Wherefore have you brought us out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people.

And they bit the people.

And much people of Israel died. Therefore, the people came to Moses and said, we have sinned. May I just suggest to you that was the reason why the Lord sent serpents among them.

Not to punish them for their murmurings and rebellions. But in order to restore them. We've got to see that the chastenings that the Lord allows upon us are not punitive in their intention, but restorative.

And the coming of those fiery serpents in some wonderful way had precisely that effect. Was there a prophet among them? Who interpreted them, the meaning of those serpents? Because it has the desired effect. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, we have sinned.

And they confessed it. For we have spoken against the Lord and against thee Moses. Pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us.

And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole. And it shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole. And it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. If you keep your finger there, in that passage, you can turn over to that verse in which the Lord Jesus makes reference to this incident and applies it to himself.

John 3, verse 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life. Going back to the Old Testament incident, I want to read just the last verse again to you, because some time ago this really lived to me and helped me so much. It does indeed as I read it this evening.

And it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. Now, when the people went to Moses, what they asked him to do was to pray to the Lord that the Lord would take away the serpents from them. That was what they thought was needed.

But apparently, the Lord did not necessarily take away the serpents from them at all. It is not said that he did it. For all I know, as long as they remained in that particular part of the country camping there, maybe the place continued to be infested with snakes.

But what God did do was, if not take away the serpents from them, he provided for them a perfectly wonderful remedy for serpent bites. And which remedy, it seems to me it is inferred, was left there, so that if at any subsequent moment a serpent had bitten any man, he had only to look for that serpent of brass upon the pole and he lived. Of course, its first purpose was to bring healing for those who had already been bitten.

And every poor dying man who was enabled to turn his dying eyes to that glittering serpent of brass found new life surged back into his body. But as I say, the Lord may not have taken away the serpents from them at all, even after that. But what he did do was to leave that remedy there, so that if at any subsequent moment a man got bitten, no problem.

There was a remedy ahead of time for that contingency and he had only got to look again at that serpent of brass. Look and live my brother, live. Look to Jesus Christ and live, because we have maybe been

bitten by the serpent.

Now I suggest to you that what we are very often hoping for is to come to a place in our Christian lives where God has taken away the serpents from us. When we are no longer bitten by the serpents. Well now, I cannot say that I have got to that place.

I want to tell you that I still have problems with serpent bites. But what God has done is to provide a remedy for serpent bites, which is all the time available, which is perfectly efficacious, so that it comes to pass, if at any time subsequent to a man's conversion, the serpent has bitten any man, he has only got to look to that remedy, that brazen serpent, the Lord Jesus, and he is immediately, gloriously recovered. And the devil hasn't affected him for any longer than it took him to look to the serpent, the cross on the pulpit.

So that I think is the meaning. Not only the initial looking to Jesus, but there is the remedy, all the time, always available, should you at any subsequent moment get bitten again by the serpent. Before we look at the remedy, just look for a moment at our old adversary, the devil, that old serpent the devil is called.

Because this is a wonderful picture of what has happened, way back in the garden of Eden, that old serpent the devil, sunk his fangs into our first parents. And he did something to them. He injected some of his own disposition and nature into them.

And the result was, they died. God has said in the day you eat thereof, of that tree you will surely die, and the serpent prevailed upon them to do it. They didn't die physically immediately, but they did die.

And so it is that our race is a race which has been bitten by the serpent, by that old serpent the devil. And you and I are born into this world with a disposition that was acquired by our first father in the garden of Eden. But it isn't only then that the serpent has bitten the sons of men.

He's been busy doing it ever since. And he doesn't cease to do it. Just because maybe we have been converted to Christ, or there's been a wonderful healing that we've experienced, and maybe that day after you were saved you feel, oh well now I'm going to have no more problems with the serpent.

I'm finished. But what was your dismay to discover? You weren't, and there was a bite, and then another one. So whatever happened to you when you were born again, this much is certain.

The serpents were not taken away from you. Indeed that old serpent became a little busier. There may have been another occasion when there was a time of great consecration, a great time of revival.

Oh praise the Lord, he's filled me with his spirit, he's taken over things in a new way. No more trouble from the serpent. But I'm afraid that hasn't worked out, has it? And you've discovered that in spite of whatever God did for you, at a subsequent time, you've been bitten again by the serpent.

But I say again, what he has done is to provide a remedy for serpent bites all the time available. But I want you to look, just before we move on to the remedy, a little bit closer at the effect of the serpent bite, because it's just as well that you should recognize when you've been bitten again by the serpent. You know, a serpent, a snake, some of them, they hiss.

Of course, some of them rattle, but some of them hiss. And all I know is when I'm bitten again by the serpent, I get a bit of that old nature of his, injected. Or maybe he doesn't need to inject it, it's there already, but he stimulates it.

And you know, I can hiss at other people. Someone's been bitten again by the serpent, you can hear it, because he's hissing and resenting. A serpent too, some of them, when they're attacked, they rear up, and they want to hit back.

And isn't that the case with us? You've only got to be accused, and you rear up, and you want to defend yourself, and retaliate. And all that sometimes happens. Sometimes you can hear things going on in the home.

I know what's happened. Some people there have been bitten again by the serpent, for that old disposition is expressing itself. Then you know a serpent, a snake, is a reptile.

And the difference, I'm told, between a reptile and a mammal, man is a mammal, animals are mammals, is that mammals have warm blood, that reptiles have cold blood. Did you know that? And you know, when you've been bitten again by the serpent, how cold-blooded you can become. How cold, and really, treating our brothers in such a cold-blooded way, even a child of God can become, when he's been bitten again by the serpent.

And I know when I've been bitten, I lose my love for the other person. I act so coldly, so carelessly, so unconcerned about their needs. Sometimes I can be so cold and ungracious towards those, I love this.

You know what's happened? And then you know a serpent, a snake, is to us an emblem of deceit. I'm sure you use the phrase that we use in England, we talk about a person, he's a snake in the grass. And I think that's an awful thing to say about some people.

You can't trust them! A serpent in the grass, a snake in the grass, is waiting, and as you go past, it's priceless. And all the dastardly things, that even us Christians have done. The terrible way in which some people have treated other Christians in the same church.

Oh, we've been capable in that respect. And you and I become snakes in the grass, when we've been bitten again by that old serpent, the devil. So that's the first effect that happens.

Something of that old disposition begins to express itself, when I've been bitten again. Someone's only got to say something, I react. It wasn't what the person said that mattered, it was my reaction.

But the devil provoked me to be so angry, or resentful, or up in arms, or irritated, or jealous. And we've been bitten again. And the other result that always happens is, just as in the story here, that those that were bitten began to die, so with us.

That spiritual life that was filling us, it was the very life of the Lord Jesus, always is diminished, when I get bitten again by the serpent. The joy of my salvation seems to go. The reality of the Lord Jesus.

And it's no longer Him living through me. Not in the degree in which it was. I'm not suggesting that when you, as a child of God, get bitten again by the serpent, that you lose the gift of eternal life, but you do lose the abundance of it.

And it's diminished about a trickle. And this always happens. Well now, it comes to pass, that if a serpent has bitten a man, what? Because this may well come to pass.

Maybe you had a lovely week, we've enjoyed God's word, and felt His presence in these days together. And maybe when you're lifted up, you're going to have no more problems. But you know, even tonight, or

tomorrow, something may happen, and you react in the wrong way, and you manifest that retaliatory hiss or something.

What do you do? And it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. So what God did, was not to take away the serpent, to provide a remedy. Now will you notice, that this remedy for serpent bites, was in the very form of the thing, which had caused all the trouble.

It was a snake that had bitten a man. The remedy was something in the shape of a snake. Isn't that extraordinary? Have you ever thought of that? It was a serpent made of brass, nailed through and stuck up on a pole, high above the tents, so that all could see it.

And that's a picture of this wonderful redemption, God's remedy for sin. Jesus said, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. The remedy, is in the shape of the very thing, that caused all the trouble.

It was sin, that caused the trouble, and the Lord Jesus was lifted up, in the very likeness of sinful flesh, and judged as that. It says elsewhere, he who knew no sin, was made sin. I remember years ago, when this thought came, almost as a shock to me.

At that time, a number of us, who were walking very closely together in the Lord, were much taken up, with the vision of the Lord Jesus, as the Lamb. We spoke about that, Jesus the Lamb, for the burnt offering, the other evening. And we loved to see Jesus as our Lamb.

And we saw that he was called the Lamb, not only because, like Old Testament, in Old Testament ways, he was a sacrifice for sin, but because this was his disposition. He said, I am meek and lowly in heart. A Lamb is the meekest of creatures.

A Lamb doesn't retaliate. A Lamb doesn't hiss. A Lamb doesn't want to retaliate.

A Lamb isn't cold-blooded. And neither was he. And we loved to see, the Lord Jesus, in his capacity as the Lamb.

And just at that time, I found myself reading, afresh, John 3. And I suddenly saw, Jesus telling me there, that he, the Lamb, was going to be lifted up, in the form of the snake, that hisses, that wants to retaliate, that's got poison under its tongue, that's so cold-blooded. It almost shocked me. But I said, that's wrong.

He's the Lamb. How can he be lifted up, in the shape of the serpent? But that's what happened. And at the cross of the Lord Jesus, he, the Lamb, was made an effigy, of the very opposite of what he was.

Do you know that? Jesus didn't only die for us, but he was made an effigy, of the very thing, that caused all the trouble. He was there in the shape, if you will, the snake. But he's not a snake.

Call him here a snake, if you like. Don't call him one. But that's what he did.

That's what is meant by, in Romans 8.4, he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He didn't only die for me. He died as me.

He was made an effigy of me, and of my sinful nature. And the moment, the Lamb was made an effigy of the snake, God condemned him. But of course, God wasn't condemning the Son as the Son.

He was condemning rather the one like this he was wearing. My likeness, self's likeness, sin's likeness. And therefore I see at the cross myself.

And that was the remedy. So it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass. And brass is interesting.

Bible students are pretty well agreed, that in Old Testament typology, brass is invariably to be taken as a picture of judgment. The brazen urther. It speaks of the judgment of sin at the cross.

And here's the brazen serpent. Jesus was judged as me, as sin, as my fallen self. And that is the remedy.

Now when the people, in their need, looked to that serpent lifted up, I want to see, suggest to you, they saw two things. And it was what they saw that brought healing. Now I want to try and get back to those days, and really put myself in their place.

I want to regard myself as a man who's been bitten. Whose life is ebbing away. But someone has helped me out of the tent, and propped me up and said, look, that's the answer.

Now the first thing an Israelite would see, when he looked there, would be obviously a serpent. Now it's very likely he'd never seen very clearly these wretched things that had been doing so much damage. I mean by the time you look round, they'd bitten you, but they'd scooted off into the undergrowth.

And not many people had caught these things, and got the whole thing stretched out to see what they were really like. They didn't see what the trouble was until they saw that effigy made of brass on the pole. Never knew they were as long as that.

I never knew the fangs were like that. And what they saw when they first looked in real truth, was the serpent. Now if I'm told to look and live, if I'm told to look to that Jesus who died on the cross, the first thing I see is my sin.

As it really is. In fact, I'm not going to get much of a healing unless I let the message of the cross come out. I know it's one of these day-to-day things that happen, but be that thing what it is.

It costs the Lord Jesus his blood. And when I see that, I really see my sin in its real light. Let's suppose that some of us have been breaking the law in some matter.

Sending a council. I don't know. I hope you aren't involved too much in this sort of thing.

But just for a matter of example. You've been breaking the law and you haven't regarded it very seriously until the day when you turn to your newspaper and you see a man is had up in court for doing exactly the same thing that you've been doing, but you haven't thought much about it. And you're really absolutely horrified and fascinated.

The whole account. And he's brought in guilty. And he's given a most severe prison sentence.

And as that man is led away to the cells, you see yourself led. And you rarely know what you've been doing. In the same way, when I see what happened to the Lord Jesus, when he wore my likeness and was made responsible for my sin, when God forsook him and judged him and left him a derelict for the moment on the cross, I begin to see my sin as it really is.

And I need to. I told the story in one other place. Let me repeat it again.

How once I was I was very close to a dear pastor friend of mine, a dear godly man. We were walking very close together and therefore we shared deeply things that one might not have shared with everybody. And there was something that happened which created in me a reaction of jealousy.

What the detail was precisely, I'm not quite sure, it was quite a trivial thing, but I had this jealousy. And I acknowledged it to the Lord, lifted up my heart. And because we were so close, I shared it with my brother.

You know when that happened, I said, I'm sorry, you know, I was jealous. And I find it very difficult to admit myself being jealous. You know, it pulls the inside out of me.

Maybe the confession of it is meant to. It's a good therapy maybe. Well, so to make it a little easier for myself, I did it with a bit of a laugh.

You know, I think, I mean, I'm a bit jealous, you know. And this dear brother looked at me without a smile. He said, Roy, that jealousy cost Jesus his blood.

Suddenly I saw the cross. And I saw my jealousy as it really was. And if you've been bitten by the serpent over whatever issue, and that old neck's gone stiff, and that hiss has begun to come out of your lips, whatever form it's taken, and that air, life and joy has begun to ebb away, and you want healing, you must go back to the cross, and the first thing you and I must see on each occasion, sin as it really is.

And you do not see sin, I don't, save in the light of what it cost Jesus to put it away. But they saw a second thing when they were brought out to look at that serpent. Yes, they saw the serpent made of brass, they could evaluate its hideousness, in a way they couldn't before.

But they saw something else. They saw that serpent nailed to that pole, and held up as a vanquished, defeated thing. Now till then, I imagine that people have been struggling and striving to do everything they knew how to recover themselves.

Those who had little medical knowledge were running around with bandages and medicines and poultices, but all of course to no avail. But one thing had happened. The elders of the people had gone to Moses and said, Moses, we've sinned, we've wronged, we've missed it.

And what happened was this. God says, now you've admitted it. And as a token of that fact, you make, Moses, a serpent of brass, and Moses, you put a nail through it, and hold it up as a vanquished, defeated thing.

And the message that I believe was meant to be get over to the dying people was this. Look, the thing that's caused all the trouble is vanquished and defeated. Stop struggling.

Stop using medication. All that's necessary to be done, I have done. The only thing I was waiting for was to hear you say, I've sinned.

Now it's over. Look, sin, the serpent, vanquished and defeated. Now this is the second, and of course this is that which liberates and heals us.

Not only at the cross do I see sin, but I see sin held up as a vanquished, defeated thing already judged by God. And I tell you when you get that new vision of the cross, and the finished work, when you've been

repented, alright, says the Lord, now you've acknowledged the truth of it. It's finished.

When was it finished? Back on the cross. Look back there, and see in Jesus, sin as a vanquished, defeated thing, it's judgment exhausted, and sin robbed of it's power to condemn you any longer. And when we do what those people did, go to God and say, oh God I've been so wrong, now look at the cross.

Don't stop licking your wounds. Don't stop mourning over yourself. Simply dare to believe the fact that what Jesus said, it is finished.

There's a great hymn in one of our books on this story called, There's Life for a Look at the Crucified One. The nearest approach to this hymn was the one we sung, but it is in other hymn books. It is not your tears of repentance or prayers, but the blood that atones for the soul.

On him then who shed it, you mayest at once your weight of iniquities roll. And the cause is, look, look, look and live. There is life for a look at the crucified one.

There's life at this moment for thee. Oh why was he there as the bearer of sin? If on Jesus thy sins were not laid, it goes on to say, then doubt not thy welcome, since God has declared, there remaineth no more to be done, that once in the end of the age he appeared and finished the work he began. And it really is finished on your behalf.

You cannot go any more astorn to life and fellowship with God than what that finished work does when you humble yourself before him as in, Lord, I admit it, I've been bitten again. And if there's one thing more than another that grieves him is our failure to believe and drink in the healing sound and see the healing sight and dare no longer to go on mourning but to rejoice. Then take with rejoicing from Jesus at once the life everlasting he gives and know with assurance thou never canst die since Jesus thy surety lives.

He's risen from the dead, the blood was enough, no reason for him to remain any longer and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the token of the finished work. If Jesus had not paid the debt he may have been at freedom set but the fact that that was enough was shown by the fact that God raised him from the dead and that's what I'm to see at the cross. So it comes to pass that if a serpent's bitten any man they had a bit of an argument and discussion one of them got a bit hot under the collar and thought well that's alright but he knew something had gone wrong he'd been bitten.

Well, he knew his peace with God had been disturbed what's he to do?

It came to pass if a serpent had bitten any man when he beheld the serpent of the cross I see again that finished work and I couldn't do better than quote the hymn that's already been quoted I hear the words of love I gaze upon the blood I see the mighty sacrifice No, he doesn't apparently take away the serpents from us but what he does do he leaves the remedy Jesus, the cross, the blood all the time available but you have to have that humbling experience of admitting you've been bitten but you know there's something, Russell the Lord I want to tell you something I've been bitten again but hallelujah I looked at the cross and I like the picture of looking you know, looking here is apparently a picture of believing and that's rather helpful people say I haven't got enough faith whereas

faith is pictures of looking can you say I haven't got enough look? can you look at your own look? you can't I don't care how bad you feel how despairing I can look at me I can sit and say Lord that's for me and though I don't feel on top I feel all wrong I'm going to dare to believe it that the blood of thy son is enough for thee therefore for me and I tell you what will happen life will be restored again new life again revival if

you like and the life that he gives us is his own life it's him living again in us we can't live the Christian life only he can but he can't do it when the serpent is bitten as we don't know and are not availing ourselves of the remedy and so here it is and I give you this picture it may be helpful you know a wife may say to her husband oh there's been

something going on and she's spoken to the children a certain way hey do you think the serpent's bitten you? or you might have to say it to her or perhaps better still you say it to your own heart but so what? this situation has been anticipated and you needn't go on any longer under the burden feeling the lack and the loss and you and I have just got to believe just got to believe it's enough and sometimes when you've been blaming yourself it takes some believing but if God is satisfied with the blood of Jesus on your behalf you and I ought to be and so this is a continuous walk we know what to do if the serpent should bite us well that's prayer, it's in prayer maybe today some of us have been bitten by the serpent oh these strange self-centered natures the extraordinary way in which

they act and react and Satan knows how to touch it off and nor we can be in despair but we thank thee for Jesus we thank thee that Calvary covers it all and may we want to be those that avail ourselves just as often as we're bitten by the serpent we thank you in thy dear name, Amen now before we have a closing hymn I'm just going to ask my wife would you like to share with me any thought you'd like to add to that that's taken by surprise well if you feel you want to add something by the time we've finished our hymn Pam, feel free, maybe you just just a testimony or some contribution alright, let's try and sing that hymn that was quoted Calvary covers it all number 96 various aspects of victorious life one aspect is not my victory over sin but his victory over me breaking me and taking me

to the cross whenever things go wrong and that's a victory because I don't want to be broken I want to be right I don't want to have to admit I'm wrong and the basis of any victory is not my, me overcoming sin but him overcoming me when things go wrong and taking me to the cross I tell you that's a victory his victory how he wrestles to break us and when like Jacob of old you give in to the one who wrestles with us then there's victory victory in your soul he takes to the cross another aspect of victory is something we've been thinking about tonight and it is getting into peace and freedom I was in a team meeting years ago of a group of men, ministers and we've been very close together and conducting conferences and one of the brothers at one team meeting said brethren I feel I've got to

share something with you I feel you must know me as I am he said I have an illegitimate child in Germany I think you should know the truth about me my bishop knows about it and so does my wife and they've forgiven me but that's the truth but it had a deep effect upon us all and we all felt we wanted to identify with him and said brother there go we but for the grace of God we've had the thoughts of these things in our hearts sometimes if not the deed and I always felt it was a wonderful victory that had been won in that brother it certainly was the victory of the self to be willing to share that but one of the brothers a deeply taught brother said afterwards I don't think he's got the victory yet I thought well what does he mean don't think he's got the victory do you think he'll do it

again or something I said to myself I knew there was no likelihood hardly any likelihood that and yet this other one said I don't think he's got the victory do you know what he meant he hasn't got through in the sense of shame he's still shattered he's still saying oh what a man I am he'd not yet looked at the cross fully enamoured not yet got wings to rejoice and come into utter freedom now that's the second form of victory to him that work is not that simply in his need believes on him who justifies the ungodly his faith is counted for a righteousness which he doesn't otherwise possess you've got to take your place as ungodly

but having done that you've got to dare to believe that God declares him to be right who admits his wrong and merely right as right as heaven can require because

of the power of love and there that's victory I long to be a person that comes through quickly into victory sees the serpent lifted up and doesn't wait unnecessarily to rejoice again all that judges sin isn't superficial but comes into peace and the other form of victory is perhaps that which is the more normal usual conception which is the life of Christ in us being the victorious one but that's based on the other I'm as willing to be broken as willing to come into peace through the blood and will not be mourning over myself and then Christ lives in me I can hand over to him and I just might suggest add that little PS if I might you say is this victory this is a very central part to know how to look and live and then look and live and then look and live if you take a long time to do that

you're a long time to be done

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