

Looking to God

What we look at shows the state of our hearts and minds. A friend of mine many years ago came up with a song called “Watch what you watch”. Before we were saved, we had our eyes on many things, mostly bad, because those are the things that agreed with our sin-darkened hearts. We looked after wine (Prov. 23:31), riches (Prov. 23:5), women (Mt. 6:28), vain entertainments, pride, and any number of other things. In fact, we were looking everywhere but to God for satisfaction. Like the ancient Israelites (Hos. 3:1), we were in actuality looking after other gods, dead gods that were incapable of giving life.

This also helps us understand why Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt for looking back to Sodom. She was looking back, not out of awe and wonder, or compassion on the lost, but because that was where her heart’s affections remained. She was grieving that what she valued was being destroyed.

We cannot help but to see what is going on around us, but the word “look” doesn’t always mean simply catching sight of something. It can also mean to gaze on something with desire. John tells us that we must not allow our hearts to be captivated by this world.

1 Jn. 2:15-17 – “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

Jas. 4:4 – “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

So if this is what we are looking at and setting our hearts on, then we have something else to look for – the wrath and fiery indignation of God in the great and terrible day of the LORD.

But true salvation comes from looking to God, in the person of Jesus Christ.

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

This is the verse that arrested Charles Spurgeon’s attention and brought him to salvation, and he referred to this verse many times in his sermons. The point was that salvation doesn’t come by self-reform and effort, or by religious works, but simply by looking to God in faith – by believing on the Son and thereby receiving life and the forgiveness of sins.

This kind of looking was what Jesus meant by his reference to the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and its comparison to his being lifted up on the cross.

Jn. 3:14 – “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:”

The reference was to Num. 21:4-9, where God had sent serpents to bite and kill the people because of their murmuring complaints against Moses and against God himself. When they repented and cried for mercy, “the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

Jn. 12:32 – “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

This is not a one-time glance, but a lifelong habit of looking to Christ’s death on the cross as our redemption. This is what we are doing when we observe the ordinance of communion. Nor is it to be seen in a physical sense, as in a crucifix or a painting on a wall. We cannot see him physically, yet we love him and “see” him with the eyes of faith.

Now, after we have been saved and are walking as disciples of Christ, what should we be looking at?

1. Obviously we should continually be looking to, and seeking God.

Ps. 34:5 – “They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their face were not ashamed.”

Isa. 17:7 – “At that day shall a man look unto his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.”

Mic. 7:7 – “Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.”

2. This looking takes the form of prayer and worship, and obedience.

Ps. 5:3 – “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.”

Jas. 1:25 – “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

3. We look to God in faith, and a desire to find our help in him.

Isa. 31:1 – “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help: and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong: but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!”

4. We are to put our attention on things that are really important, not on this world’s vanities.

2 Cor. 4:18 – “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

5. Looking to Christ helps us endure trials and tribulations

Heb. 2:9-10 – “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

Heb. 12:2 – “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.”

6. It also means looking forward to Christ’s return, in active and hopeful expectation.

Lk. 2:38 – “And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Anna (and also Simeon) were living in expectation of their Redeemer Messiah’s appearance. We also have acknowledged his coming and his person, but now live in anticipation of the full manifestation of that redemption, when he returns.

There are warnings that we should be watching and looking for his return. Mt. 24:48-50 – “But and if that servant, shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming ... The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.”

Phl. 3:20 – “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”

Tit. 2:13 – “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;”

Heb. 9:28 – “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Heb. 11:10 – “For he [Abraham] looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” This is the heavenly New Jerusalem in Rev. 21-22.

7. It is to look for his mercy by persevering unto the end.

2 P. 3:11-14 – “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all godly conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

Jude 21 – “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”