

Life in a Look

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Isaiah 45:20-22

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We are turning in our Bibles this morning to the book of Isaiah. I am going to be speaking to you from Isaiah chapter 45 and I will read a portion of three verses, 20, 21 and 22. Now, here is the title of the message: There is life in a look. There is life in a look.

In Isaiah 45:20, now this is a part of what the prophet writes here. He says, "They have no knowledge," in other words they are ignorant. People are ignorant who worship false gods, who make graven images, who pray to a god who cannot save. They are without knowledge, they are ignorant who pray to a god or call upon a god who does not have the power to save or to hear.

And then verse 21 says, "There is no God beside me. I am a just God and a Savior." Now get that. "I am a just God and a Savior. There is none beside me." There is none other God but one. The Lord our God is one Lord, one Lord. And he said, "I am a just God and I am a Savior."

Now, verse 22. Here is the verse I want you to listen carefully to, most carefully. "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else. Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was, perhaps, the greatest preacher since the apostle Paul. He preached the gospel to literally thousands and thousands of people. He pastored one of the largest churches in Europe and his sermons are still read by nearly every preacher and preachers who do not read his sermons at least know who Charles Haddon Spurgeon was. But this man was...he was raised in a Christian home. His grandfather was a Presbyterian preacher. And Spurgeon read the Bible. He read all of the old writers. His grandmother taught him the hymns of the Church. He was a brilliant boy and he used to memorize the hymns. His grandmother would give him a penny to memorize a hymn and he was memorizing so many of them that finally she gave him a penny for every five hymns he memorized. But he was raised in a Christian home. His grandfather was a prominent Presbyterian preacher. He read the old classics and the old puritans. He read the Bible. He studied.

But he said this. He said, "I still had no saving interest in Christ. I still did not know

God. Although I knew the Bible and knew the hymns and I knew the old writers, still I didn't know God." He said, "I was in spiritual darkness. With all my religious background I was yet in spiritual darkness and had no hope."

Well, but he always went to church. And one Sunday morning he was walking to church and we had...they had a snow, a heavy snowstorm fell and he saw that he was not going to be able to make it to his church on time so he stopped in to this little primitive Methodist chapel and sat down back in the back of the building, just a small building. It is there now in London. It has a plaque where Spurgeon was sitting when God revealed salvation to his heart.

He sat down back toward the back, not many people were there that cold, snowy morning. In fact, the pastor wasn't even there. And one of the men of the church got up in the pulpit to read the Scripture and to comment on the Word of God. I don't even know the man's name. I guess most people don't know his name. But he turned in the Bible to Isaiah 45. Here sat Spurgeon, raised in a Christian home. His parents were believers, a student of the Scriptures, a student of the classics, the old writers, the hymns, but a troubled young man, a young man without a saving interest in Christ, a young man without a knowledge of God, a young man in spiritual ignorance and darkness.

And he sat there and this man got up in the pulpit and read Isaiah 45:20 through 22. And he finally said, "Look unto me. Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else."

And then Spurgeon said that he seemed to address himself directly to me and he said, "Young man, you look miserable. Why don't you look to Christ? If you can, by the grace of God, look to Christ and to Christ alone, if you can lay aside all of your traditions and heritage and look to Christ and Christ alone and quit your striving and your works and your reasoning and just look to Christ, you will find peace."

And Spurgeon said it was like God had opened the curtain. And for the first time he saw that salvation was not all of the complicated things that men had made it, that salvation was in a person in the Lord Jesus Christ, in his redemptive work, in his person and in his work. And he said, these are his words, "I was able in that hour to look to the Redeemer and the peace of God filled my soul, casting aside all doubts, casting aside all human arguments, casting aside all human wisdom, I was enabled by the Spirit of God to look to Christ and he made me whole."

That is my message to you today. And that is what the Lord is saying in this Scripture. Look unto me. Look unto me. Not look to your ancestry. Not look to your tradition. Not look to your custom. Not look to your preacher. Not look to the law. Not look to your church membership, but look unto me and be ye saved.

The Lord declares, "I am God. I am a just God and a I am a Savior and there is none else."

There is life, eternal life for a sincere saving look to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scripture says, "He that seeth the Son..." And this is not a physical sight of Christ. Many people saw him when he walked the earth who never came to know him. Many people looked upon him with physical eyes who never looked upon him with eyes of faith. And so what Isaiah was commanding the people to do and what this preacher commanded Spurgeon to do and what I am commanding you to do is to look to Christ by faith with eyes of the heart and eyes of the soul. He that seeth the Son in his redemptive character, in his redemptive glory, in his redemptive work and believeth on him hath eternal life.

That is what John is saying in John chapter three, verse 14. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness..." As the people were dying Israel had been bitten by the fiery serpents and they were dying. And as Moses lifted up that serpent of brass on a pole and commanded the people, the dying people, to look and live, that is what the Lord is saying here. "Even so must the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ, be lifted up that whosoever looks to him, whosoever seeth the Son and believeth on him hath everlasting life."

Now, I know that the religious world has all sorts of instructions for sinners to perform in order to be saved. They have all sorts of plans of salvation. They have all sorts of recipes for salvation, for redemption. But the Lord God simply says, "Look. Look to Christ."

It is not do this or do that. It is not provide this or provide that. God doesn't require you to provide a righteousness. He says, "Receive one." He doesn't require you to do the work. He says, "Christ has done the work. Look to him."

The hymn writer put it this way. "Come ye sinners poor and needy, weak and wounded, sick and sore. Jesus ready stands to save you, full of pity, love and power. Let not conscience make you linger nor of fitness fondly dream. All the fitness that he requireth is to feel your need of him."

There is life for a look. God says, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, Jew, Gentile, male, female, bond or free. Look to me all the ends of the earth for I am God. Look to me. I am able to save. I am a just God and a Savior. Look to me and be saved."

So I say to the Matthews sitting out there at your desk, that is where the Lord four Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom collecting taxes. And I say to the Matthews sitting out there at your desk, going over your investments and going over your collection and going over your business. I say to you, "Look to Christ, Look to Christ."

I say to the Simons mending your nets and cleaning your fish and trying to make a living in this world, whatever manual labor you may be performing I say to you, as Christ said to James and John and Simon Peter, "Look to Christ. Look to Christ."

I say to the Samaritan women, married, divorced, married again, divorced and remarried more than once, confused in life and confused in purpose and confused in sin, "Look to Christ."

I say to the thieves. There may be those listening to my voice this morning who are in prison. It is hard to find a guilty man, but I will tell you when God finds a guilty man he provides grace. And I say if you are guilty man I say to the thieves, the outcasts whom the outcasts have cast out, I say to you, "Look to Christ. Look to Christ. If you have a need look to Christ."

I say to the moralist trying to find acceptance with God by your works and by your labors and by your deeds, I say to you what Christ said to the rich young ruler, "Look to Christ."

I say to the religionist like Saul of Tarsus wrapped in your theology and your tradition and all of your ritualism and legalism, I say to you what I say to the Samaritan woman, what I say to the thief, I say, "Look to Christ. You need Christ just as much as anybody else, perhaps more."

I say to the young people like John Mark, raised in a Christian home, raised in the tradition of religion, raised in wealth and comfort but with no peace and no rest in your hearts and in your souls, I say to you, "Look to Christ. Look to Christ."

Those are the instructions of the Word of God. Would you be saved? Look to Christ. Would you know God? Look to Christ. Would you have peace? Look to Christ. Would you enter into his rest and cease from your labors? There is life for a saving look at Jesus Christ. God in mercy and grace and wisdom has vested all things in Christ his Son and our Savior. He says, "Of him are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us all we need: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." But you must look to Christ.

The Word of God is the foundation of faith. Almighty God is the giver of faith, but Jesus Christ prophet, priest and king, sin offering sacrifice and substitute is the object of faith. And your eyes of faith must be turned in his direction. He is the source of life. He is the giver of life. He is the cause of life. He said, "I am the door by me if any man enter in he shall be saved." But you are not going to be saved by talking about the door or looking at the door or arguing about the door. You are going to have to enter the door, that is Christ.

He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He said, "I am the water of life. He that drinketh of this water will never thirst again." But he is the water and you must drink.

He said, "I am the bread of life. He that eateth my flesh hath everlasting life."

He said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep and my sheep hear my voice. They follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish." But you must look to Christ.

You cannot look anywhere else. You cannot look part time to Christ and part time to something else. Your attention totally, wholeheartedly, completely, must be turned by faith to Christ. There is life for a look at the crucified one.

I ask you this question now. What does it mean to look to Christ? What are you talking about, preacher? I have heard what you said. I heard what God said in his Word, "Look to me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth. I am God and there is none else." I am a needy creature. I want to know what you mean by looking to Christ.

All right. I will give you four things that may help you. Number one, to look to Christ is to admit his reality. Now, Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God. He that cometh to God must believe that he is, must believe that he is and he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Christ is not a myth. Christ is not an idea. Christ is not just a historical influence. Christ is a living person. He is the living God. He is Emmanuel, God with us. He is the Son of the living God. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. God in human flesh appeared and the first thing to look to Christ is to consider him as a living person, the God man, the blessed redeemer sent from heaven, anointed, commissioned and ordained to be the only redeemer between God and men. It is to look to Christ admitting his reality.

Secondly, what is it to look to Christ? I want to give you this carefully. It is to acknowledge in my heart not just with my mouth, but in my heart before God, it is to acknowledge that only in him and by him and through him can salvation and justification come, enabling God to be just and justifier, enabling a totally incapable sinner of receiving what he cannot produce. I said salvation is in him, in him, not in law, not in works, not in deeds, but in Christ.

Now, listen to this Scripture, 1 Timothy 1:9. "He hath saved us and called us with a holy calling not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the foundation of the world, before the world began."

So, my friends, we are loved in Christ. We are chosen in Christ. We are redeemed in Christ. We are accepted in Christ. We are seated in Christ. To look to Christ is to acknowledge that in him, in him, is all life and salvation and hope. It is not only in him, but it is by him.

Now, watch this verse, Romans 5:19. "By one man's disobedience many became sinners. Even so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Salvation is not only in Christ, it is by Christ. Now if I can get you to see this will you listen very carefully right now. Isaiah 53:4-6 says this. "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him. By his stripes we are healed."

Now, what I want you to do is quote that verse with me and in place of “our” and “by his stripes we are healed,” you put your name. I am talking about substitution. I am talking about salvation. It is in Christ. It is vested in Christ, but it is by Christ, in the stead of. He is a substitute. He fulfilled the law in our place instead. He went to the cross and died bearing our sins in our place instead. So read it this way. He was wounded for Henry’s transgressions or Bill or Bob or Joe or Mary or whatever your name is. He was wounded...you say it. He was wounded for Henry’s transgressions. He was bruised for Henry’s iniquities. The chastisement of Henry’s peace was upon him and by his stripes Henry is healed. That is the gospel. You look to Christ.

It is to admit his reality. It is to know and to acknowledge that in him and by him, now watch this...and through him salvation comes. He is the channel. He is the river. He is the fountain. He is the source. He is the giver of eternal life. He said to the Father, “Thou hast given me authority over all flesh that I should give...I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me.” He is the life and he is the giver.

All right. Thirdly, what is it to look to Christ? Thirdly, it is to address myself to him. Now, you go back through the Bible. God is not going to knock you in the head and save you. You are going to call on him. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But they will call on him.

Blind Bartimaeus when the Lord Jesus came by, he called, “Jesus, thou Son of David.” And the Lord stood still. The Lord heard him. The thief on the cross called to the Lord. He said, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” And the publican in the temple called on the Lord. He said, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” They Syrophenician woman called on the Lord. She said, “Lord, have mercy upon me.”

Go all the way through the Word and you will find these people calling on the name of the Lord. And to look to Christ is to address myself to Christ. That’s not to a man out in front of the church. It is not shaking a preacher’s hand. There is no salvation in the preacher’s hand. There is no salvation in front of the church. Salvation is synonymous with Christ. Seek the Lord while he may be found, not a feeling, not an experience, a person. And close with Christ. That is what the old puritans used to talk about, close with Christ. Embrace him.

And then, fourthly, it is to continue to look to it. You see, repentance and faith are not once for all acts.

Somebody said, “Well, I believed.”

Did you now?

“I repented.”

You mean it is an isolated act? It is something once for all that you did in the dim past and cut it off? No, sir. Faith is a continual attitude, so is repentance.

I have repented. I am repenting. I shall repent.

I am believing on Christ. I will believe on Christ.

And to cease to believe on Christ is not to believe on Christ. Listen to Colossians 1:21. "And you hath he reconciled through death to present you holy and unblamable in God's sight," a little two letter word, "if you continue in the faith." That is exactly by your Bible. Read Colossians 1:21-23. "To present you holy and unblamable in his sight if you continue in the faith." And if you are in the faith you will continue in the faith. That is what John said. He said, "If they had been of us, they, no doubt, would have continued with us." Hebrews 3:14 says, "We are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

So what is it to look to Christ? It is to admit his reality, to admit his reality. What is it to look to Christ? It is to acknowledge that all hope of salvation, justification is in, by and through him. What is it to look to Christ? It is to address myself to him, not through a proxy, not through a representative, Christ. Call on him. Lord, be merciful to me a sinner. And then it is to continue to look to him.

Now, for what part of salvation are we to look to Christ? For what part? Now listen to me? I have heard preachers say this. Now, listen carefully. I have heard preachers say this. "God has done all that he can do. Now it is up to you."

What I ask them, "What is up to me? Just exactly what are you talking about? I am a lost sinner, incapable of holiness, incapable of righteousness, incapable of satisfying the justice of God, incapable of writing my name in the book of life, incapable of giving myself life, incapable of satisfying a holy God...Just exactly what is up to me?"

"God has done all he can do. Now it is up to you."

What is up to me? I can't raise myself from the grave. I can't take myself to glory. I can't open the doors of heaven? What is up to me?

Well, my friends, regeneration or the new birth is of God. We are born of God. That is up to God. Regeneration, the new birth, we are born of God, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of men, but born of God. Isn't that what Scripture says?

Conviction is the work of God. Our Lord said, "The Holy Spirit, when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment." He is the one who convicts of sin. He is the one who converts the sinner. He is the one that lays bare the heart. He is the one who strips our righteous rags off of us. He is the one that knocks our foundations out from under us. He is the one.

Repentance is the work of God. It says, "The goodness of God leadeth me to repentance." The apostle said, "God hath granted repentance to the Gentiles." So repentance is the work of God. He enables us to repent.

And faith is the gift of God. "Not of works lest any man should boast." That is what Paul said in Ephesians two. "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourself. It is a gift of God."

Perseverance is the gift of God. What does the Scripture say? We are kept by the power of God through faith, kept by the power of God. Even the fruits of grace are called the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, faith, longsuffering, patience, meekness, kindness. These are the fruit of the Spirit, not my fruit.

I will tell you. Salvation is all of grace, all of God. Salvation is of the Lord. Everything I need is found in Christ.

For what part of salvation am I to look to Christ? Every bit of it. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the beginning and the end. He is the alpha and the omega, from eternity past to eternity future everything I have, everything I am, everything I know, everything I will ever be is found in Christ and not in me. I will give him all the glory both now and forever.

All right, last of all. What is our encouragement to look to Christ? Charles Wesley wrote that hymn, "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood? Died he for me who him to death pursued."

Another hymn he wrote, "Depth of mercy, can there be mercy still reserved for me?"

You say, "Preacher, how can we be sure that God will show mercy to folks like me and you?"

Well, here is the first reason, his character. He said, "Look unto me. I am a just God and I am a Savior. I am a Savior."

Adam is put out of the garden, but he goes out with a promise. The flood destroys the earth, but there is an ark on top of that flood. Sodomy is destroyed, but Lot walks out. God walks through Egypt and destroys the first born of every home, but there is some blood on the door. And so God's character says God will be merciful.

Secondly, God's promise is all the way through the Word. He says this, "Come unto me. I will give you rest." That is his promise. He cannot lie. "Come now, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet I will make them whit as snow." Do you believe that? I believe God. I believe he is able to perform all that he promised. And he promised to save all who will come to him. That is what he said.

And then his visit to the earth. He came down here for just this purpose, to seek and to save the lost. He said, "The son of Man didn't come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Paul said, "This is a faithful saying. It is worthy of acceptance by everyone of you that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

So, sinner, if there is one there, they are hard to find, but if there is one there, if you can look to Christ on the authority of God's Word, you will be made whole. For he says, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth. I am God and there is none else."

Now, I have this message on a cassette tape. It is called, "There is life in a look." On the other side there is a message I will preach next week on "He is a Jew...He is a Jew." These two messages will cost you two dollars. That is what it costs us to make them, send them to you. You send a two dollar donation, I will mail you these two messages: "Life in a look," "He is a Jew."

Until next week, God bless you.