

“Lifted Up”  
Pastor Wally Contreras  
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“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. And 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 loathe this worthless food.” Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have 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.” (Numbers 21:4-9)

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Pastor Wally spoke of biblical typology. A “type” is much more than just a “connection” between the Old and New Testament. John Piper laid out what he believes the characteristics of a “type” to be: “The person or the object or the event that we are calling a type resembles what is coming. So, there is a resemblance with the thing that is coming — like, Christ is coming and Adam was the type. The thing that is coming is sometimes called an antitype...To be a type in the Bible, the resemblance has to be designed by God to make a point. It is not just an interesting correspondence. It is a design by God to link one part of redemptive history in the flow of history to a later part of redemptive history...[and a] type is prophetic. It predicts. God designed [a type] not just to correspond to something in the future, but to point or to predict something in the future...Analogies are simply observed similarities, but types predict. They give insight into the plan that God has for the future.” So, there must be a resemblance with the thing that is coming, be designed by God and it is prophetic. How do I react when I come across a “type” found in Scripture? Explain.

Surprise, surprise, surprise! The Israelites became impatient. John Piper once pointed out that: “Impatience is a form of unbelief. It’s what we begin to feel when we start to doubt the wisdom of God’s timing or the goodness of his guidance. It springs up in our hearts when the road to success gets muddy, or strewn with boulders, or blocked by some fallen tree...The opposite of impatience is not a glib, superficial denial of frustration. The opposite of impatience is a deepening, ripening, peaceful willingness either to wait for God where you are in the place of obedience, or to persevere at the pace he allows on the road of obedience — to wait in his place, or to go at his pace.” Is it easy or difficult for me to “wait in [His] place, or go at [His] pace” and why?

What is some of the “fruit” of impatience?

The Israelites objected to the terms of their Wilderness journey. Although God had provided food and water for them, it was not the bounty of the Promised Land...they grew impatient waiting on the “milk and honey” promised them. They wanted to see clusters of grapes that had to be transported on poles and the pomegranates and figs that the spies had brought back with them (Numbers 13:23). They told God they were dissatisfied with His faithful provisions...they wanted better “stuff” and they wanted it NOW! So, it wasn’t just impatience with God, but also it was dissatisfaction with His provision. How do I respond when, not only does it take forever for the food I ordered to arrive at the table, but once it gets there, the food is lukewarm and the steak looks more like a burnt offering?

What is some of the “fruit” of dissatisfaction?

The people of Israel hated and were disgusted with God’s provisions – they loathed His provisions and described it as “worthless”. They weren’t just impatient and dissatisfied with God’s provisions, but they were also ungrateful. A man’s son wants a bicycle for Christmas so the father works a second shift at work for several months to earn enough money to buy his son the bicycle. The father stayed up until 3:30 a.m. on Christmas morning putting the bike together and setting it under the tree. When the son sees the brand new bicycle under the tree for the very first time, the father finally hears the words he worked so hard to hear, “But I wanted a RED bike!” What words come to mind when I think of the father?

What words come to mind when I think of his son?

What is some of the “fruit” of ingratitude?

James 1:17 (ESV) reminds me: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” Do I always recognize God’s gifts in my life or do I sometimes chalk it up to my hard work or good luck? Explain.

Do I always see God’s gifts in my life as being both “good” and “perfect” – the best of the best? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Spurgeon, preaching his 1,500<sup>th</sup> published message on October 19, 1879, preached on Number 21:9. In that message, Spurgeon reminds me: “The only people who did look and derive benefit from the wonderful cure uplifted in the midst of the camp, were those who had been stung by the vipers. The common notion is that salvation is for good people, salvation is for those who fight against temptation, salvation is for the spiritually healthy: but how different is God’s word. God’s medicine is for the sick, and his healing is for the diseased. The grace of God through the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ is for men who are actually and really guilty. We do not preach a sentimental salvation from fancied guilt, but real and true pardon for actual offences. I care nothing for sham sinners: you who never did anything wrong, you who are so good in yourselves that you are all right— I leave you, for I am sent to preach Christ to those who are full of sin, and worthy of eternal wrath. The serpent of brass was a remedy for those who had been bitten.” As Pastor Wally pointed out, those bitten did not need to “worship” the bronze snake, but rather just do something that is, in itself, insignificant – just “look” at it. Spurgeon pointed out: “The brazen serpent might have been, if God had so ordered it, carried into the house where the sick man was, but it was not so. It might have been applied to him by rubbing: he might have been expected to repeat a certain form of prayer, or to have a priest present to perform a ceremony, but there was nothing of the kind; he had only to look. It was well that the cure was so simple for the danger was so frequent.” Like those on the night of the first Passover, God had them do something fairly insignificant, putting blood on the lintels of their doors. In both instances, when the people did as God had commanded, death passed over them. A simple act on our part that provides significant and powerful results by God. God has required of us a simple act for our “Who’s Your One” that has significant and powerful results for someone who is “full of sin and worthy of eternal wrath”. Have I stepped up yet to God’s calling for me to share Jesus with this person? If so, who’s next? If not, why not?

Spurgeon went on to say: “For the bites of the fiery serpents in the wilderness there was no remedy whatever, except this which God had provided, and at first sight that remedy must have seemed to be a very unlikely one. A simple look to the figure of a serpent on a pole— how unlikely to avail! How and by what means could a cure be wrought through merely looking at twisted brass? It seemed, indeed, to be almost a mockery to bid men look at the very thing which had caused their misery. Shall the bite of a serpent be cured by looking at a serpent? Shall that which brings death also bring life? But herein lay the excellency of the remedy, that it was of divine origin; for when God ordains a cure he is by that very fact bound to put potency into it. He will not devise a failure, nor prescribe a mockery. **It should always be enough for us to know that God ordains a way of blessing us, for if he ordains, it must accomplish the promised result. We need not know how it will work,** it is quite sufficient for us that God’s mighty grace is pledged to make it bring forth good to our souls.” (Emphasis added.) Do I know what God has ordained in and for my life as His “way of blessing [me]”?

Have I, in some ways, taken God’s blessing in my life for granted? Explain.