

LOOK AND LIVE

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Isaiah 45:22.

The ages have definitely taught all of us that it is the very height of folly for men to lose themselves in earthly trifles as the source of true happiness. Yet, there are too many, even in this enlightened age, who spend their days in fruitless chasing after this world's blandishments. One expects it from the flesh, another from business and wealth, another from honor and fame, another from play-pretties and play-parties, another from drink, another from gambling, another from lust. There are some, higher of mind, loftier of heart, who seek satisfaction in the arts, in music, in the theater, in literature, in paintings. But God proclaims the eternal folly of such a course.

I. A Proclamation of Guilt.

The subjects of this mighty invitation are the miserable, the wretched, those who need salvation. Need I go into detail? That all men are in a state to render salvation necessary is stated by the Scriptures. God has promulgated this law. It requires obedience. The transgressor of it is exposed to everlasting punishment. Man has ruined himself by his sins. They have all stepped aside.

This state of sinful wretchedness is borne out by observation. Look at the character and conduct of people about you, wherever you will, under whatever circumstances you choose. You will find only one general characteristic. There are all sorts of stations, all degrees of rank, of wealth, of education; but all are immersed in sinful guilt, all are universally exposed to danger. There are various shades of moral excellence or moral delinquency; but in every one there is a hatred toward God. To the rendering to God the universal, supreme homage of the heart, there is nothing but universal failure.

Such a condition of the race of men is deplorable and dangerous. There is danger in insolvency, in war, in epidemics, in civil imprisonment, in condemnation, in executed death. There is no peril, no curse, no condemnation to be compared with the fatal state of the sinner, upon whom the wrath of God will abide forever, unless he is saved by grace.

God's Word constantly addresses men as sinners. It teaches us that, in consequence of sin, man is excluded from God's gracious presence, and estranged from Him in his affections. The curse of the violation of God's law hangs over him, and the pervading power of sin subjects his spirit to the most abject slavery. As a violator of God's law, he is the object of His wrath.

II. A Provision of Grace. "Look unto me."

The God of mercy has provided a way of escape through the atoning sacrifice of His only begotten Son. Truly He is the God of compassion. How can one improve upon John 3:16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It seems that this one verse ought to induce an entire world to eschew evil and embrace good. Salvation in all its parts, all its effects, all its everlasting duration, must be ascribed to the illimitable grace of God.

God has designed our salvation. Christ has secured it. It is delivered to us by the Holy Spirit. In the Councils of the Father it was determined that Jesus should redeem sinners. The types of the Old Testament prefigured it. The voices of prophets proclaimed its approach. The earth anxiously waited for it. In the fulness of time Jesus came. As He lived here His divine appointment was abundantly proved by His person, His words, and His mighty works.

He is called the Saviour. He exhibited Himself as the Saviour. He did it by the

breaking of bread and the outpouring of wine. He did it in the blood sweat of Gethsemane's dark night. He did it in the mockery of the judgment hall, as He endured the despising, cursing, etc. He did it on cruel Calvary, where the atonement was consummated, where the Cross was planted, where His body was nailed, where the awful darkness of God's wrath and man's sin overspread the earth at noonday. The sacrifice of Christ was propitiatory, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:5-6. In this atonement we find refuge. Turn your back upon it and you are exposed to all the wrath of the divine Lawgiver. Cling to this Rock. Press yourself by faith to it. Reject it not lest you be plunged into the gulf of endless woe.

It is of unspeakable importance to have clear and scriptural ideas about the way of salvation. All other subjects, when compared with salvation, sink into utter insignificance. Many hearers of the gospel have a very poor conception of what salvation means. If you were to ask what they understand by the term, the answer from most of them would be that salvation is deliverance from the penalty of sin, and wrath of God and the miseries of hell. But, is this all that salvation implies? It is a blessed truth that the sinner who believes in Christ is rescued from the curse of a broken law, the wrath of an offended God, and the woes that await the impenitent in the regions of despair; but the half has not yet been told; much more than all of this is comprehended in the salvation which has been provided for sinners. It includes deliverance from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and eventually from the presence of sin.

Here is a suffering, dying, risen, ascended Lord, Who ever lives to make intercession for you. God bids you to look to Him and live. To look to Him means a believing application to and acceptance of Christ for your salvation. You are in fearful danger. You have been bitten by the serpent of sin. You may try to better your condition but you cannot. You may try to improve your heart, but that is in vain. You need a knowledge of Christ as your Saviour. You need not doubt the efficacy of this Christ-cure. God has appointed it. See what it has done for others. Rich, free mercy of God is flowing to you also.

On Sunday morning, January 6, 1856, at New Park Street Chapel, in London, Charles H. Spurgeon preached on the words of this text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Standing before his great audience, he said: "Six years ago today, as near as possible at this very hour of the day, I was 'in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity,' but had yet, by divine grace, been led to feel the bitterness of that bondage, and to cry out by reason of the soreness of its slavery." He then proceeded to tell his audience that on that particular morning he did not go with his father to the usual place of worship, but as the morning was very snowy, he heeded the advice of his mother, and went to the chapel of the Primitive Methodists, located on Artillery Street. He had heard that these people sang so loudly as to make one's head ache. Here was his opportunity to test this out for himself; so making his way to the chapel, he took a seat that morning in the little balcony. The regular pastor was absent, but finally a tall and slender lay preacher entered the pulpit, read from the scriptures, and announced as his text the words which I have taken as the basis of my message to you. Placing his eyes upon Spurgeon, he said in tones of thunder, "Young man, you are in trouble; you will never get out of it, unless you look to Christ!" He then lifted up his hands and cried out, "Look! Look!" At once Spurgeon looked to Jesus as his personal Saviour, to the salvation of his soul. His heart leaped with joy. He had been waiting to do many things, with the hope that by so doing he might experience divine forgiveness and spiritual joy; but the moment he looked to Jesus, he found life in the look. That snowy day was the most joyous day he had ever known; it was also a day of unspeakable blessing to the whole world. That day the greatest preacher since the days of the Apostle Paul experienced the joy of the new life, and entered upon his unique career as the foremost preacher of the centuries.

This command, "Look unto Me," rests on a firm foundation. It carries us back to what is said of God in the preceding verse, "A just God and Saviour." This command arrests our attention and demands our prompt obedience. It shows the perfect simplicity of salvation--"Look unto Me." We are to look to Christ with the eye of faith. This is a look that is humble, earnest, hopeful, and trustful.

When He says, "Look unto Me," He is getting down to the simplest thing. He does not tell us to analyze our thinking, to examine our hearts, to delve into the mysteries of nature, or to study the history of the world. We can praise God that looking is not beyond the ability of a solitary soul. One can look when he cannot do anything else. As sin entered the world, salvation comes to a soul through a look. To look is to admit the reality of God. Why look if there is not someone to look to? It is also the acknowledgement of the ability of the ONE to Whom we look. It is also the expression of faith.

III. A Promise of Glory.

"And be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." This supreme blessing centers in the words, "And be ye saved." To many people salvation is meaningless. The reason for this is a lack of the consciousness of sin and the terrible penalty it carries. The Bible teaches a salvation from and a salvation to something. The believer in Christ is delivered from Satan, sin and self and saved from a life of uselessness. And he is saved to peace of mind, to fruitfulness, and to heaven itself. What a blessed result! It is bliss to the soul forever.

To be saved is to be free from all the debasement, the defilement, and the danger of your natural state. To be saved is to be freed from the guilt and power of sin, and to be restored to the favor of God. To be saved is to have everlasting life, to be conducted to and endowed with the honors of immortality, to be raised up to the enjoyment of celestial pleasures in the presence of the Lord forever and forever. The New Testament calls this "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Oh, the bliss of that glorious thought, the believer shall be perfectly pure, perfectly intelligent, and perfectly happy. We shall be exalted to the highest honors. We shall see God. We shall enjoy blessed companionships with the saints in glory.

This proclamation of guilt, this provision of grace, and this promise of glory are very extensive. The ends of the earth are invited to look and to be saved. Across the sky of God's eternal blessings for mankind He has written in fiery flames of love the word "Whosoever." This is all-embracing and takes in a lost and dying world. God has commanded us to preach the Gospel to every creature.

Upon the authority of the King of Glory, I lift up Immanuel's standard before your very eyes. I bid you look by faith to the bloody emblem of God's redeeming purpose--the cross. I bid you believe. If you look and trust; if you look and believe; if you look and receive; if you look and enlist; if you look and live, I promise you upon the authority of the Bible that you shall be saved eternally.

Hear me! Jesus Christ is the only Saviour. "For I am God, and there is none else." None else has ever been appointed. None else ever shall be provided. He is the only way to escape hell. He is the only gateway to heaven. Any other attempt at salvation will fail. Conviction is not enough. Conduct is not enough. Christ alone will suffice. Let your eyes be fixed upon Him as your Saviour.

For this you should not wait. God is pressing this salvation upon you. God is offering the blood of His Son in exchange for your sins. Look to Jesus Christ, crucified for your sins, now and live.