

The Test of Deliverance
Bethany Chapel
September 30, 2012

I. Introduction–

- A. John 3. Well-known, yet unknown. Tim Tebow. Football games and other sporting events–have you seen the sign John 3:16? This seems to be the key evangelistic verse of the Bible. Along with John 3:3, they are among the most preached verses in Christendom. John 3:16 offers eternal life to whoever believes in Christ. But, how many of us know John 3:14-15?
 - 1. But what does that term “believe” really mean? I think that John 3:14 and 15 have the key that unlocks this word “believe.”
 - 2. Further–if we understand “believe” then we can enjoy the deliverance that it brings. This, then, is the *test of deliverance*.
- B. Map: OT Sandwich. A healthy slab of Hezekiah between two slices of Moses
 - 1. 9/1– **test of Dependence**, as illustrated by Moses at the Burning Bush
 - 2. 9/9 – **test of Relationship**, as illustrated by Hezekiah’s early kingship
 - 3. 9/16– **test of Adversity**, as illustrated by Hezekiah’s middle kingship
 - 4. 9/23– **test of Success**, as illustrated by Hezekiah’s late kingship
 - 5. Today– **test of Deliverance**, as illustrated by Moses and the Bronze Snake.

Num 21:4-9 *They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; 5 they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" 6 Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. 7 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. 8 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." 9 So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived. NIV*

John 3:14-15 *Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. NIV*

II. Background to Numbers account

- A. 40 years in the wilderness
- B. Grumbling (optimist/pessimist story)
- C. Judgment from God (“Stress is that condition in which the mind overrules the body’s natural urge to choke the living daylight out of someone who desperately needs it.”)
 - 1. Fiery serpents (because of the poison?)
 - 2. To be bit, sentence of death. Death not immediate, but absolutely certain.
 - 3. Cry for salvation.
 - 4. Note: They were the cause of their own death, and they knew it!
- D. Deliverance
 - 1. Moses to make a snake out of bronze
 - 2. Set snake on pole
 - 3. Whoever looks on the snake is healed.

III. What does all this mean?

- A. Snake=picture of sin. Harkens back to Genesis.
- B. Venom=consequences of sin. Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death;

- C. Bronze=judgment (Altar of sacrifice)
- D. Bronze snake=sin, judged.
- E. Pole=cross? Maybe. "Lifted up"=away from the earth. This is the key. Israelites were forced to choose. Were they going to look at the snakes (problem/cause of their death) or the SNAKE (solution)?
- F. Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark-(now on Blu-ray!).
- G. Those who took their eyes off the problems, i.e. snakes (many) and fixed their eyes (hope) on the solution (bronze snake), were saved. VERY DIFFICULT! Clear cut.
- H. Two principles of note:
 - 1. Many venomous snakes, only one snake on a pole. Principle: Distractions are generally plural. In the Bible, there is really only one real problem, Sin. Therefore we need only one solution, Christ. Corollary: Sin complicates, righteousness simplifies. But how do we access the solution? John 3:14.
 - 2. The pole was just high enough that one was required to take their eyes off of the problems and turn them to the solution. Principle: The solution and the problems may not be viewed in the same glance. To believe in Christ one must abandon all pretense of saving oneself. Salvation is not Jesus plus, but Jesus alone.
- I. This is a picture of Christ.
But how?

IV. Application

- A. Non-Christians
 - 1. Perhaps you have, all your life been trying to kill the snakes.
 - a. Overt sins
 - b. Covert sins
 - c. Bad habits
 - d. Problems of life
 - 2. Main problem: You've been bitten. The venom is in your veins. The sentence of death is sure.
 - 3. Main distraction: Trying to kill the snakes. There is exactly one more than you can handle. Even if one could kill all the snakes, it's a losing cause. The real problem is not the snakes but the snakebite. Death without dealing with the snake bite is certain. Principle 1: Distractions are generally plural, but both the real problem and the real solution are singular.
- Illus. Buster Keaton. Satan is a master of keeping us "busy."
- 4. Main solution: trust the Anti-venom. The solution. Trust Christ. Act of faith.

John 3:14-15 *Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.* NIV

Heb 12:1-2 *Therefore also, as for us, having so great a cloud of those who are bearing testimony [i.e., the heroes of faith of chapter 11] surrounding us, having put off and away from ourselves once for all every encumbrance and that sin which so deftly and cleverly places itself in an entangling way around us, with patience let us be running the race lying before us, **looking off and away to Jesus**, the originator and perfecter of this aforementioned faith, who instead of the joy then present with Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

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Heb 12:1-2 *THEREFORE THEN, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [who have borne testimony to the Truth], let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance (unnecessary weight) and that sin which so readily (defly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us, and let us run with patient endurance and steady and active persistence the appointed course of the race that is set before us, 2 Looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith [giving the first incentive for our belief] and is also its Finisher [bringing it to maturity and perfection]. He, for the joy [of obtaining the prize] that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising and ignoring the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. AMP*

Nick Wallenda: Crossing the Niagara. Can he look down? Yes—the thunder of the falls is neither a distraction nor a problem. On the other hand, we would need to keep our eyes focused straight ahead. To look down would be disorienting—our brains would short out just trying to figure it all out.

Navy: It doesn't matter how deep the ocean is, as long as you remain on the surface.

B. Christians

1. Returned to your old ways. Saved by Grace, now trying to earn God's love.

Illus. Aerodynamics vs. gravity.

2. If I can just solve this one more issue, deal with this one more issue, reform this one more bad habit, then God will love me. Principle 1: Distractions are generally plural, but both the real problem and the real solution are singular. It's not our justification that's at stake—but our sanctification! It's not the courtship, but the marriage!

Illus. Husband who is so busy earning a living that he is losing his family. Wife who is so busy keeping a perfect home, that she ignores her husband. So concerned with the trappings of marriage that we forget the reason. The church member who is so wrapped up with the busyness of the church, that he or she forgets relationship with Christ.

3. Get off the treadmill. Resign from the rat race. Take your eyes off the distractions—put them on the solution. We cannot earn His love.

Illus. Daddy, how much do you make an hour?

C. This then is the test of deliverance.

1. One that we will face for the rest of our lives.
2. One that is also simplicity itself to pass: Look and Live.

V. Conclusion—5 tests of the Christian life? There are more. However—

- A. Test of Dependence: On Fire with Christ, not for Christ.
- B. Test of Relationship: Getting our house in order—as preparation for life!
- C. Test of Adversity: Trusting God when the empire strikes back
- D. Test of Success: Learning to keep our head in times of blessings
- E. Finally, the Test of Deliverance. An initial test of Justification—and, a daily test of everyday sanctification. Grace is grace. To experience deliverance, we must believe in Jesus. But, to believe in Jesus, we must stop believing in our own ways. Let's stop—trying to kill snakes. Look—away from your abilities and any other distractions. We cannot cure ourselves. Look—away unto Jesus. And LIVE! Really live!