

Living Above the Snake Line

Texts: Revelation 12:7-11; Revelation 20:1-3, 10

The American “Prince of Preachers,” Russell Conwell, puts forth a beautiful application in a challenge to live “above the snake line,” from a lecture published the year of his death in 1925: “Ancient tradition related that there was a ‘snake line’ above which no poisonous snake ever crept. If a person builded above an elevation of about twelve hundred feet above the sea, no poisonous serpents ever bit his children, or destroyed his property, or endangered his life. But if he built in the valley, he was subject to these deathly dangers. In the old times when the country was settled, every person who approached was advised to build his house above the snake line.

“Above the snake line the early settlers dwelt — those pioneer New Englanders whose emigrants formed the foundation of the middle and western states. The farms were small, the ground stony and difficult to clear for agriculture. The mountains were covered with the primitive forest. The valley soil was richer and more easily worked, but those wise and pious Pilgrim fathers endeavored to build their homes safely above the snake line.

“Above the snake line they built the red New England schoolhouses. In those schoolhouses have been inspired poets, scholars, martyrs, missionaries, statesmen, inventors, philanthropists, teachers, musicians and lovely homemakers. That is where education really began for America. There the boys and girls were instructed in what they needed to know of the elements of a practical education. The red schoolhouse of New England — glorified by poets and orators and patriots throughout the land, where the eternal friendships were formed by those who attended them — was indeed the palladium of American liberty. They built their schoolhouses above the snake line!

“The churches also were constructed on the mountaintops of that portion of the Green Mountain range where Vermont and Massachusetts unite. When the farmer leaned upon his hoe, he could look over the intervening hilltops and see the spires of many churches. They built them in the highest places of New England. They could be seen forty or fifty miles, and all, like the churches of Peru, Blandford, Worthington and Chesterfield, pointed all the people by sunlight and moonlight to God. From the celebrated ‘Mohawk trail’ the traveler’s attention is called to churches sixty miles away. The farmer who built his house and made his home above the snake line, also constructed his place of worship above the snake line. The churches are built where sin does not enter, and where it is safe for children to enter and for all people to worship. It is a wonderful illustration. The virus of temptations, the malarial of secret sins seem never to be lurking there. Above the snake line there is health!”

1. WE HAVE ALL BEEN SNAKE BIT.

Genesis 3:1-4, 14, 15

Romans 3:10-18

Numbers 21:5-7

2. CHRIST ALONE IS THE ANTIDOTE.

Numbers 21:8, 9

John 3:13-16

3. THROUGH CHRIST WE ARE POSITIONED ABOVE THE SNAKE LINE.

Ephesians 2:4-6

Once a little girl was playing in the yard when she stopped to examine the flowers in her mother's garden. She said, "Mom, I know why flowers grow." "Why?" asked the mother. "Because," explained the little girl, "they want to get out of the dirt." That desire to "get out of the dirt" dwells in the heart of every child of God.

It is the inborn nature of the child of God to desire to dwell above the sinful activity that the world relishes.

4. LET US, THEREFORE, LIVE ABOVE THE SNAKE LINE.

Colossians 3:1-3: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

In symbolism, we see when Jonah fled from God, he "went down." It was only when he meditated and prayed to the Lord, whose earthly throne was upon the Hill of Zion, that Jonah found deliverance and peace (Jonah 1:3; 2:6, 7).

It has been said the prodigal son left the highlands of Judea to live among the worldly Gentiles in the coastal cities. Then happily we read in Luke 15:17, 18, "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee."

When God had a message for His servants, He often called them up above the "snake line." Exodus 19:20: "And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up." I Kings 19:8: "And he (Elijah) arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."

Ezekiel 40:2: "In the visions of God brought He me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south."

Matthew 14:23: "And when He (Jesus) had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone."

Matthew 5:1: "And seeing the multitudes, He (Jesus) went up into a mountain: and when He was set, his disciples came unto him." Matthew 17:1: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart." II Peter 1:18: "And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount."

There is story from World War II of a pilot who took off from one of the Pacific Islands when he heard a strange scratching sound coming from between

the walls of the fuselage of his plane. He cut the engines and recognized the sound of a rat chewing. Behind those walls were the cables for the rudders, the hydraulic lines, and all the electrical wires. In a matter of time the rat could chew through one of the wires and cause the plane to crash. The pilot could not reach the rat and there was a great expanse of water forbidding him to land. The pilot had a plan. He pulled back on the stick and headed straight up into the sun. Soon the chewing stopped. When the pilot landed he found the dead body of the rat, which could not survive in the high altitude.

It is when we live in the high altitude of God's will the enemy has no power over us. Isaiah 54:17: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD."

Conclusion:

Habakkuk 3:19: "The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places."

God has provided higher ground for us. He will enable us to maintain our balance above the snake line. In a worry-free environment He causes us to walk in calm surrender and authority. Jesus said in Luke 10:19, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

I love the hymn that says, "I'm pressing on the upward way, new heights I'm gaining every day; Still praying as I'm onward bound, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

-Pastor Pope-