

Numbers Chapter 21 v 4 - 9

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Date: 08 March 2020

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[0 : 00] Let's draw near to the Lord, shall we? Psalm 39 really reflects on something that we were thinking about this morning.

David says this, Show me, Lord, my life's end and the number of my days. Let me know how fleeting my life is. You've made my days a mere hand-breadth, the span of my years is as nothing before you.

Everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure. Surely everyone goes around like a mere phantom. In vain they rush about, heaping up wealth, without knowing whose it will finally be. But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you. My hope is in you. Our first hymn reminds us that our God is our hope, in the sense that everything that we hope for is found in him.

And it's a different tune, perhaps, to what you're used to, but I'm going to ask Kath very kindly to play through the first verse for us. 123. Just go listen to the first verse, and then we'll stand after that.

[1 : 18] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Let's come to prayer.

Let's have a time of open prayer, a time of thanksgiving, of praise. A time of renewing our hope, our faith in the Lord as we've been singing, reminding ourselves of his great goodness that lasts forever.

I'll lead in prayer briefly, and if those who feel able also, lead us in our praise as we come and draw near to the Lord. O Father in heaven, our Lord, our God, our Saviour and King, we again declare that you are all our hope, all our confidence, all our trust is in you.

We do not put our trust in ourselves or in others, for we know that we are failing, and so are others too. We know that we are sinful, and so is everybody else.

Apart from you, you never fail. You are fully and completely faithful from everlasting to everlasting. We pray, Lord, that this evening, as we come to worship and draw near to you, may we know the strengthening and the building up of our faith, that, Lord, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, we may be able to go from this place, declaring afresh, because your Holy Spirit has implanted it anew to our hearts, that all our hope and our confidence is you.

[3 : 05] We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Numbers and chapter 21.

Numbers chapter 21. If you have one of the church Bibles, that's page 158. Page 158.

John, have you been to America? And you're back again. How long were you there? The conference went ahead.

Oh, that's right. I wasn't expecting you back till next week. I don't know why. Good to see you. Did you have a nice time? It was an encouraging time. Okay, lovely. David, well.

Excellent. Yeah, so Numbers chapter 21. And last week we looked at the life of Aaron and something of his character and his life and particularly how he pointed us to the Lord Jesus, our great high priest.

[4 : 12] We're going to pick up from then chapter 21, reading the first nine verses. Numbers 21, beginning at verse 1. When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the road to Atherim, he attacked the Israelites and captured some of them.

Then Israel made this vow to the Lord. If you will deliver these people into our hands, we will totally destroy their cities. The Lord listened to Israel's plea and gave the Canaanites over to them.

They completely destroyed them and their towns, and so the place was named Hormar. They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea to go round Edom.

But the people grew impatient on the way. They spoke against God and against Moses and said, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?

There's no bread. There's no water. And we detest this miserable food. Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them. They bit the people and many Israelites died.

[5 : 26] The people came to Moses and said, We 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.

The Lord said to Moses, Make a snake and put it up on a pole. Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole.

Then when anyone was bitten by a snake, they looked at the bronze snake. They lived. Well, we'll come back to that in a few moments.

So please have then Numbers 21 open in your Bibles, those first nine verses. Do you suffer from ophidiophobia?

Usually there's some bright sparks in the air and you seem to know everything when I ask you, know what that is, what that word means. It means the irrational fear of snakes.

[6 : 41] I think most of us would probably have some variation of ophidiophobia, even if we didn't recognize the name of it. Now, as you know, in the UK, we only have one venomous snake.

That's the adder. And maybe you've seen one. I've seen one just last year up on one of the moors. When the sun's out, you'll see them around and about. And although they're venomous, nobody has died of an adderbite in over 20 years.

So that's a comfort of some sort. But they are nasty. And there is, thankfully, an antidote if you're bitten. But around the world, there's all sorts of very nasty and venomous snakes.

The black mamba is a notorious snake. It can grow up to three meters long. That's nearly 10, 11 feet. And it's native to nearly all of sub-Saharan Africa.

It's so poisonous that a single bite can be fatal within as little as half an hour. So it is a terrible thing. And what's even more worrying about the black mamba is not only that it's extremely long, not only that it's extremely venomous, but also it's extremely quick.

[7 : 49] Unless you can run faster than 12 miles an hour and keep it up, then it's going to catch you. So it is a very terrifying thing. Now, we don't know what the snakes were, what breed of snake that was sent by the Lord amongst the people of Israel, except that we're told they were venomous, or actually the word is fiery serpents.

It doesn't mean that they were flaming or anything, but I think most commentators recognize it meant that the bite was extremely burning and painful. They were venomous and fiery serpents. We don't know what they were, but clearly they were very poisonous and their bite was universally fatal. Verse 6, The Lord sent venomous snakes among them.

They bit the people and many Israelites died. Now, you may think, well, why has he skipped out the first part of chapter 21, the first three verses? Well, because God willing, next week, I want to put them together with the other battles, because the rest of chapter 1 is mainly journeying and battles. So I'm putting them all together and dealing with this passage in a separate case. But the reality is that the situation we come upon in verse 4 follows this victorious battle.

[9 : 12] God's people have been moving towards the promised land. Remember, this is now in the 40th year. They're not far away, just a matter of months, really, from entering into the promised land and beginning the conquest of the land.

And so really from now on, there's battles. Here's the first one. It started off with them being under attack, but then through prayer, the Lord answers their prayer and they are given the victory.

And they move on, we're told, in verse 4, traveling from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea to go around Edom. Now, you think they'd be in high spirits. You think they'd be rejoicing in what God has done for them and the victory they've had.

But no, the people grew impatient on the way they spoke against God and against Moses. Here they are near the promised land.

God has faithfully provided for them and kept them and led them all this time. And what do we read? Once more again, they are grumbling and murmuring and moaning about the Lord and Moses, his servants.

[10 : 20] Thankfully, it's the last time we read of their grumbling and moaning here in Numbers, but we've read it over and over again, haven't we? Through the years, through the decades, every now and again, up it would come.

It's so very tragic, isn't it, that this sinful habit had become so ingrained in the people that it was still afflicting them all these years later.

They didn't seem to have been able to conquer this particular sin. Now, dear friends, we all of us are on that journey, that Christian life. Some of us have been maybe 40 years and more like the Israelites of old.

I wonder, are we still struggling with and giving in to sins that were there 40 years ago? Are they still conquering us instead of having been conquered by us?

Surely the answer should be that they are becoming less and less effective in our lives. The Christian life is one of ongoing sanctification, one of ongoing victory over sin.

[11 : 30] And dear friends, if we are going on in the Christian life, then those sins of old should have less power in our lives, not more.

The difficulty is, or the reality is, if we're honest, for some of us, we have never really faced those sins. We've never actually sought to get rid of them or even acknowledged that they are faults or sins in our lives.

And if we're honest as well, perhaps as we're getting older, some of those sins of the youth become stronger. Perhaps as our bodies become weaker, they seem to have a greater potency and power. Now, we will never vanquish sin ultimately in our lives. We've sung that wonderful hymn of Wesley, but Wesley had one or two misunderstandings about the work of God in the Christian life.

He had a belief that somehow a Christian could attain in this life a level of holiness and perfection where sin no longer had any influence.

[12 : 33] Now, he was wrong in that. He's a great man of God, but every great man of God has something wrong with him because they're still sinners as you and I still are sinners. But, though we shall never vanquish sin, dear friends, we should seek with God's grace and with prayer and with the help of God's people that year by year the power of sin over us will diminish, not continue, not increase.

and in fact, just as we sang there, so Charles Wesley takes from the letter of Paul in 2 Corinthians 3.18, we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, that's every believer by the way, every Christian, are being transformed into his, that's Christ's likeness, his holy likeness, his sinless likeness, with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

We can't, as it were, rest on our laurels as Christians. We can't say, well, I've been a Christian all this time, I've sort of reached the place where I don't expect there to be any more improvements in my holiness or my godliness.

Dear friends, please, please don't ever get to that place. No matter what age you are, no matter how well the Lord has dealt with you, no matter how the Lord has used you, please never get to such a point where you feel that you have conquered or overcome all sin.

So if we desire to conquer sin, and I hope that we all do, sin as the sin of the God's people here that we've met with once again, this murmuring, complaining, it takes on the mantle, as it were, it takes on the type of impatience here, but it's the same problem all along.

[14 : 25] What can we learn from here? What can this teach us? How can we, as it were, learn from how God deals with his people here? And indeed, that's what we're meant to do, because this episode in the life of God's people is spoken about by the Apostle Paul.

In fact, he highlights it in 1 Corinthians and chapter 10 as one of the examples of God's people. He writes this in 1 Corinthians 10, 9 and 11.

We should not test Christ as some of them did and were killed by snakes. It's obviously this event, because there's no other place where they're killed by snakes. And do not grumble as some of them did and were killed by the destroying angel.

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

So this episode in the life of God's people where they fell into sin and God punishes them and deals with them is an example to us, a warning to us, a help to us, and he pulls this one out.

[15 : 36] And notice how Paul describes their sin as testing Christ or tempting Christ. So again, we must remember that when we are dealing with scripture, it has one continual, as it were, one continual theme and that theme is the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of his church, the head of his people in both the Old and New Testament.

So let's look at what happened very briefly and then see how that leads us. As I've said already, the people are known a great victory. The king of Arad and his army have been defeated in answer to the Lord's prayer or prayers to the Lord.

They're on the move again, but a few weeks ago we knew that they couldn't go through Edom. That was the land which was possessed by the children of Esau, Esau, Esau, Esau, who was, of course, Jacob's brother.

And so God told them they couldn't go through the land or rather the people of Edom stopped them going through the land, wouldn't let them go through the land and so they have to go around it. But going around it means that their journey is extended in the wilderness.

They've got to go back into the wilderness and they are becoming impatient. The people grew impatient on the way. This, as it were, diversion from the direct route to the promised land creates in them impatience.

[17:06] And we can sympathize with that, I'm sure, all of us. In the Christian life there are times when we feel impatient. In fact, not just in the Christian life, I think it's fair to say that in our own society there is a growing sense of impatience.

And I think that may be because, of course, things in the 21st century have become much quicker on the whole, haven't they? We have instant communication around the world if we want it. We have microwave ovens, of course. We've had them in the 20th century, I know, but I'm just sort of, they can cook you dinner, can't they, in a tenth of the time that it would have done before. And yet we still have delays on the trains. We still have roadworks that hold us up. And we still have to wait in a queue when we want to get something, go to the doctors or whatever it may be. We are becoming more impatient. But for us as believers, one of the things that we struggle with is impatience with the Lord, in the matter of our prayers.

[18:12] Impatience with the Lord in the matter of our prayers. We find it hard to wait upon the Lord to answer and to reveal his will and his way. And though we can understand and empathize with this impatience, we must be very careful, dear friends, that our impatience does not, as it were, mutate into resentment, complaining, muttering, doubting, doubting, and so on, as we see here in the hearts of these people.

In one sense, in our own patience, let us not sin, as we wait and trust in God. Isn't it strange when you read through what they have to say, how you feel like you've got déjà vu?

Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? Hold on, they said that 40 years ago. They're still, as it were, repeating the same old story.

But most of them have never lived in Egypt. Remember, God had said that those over 20 would die in the wilderness over the next 40 years, and so many of them, if not all of them, who were in Egypt have now died.

But they're still saying Egypt was the good old days. When they're in slavery there. Rose-tinted glasses that look at the past. Not always give an accurate picture of what things were like.

[19:37] But the most sinful thing that they do, and certainly the most sinful attitude that's displayed, is this last line in that verse 5. Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?

Well, he said that to Moses over and over again, and that was never the case. There is no bread, there is no water, and here, we detest this miserable food. The word is worthless food.

They're talking about the manner that God sent them every single day, apart from the Sabbath, as you know, when they were given twice the amount the day before. God has provided for them food, nourishment, and yet to them it is miserable.

We're sick to death of God's provision. This is where we see, as it were, the height of their ingratitude against God's provision for them.

It's shocking, what they have to say, and it betrays the thought that in their hearts they believe that God was not dealing with them fairly.

[20:39] God was not treating them well. God was stingy. God was holding back things that should be better things for them. What God was giving them was second rates.

Do you see the underlying sinful attitude there in saying this? It's not just a matter of ingratitude, it is a matter of their attitude towards the Lord.

You are not the caring, loving, heavenly Father that we thought you were. You don't care for us. You've given us miserable food to eat.

Isn't that part of the real problem in our hearts? Isn't that how we begin to think when we are impatient upon God, when we're seeking in prayer, when we're looking to provide, when we're looking for him to lead, when things are difficult and we find ourselves, as it were, diverted away

from the way we would like to go, isn't there within our hearts creeping in this sin that says, God, this isn't fair.

You're not treating me as you should. You're failing me. You're letting me down. That's why, of course, we see God acts as he does against this sin.

[21 : 50] It's no light matter to murmur and mutter against God as they did. God punishes them and he sends them these snakes. That's a strange thing, isn't it?

Because when we've gone through again Exodus and Numbers, God has never sent snakes before, has he? He's sent fire from heaven. He's opened up the ground. He sent a plague on more than one occasion to slay them, but why does he send them snakes?

Now, I wonder, this is my thought, could it be that God is reminding them and pointing back to the garden, where sin began, where the snake deceived them, and their hearts of Adam and Eve were turned away from the Lord over this very same thing.

Remember how the serpent spoke to the woman and said to the woman in chapter 3 of Genesis, verse 1, the serpent said to the woman, did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden.

And what he was sowing in their hearts is this same attitude. God is withholding from you better things, good things. He can't be trusted. He isn't the God who cares for you at all.

[23 : 07] It's the same sin. This is my thought, that these snakes sent from the Lord point back to that snake, that deceiver, that same sin of ungratitude and unbelief.

And these snakes, as they come into the camp, begin to bite people and these people die. And so the people in verse 7, in fear and repentance, turn to Moses to intercede for them.

Please pray for us. We've sinned against the Lord. Please pray for us that the Lord will take the snakes away from us. But God doesn't take the snakes away, does he?

God doesn't take the snakes away. The problem isn't removed immediately. The consequences of their sin are not suddenly, as it were, magically whooshed away, as God could have done.

But instead, rather, God orders Moses to make a way of healing for anyone who is bitten. In verse 8, the Lord said to Moses, make a snake and put it up on a pole.

[24 : 23] Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. That's exactly what Moses does. He makes a bronze snake and puts it up on a pole. Just an aside, I don't want to be diverted from the story too much, but one of the things that strikes me here is this.

God is commanding Moses to make an idol. Isn't he? Remember the second commandment. He's telling him to do something which is, on the surface, inconsistent with the second commandment.

The second commandment says that you shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the sea, in the seas.

So, is God being inconsistent? Is God actually speaking making a new command which overthrows the first command? No, he's not.

The rest of the second commandment gives us clear boundaries as to the making of objects in the shape of created things.

[25 : 29] For the rest of it says you shall not bow down and worship them. So, this commandment is not saying you can't make a sculpture or you can't paint a painting or you can't do any crafts that make an animal or whatever it may be.

No, of course not. It's talking about idolatry, worshipping that thing. What's very sad as we go on into the rest of the scriptures is we find during the time of the kings that this snake does become an idol for the people and they start to offer to it, worship it and in fact it ends up being smashed up by a godly king to prevent them from doing that.

No, let's get back to the story then. So, this snake is made of bronze, it's fitted to a long pole and the pole is raised and elevated in the middle of the camp for everyone to see.

Moses made a bronze snake, verse 9, and put it up on a pole. Anyone who was bitten only needs to look at the bronze snake and their life is saved and they are healed.

So, then anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived. Here's God providing a wonderfully gracious way of forgiveness and healing for these sinful people.

[26 : 46] He doesn't take away the consequences of their sin but he does provide a way for them to be healed, a way for them to be forgiven, if I can put it that way, a way for them to be saved.

And Jesus points to this very event and to this very snake to highlight how his death on the cross can give forgiveness and healing to all.

In John chapter 3 in verse 14 Jesus says this to Nicodemus who is there with him, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the son of man must be lifted up that everyone who believes may have eternal life.

Just as one look at the snake saved your life, so just one look at Christ crucified secures eternal life. Again dear friends, don't we see here once more that the gospel of God's free grace runs all the way through the scriptures.

Those people who say of course the Old Testament God is a God of law, the New Testament Jesus is a God of grace, are completely wrong because here we see grace. And the gospel of grace illustrated in how God deals with the sin and provides forgiveness and salvation for the sinner.

[28 : 07] The Lord doesn't ask them to come up as it were and offer a sacrifice to the snake. He doesn't ask them to go and kiss the snake or to bow down to it or to do any actual practical thing.

All they had to do was lift their heads and look at it and they would be healed. To take God at his word and with faith look at the bronze snake that he had provided.

And so too dear friends there is full salvation from sin, from the curse of our sin for everyone who will but take a look at Jesus, take him at his word and trust him that he has done everything in our place for our forgiveness.

Only faith. That's all God asks. Not works or good deeds or religiosity or any of those things or law abiding or obedience only faith alone in Christ alone.

The gospel of grace. Romans chapter 5 verse 1. Therefore since we have been justified, that's made right with God, through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[29 : 21] Christ. What a wonderful gospel. What a wonderful salvation. Just a look. Just a simple act of faith to look and be saved.

Think about it. If you were one of those people, do you ever do that when you read through the Old Testament? I'd encourage you to do that. Or even through the gospels. Put yourself in that place, in that camp, in the midst of those people.

Think about it. Think about yourself being there. You've grumbled and complained and these snakes have come and now you've been bitten by one of these snakes.

Would you really be so stubborn as to reject such a simple cure? Would you really be so hard-hearted and so angry against God that you wouldn't look to that snake for salvation?

And think about it. even today, men and women, perhaps one of you, I don't know, you are awaiting, as it were, the punishment of your sin.

[30 : 26] God's judgment is hanging over you so that you will get what you deserve. The consequences of a life lived against God and for yourself.

Are you still so stubborn that you'll reject the gospel of Jesus, that you'll reject this simple salvation of looking to him who died for you, of believing on him?

Will you suffer the consequences of your sin because you will not humble yourself to look up your eyes heavenward to the one who can save you eternally?

We've gone off point as we do occasionally. Started by talking about sin and conquering sin in our lives, of overcoming impatience with God.

Let's return to that then. What does this all have to teach the believer, you and I, about overcoming sin, especially this sin of impatience with God, that is, when we struggle with the way that he leads and guides, which seems to be to us to be wrong.

[31 : 43] What do we learn? Three simple things from this story as we bring our time to a close.

First of all, we learn, don't we, that the Lord leads with a purpose. The Lord leads with a purpose.

Verse 4, they travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea to go round Edom. Why do they have to go this way? Think about it. Where did they go?

Where did they travel through at the very start of their journey 40 years ago? The Red Sea, wasn't it? They crossed the Red Sea. And now, it seems like they're going back, backwards, towards the Red Sea again, towards the desert again.

Is the Lord leading us in circles? Hasn't he made a mistake? We shouldn't be going this way. We shouldn't be in this direction. We're going backwards instead of forwards. You can hear the murmuring and the grumbling going on between them.

Why do we have to turn back? We've just come that way. We don't always, in fact, we usually don't see the purpose that God has in leading us in the way that we're going.

[32 : 49] We may feel like we're going back over old ground or having to go through the same problems again. But God has a purpose. His purpose was that they should not go through Edom.

They should go around Edom. God was leading them with a purpose. And it would be easy for them to sort of say, well, it's all Edom's fault. If they hadn't been so difficult with us, if they hadn't forbidden us to pass this land, if it hadn't been for their horribleness with us, then things could be so much better and we can begin to look at people instead of the Lord.

Well, if only the people I have to work with were easier to get on with. I wouldn't struggle with my impatience. I wouldn't struggle with being angry with them. Dear friends, we need to be careful not to confuse other people's sin with God's sovereignty.

Wherever he has led us, wherever we are going, whatever we are going through, he has not stopped leading. That doesn't mean that people's sin can be excused.

We can say, oh, that's fine. God likes it when they sin. No, of course he's not. But God is bigger than sin. God is bigger than the attitudes, the actions of wicked people.

[34 : 05] They would get to the promised land. Good would lead them there, but it would be in his time and it would be by his route and with his help. Remember this lesson, as it were, the main lesson in this whole story is this, faith.

We live by faith. Faith in Christ who is exalted and lifted up for us as the snake was for salvation, but every step of the way is a step of faith.

We look to God to supply our needs. We look to God and trust him wherever he leads. There's a purpose which we may not see now.

We may not ever see. But God leads with a purpose. purpose. And then we see as well, of course, God leads with provision.

Verse 5. They complain that we've got no food and we've got no bread and we've got no water. How many years have these people been provided for by God?

[35 : 11] How many years have they been in a wilderness, a place where there's no food and no water, and God has always provided them food and always provided them water? How many times have they been in the desert and there's been nothing there and they've cried to God and the rock has opened up and God has provided water for them?

Lots of times is the answer. Again and again. And they still haven't got it. Why has God taken them again to a waterless place?

Why doesn't he take them to a place where there's pools of water and oasis? Sometimes he does of course when we read through the story, but sometimes he doesn't and he doesn't again. Leads them to a place where there's no water again.

What's he doing? Why is he leading them there? Because they haven't learned to trust him. They haven't learned to trust him to provide for all their needs.

And dear friends, if you feel like God is taking you in a circle and you're experiencing deja vu in your life about a certain situation, then it may be that you still haven't learned the lesson from the first, the second, the third and the fourth time.

[36 : 24] Perhaps you still haven't got the hang of God's provision for you. And so when you went through a situation years ago where perhaps for some reason you were struggling in your job or whatever it may be and God brought you through it and you praised him and you thanked him and you said, thank you Lord, that's wonderful, that's great and now you're in the situation again but you've forgotten what God taught you then and you're back again saying, Lord, where are you?

Why have you left me here? God provided for them. They called it miserable food, waste, worthless food.

Now manna may not be Whitby fish and chips. It's definitely not miserable and it's definitely not worthless. God was providing for them but they wanted more.

We thought about that a bit this morning, didn't we? They wanted more but God has provided for all your needs. And thirdly, we see here as well that the Lord leads us with pardon, with purpose, with provision, with pardon.

Yes, they fell into their old sins. Yes, they fell into grumbling and complaining. Yes, they fell into that same old bad habit.

[37 : 55] But God provides them pardon, doesn't he, in this bronze serpent. He provides for them forgiveness. Or else he wouldn't have given the bronze serpent. If he wasn't forgiving them, if he wasn't gracious and patient with them, then the bronze serpent wouldn't be there.

They'd have just died of their bites because of their sins. Dear friends, you and I, yes, in our journey in the Christian life, we will still sin. And we will still fall.

And we still get tempted. And we won't be perfect in this life. And we will make a mess. But wherever the Lord leads you, there is pardon.

Wherever the Lord leads you, there's forgiveness. He never will take that away from you and I. He never will remove the way of forgiveness in Christ. Whatever situation we find ourselves, we find ourselves tested to the limit.

We find ourselves even allowing wrong and attitudes in our hearts to come up. Let them not, dear friends, conquer you. But remember that with Christ, there is forgiveness for them and grace for them.

[39 : 06] That though you fall, you need not stay down. Though you stumble, you can get up again because there is forgiveness. Where's that forgiveness?

It's in the one who's been lifted high for your salvation. How can we continue in the journey when times are difficult, when we feel impatient, when we don't think we're going the right way?

How can we keep on going? Because we need to lift our eyes. Just as they lifted their eyes up to the snake on the pole, we need to lift our eyes up to Christ.

He's been lifted up and exalted for us. He's the one who is the provider of all God's blessings to us. And so we take from Hebrews those very same words.

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

[40 : 21] For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him or look to him, set your eyes on him who endured such opposition from sinners so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

God's people lost heart and became weary. But you and I need not. For rather we set our eyes and fix our eyes on Jesus.

Let's pray together. Father in heaven we thank you for the amazing grace that you have always shown to us your people in every circumstance and situation.

Thank you for your amazing patience with us as your patience with your people of old. Thank you for the wonderful provision that you've made for forgiveness and healing and salvation through Jesus Christ and through him being lifted up upon a tree, upon a pole, upon a cross to suffer and die in our place.

We thank you oh Lord that you are leading us. just as we put our trust and faith in you so you will never let us down. We pray Lord that when we find ourselves being diverted off the course we think we should be going we ask for ourselves that when we become to feel impatient at the way that you are dealing with us and wrong attitudes and thoughts well up Lord we ask that by your grace you would cause us to overcome them and defeat them as we look to Jesus and the price he paid and the sacrifice he made for us.

[42 : 21] How can we ever doubt your love? How can we ever doubt your care? How can we ever doubt your provision when at such expense to yourself you gave your only begotten son for us sinners?

thank you for your word help us in the week ahead oh Lord to keep our eyes fixed on him and oh Lord to follow your ways we ask it in Jesus name Amen to him who is more than able to keep you from falling or stumbling and to present you before his presence in glory without fault but with great and excessive joy to the only God our saviour be glory majesty power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all of time today tomorrow and forever more Amen Amen