

Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen
(Old Testament)

Numbers 21:4-9

Fiery Serpents

Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke 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 our soul loathes this worthless bread." So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore 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. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

I have a soft spot for snakes. I don't play with them or keep them as pets. Nor do I believe in handling them for faith-building purposes. But I do like snakes.

During my work as a camp director, I maintained a nature center that included a few live displays. Among these were black rat snakes, common to southern Indiana. When I fed them, my staff always wanted to watch, calling themselves witnesses to the execution. I know it sounds morbid but that's the dark side of humor for overworked camp staff.

Snakes are hard to see in the wild. Sometimes they're right under foot before you know it. This frequently happened to my grandpa during his pioneer-style life in the hills of Kentucky. I've heard that while berry picking one day, my grandpa strayed into the middle of a den of rattlesnakes. He always carried a single-shot Iver Johnson 12 gauge shotgun and had to use it to shoot his way out. Okay, I know what you're thinking: that's an exaggeration. But hey, it's my story.

The Israelites did just the opposite. They didn't stray into a land full of snakes. The fiery serpents came to them. But they did stray in their sins. In addition to their disobedience, they complained – they complained a lot.

They complained about the dangers of the wilderness. But God was seeing them through the difficult days. They complained about the food. But God was feeding them. They complained about thirst. But God was giving them water. They complained about the manna. But God faithfully sent the life-giving substance. In fact, they were never without these things during their entire forty year wilderness adventure.

Many times we, too, complain when in fact God has everything under control. We complain when in fact God is blessing us beyond measure. We, too, stray in our sins. If you analyze everything we complain about, you'll find that it's all about the sin that's in our lives.

So fiery serpents have been sent to us: death and the grave. Paul said, "*The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law*" (I Corinthians 15:56). We're stung to death and death is certain, like deadly venom from fiery serpents. There's no hope...

But wait! Something has been lifted up! There! Suspended between heaven and earth, like Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness – it's the Son of Man (John 3:14)! Look! Look upon the Lamb and live! Look at Him! Look at Him! He is clothed with a garment down to His feet and around His chest is a golden band. His head and hair are white like wool, white as snow. His eyes are like a flame of fire. His feet are like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace. His voice is like the sound of many waters. His countenance is like the sun shining in its strength. And HE IS ALIVE (Revelation 1:13-17).

Once and for all He was lifted up on the cross so that all who look on Him and believe *should not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:14).

Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

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Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Numbers 21:4-9
Fiery Serpents

HOOK

1. What snake intrigues you most, and why?

2. Describe several things or products snakes are good for (yes, they are good for something).

3. Tell the story of your or someone else's encounter with a snake. Yes, you can exaggerate!

LINE

If you analyze everything we complain about, you'll find that it's all about the sin in our lives. So fiery serpents have been sent to us: death and the grave. Paul said, "*The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law*". We're stung to death and death is certain, like deadly venom from fiery serpents. There's no hope...

But wait! Something has been lifted up! There! Suspended between heaven and earth, like Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness – it's the Son of Man! Look! Look upon the Lamb and live! Look at Him! Look at Him! He is clothed with a garment down to His feet and around His chest is a golden band. His head and hair are white like wool, white as snow. His eyes are like a flame of fire. His feet are like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace. His voice is like the sound of many waters. His countenance is like the sun shining in its strength. And HE IS ALIVE

What sin do you struggle with the most? How have you included God in helping you overcome this sin? What steps will you take to make sure this sin stops influencing your Christian walk?

Tell how you came to know Jesus. If you are not a Christian, will you look upon the Lamb of God and live? Ask a Christian friend to help you know Jesus as Lord of your life. TODAY.

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words: sin lifted up looked upon the Lamb of God
