

The Vision for Saints and Sinners

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Bible Text: Hebrews 12:2; Isaiah 45:22

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Hebrews chapter 11 tonight in the Word of God. Please put your finger there and then turn to Isaiah 45. Isaiah 45, I want to break in at verse 20, read to the end of the chapter and then jump over to Hebrews 11. Isaiah 45 and verse 20. Let us hear God's Word.

Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.¹

Now turn, please to Hebrews chapter 11. I want to begin reading at verse 32, Hebrews 11 verse 32.

And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom

¹ Isaiah 45:20-25

the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.²

Amen. The Lord will add his own blessing to that reading from his Word to our hearts for his name's sake.

Would you bow your head with me around the throne of grace? Let's all seek the Lord's face together.

Our gracious heavenly Father, it is the hour of preaching and the hearing of the Word. We freely confess that without Christ, without his Spirit's work in us tonight and through this congregation, nothing will be done for the Lord. We therefore ask thee: Give us the Holy Spirit. We pray that thou wilt take any weariness of mind and body away from us, that thou wilt take sleepiness from our eyes. We pray that there will be a quickening tonight particularly, Lord, that quickening unto salvation among those who are lost. This is thy work, oh God. We pray that thou wilt do what thou hast promised to do and answer prayer and save the lost. We pray that thou wilt draw sinners to thyself and we pray that thou wilt draw saints closer to Christ. Come and deal with us, our God. Thou art the God who does deal with sinners. Thou dost deal with people. Deal with us in mercy tonight. We ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen and Amen.

This evening I have two texts I want to preach from. The first one is found in chapter 12 of Hebrews verse two. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."³ And in Isaiah chapter 45 the prophet said in verse 22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."⁴

The two texts of Scripture I have just read are addressed to two entirely different classes of people. But you don't have to be a great Bible exegete to observe that they have something in common something that ties them very closely together even though they were written several thousands years apart and written to two different kinds of people.

But before looking at that common bond I want to consider briefly the two different classes of people to whom Paul and Isaiah wrote those words.

² Hebrews 11:32-12:2

³ Hebrews 12:2

⁴ Isaiah 45:22

When you come to the text in Hebrews 12 you find the apostle has been addressing the people who are referred to in Scripture as saved, righteous, believers, Christians, saints. They are a people whose lives have been radically changed. Make no mistake about it. When someone is saved, when they have been born by the Spirit of God there is a radical transformation that takes place in their life. They have been saved from the condemnation of sin. They have been saved from the wrath of a sin hating God. He is no longer angry with them because of their sin and rebellion, but he has brought peace into their lives and peace has been made with him. They have been reconciled to God. They are no longer lost in their sin because they have placed their hope, their trust, their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. They are trusting in no one and in nothing else, but Jesus Christ to save them from their sin and from God's condemnation of their sin. They are depending only upon the shed blood of Christ to satisfy the justice of God.

Not only have those who are saved or saints or Christians—whatever term you want to use—not only have they been saved from the condemnation of sin and the law of God, they have been saved from the power of sin. By that I mean that Christians have been saved from the servitude of Satan. They are no longer in bondage to sin.

It was this experience of the believer that Augustus Toplady had in mind when he wrote, “Rock of Ages, cleft for me. Let me hide myself in thee. Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed be of sin the double cure. Save me from its guilt and power.”

Because Christ has saved them from the guilt and the power of sin, their future, their future is not the lake of fire, but it is the land of heaven.

Interestingly enough, the exhortation addressed to these saints, these holy ones—for that is what the word means—makes clear mention of their sins. In verse one Paul makes reference to the weights that so easily beset—the word means surrounds—the Christian.

In the imagery of a Greek runner running a race the apostle exhorts the Christians to put off those weights, those besetting sins we call them just as the Greek runner would remove his clothing in a race so that he wouldn't be hindered or slowed down in the race by anything.

And, ironically, what these believers needed, these believing ones needed was faith. Or should I say, an increase of faith that was already in their hearts.

Remember that Hebrews 12 follows that lengthy review of the men and women of faith in the Old Testament who lived and who died by faith and received eternal life. That is why chapter 12 begins with the word “wherefore.”

You see, they were believers who were being tempted to return back into Judaism. You see, it was difficult times for them. They were suffering real persecution for their faith in Christ. I mean lives were being...men and women were being persecuted. They were being put to death for their faith in Jesus Christ. Families were being ripped apart and it

was costing them something to follow Christ. And the great temptation for them was to go back into the safe and secure world of Judaism.

And Paul says, “What you need to do to keep on living the Christian life...” “Wherefore... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”⁵

As we look at the context surrounding that verse in Isaiah we find that it is clearly addressed to the lost, to the unsaved, to the unbelieving. “Look unto me, and be ye saved.”⁶ That means they were not saved. Those who whom the Lord is speaking may be religious. They may be irreligious. They may live a good moral life outwardly. They may live the life of a savage. They may be a Baptist, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, Episcopalian. They may have no denominational tag at all. They may be white, black, red, yellow skinned. They may be rich or poor. They may be learned or very ignorant. The Lord is speaking to all because he says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”⁷

The one thing that they do have in common is that they are lost in their sin. Their sin condemns them and they are without a Savior. And unless something changes in their lives, unless something is done with their sin, they are going to die in their sin and they are going to be cast into an eternal hell where they will be tormented day and night. And the one thing that above all that marks this class of people is the absence of faith in God.

As you can see from verse 20 they were trusting in their idols to save them for they... Go back to Isaiah 45 verse 20. “Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.”⁸

They were without faith as is every sinner who is still lost. He is not trusting in Jesus Christ. Hence, the Bible says in Revelation 21 verse eight that, “fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”⁹ You see, you don’t have to be a murderer. You don’t have to be just a whoremonger or a sorcerer or an idolater. All of those are vile, wicked sins. It just takes you to be an unbeliever to find yourself in the lake of fire, just an unbeliever.

So here are two different classes of people as different as night and day, the saved and the lost. And I have to believe tonight with all of my heart I am convinced we have both of those classes here tonight. I don’t know which one you are in, but you are in one or the other. Whether you are in the gallery, whether you are on the main floor below, everybody here tonight is in one or the other. You are saved or you are lost.

⁵ Hebrews 12:1

⁶ Isaiah 45:22

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Isaiah 45:20

⁹ Revelation 21:8

But to both of these people comes the same message. The one exhortation: Look. Look. Look! “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”¹⁰ “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”¹¹

From those two texts this evening I want to speak on the vision for saints and sinners, the vision for saints and sinners.

I said there are four visions I want to leave with you. This is the second one tonight. It is a vision for saints. Without the vision you will perish. I don't mean perish in hell, but without this vision your life will waste away. You will decline spiritually. It is the vision you must have. And certainly without this other vision for sinners you will perish and I mean perish forever.

There are two simple points I have from those two texts. First my word is to those who are saints in the meeting tonight. Where saints must look is my first point. Where saints must look, the vision that you must have.

The apostle has just called upon these Hebrew Christians to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily surround them in this race they have toward heaven. But the question I believe that so often plagues the child of God and, therefore, so often plagues many of you if not all of you somewhere along the line is in regarding this running of this race is how, how can I do it?

You have said perhaps many a time to yourself or perhaps to your minister, “I feel so weighed down by my troubles. I feel so entrapped by my sins, by my temptations, by my trials, that I feel like I am not making any progress in this race at all. I wonder if I am saved.”

I was speaking to a woman one day about this very thing. She had been saved for many, many years. She was in my...and I had known her all my life. She was in my opinion one of the sweetest and the godliest Christian women I had ever known. She had served on the mission field in Africa for many years. She had been a pastor's wife for over 25 years. But here she is in what we call the Autumn of her life sitting there on her couch with tears in her eyes and telling me how she was so deeply troubled by her sin, her sharp tongue, her impatience and even expressing a feeling of slight resentment toward God because of her husband's illness that required constant care.

“How can I be a Christian and act like this?” she said.

In other words, to take the thought of our text, “How can I run this race? How can I cross the finish line?”

¹⁰ Hebrews 12:2

¹¹ Isaiah 45:22

The words of our text came to my mind that afternoon, “Looking unto Jesus.” There are, actually, two distinct thoughts within this simple exhortation and they are both tied to that word looking.

First, brothers and sisters in Christ, if you are going to run this race, if you are going to live this Christian life and live it in victory not defeat, live it in joy and not depression, live it in peace of mind and in power and not in defeat and frustration, then you must look away.

The word “looking” reads literally “looking off,” look away from something, to look away from every other thing and fix your eyes upon one thing.

In order to look at something, to really look at it, you have got to look away from everything else.

You know, if you really want to look at me tonight you can’t be looking around you, can you? You can’t be looking down. You can’t be looking over there or looking over here or looking up there. If you are going to look here, you have got to look here and that means you have to look away from everybody else and everything else.

But, you know, that is so critical, so fundamental to this peace and this joy and this victory and living this Christian life.

“What does that mean, preacher? What am I supposed to look away from?”

In the first place, you must look away from self. The devil will use many tactics to keep the child of God from looking steadfastly to Jesus Christ. And one of the most oft used tricks in his bag and one that he uses with great success is to get your attention focused upon yourself. He knows that man has a natural tendency to be self centered and he exploits that tendency with great skill. But if the Christian is going to lay aside the sin and run with patience the race and run it will, not, you know, not just limp across the finish line, not just get in by the skin of your teeth so to speak, but run it gloriously and run it victoriously and run it for Christ, then he is going to have to look away from self.

What does that mean, looking away from self? You know, sometimes we throw the jargon around and we don’t really stop to think what the jargon means, look away from self.

In the first place you must look away from your feelings, your feelings. Your feelings are guaranteed to change. They will fluctuate with your circumstances, yet many Christians go all around all the time taking their spiritual pulse. They are spiritual hypochondriacs.

“What is wrong with me now?”

You know what a hypochondriac is, right? They always think there is some sickness they have attained. And they do all the research. And, “Oh, I have got that sickness. And, oh, I

have got that sickness.” They are always expecting something to find something wrong with them.

There are Christians like that regarding their spiritual life, always expecting to find something wrong, always taking the spiritual pulse. And they judge their spiritual state by how they feel, by their emotions. If they feel the Lord is close to them and they are close to the Lord, then they feel happy, they feel confident. But if they feel the Lord is far away from them and that they are far away from the Lord, out goes their joy, out goes their confidence.

So, too, with the feelings of peace or contentment or of holiness. But feelings are fickle and therefore they can't be looked to. You can't trust in your feelings. They will deceive you.

I thank God for feelings. I thank the Lord for the emotion of joy. I thank the Lord for that feeling of peace. But you see, my relationship to Christ, my salvation is not dependent on whether or not I feel that. So I would be very foolish, you know, to look to that.

You also must look away from your failures. Any believer here fail today? Did you lose your temper? Did you say something very unkind? Were you impatient with your wife? Did you have thoughts you had no business having? Did you fail last week to live the way you know you ought to live?

Well, you must look away from your failures. I do not mean for a moment that you don't confess your failure to God. I do not mean for a moment that you can just glibly pass by your failures. But I tell you one thing. If you constantly focus upon your failures you will go in day in and day out defeated. You won't have joy. You won't have happiness. Didn't the prophet say, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise”¹²? His focus was not upon his failure. It was upon Christ, upon the Lord.

You also must look away, as you look away from yourself, you have got to look away from your fruit. Now, looking at your fruit, you know, these spiritual evidences, these spiritual graces, can go one of two ways. You can look at your fruit and become very cocky, very arrogant, very proud. “Oh, look at me.” And then you begin looking down at every other believer because they are not as far advanced as you are in the spiritual life. And you talk about something that will wreck your life and wreck your walk with the Lord. Just go ahead and try to walk in arrogance and walk close to Christ. It is not going to happen.

What often is the case as we look for the spiritual evidences and we compare ourselves among ourselves. We look at some other brother whom we highly respect or some other sister whom we highly respect. And we look at ourselves, “And I don't have that grace. I am not like him. I am not like her.” And we began to wonder if we are God's child at all because we are fixing our eyes upon our graces, our fruit.

¹² Micah 7:8

Well, let me emphasize that you would be a fool to go through life and not be looking for, “Do I have the grace of God in my life?” You would be a fool to do that. But you are a fool, as well, if you constantly are looking to for this joy and this peace and this contentment and this power by looking to your own graces, looking to your own fruit. You must look away from yourself.

Secondly, you must look away from saints. Mr. Greer will appreciate this, but when he first came to Newtown Square and I first met him I used to get depressed just thinking about him. I saw his godliness. I heard him pray. I saw the holy life. I am not trying to puff him up. I am just telling you what we actually have to deal with. And I said, “Woe is me. I don’t pray like that. I don’t have that humility. I don’t have that kindness and that gentleness. I don’t have that wisdom.”

But, see, the eyes were being placed upon a man and while there is much to learn from other people, that is not to be our focus in running this race. That is not to be our focus. We will trip up every time because one thing that will happen—and I tell my congregation this all the time, “Listen, folks. Do not put your eyes upon me because I am going to disappoint you. I promise you that now. I am going to disappoint you. I am going to do something. I am going to say something, not intentionally, per se, but we are just humans and we have got faults and failures. And if your eyes are upon me and you are depending upon me, I am going to let you down every time. But that won’t happen with Christ. We have got to look away from saints if we are going to go on with God.”

Comparing ourselves among ourselves, Paul says, we are not wise.¹³

There is something else from which you must look away and that is your situation.

How many believers here tonight are judging their spiritual life by their circumstances? I don’t know what your circumstances are. I will tell you one thing. When the skies grow dark and the storm clouds gather and the thunder is roaring and rolling and rattling and you can’t see the light of day and you are in the boat and you are trying to row and to row and to row and to row and making no progress it seems that God himself is against you. You are wide open when you judge yourself by your circumstances, you are wide open to defeat and depression and discouragement and you get tripped up.

When any or all of these things become the focus of the believer’s life, he is doing nothing more and nothing less than crippling his faith. All of these things turn the eyes off of Christ who is the author and finisher of our faith. When you don’t see Christ and all that that means, your faith ebbs away. It grows weaker and weaker and weaker. It is only as you look to Christ in everything and look to Christ for everything that your faith will work and the work, running with patience the race.

You must look away. But, of course, tied all up in the thought that you must look away, you must look, too. And so we now come to the fact that the saint must look to Christ.

¹³ See 2 Corinthians 10:12

What does it mean to look unto Jesus? What does that mean? Again, I become fearful because we have heard these terms all our lives.

But, you know, just hearing a term and repeating as if it is some mantra that it is going to bring peace and power and victory in your life as a child of God. That is just not so. It doesn't work like that.

What am I to look for as I look unto Jesus? This look unto Christ, first, must be a crossward look. It must be a crossward look.

You know, Paul wrote in Galatians chapter two verse two all about living the Christian life. He says, "I am crucified with Christ."¹⁴ It reads literally, "I have been crucified with Christ nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."¹⁵

In that text right there the apostle Paul is talking about living the Christian life. And he says, "Here is how I do it. I have been crucified with Christ." His eye, his focus was upon the cross. "This life that I now live in the flesh, day in and day out, wherever I am and whatever I am doing, my eyes are upon Christ crucified."

And I will tell you something, brothers and sisters, you will go astray and you will trip up and you won't run this race with patience when something else begins to ill your vision other than the cross.

It was an old Puritan—I can't remember who—who said that the believer needs to look upon the cross and gaze upon the cross until everything that is on the cross is in his heart and everything in his heart is on the cross. That is a wonderful thought. And that is certainly part and parcel to what it is to look that crossward look to Jesus Christ.

Your sin, your sin that is troubling you, your fight and your struggles and sometimes your failures...where is the answer? It is a crossward look. It is Christ crucified. That is how you live the Christian life.

It must be a contemplative look, contemplative. It is about gaining knowledge. That requires contemplation. It is not a quick glance, you know, at Christ. And by that I mean, you know, you come to church on Sunday and you hear about Christ and really then little thought given to that. It has got to be a contemplative look. Peter exhorted the believers to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.¹⁶ Contemplation is all tied up with getting knowledge, knowledge of Christ himself, of who he is and what he is. It is going to require contemplation on your part and mine. But, you know, we get so busy, don't we? We don't have time to contemplate any more, do we? We don't have time to meditate anymore, just to sit down in a room with no distractions, shutting the

¹⁴ Galatians 2:20

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See 2 Peter 3:18

television off, shutting the computer down, getting the newspaper out, no distractions, just sit down with an open Bible and contemplate Jesus Christ that you might know him, because you are not going to know him if you don't contemplate him.

It must be a continual look. That word "looking" is a present participle. And that means it is continual looking. Wherever you are keep on looking.

You know what happened. The old story you oft by heart when Peter stopped looking to Christ while he was walking on water. He began to sink. And that is what you do and that is what I do.

You recall Mary Magdalene at the tomb. Her eyes were just filled with tears and sorrow. She was broken hearted. Supposing him to be the gardener, she was so overwhelmed with her sorrow, her eyes so filled with tears, she did not recognize it was Christ until he spoke to her the word, "Mary," and she turned about and saw him and her heart was filled and the gloom and the doom departed because she saw Christ.

Remember those disciples hiding behind closed doors for fear of the Jews after the crucifixion. They had already heard men come to them and tell them, "He is risen." The women had come back. The two men on the Emmaus Road had come back. And there they are scared to death, depressed and discouraged.

And then it says, "Then Jesus came and stood in the midst. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."¹⁷ He showed them his hands and his feet. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

That is continually looking for Christ, looking to Christ in our ups and downs, looking to Christ on the mountains and when we are in the valleys, looking continually to him in our strength and in our weakness.

Oh, that the Lord will come this week and show us Christ in ways we have never seen him.

It must be a complete look, a complete look. By that I mean never be satisfied with a partial glimpse of Christ. Never be satisfied with a partial knowledge of Christ of who he is and what he has done for his people as the Mediator of the covenant, complete.

He is prophet. You know that.

As the author and finisher of your faith Christ, as prophet, reveals the Word of God to your soul. He comes and he speaks that Word to your own life. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."¹⁸ And Christ teaches you and expounds the Scriptures to you by his Spirit.

¹⁷ See John 20:19-20

¹⁸ Romans 10:17

You know, I know one thing. It will be completely pointless for me tonight if Jesus Christ is not come and, as the prophet, teach you the Word of God. You will hear a sermon and all I will do is preach a sermon and God save us from simply hearing the hearing of sermons and the preaching of sermons.

Every time we meet we need a message from God. Every time we meet that preacher needs a message from God and preach that message in the power of the Spirit of God. And you need to hear a message from God or you don't change. You become sermon hearers and sermon tasters and sermon critiquers. You can do that all day long. But that is not running the race.

A complete look means that you look at Christ as the priest. He interposes his all prevailing blood. He intercedes at the Father's right hand for your continually. When you can't pray, you feel you can't pray, he prays, he pleads, he intercedes. When you fail he is your advocate. He is the one that stands up on our behalf.

Though the restless foe accuses, sins recounting like a flood, every charge our God refuses. Christ has answered with his blood. That Christ you must know. That Christ you must look to continually.

A complete look involves looking at Christ as king. As king, therefore, he is on a throne. As king he is controlling. As king he is sovereign. Every little detail of your life, I want you to think about it, every little detail, every little situation. In the home, in the family, in the children, in the marriage, in the church and at work, day in and day out every detail, the king is controlling. Nothing is by chance. It is not happenstance. He is ruling.

The king is one who conquers promising, as king, to subdue all of our sin. As king he is coming.

Just a look. A look, looking to Christ. You can look to 10 steps to this and 10 steps to that. You can look to all kinds of things brothers and sisters, but it is not going to happen unless there is this continual looking off to Jesus, looking off to him.

Let's turn to Isaiah 45. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."¹⁹

As I have already mentioned the Lord is speaking through his prophet Isaiah to a people who are trusting in their graven images to save them. They pray to a god that could not save. They were looking to a piece of wood or stone or metal to deliver them from their trouble and from God's judgment. But they were looking in the wrong place. They were looking at the wrong thing. If the focus of their heart continued on as it was all was lost.

Now you might wonder what the idolatrous practices of an ancient people have to do with sinners in present day society. Well, everything, to be honest.

¹⁹ Isaiah 45:22

The Roman Catholic is still bowing down before the graven images of Mary and a host of other saints. And they pray to a God that cannot save them although they are taught just the opposite. But a man doesn't have to be a Romanist to be guilty of the sin of idolatry. If he is looking to anything else to save him, he has set his hope upon that thing or that person before God. And God says, "I am the only one who can save you."

Idolatry, that looking to and trusting in anything else for salvation is alive and well. But if a sinner is ever going to be saved, if you, sinner friend, are ever going to be saved your eyes must have a different object of focus. You must look at the right place in order to be saved.

Now the Lord's command in our text in verse 22 involves two elements just as it did in Hebrews chapter 12 verse two. When the Lord says, "Look unto me and be saved,"²⁰ he is saying that the sinner must look away and the sinner must look to.

You who are lost, you who tonight still are headed to hell, you who are still on the broad road, who know nothing of the experience of the new birth, who nothing of the forgiveness of sins, who knows nothing of what it is to have that guilt removed and the peace of Christ filling your heart, you must look away.

In the first place you must look away from the world because that is where your eyes are right now. I know that because I was there once. Your eyes are still fixed on the world. If you are here without God's salvation tonight you must realize that until you see this world as your enemy you will never look to God to be saved.

The apostle John makes it very clear in his first epistle when he writes, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."²¹ So you must look away from the world.

What does that mean?

Well, in the first place you must look away from the world's wisdom. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians one that the world by wisdom knew not God and that God has made foolish the wisdom of this world.²²

You must look away from this world. You know the world thinks it is so wise. They have got a handle upon life, that they know what it is all about. But the world is foolish as foolish can be. And you have got to look away from this world and all of its trinkets and all of its wisdom. You must look away from the world's pleasures.

I have to confess. There is pleasure in sin. The Bible says there is. But it is only for a season. It is only for a season my friend. You will indulge your flesh and it will be pleasurable, but it is not lasting. You can live your life for all the pursuit and the pleasures of this world, but there is going to come a payday.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ 1 John 2:15

²² See 1 Corinthians 1:21, 20

Many...most people have heard of Shakespeare. But many have not heard of Christopher Marlowe. He was a contemporary of Shakespeare who wrote a play called *Doctor Faustus*. Faustus was a man who wanted magical powers. And he entered into a pact with the devil and the devil gave him all those magical powers to perform all kinds of...and the play develops with him, Faustus, performing all that. But, you see, in the contract that he had with the devil, "It is fine, Faustus, I will give you these powers of magic, but there is going to come a day, a specific hour when you have to give me your soul."

At the end of the play the clock in the background begins to chime and it chimes out 11 hours. Faustus has all of his magic books scattered around the room and he is all alone. As he hears the chimes in the background he says to himself, "Ah, Faustus, now thou hast but one bare hour to live and then thou must be damned perpetually."

And he begins to plead with the moon to stand still, with the heavens to stand still just to give him another day. But at the end Mephistopheles comes from Hades and as Faustus is dragged down to hell he says, "I'll burn my books." But it is too late.

He enjoyed the pleasures that he thought was pleasure for a season, but it came to an end. And I want to warn you, my sinner friend. You don't know when the midnight hour comes. You don't know when the clock is going to strike. This could be your last hour tonight. It very well could be. You tell me it is not? You have got all the time in the world?

You must look away from the world's pleasures. I know they are tempting. But they will damn you and damn you forever.

You also need to look away from the world's friendship. Friendship of the world is enmity with James writes. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."²³

The world stands in direct opposition to the Lord. It promotes sin. It promotes the flesh. It promotes Satan. It is his kingdom. Therefore the man of the world is not a man of God. And his friendship will not lead you to Christ.

Now I wonder if I am just talking to some young men or some young women tonight and you have got friends who are lost, too, just like you. They are not here in church here tonight. As a matter of fact, I would say if they knew you were in church tonight and they met you they would sort of laugh at you.

"Oh, Sunday school boy, huh? Sunday school girl, huh? Oh, you went to church on Sunday, huh?"

²³ James 4:4

And you don't tell them that you are actually in the church on Sunday. You are afraid that they will reject you. You are afraid you will have to endure their scorn. And you don't want to be rejected by your friends.

I will tell you one thing, my friend. If you end up in hell you will wish you would have been rejected by your friends because you took Christ as your own. I promise you that one.

How many a person has there been who has refused to look to Christ for salvation because of what his friends were saying?

“How am I going to face them at work and I will have to tell them I am a Christian?”

You must look away from the world's friendship.

So you must look away from the world. And something else you must look away from, you must look away from your works.

We have a tract we pass out in the US and Canada called “The Wrong Answer at Heaven's Gate. The Wrong Answer at Heaven's Gate.” I have asked the question many a time that occurs in the tract when I have gone knocking on doors and spoken to people about their spiritual state. And I make it clear that this is not how it happens, but if it did, if you were to die right now and you stood before God and he said to you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” What would you say to him?

The answer I usually get is classic. “I've lived a pretty good life. I try to do right. I pray every day. I am a member of such and such a church.”

That is usually the answer that is gotten.

I go to explain that in the eyes of God all of your attempts at good living, all of your good works are as filthy rags in the eyes of God.

There was a man I was talking to one time who used to print a paper we put out when I was in Orlando. He was the printer and he had cancer. He was wonderfully cured of it. It was a very devastating cancer, but he was cured of it. But it gave me an opportunity to talk to him about the Lord and his soul. And I asked that man to answer the question, “Why Christ had to die at all if entrance into heaven could be attained by good living?” What was the point of his death if you could actually get into heaven by doing good works?

And he said to me, “You know, I never thought about that.”

Isn't it interesting what the devil blinds the mind to? Why did Jesus Christ have to come, have to die on the cross, have to die on Calvary in order to save men if they could save themselves?

Paul said to Titus that it was not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.²⁴

If you believe that God will one day bring you to heaven because of your good works, because of your clean living, your acts of kindness, your church attendance, your prayers, your tears, then you are still in your sins tonight and you are still lost. You are as lost as lost can be without Christ and without salvation.

How did the hymn writer put it? Out of Christ without a Savior. Oh, can it be, can it be? Like a ship without a rudder on a wild and stormy sea. Out of Christ without a Savior, no help, no refuge nigh. How can you, my friend, my brother, dare to live or dare to die?

The man whom God saves is the man who looks away from his works and looks to the one work that Christ accomplished upon Calvary. He saves the man who looks away from the law as a means of gaining righteousness in his eyes, but who looks to the Lamb of God. You must look away from your works, from all your attempts at saving yourself. I promise you if you don't you will die and go to hell and I will see you on Judgment Day at the left hand of Jesus Christ, not his right.

Mark it down. It will happen.

Not only must you look away, you must look to Christ. "Look unto me and be saved."

Who is honoring those words? Well, verse 23 is cited in Romans 14:11 by Paul. Verse 10 of Romans 14 Paul had stated that we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ when every knee will bow and every tongue confess. And what will they confess?

Philippians 2:10 say:

At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.²⁵

I say all of that to say this. Christ is the one who has uttered those words. "Look unto me and be ye saved." Christ is saying this.

"But does that mean, preacher...I am here tonight and I am lost. What you said is true of me. I have been living my life for this world for its pleasures. But I know I am here tonight and I am lost. But I don't want to go out lost. I want to go out saved. I want to be saved."

I am telling you, if you want to be saved you can be saved tonight by looking to Jesus Christ. What does that mean?

²⁴ See Titus 3:5

²⁵ Philippians 2:10-11

Number one, look to his perfection. You are very imperfect, you know. You are full of sin, you know. You are polluted, you are defiled, you know. All of your righteousnesses are as filthy rags,²⁶ you know. You need a perfection. You need a perfect righteousness that God will accept. And you can't do it yourself. Jesus Christ alone offers to you a robe of righteousness. Why will you die in your sin and in your filth when Jesus Christ the Savior says, "Here is my robe. I lived a perfect life. I kept all the law of God and that will cover all of your sin and all of your unrighteousness and you will be admitted into heaven based upon my perfection"?

You must look to his perfection.

You must look to Christ's power. It was a joy to me this week. I was a bit [?] as you would say here. But I went to see Tommy Lind. I have heard people as I have ever been coming to Ballymena pray for Tommy Lind. And he was sitting in the bed on the side with the nasal mask on taking oxygen and telling me his testimony. I knew that Tommy Lind had come to these services for years and years and years, have sat under the preaching of the Word of God.

And in that time when Mr. Greer went to speak to him there was the question "Is it too late?" that came to his mind. "Am I beyond the redemption point?"

Oh, what a question, what a question. You must look to the power of Jesus Christ who is able to save to the uttermost all who that come unto God through Christ. He is powerful, omnipotent and he can save you tonight right where you are. I don't care how deep, dark dyed yours in is. I don't care how long you have rebelled against God. It doesn't matter to me what sins you have committed, how black they are. You could be an adulterer. You could be a murderer tonight. You could be a liar and a deceiver, but I will tell you one thing. Christ has the power to save you.

Or you could be the most self righteous, sanctimonious, church going hypocrite this town has ever seen. And you are not too hard for the Lord.

You must look to Christ's power.

Young person, child, adult, he has the power to save you tonight, right here in this place.

You must look to Christ's promise. What do I mean Christ's promise? Christ said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."²⁷

Christ said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."²⁸ Him that cometh.

²⁶ See Isaiah 64:6

²⁷ Matthew 11:28

²⁸ John 6:37

Was it Bunyan who said when he asked the question, “What him can come? Any him in the world,” he said.

The promise is if you come he will save you. You must come. You must come. Sitting on in your rebellion. Sitting on in your sin won’t save you. You must come to Christ. I don’t say you have got to come down an aisle. But you have got to come to him. Just as you are come to him. Have you done that?

I don’t ask if you have joined a church. I don’t ask if you are a Free Presbyterian. There will be Free Presbyterians in hell. You do know that, don’t you? That doesn’t save you. Your parents’ faith can’t save. You, personally, must come to Christ and say, “Lord Jesus, here I am in all my rags and all my sin. Will you save me?”

And he promised, “I’ll save you.”

Just come.

Finally, you must look to Christ’s passion, I mean his suffering. Will you come with me tonight for a moment, will you come with me please and let’s climb a hill crag called Calvary. As we approach the brow of the hill we see off in the distance the soldiers have the cross, whatever shape it was, laid down on the ground. And they stretch the Lord Jesus upon that cross. You hear the clang of the hammers as they drive those large pins through his wrists and through his ankles. But above the clang of the hammer you hear the groans of the Son of God as he would have cried out in pain. Don’t forget, he was man.

They were just doing their job. They carelessly picked up the cross and dropped it into its socket, just rattling his body. There you watch the Lord Jesus Christ suffer. There you hear the one who created all the water in the world say, “I thirst.”²⁹ I am thirsty.

Darkness comes over the land, impenetrable darkness. God hides his face from his Son. And he says, in essence, “I can’t look upon him. He is my Son, but I can’t look upon him. He has been made sin. I can only pour out my wrath. I cut myself off. I forsake him.”

And our Savior, do you hear him crying out through the darkness that you can’t see, but you hear the voice, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”³⁰

He cries, “Finished.”³¹ “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”³²

My words are feeble, you know, to describe the death of Christ on Calvary. I wish I could somehow make you who are lost see the man of sorrows as those here who are

²⁹ John 19:28

³⁰ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34

³¹ John 19:30

³² Luke 23:46

saved have seen him. His face was bloodied and bruised and swollen because they had beaten him without mercy. They had plucked out his beard. He must have been some sight to behold, you know. Those pictures you see painted, forget about them. "His visage was marred more than any man."³³

But I will tell you tonight it is in seeing Christ crucified, looking to him, that is your only hope of salvation. You are lost. And you know you are lost. You know it as sure as you are sitting there you are lost.

Why, why will you die? Why will you choose death? Why will you go out tonight and go on home and try to forget about everything you heard? Why will you do that when the Son of God says, "Come and be saved"?

That's it. Look. Look.

Spurgeon was just a teenager when he made his way to that primitive church in England because of the snow storm. The deacon...the pastor couldn't make it. The deacon was up there and from what Spurgeon wrote he wasn't much of a preacher. That was his text. "Look unto me and be ye saved."

And then he just shouted out. "Look, look, look. Young man, look."

And the place was pretty empty and Spurgeon said, "He was talking to me." He had been wanting so much to be saved and he just didn't know how to go about it. And that morning he said, "I looked and I could have looked my eyes away."

It is just the look, my friend, just a look to Christ, to come to him and go out saved.

God write his Word upon our hearts for his name's sake.

Mr. Greer.

³³ Isaiah 52:14