

God's Antidote for Sin

The VISION Newsletter / November 2014

Pastor E. Keith Hassell

John 3:14–21 (NKJV) “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

One of the most primitive fears of man is the fear of snakes and in particular the fear of being bitten by a poisonous snake. In ancient times a poisonous snake bite usually meant certain death. There were no antidotes in those days. It is no wonder that Jesus compared the effects of sin to the venom of a poisonous snake. Snake venom is spiked with very powerful cytotoxin. Cytotoxin in snake venom initiates the digestion of the prey before it is swallowed. It destroys cells—especially those in the muscles. When the cells die, the tissue collapses. Some types of venom attack specific cardiac muscles causing heart failure while others have more widespread effects.

Through advancements in modern science, scientists have been able to develop an antidote or “antivenin” for many poisonous snake venoms. These antivenins have saved countless lives. Access to these antivenins can literally make the difference between life and death.

Technically speaking, snake antivenin is a biological product that typically consists of venom neutralizing antibodies derived from a host animal, such as a horse or a sheep. The host animal is hyper-immunized to one or more snake venoms, a process which creates an immunological response that produces large numbers of neutralizing antibodies against various components (toxins) of the venom. The antibodies are then collected from the host animal, and further processed into snake antivenin from the treatment of envenomation.¹

Antivenin is expensive to produce. At the writing of this article, one vial of antivenin costs about two-thousand dollars with each treatment requiring four to six vials. One student in California was bitten by a rattlesnake and was charged one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for antivenin.

Spiritually speaking, human beings are dying of the venom of sin. Through yielding to the deception of temptation, all have sinned and thus suffered the venomous bite of the Serpent of old. This Serpent is also called Satan, the Devil, and the Great Dragon.² Sin is the Serpent's

¹ Wikipedia

² Genesis 3:1; Revelation 12:9

venom that runs through man's spiritual veins.³ The final consequence of sin is death.⁴ Without an antidote for sin, the sinner is hopelessly doomed to die in their sin.

Thus enters the good news of God's salvation. In His mercy, God sent forth His Son to deliver men from the power of sin and death. His mercy, motivated by His love, secured the antidote. That antidote for sin and death is found in the message of the Cross.

In the Old Testament, the Cross of Christ is foreshadowed in one account involving Israel in the wilderness.⁵ The people of Israel spoke against God and against Moses. As a result, the people were bitten by poisonous serpents. Realizing their error they cried out to Moses for salvation from death. In His mercy God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and lift it up on a pole. Whoever had been bitten and would look upon the uplifted bronze serpent would live. The obvious reality is that this bronze serpent could not save them. It was faith in God's word that activated God's antidote for the serpent's venom.

In the New Testament Jesus became like that uplifted serpent.⁶ Jesus said, "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*"⁷ Just as the Israelites in the wilderness had to look upon the bronze serpent and believe, so sinners are to look upon the Cross of Christ and believe. Jesus' blood provided the antivenin needed to save sinners. God's antidote for sin is activated the moment the sinner looks upon Christ and His Cross and believes. Those who believe will not perish but will have everlasting life.⁸

It is likely that not all who were bitten by serpents in the wilderness looked upon the bronze serpent and believed. They likely regarded it as foolishness. In the same way not all sinners are willing to receive Christ and His work on the Cross. As a result, they are condemned to die in their sin.⁹ They are condemned to die in their sin but not by God's choice. God did not send His Son to condemn men in their sin but to rescue them from their sin.¹⁰ Rather they are already dying of the venom of sin because of their own willing disobedience. Before Christ came to save sinners, the venom of sin was already performing its deadly work. Although sinners are dying in their sin, they are condemned because they stubbornly refuse to believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God.¹¹

God desires to save sinners. It was His love... "*for God so loved*"...and His desire to save sinners... "*that the world through Him might be saved*"...that motivated God to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the Cross for sinners. This salvation is offered to "whoever believes."¹² Whoever believes in the Son of God will not be condemned.¹³

³ Romans 7:20

⁴ Romans 6:23; James 1:14-15

⁵ Numbers 21:9; John 3:14

⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁷ John 3:14-15 (NKJV)

⁸ John 3:16

⁹ John 3:18-19

¹⁰ John 3:17

¹¹ John 3:18

¹² John 3:16

¹³ John 3:18

Why do sinners choose not to believe? It is because they love the darkness of sin rather than the light. Jesus said, *“This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.”*¹⁴ Sinners do not believe because they can’t believe. They do not believe because they *choose* not to believe. The decision not to believe is called unbelief. It is unbelief, rather than sin, that condemns the sinner. God has provided an antidote for sin but not for man’s will.

Unbelief is different than doubt. Many sincere people struggle with doubt in search of evidence to believe. Biblical faith is not blind. True faith is based upon the evidence God has provided in creation, in His Word, and in His Son. Stated another way, God does not provide *proof* but He does provide *evidence*. God provides evidence enough to believe. Faith embraces the evidence God provides. Unbelief, on the other hand, is a moral and spiritual problem. It is a heart issue not a head issue. People with unbelief have made a *choice* not to believe. They see the evidence but refuse to believe. They demand proof in order to dismiss evidence. For the stubborn, not even proof would change their unbelief.

Why do sinners choose not to believe? They *choose* not believe because they do not *want* to believe. They do not want to believe because they love the darkness rather than the light. The issue of unbelief is rooted in the heart rather than in the mind.

Why do sinners love darkness rather than light? Jesus said that it is because their deeds are evil.¹⁵ Those who do evil do not want their deeds exposed or challenged by the light of God’s truth. It is the reason why criminals operate under the cover of darkness so that their deeds are not exposed.

Darkness is simply the absence of light. Spiritual darkness is the absence of God’s Light. Because their deeds are evil, sinners seek environments of darkness in order to avoid having their deeds exposed by the light of God’s truth. They choose friends that approve and support their sinful choices. However, those who do evil love the darkness and hate the light. They want to feel good about the evil they are doing. They are masters of excuse and justification. Someone once said that an excuse is simply a lie wrapped up in a reason. Those who love darkness believe they are the exception to the rule. They believe they can enjoy sin while beating the consequences. When exposed by truth, sinners attempt to hide their sin, rationalize their sin, or attack the truth that exposes their sin. Those who do so sin against the light and seal their own condemnation.

Jesus came as the Light of the world to deliver sinners from the grip of spiritual darkness. As the Light of the world Jesus came to remove the obscurity regarding God’s standard of righteousness. Light illuminates the darkness, revealing man’s sinful condition.

Light stands in stark contrast to darkness. Darkness hides sin. Light uncovers sin. Darkness cloaks the evil of sin. Light reveals the ugliness of sin. Darkness confuses the issue of sin. Light clarifies it. Darkness obscures God’s boundaries. Light defines God’s boundaries. Darkness redefines good and evil. Light defines good and evil. Darkness defends lust. Light defends love. Darkness defines disobedience as freedom. Light defines disobedience as bondage. Darkness portrays rebellion as self-assertion. Light reveals rebellion as sin against

¹⁴ John 3:19

¹⁵John 3:19

authority. The first step out of darkness is a step into the Light. Freedom comes when we let go of darkness and embrace the Light.

God provided the antidote. God gave sinners the opportunity and responsibility to receive the antidote that He provided. The Cross is God's antidote for sin and death. Have you received God's antidote for sin? Have you looked upon the Cross of Christ and believed?

© Edward Keith Hassell
Grace Fellowship
P.O. Box 260
Rusk, Texas 75785
(903) 683-6550
www.gracefellowshiprusk.com