

Looking Unto Jesus

“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.” (Hebrews 12:2)

The believer's experience of salvation begins with a look. “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.) What a blessed “look” that is when by the power of the Holy Spirit we look away from everything, and “look” to Christ alone. We look away from our doings, and look to him and His finished work upon the cross. We look away from our feelings, and look to him and His promise. We look away from our supposed goodness, and look to Him who is all our righteousness. We no longer look to anything in ourselves to make us acceptable unto God, but rejoice that we are “accepted in the Beloved.”

We must continue to run our race in this world “looking unto Jesus.” We must look to Him in our weakness to receive strength as we go on our way. We must look to Him in our discouragements to be given encouragement. We must look to Him at all times or we will surely grow weary in running our race.

We must anticipate the joy that waits us when we will look no more by faith. We will then experience what Job knew awaited him: “whom (his redeemer) I shall see for myself.” We will see Him, look upon Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

What was the “joy that was set before Him, who despising the shame endured the cross?” His delight was to do his Father’s will, and the cross was part of His will. His obedience, then was part of His joy. His bringing many sons to glory is also part of His joy. He accomplished the salvation of all of those that the Father chose and gave to Him.

-David Pledger, Pastor of Lincoln Wood Church, Houston, TX USA

God, The Problem Solver

One of the men of our church was in a shelter the other day and saw a sign in the office that said, “I am God and I am here to solve your problems.”

This is all that God is to the majority of people – how can this be? Because this is the way those who occupy the pulpits present him. God is made to be all things to all people. Whatever your problem, “god” can handle it. If it is a health, financial, marital or anything else . . . even a sick pet! Just ask god . . . he can solve your problem.

This is atheism in practice; this is imagination run amok; and the best the natural man can come up with in its view of God.

Is this the view the scriptures give of God? The God of the Bible is sovereign, immutable, eternally holy and righteous, and can do nothing for anyone without doing it righteously. He doesn't reveal himself as the solver of problems but as a "Just God and Savior."

There are those who make heaven and hell the issue. The word of God makes Christ and sin the issue. The majority make "god is love" to be paramount, but the Holy Scriptures make His righteousness and how sinners are made righteous to be paramount. The scriptures make the gospel of God's free grace in Christ as the only way God will save sinners as it is preached. Scott Richardson has said many times, "God will not speak to, or be spoken to, by any member of the human race apart from His Son Jesus Christ".

What is man's real problem? It is sin, rebellion, and self-righteousness – how is this to be solved? It already has – by the Lord Jesus being "made to be sin, by bearing that sin to the cross, and there bearing the judgment and justice of God against sin, once and for all."

By God given grace and faith, God will justly justify the sinner who believes on His Son.

– Don Bell, Pastor of Latana Grace Church, Crossville, TN USA

God Bears His Sheep Through the Change Of Years

As I was looking through past bulletins I came across the following article which I wrote as we moved from 1996 to 1997. I would have been just short of my 42nd birthday. But the succeeding years have only proved the truth of what I wrote over 23 years ago:

We cannot help but notice the changing of the years, for we are creatures of time. The years rob us of youth, then of strength, and finally, of life, itself. So much about us changes. But God never changes. 1996 will slide into 1997 without so much as the slightest mark of age or decay showing upon the Divine face, "Thou hast the dew of youth." Our Redeemer is ever in the prime of life, ever strong, ever patient, ever merciful.

The world looks upon the new year as a clean slate. We shall not be long into the new year before we shall have defiled it with our sins, but the Redeemer's patience shall not become worn; He shall still "forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness."

In the coming year, we shall, each of us, creep one year closer to the grave, but it is only a move closer to Him who conquered death. There may be many things in 1997 that are different from 1996, but this shall remain the same: the living God shall care for His sheep in this world and shall work all

things in 1997 together for their eternal good. As the hymn writer wrote:

"Even down to old age all My people shall prove,

My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love.

And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,

Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be born."

Lord, grant Your goodness and grace to us in the coming year.

-Joe Terrell, Pastor of Grace Community Church, Rock Valley, IA USA

Christ, Our Refuge

“The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation – my stronghold.” Psalm 18:2

On every side are hosts of enemies ever invading our souls – trampling down every good thing in our hearts – accompanied by a flying troop of temptations, doubts, fears, guilt and bondage sweeping over our soul.

And we, as regards our own strength, are helpless against them.

But there is a refuge set before us in the gospel of the grace of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, as King in Zion, is there held up before our eyes as . . .

the Rock of our refuge,
our strong Tower,
our impregnable Fortress;

and we are encouraged by every precious promise and every gospel invitation when we are overrun and distressed by these wandering, ravaging, plundering tribes—to flee unto and find a safe refuge in Him.

“Keep me safe, O God, for in You I take refuge.” Psalm 16:1

“O Lord my God, I take refuge in You; save and deliver me from all who pursue me.” Psalm 7:1

What Is It To Be In Christ?

“To be found in Him...” Philipians 3:9

Every believer in Jesus Christ confesses that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). We know that the righteousness of God comes not by our works but by the faith of Jesus Christ. And only those who are in Christ by faith have the righteousness of God which was merited by the faith of Christ (Romans 3:22; Galatians 2:16;20). Therefore, as Paul desired to be found IN Christ, even so, does every believer have the same desire. For to be in Christ is to be as safe as Noah was in the Ark; as safe as the man-slayer was in the city of refuge, and as sure as Christ is in God (John 14:20).

To be in Christ is the closest possible union we can have to God and is the only source of communion with God. To be in Christ is to be accepted by God, justified by God, and sanctified by the Spirit of God. Therefore we, like Paul, desire to have nothing but Jesus Christ to be our all (1 Corinthians 1:30)!

Let us who in Christ rejoice for IN Him we are safe, happy, and sure to receive all the promises of God; “For all the promises of God **in him** are yea, and **in him** Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

We are persuaded that Christ is all our life and peace with God. For Christ alone has accomplished our redemption and brought in everlasting righteousness (Daniel 9:24).

Are you IN Christ? Is this your desire to be found only IN Him? If death comes to you, will it find you in Christ? If the justice of God finds you, will it find you in Christ? In Christ, there is no death. IN Christ there is no condemnation. In Christ, there is no threatening or wrath of God but only forgiveness, pardon peace, and love (John 11:25; Romans 8:1; Isaiah 53:11; Psalm 103:1-4)!

I know it is all my daily desire and prayer to be “found in Christ not having my own righteousness, but that which is by the faith of Christ.”

-Fred Evans

A Promise To Weary Sinners

Oh, that a weary, brokenhearted world would learn these lessons of grace! Oh, that they would taste and see that God is good! Let them but come home to Him. He will not mock them with shadows, nor feed them with husks. He will satisfy their craving souls; He will turn their midnight into noon; He will give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of

praise for the spirit of heaviness that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.

-Horatious Bonar

Do Not Praise The Dead And Shun The Living

If I truly believe the gospel of God's sovereign grace and glory, I will not hesitate to be fully identified with those who believe and preach that gospel in my day. Paul said to Timothy, "Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner." It is cowardice and compromising to brag on dead preachers like Spurgeon, Pink, and Barnard, and yet fail to support, encourage, and hear those who preach the same gospel now! Such professors who never bear the scars of battle will never wear the crown. Those *who shun the good fight of faith in their day will never celebrate the victory in that great day of our Lord.*

-Henry Mahan

Love God And Live As You Please

“Love God And Live As You Please.” This was the response of Augustine when he was asked what is the secret to the Christian life. This was also the response of Martin Luther when he was asked to cite his rule of life.

Everyone except those who are physically confined or restrained endeavors to live the rule “Live as you please.” The difference between us is the object of our love. For we are motivated to live by whom we love. This is true for both “lovers of *themselves*” (2 Timothy 3:2) and “lovers of *God*” (2 Timothy 3:4). The first will have “pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:12). The second will imitate Jesus Christ when He said of His Father, “I always do those things that please Him” (John 8:29). Nevertheless, many religious folks become upset when Christians confess to live by the rule “Love God, and live as you please.” They appear to skip over the *first* part of that rule – which is the most important part to a Christian – and therefore misunderstand or misapply the *second*.

Some have told me, “Your rule lets you do what you want to do.”

O, how I wish I could do what I want to do! I want to serve the God I love completely and perfectly. I am grieved when I do not (see Romans 7:15ff).

Some have told me, “Your rule gives you a license to sin.”

To the contrary, a license to *sin* belongs to those who hate God and love themselves. Lovers of God depart from sin to godliness because they have, as it were, a license to *righteousness*. Lovers of God obey His Word when it says, "You who love Jehovah, hate evil!" (Psalm 97:10). Lovers of God are compelled by their love to "no longer . . . live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:2) and to "live according to God in the spirit" (v.6). Lovers of God live so as to be "imitators of God as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1), and to be holy and perfect because He is (1 Peter 1:15f; Matthew 5:48), and to live according to the example of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21).

Lovers of God are not *legalists* motivated by the desire to live in a way that obtains justification or sanctification through keeping the law. Nor are lovers of God *mercenaries* motivated by the desire to live so as to earn rewards from God.

Rather, lovers of God are motivated to live according to God's love to us and our love to Him.

And, as Augustine also said, "To profess to love God while leading an unholy life is the worst of falsehoods."

—Daniel Parks, Pastor Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Saint Croix, US Virgin Islands

God's Word Like Heavenly Dew

The dew falls imperceptibly. No man can see it fall. Yet its effects are visible in the morning. So it is with the blessing of God upon His Word. It penetrates the heart without noise; it sinks deep into the conscience without anything visible going on. And as the dew opens the pores of the earth and refreshes the ground after the heat of a burning day, making vegetation lift up its drooping head, so it is with the blessing of God resting upon the soul.

Heavenly dew comes imperceptibly, falls quietly, and is manifested chiefly by its effects, as softening, opening, penetrating, and secretly causing every grace of the Spirit to lift up its drooping head.

Whenever the Lord may have been pleased to bless our souls, either in hearing, in reading, or in private meditation, have not these been some of the effects? Silent, quiet, imperceptible, yet producing an evident impression . . .

softening the heart when hard,
refreshing it when dry,
melting it when obdurate,
secretly keeping the soul alive, so that it is neither withers up by the burning sun of temptation, nor dies for lack of grace.

-J.C Philpot

Consider God's Crooked Work Of Salvation

Consider the work of God: for who can make straight which He hath made crooked? (Ecclesiastes 7:13)

Behold how the work of God seems crooked in the eyes of natural human reasoning and wisdom. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12). Consider the work of God in salvation.

1. Consider the work of God the Father. He has from eternity chosen a people and put them in union with Jesus Christ. Consider that the Father purposed them to be holy; not by their works or merits, but by the work of Jesus Christ His Son (Ephesians 1:3-6; 2 Timothy 1:9).

2. Consider the work of the Son of God. The Son was made flesh to represent all the Father gave him to save. Behold Jesus has accomplished all the righteousness and redemption of His people as their federal head and High Priest (Hebrews 10:12-14; Isaiah 53:6-11). And having accomplished salvation God raised him from the dead and sat Him upon the throne of God (Ephesians 1:20-23). All power is given to Jesus Christ for the purpose of giving eternal life to His elect (John 17:1-3).

3. Consider the work of the Holy Spirit. All men by nature are spiritually dead and cannot come to Christ by faith. The Spirit of God will quicken every elect and redeemed sinner to spiritual life and faith and none of them will fail to believe on Christ (John 3: 3-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; John 6:37-40:44; 2 Peter 3:9; Ephesians 2:8-10). And every one that believes on Christ will persevere in faith only because we are kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5; John 6:37-40). Therefore consider that "Salvation is of the LORD!" Consider that "Salvation belongeth to the LORD" (Jonah 2:9; Psalm 3:8). So then every believer rejoices when we consider God's Work of Salvation.

But in the mind of the natural man, God's Salvation by grace is crooked (Romans 1:18-25). Behold the vanity of the carnal mind to try to straighten out God's Work of salvation to fit their scheme of works and free-will religion. O vain man, will you straighten God's salvation when He has made it crooked in your mind? The truth is that God's work of Salvation is straight and its man's depraved mind and heart that is crooked. See then how God has made foolish the wisdom of men by His gospel of salvation by grace (1 Corinthians 1:20)!

-F.E