

# The Look of Faith

by Mack Tomlinson

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*This sermon delves into Psalms 123, emphasizing the importance of living by faith and trusting in God's mercy. It highlights the concept of 'looking' as a key aspect of faith, drawing parallels from biblical examples like Moses, Job, and Paul. The focus is on fixing our eyes on Jesus, seeking His mercy, and living a life of continual dependence on Him.*

**Scripture:** Psalms 123:1, Hebrews 11:27, Isaiah 45:22, John 3:14, Hebrews 12:2

**Topics:** "Faith", "Dependence on God"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Well, let's go to the Psalms, Psalm 123. Psalm 123, follow me as we hear God's voice in the Bible. Unto you lift I up mine eyes, O you who dwells in the heavens.

Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden look unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes, our eyes, wait upon the Lord our God until He has mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us, O Lord. Have mercy upon us.

For we are exceedingly filled with contempt. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those who are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud. Lord Jesus, we just say this morning from our hearts, Master, speak.

Your servants, your children, your sheep are listening. We want to hear your voice through this psalm for our good, for your glory. So Lord, speak in the way only that you can.

We trust you for this time, and we trust you for grace to bring this message, and for every heart to see and to hear and to respond. Blessed be your name, Lord. With thanksgiving, Amen.

You know, all the books of the Bible normally have one purpose, one general theme, one general message. Genesis is about beginnings. Proverbs is about wisdom.

Hebrews is about the superiority and the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Psalms is unique in this sense. Psalms, more than most other books, is so unique.

It's not a story like Job or Jonah. It's not a to-do list of rules or principles that we're just to kind of follow. It actually means, in the original, praise psalms.

The Hebrew word originally, the book of Psalms was titled Thehalem, which means praise psalms. So it's the only book that's all songs, poetry, and prayers. So that makes it unique.

Now the psalmist, plural, whether David or Moses or the sons of Korah or Asaph, in the Psalms they're modeling for us, and at the same time teaching us a high view of God that's relational. That's relational. To make us grow in worship.

The Psalms, if they're about any one word, they're about worship. But they're about many things. The Psalms are meant to focus our eyes and our thoughts upon our God.

With the result being, we adore. And we love. And we commune with Him.

Every time you read a psalm, there ought to happen adoration, thoughts of God, relational warmth, and communion. The Psalms are relational. The Psalms show us, in many ways, God's person and His attributes, what He's like.

The Lord is good. And His mercy is everlasting. All through the Psalms we see His person, His character, and His attributes.

Now some psalms, you know, they're about repentance. Psalm 51. Some psalms are about devotion.

Some are about our pilgrimage. Some psalms are exclusively about glorious praise to God because of His wonderful, marvelous works we see. Both in creation and in redemption.

Some of the psalms just burst forth exclusively with praise and adoration for God and what He's done in creation and in redemption. Some psalms, though, are meant to bring us into intimate trust and reliance and faith. Trust, reliance, and faith.

That's Psalm 123. This is about trust and living by faith. Now we're so used to that term, living by faith.

Oh, yeah, that's what we're supposed to do. We're so used to it. We're so... I don't know what else to say.

We often lose the depth of what that is talking about. We often lose the wonder of what it means to live by faith. We're often scared to live by faith because of what the waves are going on around us.

And we are prone all our life to do anything except live by faith in God alone. But that's what this psalm calls us to. Four powerful and warm verses about living by faith.

But the beauty of Psalm 123 is that the psalmist shows us exactly what living by faith looks like. We'll see here that living by faith... Listen to me. Living by faith is not about a labor.

It's about a look. That's what's here. Now Jeff's opening reading, he didn't know what I was speaking on.

I didn't know what he was going to use for opening reading. That's what that reading was about. And our songs and hymns today were about this issue of faith not being a work, working for God, but it's looking to

Him in everything.

Now, yes, faith is a fight. Faith is simple, but it's not easy. Faith is a fight.

But faith, the essence of it, is not us striving, but it's looking. It's taking the eyes of our minds and our hearts off of ourself, off of our circumstances, off of people, off of anything under the sun. Faith is looking away to the living God.

I took one of my granddaughters Thursday or Friday to the optometrist. I guess that's what they call them. She had a checkup.

And so, she and I are in this room while we're waiting. And she had just been given the test, you know, where you're looking at the screen. And I always dreaded those.

I was always stressed out. Am I going to flunk this? You know, am I going to get glasses this thick? I never liked that. But Kyle is there looking, and she passes the test.

And then, he says, You know, young lady, your vision is good. Is your vision this morning good? In four verses here, eyes are mentioned four times. And looking is mentioned twice.

You see this all in the first two verses. Look back at the first two verses with me. Unto you I lift up my eyes.

Verse 2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look, as the eyes of a maiden looks, so our eyes wait upon you. It's so liberating to get outside of yourself, get your eyes off yourself, and just look away to Christ. There's life and freedom and joy there.

There's a hymn that says there's life for a look at the Savior. There's no life by looking in here. So, how's our vision? Here, in these first two verses, the psalmist says it.

Eyes four times. Looking twice. So, it's the eyes and it's the looking that waits in faith here.

He says, so our eyes wait for Thee. You wait upon God in faith with the eyes of your mind and your heart. Blessed are the eyes, Jesus said, who see.

So, that's what this psalm is about. And it's so wonderful. Now, the psalmist uses these pictures of two people, servants and handmaidens.

Of course, in biblical times, a servant sometimes was owned by the household. Not often. Sometimes they weren't.

But the servant's role was one thing. To serve at the pleasure of their Master. Have you ever been in a restaurant? Stay with me here.

Have you ever been in a restaurant, and you were just struck by the quality of your server? Or you were struck by how bad they were? But a striking thing about a great food server, and I've never done it, but a striking thing about them is that whether you know it or not, they're keeping an eye on your table. They're watching you. They're looking.

They're watching. And they don't bug you too much, but just at the right time, when your water glass is low, your tea is low, or maybe your coffee's half full, Alan, suddenly they show up just in the nick of time. They're serving.

They're looking. They're watching. They're serving.

Because they want to please the one they're serving. That's the picture here. As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their Master, as the eyes of handmaidens look to the hand of their mistress, so our eyes are upon you.

It's the eyes and the look that waits in faith. Now, in the biblical times, it was much more critical, if you will. Servants lived on the property normally.

Their life was intertwined with the Master. And they not only had a heart toward them to serve, but the servants were dependent on everything in relation to the Master. Provision.

Direction. Help. In all things, there was this relational connection between Master and servant.

But what the servant's doing is not trying to earn anything here. The servants weren't competing against the maidens. They were all looking.

Looking. Now, if the psalmist here is talking about eyes looking, how do we know for sure he's talking about living by faith? How do we know that? Well, here's the answer. Because all the Bible pictures faith like this.

All the Bible pictures faith like this. The picture of looking. Now, picture that for the non-Christian who's not become a Christian.

You're not a Christian yet. The Bible tells the non-Christian to look. Just look.

Look. But the Bible tells the believer who's walked with the Lord 70 years to still look. Right? We're still looking.

We started out when Christ saved us by looking to Jesus. We continue to walk with Him by looking. And if we persevere to the end, we will close our eyes in death looking to our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

So all the Bible pictures faith like this. For instance, think about Isaiah. Who remembers the chapter? List the book and chapter.

Some of you will. Those know-it-alls, don't answer too quick. Who remembers the chapter in the Old Testament that Spurgeon was converted through? I see some smiles.

Some of you remember Isaiah 45. You know what was the verse that smote young Spurgeon as a teenager? Smote his heart? Isaiah 45. All you nations, hear.

All nations and peoples, hear Me. Look unto Me and be saved. All the ends of the earth, look unto Me.

And Spurgeon said, go read it this way, Spurgeon said, suddenly, I looked. I savingly looked. And my sins were forgiven.

Isaiah says, look. Now remember Jehoshaphat. The Moabites and Ammonites are coming.

An exceeding great army. It says a gigantic army is coming. What did Israel do? Well, they didn't keep listening to the report.

They didn't look at the circumstances. They looked up and away to the invisible God and His promises. Now faith is simple, but it's not easy.

A look is simple. Turning your mind is simple. But when you see an army coming, when you're broken down on the side of the road on a busy interstate, and it's nighttime, it's not easy to stop and just pray.

We want to panic. We want to sweat and perspire. We want to figure out.

We want to make all the calls we need to. And then maybe, just maybe, we'll pray. Jehoshaphat.

Here's basically what they prayed. Oh Lord God, are You not God in heaven? First thing they prayed. Do You not rule over all the nations? Lord, here they come.

Here they come. In Your hand, is there not power so that no one is able to withstand You? They're getting closer. Are You not our God? Remember, an army is coming for them to wipe them out.

Are You not our God? And here's the bottom line. They said, we have no power against this bunch that's coming. Not only that, we don't know what to do.

Powerless and clueless, but our eyes are on You. But our eyes are on You. We have no power and we don't know what to do, but our eyes are on You.

You know what? Some of us, we don't want to ever feel powerless and clueless and have to just be shipwrecked on God and just have to look to Him to do what's needed. Because if He doesn't act, it's not going to get done. Moses, Israel had sinned.

A plague of poisonous snakes had filled the camp. And one remedy comes. Only one remedy comes.

God told Moses, make a serpent of brass and lift it up for all to see. Just lift it up for all to see. Whoever runs to it and hugs it.

Whoever can outrun the snakes the quickest. Whoever looks upon the serpent will live. Well, where is that quoted in the New Testament? John 3. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever will look, whosoever will believe, will have everlasting life.

There's life just with a look at the Savior. There's peace in the midst of the storm just with a look at the Savior. There is comfort that will come in your darkness and confusion when you savingly look again afresh at the Savior.

So in the Bible, faith is looking away from self and efforts and works and is looking to Christ as the eyes of servants and the eyes of maidens look so our eyes look unto You, O Lord. David said, I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from which comes my help. How much are your eyes, day in and day out, looking at yourself? Looking at others? Looking to man? Looking inward, outward, behind you, instead of up and away to see the invisible God Who is your refuge and strength? Beloved, when we continue to choose to live in the mold that this world put us in from the time of birth, living for self, living for the seen, you see something good that happens and you're encouraged.

You don't see something that you hope happens, you're discouraged. Living for the seen. Living by the seen of these eyes.

Living by what we know. Living by what's most suitable and trendy. Living by what's comfortable and understandable.

Living by the unrisky and the safe. When we live that way, we are removing ourselves from the possibility of living by faith more and more. By gazing upon the unseen Savior Whom we now love, though we haven't seen Him yet.

Living the Christian life is to live by continually setting the eyes of our hearts upon Him as we journey and keep looking. And you get your eyes off, you refocus. And you keep looking.

And you keep looking as you walk on. Now, you know, often when I read The Life of Moses, I'll have this pause and I'll think, you know, Peter and John had it easy compared to Moses. Moses had over 80 years of stress and drama and danger and stubborn people.

A church of 2 million who want to kill the pastor. Moses had it hard in so many ways. So how did he make it all the way? How did he endure to the end? You know what Hebrews 11 says? He endured by seeing Him who is invisible.

That's it. That's it. Now, he got frustrated.

Lord, just kill them all and start over with me. That's what God wanted to do. And Moses interceded.

Right? He endured by keeping his eyes focused on the living and unseen God. How did Job endure? Same thing. His wife told him, you know, go ahead and blaspheme God and just commit suicide.

It's all over. I can't take any more. I can't watch you die.

So just blaspheme God and commit suicide. That's what his broken-hearted wife told him. How did Job endure? By seeing Him who is invisible.

How does Paul even said this in one place of the Corinthians? He said at present, we don't see everything. What's the next phrase? But we do see Jesus. It doesn't matter if you hadn't seen everything.

It doesn't matter if you know what's going on right now. It doesn't matter if you're like Abraham. You're going out.

You know not where. You don't know when you'll get there. What matters is that now, we truly and are continually seeing our Savior.

How does Hebrews begin to close its arguments and deep encouragements and strong warnings about pressing on and don't draw back? How does Hebrews begin to summarize it? Let us throw off everything that hinders. Let us run the race set before us looking unto Jesus. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

You run and you persevere to the end by looking to Christ. But you know, that's not all the psalmist says here. What are we to look for? What are we to hope for? In our looking, what are we looking for? What do we want to get? Well, it's in verse 3. 2 and 3. Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God until He has mercy upon us.

Verse 3. Have mercy on us. O Lord, have mercy upon us. Mercy is what we're looking for.

All you need is continued mercy from God to persevere. And it comes by looking and trusting. Think about it, brethren.

Mercy is... there's a triple emphasis here because the psalmist is saying exclusively this is what we need, Lord. Mercy. Mercy.

There's one place where Paul talks about one of his colleagues in ministry who was at the point of death, but then Paul says, but God had mercy on him. Mercy is all you need. Mercy is all-encompassing.

Lord, our homes need Your mercy. Lord, our church needs Your mercy to continue. Lord, America needs Your mercy.

Our children, Lord, need saving mercy or they're going to perish. Lord, mercy, mercy, mercy. It's what we need and we're looking to You, the only source for it, to send it and bring it.

Lord, have mercy upon us. Our churches, our families, our children, our marriages, our future. Lord, grant us mercy.

So the life of faith is a life of looking. How's your vision? Are the eyes of your heart fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ or upon anything else? Now to the non-Christian here this morning, just hear me. There's nothing you can do except look.

Nothing you can do. You can't be better because you're not good before God, so you can't do better to perform for God. All you can do is look.

But that's all you need to do. Just look. Just look at the Savior.

Look at who He is. Look at what He did. And come and savingly cast your heart upon Him by looking to Him alone for your salvation and your forgiveness.

Just look. Look unto Me and be saved, for I am God and there is no other. Jesus to all and to you says, and this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son, looks upon the Son, and believes in Him, has eternal life.

Have you looked with a repentant heart? Have you looked in simple trust? Have you looked with a heart that says, here I am? How do you look? Well, Isaiah 55 kind of tells us. Listen to what Isaiah said. Seek the Lord while He may be found.

The eyes of the heart go toward Him. Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him.

Here, Psalm 123, arise, look, have mercy on us. The eyes of faith cry out to this invisible One that we know is real and knows there, and we know His testimony is true. We know He's trustworthy, that we've not seen Him with these eyes.

We know the record says, the living God I can't see is most worthy of my trust, so I'm going to call on Him. Call upon Him while He's near. Let the wicked forsake His way, and the unrighteous person his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord.

What's going to happen if you look and go to Him? This, He will have mercy on you. He will have mercy and He will abundantly pardon, abundantly forgive you. What's keeping you this morning, if you're not a

believer, from looking this morning? Beloved Christian, as you walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, what are your eyes looking at in your life right now? And they need to be refocused upon Him.

You, by looking, can't help the situation. All that will do is foster and fester anxiety and stress and worry. What do you need to refocus your eyes away from to look to Jesus? Beloved, today, let's wean ourselves off of looking to men and methods and the world's wisdom and passing fads and social media, and set our eyes increasingly and exclusively upon Christ.

Psalm 25 says, My eyes are ever toward the Lord. May God help us to make that a reality in our life. Father, thank You for Your Word.

This psalm, so small, so powerful, we pray You'd bless it to our hearts and our lives. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

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