

Where to Look for Life

by Alan Redpath

The sermon emphasizes the importance of looking to God for salvation and eternal life, and the difficulty of doing so due to our tendency to look to ourselves and our own abilities.

Duration: 35:28

Scripture: Psalm 121:1-2, Isaiah 45:22, Matthew 6:33, John 14:9, Acts 4:12, Romans 10:13, 2 Corinthians 4:18

Topics: "Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a young man who was feeling miserable and burdened by his sins. On a cold winter day, the young man decided to attend a Methodist chapel instead of his intended church. The preacher, who was delayed by the weather, began the service and announced his text from Isaiah 45:22, 'Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else.' The preacher then directly addressed the young man, urging him to look to Jesus for salvation. In a powerful moment, the young man looked deep into his soul and found peace, joy, and a burden lifted from his heart.

Transcript

May we bow together for prayer a moment. Heavenly Father we thank thee that the Lord Jesus said, he that hath seen me hath seen the Father. We would indeed turn our eyes upon Jesus and look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth shall grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

We ask it for thy name's sake. Amen. Will you turn with me dear friends this morning for our meditation to the prophecy of Isaiah and the 45th chapter.

Isaiah chapter 45 and I read to you from verse 22. Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else. On Sunday January the 6th 1850 a young lad not quite 16 years of age was walking through a village street in a little town some 50 miles from London, England.

It was a bitterly cold day and the snow was falling heavily. He was going to find the house of God. Deeply conscious of his need of God, conscious of the failure and breakdown and sin of his own life even at that comparatively young age.

And as he made his way through the street somehow as the snow fell so heavily he felt that it was too far to go to the church which he had intended to go. So he just walked down the little back lane and entered a

little Methodist chapel. He sat down in a seat near the back.

It was as cold inside the chapel as it was out. The congregation mustered about 12 or 13 people. Five minutes after the service was due to begin at 11 o'clock the preacher announced for the morning had not made his appearance.

He had been delayed by the weather. And so one of the deacons came to the rescue and began conducting the service. And after a little while he announced his text.

Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else. After 10 minutes he had said all he knew about his text. And the service was terminating when suddenly the deacon noticing this miserable looking young man at the back of the church said to him aloud in the presence of the 13 other people young man you look very miserable this morning.

You need to look to Jesus and be saved young man look look to Jesus. And somehow in a very strange amazing way that man that young man looked from the depth of his soul into the very heart of God. And he went out from that church and he tells that as he walked through the street his burden had been lifted.

Never to return again he walked with a new light in his step and a new joy in his face and a new sense of peace in his heart. He had looked and lived. That young man as many of you probably know was Charles Haddon Spurgeon who for another 40 years 43 years to be exact lived to become one of the greatest preachers of his generation.

And it all began when as a young man scarcely 16 years of age he looked and lived. It could well be that here at Moody church today there is someone like that or if not actually in the church someone listening by radio and possibly both. Who have come to this place this morning and you've lived for quite a while under the atmosphere of religion and Christianity.

But you've never really looked or if you did at one time look somehow your eyes have been taken away from the Savior. And you're burdened this morning with a sense of deep need and the consciousness that you are far from God even though you may be within geographically the area of Christian things. And it is my privilege and responsibility this morning to ask you to turn your heart to the one where you may find life.

We have been reminded in song about him already today. I want you to notice with me in this chapter as we turn to this simple verse and this wonderful verse of scripture. I want you to notice a repetition of a phrase that occurs over and over again in this portion of God's word.

When the Holy Spirit repeats himself it's well for us to give special attention. For when he repeats himself it is because it is this upon which he wishes to stress and to concentrate our thinking. Verse 5 of this chapter says, I am the Lord and there is none else, there is no God beside me.

Verse 6 in the last little sentence, I am the Lord and there is none else. In the last verse words of verse 14, there is none else, there is no God. Similarly in verse 18, I am the Lord and there is none else.

And in verse 21, there is no God else beside me, a just God and a Savior, there is none beside me. And in our text, I am God and there is none else. I wonder if in your mind this morning if it would be possible for us to take a flight of imagination.

Could you imagine a moment when this world never existed, when this universe as much of it as we know was not in existence, when there were no stars and no sun and no moon, no heavens, no earth as we know them and see them, when there was none of this, but there was God. And he was from everlasting and to everlasting. He had no beginning and will have no ending.

And in that moment this universe as we see it was, so to speak, just slumbering. In his mind it was there in embryo, but there was God in a vast canopy of space with no universe, no stars, no people to worship him or to love him, but God. And the only light in all that vast canopy of space was the glory of his countenance.

God, the great, holy, majestic, omnipotent, the God with no beginning and no ending, God. And in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. There came a moment when the mind of God began to take action and to put into action that which had been there, that which had been merely slumbering within his heart.

And there came a sun and a moon and star, and there came a universe, and into that universe as part of it a little place that we call the earth which we inhabit. And in that world he put men, men made in his own image. And as you think about God, if you can in that conception of him, if we can for a moment, immediately we would recognize that anything that God made must be insignificant compared with the God who made it.

How small compared with the great, mighty God. And therefore because that is so, how impudent of anything or anyone whom God made ever to imagine that he could set himself against God. But that's what Satan did, and that's what all the inhabitants of this little place, this earth of ours, have done.

Just little creatures of time that exist for 70 years, a bit more or a bit less. And we've set ourselves up in rivalry to the God who is eternal, who had no beginning and no ending. And it has been the great purpose of God all through history ever since that time, to teach mankind that there is no God beside him.

There is none else. Especially is this true concerning the greatest work that God has ever done, and that is the saving of a soul from himself and his sin. But before I speak to you of this, let us think a moment of the ways in which God has sought through all history to demonstrate in all sorts of different ways and to all sorts of different people that there is no God beside him.

He has sought to teach the idols of heathen nations that truth. And you might well ask today, where are the idols of ancient empires? They're no longer in existence. The gods before whom great vast proportion of this world of ours used to worship are no longer in existence.

And he sought to teach not only other gods and idols, but he sought to teach great empires that there was no God beside him. You can only travel a little way today into the Middle East, and there you will see the ruins of ancient Greece and Babylon and Rome. These great mighty empires which at one time seemed to be omnipotent, but now they're just buried beneath ruins.

A testimony to the truth of our text, that beside our God, there is none else. And he not only sought to teach empires, but he sought to teach kings who ruled over them. You will recall for instance in the word of God, Nebuchadnezzar, as he walked through Babylon and said, behold this great Babylon that I have builded, a man did I say, did you say, a king? I see him in a few moments crawling on all fours.

I see him with his hair, says the scripture, like eagle's feathers. I see him with his fingernails like the claws of a bird. A man? Yes, a man who set himself against God, and a man to whom God spoke and whom God humbled and to whom God said, there is no God beside me.

And I remember Belshazzar, who drank out of the sacred vessels of the temple, who set himself up as the king of all the earth, and who one day saw the writing on the wall. And before he knew what was happening, was dead. And I think of a man in the word of God called Herod.

And as people heard him speak, they said, this is no man, this is a God. But presently a worm enters his body and another, and he's eaten of worms and he died. And you could go on through history and you could find men like Alexander and Napoleon, and if you come to our century, men like Hitler, and today men like Khrushchev.

And before all of them, God stands and says, beside me there is no God. He has spoken that word to empires, and he's spoken it to men, and he's spoken it to kings, and he's spoken it to other gods. The God who brought the whole universe into existence, insists that there is no God beside him.

That the hardest place where God has to speak that word is to his church. These are the people redeemed by blood, who find it so hard to believe that there is no other God beside him. That was true in the church, if I may use the word, of the Old Testament days, who because of their disobedience, were sent into captivity in Babylon.

It has been true through all history, that the church has found it desperately difficult to acknowledge that the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, the Christ of Calvary, and of resurrection power, and of coming glory, the church has found it desperately difficult really to believe that there is no God beside him. And we've demonstrated that we find it difficult to believe this, because we don't pray to him, as we should. Because our prayer meetings are often so neglected, and our programs in our churches are so busily in preparation.

When we have substituted so much before which we worship, and so many other things that really demonstrate in point of view and in practice, that we don't really believe that there is no God beside him. Many, many a child of God has come across days of ease, and days of plenty, and days of prosperity, and things have gone well. And the Christian has found himself worshipping at the God of materialism, and wealth, and riches, and plenty, and comfort, and enjoyment.

And God has had to strike him low. And through chastening, and through affliction, and often through sorrow, and trouble, through any experience that God may teach him the lesson that there is no God beside him. Ah yes, it's hard for the child of God really to believe that.

And God has had to teach it sometimes, teach it drastically to those who minister his word, who sometimes are put in the place of God by some people, who sometimes, sometimes have had to be taught the lesson till they've seen the simpleness of their own heart. And many, many times of coming to a pulpit would rather crawl behind a pew, and feel themselves of being unworthy of being part even of the congregation. God has had to teach his ministers this, that there is no God beside him.

I am not sure that any man get very far in Christian living until he's come to say, as the Apostle Paul said unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints, is this grace given that I may make known the unsearchable riches of Christ. It's amazing when you think about it, in the conception of who God is, that

all through history he's been seeking to teach his people that beside him there is no God. That's the emphasis of this portion of scripture, a demonstration of the fact that there is no rival to our God.

But beloved, as I said a few moments ago, this is especially true in the greatest thing that God has ever done, and that is the salvation of a soul. The hardest thing for a man ever to do, as he seeks to grope his way through intellectual fog and misunderstanding and theological argument in his search after God, is to come to a place where he's honestly prepared to say that beside God there is none else. You will notice that our text suggests this in three different ways.

In three different ways God speaks to an individual, speaks to a person, in order to show him that there is no God beside him. He says, look unto me, there is no God beside me. The person to whom I am to look, look unto me.

The thing that I am to do, to look. There's nothing hard in this, so basically absolutely simple. But in looking I am admitting that there is none other God beside him.

I am forsaking every confidence and every idol and every God. As for my salvation, I look to him. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, around the whole circle of the globe, says God.

There is no God beside me. The person to whom I am to look, look unto him. The thing that I am to do, in order that I might find him, just look.

The people who are to look, all the ends of the earth, for beside him there is no God. Therefore I am speaking this morning to somebody in this audience today, perhaps someone who's quite surprised because they've been so long under the sound of the word and in the circle of Christian things, and yet, yet somehow if they once looked, it's long since they did look, and who desperately need again this morning to turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look unto me.

Let's look for a moment here at this person, this one to whom we are to look, in this whole great thing, this great work of God in salvation. He says, look unto me. So difficult to do that, isn't it? So easy to look to the church, so easy to look to the preacher, so easy to look to some form or some ritual or some ceremony, to look in these directions, would be quite simple.

Oh no. God says, these will never save us, they will never bring us the blessing that we need of his life and of his power. I am to look away from all this to him.

And where am I to look? I am to look, beloved, at a place called Calvary. Not primarily to Bethlehem, though Bethlehem paves the way for Calvary. Not primarily to a life that he lived, about which we read in this book, in the gospel, because that life paved the way for the cross.

But I am to look at a cross. I wonder, I wonder how long it is since you paused and thought about him. Have you looked lately? Have you looked at a head that was crowned with thorns? Have you looked at the blood that came from it? Have you looked at a head that was bowed meekly upon his breast in absolute submission to the will of God, with no rebellion whatsoever as he meekly bowed to the will of his Father? Have you looked at a side that was torn with a spear, out of which flowed blood and water? Have you looked? Have you looked at feet that were almost rent in two as they bore the weight of his body hanging upon a tree? Have you looked at a pair of hands that were pierced to a cross? Have you looked at Jesus? Look unto me, he said.

Have you looked there? Really looked? Have you ever looked and said, Lord Jesus, that was for me? Has your faith ever taken you to that place where you've made that personal and said, Lord, that was for me? Have I looked there? Have I looked at an empty tomb? Have I looked at him, my great high priest, whoever liveth to make intercession for me? For if any man sins, says the scripture, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous. Have I looked at him? Have I looked at him in my mind and seen him as the one before whom every knee shall bow, King of kings and Lord of lords? Have I looked at him? I wonder. And this is what God asks me to do, this is what he expects of me, this God who had no beginning and no ending, this God who, who put the whole universe into action, this God who sent Jesus, that he might be the Savior of the world.

He says that I must look at him. I wonder if I have. Did you this morning before you came to church, did you look at Jesus? Oh you say to me for years, perhaps for months, all this past year I've been trying to see him.

God doesn't say you've got to see him, he says you're to look, that's all. Doesn't say see, just says look. You look to Jesus, look unto me, that's his word.

Right away from the church, because that'll save nobody. Right away from the preacher, because he will always disappoint you and disillusion you. Right away from all outward form and ceremony and everything else, that you might look right off from all of this and right through to the throne and there see in your heart Jesus.

But what am I to do? That's where I am to look for life. But what am I to do that I might obtain life? I am to look. Now you know all through history people have wanted a very complicated religion, very complicated.

And they've liked it when they've had priesthood and all the rest of it, and religion has really become a complicated thing. They like it made difficult. I honestly believe that if I could guarantee this morning to any of you, that if you were to walk to New York on bare feet along the highway and you would be absolutely sure of making it to heaven, if you did, I believe there'd be some people who'd do it.

Just because they would feel by doing this they'd done something meritorious, something that was worthy, something that had earned them something, you see. Oh we like religion to which we attach personal merit. But God puts us away from all this and takes us aside from it and he says one simple thing, look.

Maybe in your lifetime, indeed in mine, I have read many books on theology which have expounded all kinds of things in an attempt to show me how I may one day reach God. And I haven't been convinced by the time I finish. The Holy Spirit needs exactly four letters, two of them the same, to tell me what I must do.

L-O-O-K. Look, that's all. The simplest basic thing that any soul can do, but the most difficult thing that any of us find really to do day by day in our lives and in ours.

Oh we like it to be made complicated, because this panders to our intellect and our thinking and our mind. And God says I only ask that you do one thing, the thing that I think is essential, that the Creator should ask of his creatures that you might look. What does it mean to look? Oh beloved, it's not, it's not, it's not what I see of myself that matters, it's not my calculation, my rep, my opinion, my, my ideas or conception of what I am, but it's my conception of what God in Jesus Christ is that matters.

It's the objective look to him. And maybe one of the most difficult things for any of us to do is to get our looking away from ourselves, one within us, and looking right away to our Lord upon Calvary and upon the

throne. For some people will say well I'm too bad, or others I'm too good, or others will say well I'm righteous in myself, and others will say If only we would look away from all of ourselves, good or bad, and look right off to Jesus, just look.

And if you want to know again I say what it means to look, why it's the desire after him that matters beloved. It's a longing after God, it's a hunger in your heart for him, it's the deep burden of sin, it's the consciousness of your failure and your sinfulness, it's hanging upon Christ, that's what it is to look. It's hanging upon Jesus until I hang with all this, all my, my heart and soul and know I will lift up mine eyes unto the hill from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from the Lord, from the Lord.

And I hang upon him and I trust in him. This is what it means to look. This is the state of hopelessness apart from a life that is totally and utterly hanging upon the Christ of power and glory.

Have I looked like that? That house Charles Haddon Spurgeon was saying as he went into that little Methodist chapel with a burden heart, he saw in a simple flash as the verse was read that what God wanted from him was just that, that he might learn to cling and to hang upon the Lord. How simple. Yes, look, it's all I've got to do.

Have I ever really done it? Have you ever done it? You're doing it now. But who are the people that have to look? Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. Of course we interpret that word salvation in a very narrow sense.

It's a much greater and a vaster and a bigger thing than we imagine. It's not merely the salvation and forgiveness of our soul from sin. It's a far bigger thing than this.

It's salvation from racial prejudice for one thing. It's deliverance from that. It's deliverance from the thinking that because a man's skin is a different color from mine, he's an inferior creature.

It's deliverance from racial prejudice. Salvation from that. Oh and one day, bless the Lord, there'll be deliverance from all the social evils of our race and of our world, because one day unto me, says verse 23, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear.

Salvation is so vast, but I, I dare not take time to enter into more of that this morning, maybe another day. But who are the people that have to look? Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. You know, just sit a minute, that's overwhelming.

It's tremendous. It's the word of omnipotence, of authority, all the ends of the earth. Of course that means the heathen.

Of course that means the people who today have never heard. And somehow as I read that verse in my own mind and in my own heart, it kindles a fire and a burden and a concern and it makes me ask myself, why do I live like I do when millions today have never heard about my Jesus? It makes, it puts, it puts feet to my praying and it somehow ought to put sacrifice to my giving. It ought to mean that nothing matters, but that the ends of the earth shall hear.

Of course you cannot be a child of God unless, oh unless God opens your eyes to the truth of this. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. But how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they're sent? Ah yes beloved, it means that, but it means something else I think.

And I bring it right home to your heart and mine. Do you mean to tell me that the ends of the earth is something that's geographical? Not a bit of it. I believe that it is something very deep and very personal and very spiritual in the minds and hearts of people who listen to my voice this morning.

Beloved, you're in Moody Church today or you're listening to this service, you're hearing God's message and he's bidding you look. But spiritually, though geographically you're here and under the sound of it spiritually, you're at the end of the earth in your distance from God. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.

I wonder if you ever looked. I wonder who I speak to you this morning, dear soul, and somehow you know today you're so far away from God the distance is immeasurable, immeasurable. And your heart is cold and dry and dead and your mind doesn't respond to the truth and God is just millions and millions of miles away.

The ends of the earth, that's where you are. I'm not going to go into why that is so. Many reasons may have put you there.

I don't know, possibly rebellion against God, I don't know. Possibly some sad tragic circumstance in your home, I don't know a thing about it. But that's where some of you are today.

Spiritually, even though actually in person, in body, here under the sound of the truth, in your heart and soul at the other end of the earth from God. Religion real, church service real, profession real, but Jesus Christ a glorious tragic unreality in your life. The word comes to you, I trust with the authority of his spirit.

Look, look unto me, all ye at the very end of the earth, look! In other words, the terms of salvation are the same for the man who spiritually is miles away and the man who of whom God could say this morning thou art not far from the kingdom. Look here, the terms are just the same for the man who's in the upper bracket in his income and the man who's in skid row. Just the same for the man who's drinking himself to death and the man who's clothed with his robe of self-righteousness.

The terms are absolutely universal and are the simple glorious wonderful truth that today I can break through the mists of my mind and intellect, the things that hide God from me and by his grace I can break through the tragedy of my sin and breakdown and I can look to Jesus. On Monday, was it Monday? No, Sunday of this week, this past Sunday, as I retired for the night, the city in which I was staying, Edinburgh, it was dirty, it was cold. Something for me to say that, but it's true, it was cold.

It was dirty, it was foggy, it was smelly, it was everything that I could think was horrible. Really it was, and I love Scotland. But oh, it was so cold as I looked out of my window, I couldn't see Edinburgh Castle that stood just across the road, it was shrouded in fog.

And the smell of smoke, no wonder the Scots call it Old Reekie, it's reeked with smoke, isn't it? And I wakened up the next morning and I drew the blind, and when daylight came, it was clothed in a robe of spotless white. For overnight there had been six inches of snow, and I never saw such a beautiful scene as I saw that morning, as the sun rose, and that place which had been so dark, and so smoky, and so dirty, and grimy, was absolutely completely transformed into a mantle that was so clean, spotless, and immediately as I saw it, my heart went out to God, and I found myself saying, O Lord, O Lord, though this man's sin be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. For they shall be as red as crimson, they shall be white like wool.

Look, just look, just look from the depths of your heart to the throne of God, from the impurity and sin, from the religion and of righteousness, from all this God says one thing to people who are at the very ends of the earth today, spiritually and without hope. Just look, look right through to Jesus, O Christian, Christian look. And people here today, most of all the preacher, let's look again at Calvary, and let's remember that his righteousness and strength are ours.

And this God upon whom we may look today, whose blood was shed for our redemption, is the God before whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he's Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Shall we pray? O God, for Jesus' sake this morning, help us to turn our eyes afresh upon thee. We have to acknowledge that we've looked away to other things, and we've placed our confidence in other gods, and we think of thee the great God with no beginning and no ending, from eternity to eternity, the one who has created creatures like us, that we might worship thee and we've worshipped others.

O how desperately we need thy forgiveness. We would come to thee, O Lord, and ask that we may, just look, hang upon Christ today, that we may hurl every burden at his feet, and look off to Jesus. O make this true in our heart, for thy name's sake.

Amen.

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