

# How Christ Calls to Our Souls

by Peter Masters

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of looking unto Christ for salvation and dependence on him for forgiveness and help.*

**Duration:** 38:28

**Scripture:** Isaiah 45:22, Matthew 11:28, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 10:9, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 John 1:9, Revelation 3:20

**Topics:** "Salvation Through Christ", "Spiritual Conversion"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the call of God, particularly through Christ, to our souls, using the story of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's conversion as an example. It delves into the significance of looking unto Christ for salvation, highlighting the need to turn away from worldly dependencies and sins to fully rely on Him for forgiveness, transformation, and eternal life.

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## Transcript

This is about how God, indeed how Christ, calls to our souls. Now the text is above me and behind me. It's a very famous text in this church.

You know that that great preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in the 19th century, was pastor of this church for 38 years. The church goes back to 1650, but it was the ministry of C. H. Spurgeon, which is so remembered. Spurgeon is noted today because his books, his sermons, still outsell those of any other writer of religious books, sermons particularly.

In fact his sermons fill now 63 volumes. I used to be able to say 62, but in the last few years, a 63rd volume of previously unpublished sermons have been located, edited and published. But it gives him by far the record as being the English author with the largest work in print, by far.

Nobody even approaches him for in print books. But when C. H. Spurgeon was a youngster of 14, he came to Christ and experienced conversion through this text, which is above and behind me. He'd been seeking the Lord, he was very exercised, very concerned about his soul even at that age.

But it was on the 6th of January in the year 1850 that he was walking to church in the Colchester area and as he drew near to the town, he knew where he was going. He was going to a Baptist church in the town, but there was the most fearful snowstorm, such a blizzard, and he lost his way. No doubt many of you know the story well.

He didn't know where he was going or heading and just on what was then the outskirts of Colchester, he stumbled into a little primitive Methodist chapel, a very small chapel. It's there to this day with a tiny gallery. And there were just a few, a handful of people because of the storm.

The congregation mainly couldn't turn up. But there was no preacher. The assigned preacher, he couldn't get there because of the snow.

And a relatively uneducated man who was entirely unprepared took the pulpit, preached the sermon on this very text. And as he repeated himself of necessity over and over again, nevertheless, that message spoke to the heart of that 14-year-old youngster. And he looked to Christ and he put his trust in him and he prayed to him for forgiveness and for life.

And that marked his experience of conversion and, of course, his subsequent ministry became world famous. So I'd like us to think of this text before us now. Chapter 45, verse 22, Look unto me and be ye saved.

Look unto me, says God, and we will interpret it as Christ speaking. Indeed, the Lord Jesus Christ utters words which are the equivalent of this very text. Come unto me, all ye that labour.

And that is the sense of these words. Now, modern translations of the Bible almost all translate it a little differently. Instead of look unto me, they translate it turn unto me.

And strictly speaking, that is correct. The Hebrew verb used is the verb to turn. But when it's used in this sense, turn unto me, it's used in the Hebrew Bible in the sense of look unto me.

It is turn unto me, but it's a text which means depend upon me, rely upon me, depend upon me. So the more accurate English equivalent is not just the bland turn unto me, but look unto me. That little phrase implies to depend, to trust.

And that's what the Hebrew intends. So our old version, I think actually, is still more accurate in turning it from turn unto me to look unto me. There is reliance and dependence in this appeal to lost men and women.

And that's what we need to consider. But it's good to have the awareness that the verb to turn is underneath it because it helps us to understand that you've got to turn away from something else to look unto Christ, to rely on him. You've got to stop relying on whatever you were relying on for the satisfaction of your heart and your soul, for your whole philosophy of life, for your policy.

What made you happy? What did you depend on? What was your all in all, your everything in life that meant so much to you? You have to turn away from that in order to turn to and look to Christ for provision and dependence and help for your soul. So if we could, we'd have both words. Turn away and look to Christ.

And that little phrase does justice to what we read here in this text. Look unto me. And I'd like to think about it.

In verse 20, the great appeal begins with three imperatives. Assemble yourselves and come. Draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations.

The idea, it's ringing with urgency, is that you need to escape from something. The language here is the people are addressed right down history. You're escaping from things.

You've seen through certain things. You've been captive, speaking of the Jews, captive time and time again. You've turned to the gods of the Assyrians.

You've turned to the gods of the Chaldeans. Before all that, you turn to the gods of the Egyptians. In due course, you'll be worshipping the gods of the Medes and then the Persians.

And then many of you will be in the Roman Empire. And no doubt, you'll be turning to their gods. But you'll be disillusioned in every case.

And you'll see the fall of each one of those empires in turn. Their idol gods are no good to you and they were no good to them. And in this context, the word of prophecy says so.

You've only one sensible thing to do. Turn, look unto me and be saved. So here is the idea.

People turning from one thing to another. Why, in the Victorian age, when Spurgeon preached towards the end of it and into the Edwardian age, the idea was humanity, humanity, human society, people are getting better and better. Society is becoming altogether more refined and civilised.

We're moving on from primitive periods and here we are going to a time when we shall conquer our sin and all our imperfections and failings and society will march forward and make tremendous progress. And people began to be very proud of the refinements of society and culture. And in the middle of all this optimism along came World War I when the most refined and cultured people in Europe and then the world were at each other's throats.

And the whole theory collapsed that man is good at heart and through our culture and our progress we shall make a happy and a perfect earth. And it's been in tatters, that idea, pretty well ever since the communists tried it and they couldn't make it work. Things only got worse with them and then communism rapidly fell apart.

But now the theory is moral freedom. Get rid of right and wrong except leave only the principles that hold community together. We mustn't kill each other or be cruel to each other or hurt each other.

But apart from that have complete sexual liberty, do away with the notion of sin and this will create a happy and fulfilled and civilised and forward moving society. Well we've seen the start of this theory over the last 50 years and where has it got us? And we can see that it's folly and foolishness. Well all these are gods.

They're gods and objectives for society. And here it's in this context that the prophet gives the words of God Look unto me and be saved. Look unto me.

Turn from these ideas, these things you trust in, apart from God for happiness and for fulfilment and success. And look unto me. That word me is very heartening.

Look unto me says God. I am a personal God. I may be looked to.

That's why the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, came into this world, assumed human flesh. That helped to demonstrate that God is personal, that we may appeal to him and come to him and trust

our souls to him and seek his forgiveness and know him and walk with him. Come unto me.

God is like us in many ways or rather we are like him. He has created us in his image. Now while there's a vast difference between us because he is infinite and we are limited, very limited and finite.

And he has his great divine attributes. He's all powerful and we're not very powerful at all. Very limited and weak in fact.

And he's all knowing. And our knowledge at its very best is just incapable of being compared with his infinite knowledge. So while there's a huge gulf between us and of course he is holy and we are sinful, fallen, rebellious creatures, nevertheless there are some remarkable similarities.

And this is what it means when it says we're made in his image. He is personal and we are personal. We are relational beings.

We love each other and sadly we hate each other too at times. But we communicate and interact. And if we don't do that we get desperately lonely.

So we know about relating. Come, look, turn unto me, says God. He is like that.

He is ready to smile and receive us and engage with us and teach us and help us and shape us. And we know his love and his goodness. That is how we learn about God.

We look at ourselves and realise that he is us. Only millions of times greater and without sin and with all knowledge and power to go with it. So we can come to him.

Some people don't know this. It is astonishing. But I've had very intelligent people, very able people who've gone right on in life and held high appointments who have said to me words along these lines.

I didn't know you could speak to God. Oh I know we talk about prayer but I always assumed that that was just an exercise of pretense to make us feel better. But you're saying you can actually speak to God and as a man but far far greater he will hear and receive.

So we learn this even from this simple word me. Look unto me. I am the infinite personal God and I will receive and hear those who come to me in the right spirit.

But of course he is an offended God and we have offended him and sinned against him and stolen our lives and denied him his praise and worship and flaunted his law, done the most terrible things and we have become by nature people who are objectionable in his sight, proud people, deceitful people. There's all sorts of things wrong with us all the time. But he is a merciful God and he's ready to pardon and forgive.

That is his character. So he says look, depend, turn and depend, look unto me for mercy and for forgiveness and for help. I know a man who sent a book to Her Majesty the Queen.

He did rather expect an office acknowledgement but what he got was a personal note and he was amazed and overwhelmed. Well don't expect to get that if you send a book to the Queen but sometimes it happens and you know it always happens with God. If you come to him humbly and you come in the name of Jesus Christ who suffered and died for your sin if you believe in him then God will deal with you personally and directly.

Christ will hear your prayers. He will answer from on high and help you. But you've got to approach him in the right spirit.

I know another man who bought a very complicated gadget and it didn't work and he wrote a stormy letter to the international multinational company that produced it and his astonishment he got a letter back from the designer sympathising with him and explaining what he needed to do. He didn't expect that. I don't suspect the designer is always so approachable but he got a reply.

But with God you always get a reply if you come sincerely confessing your sin yielding your life to him. Look unto me is the imperative in this verse. Look unto me and be ye saved.

What does that mean, saved? Oh, let me give you a technicality. The Hebrew word which is translated as saved in this passage actually means open wide. You can see how it came to be used for saved.

Opened wide. The idea is that of escaping from something or somewhere. A prison perhaps or a great danger and the prison door is open wide and you get out into liberty, freedom, safety whatever it is that you desire.

And that came to be in the Hebrew the word saved. Liberated into a wide safe place. That's us.

We're in prison. While we're taking no notice of God and we're living our lives away from him and we're loving our sin and offending away the years while we're doing all this we are actually in a prison. The prison we are in is the prison of condemnation.

We are under God's judgments. We are going to be condemned for our godlessness and our sinfulness and we're tight in that prison. We can do nothing to get out.

You cannot escape from it. To be saved means to be forgiven and the doors are open wide and you're safe outside that prison. And you are in a prison.

If you don't know the Lord your soul is fast asleep.

You're functioning only as an animal not as a man or a woman with a living soul your mind capable of absorbing and understanding the whole meaning of life the meaning of the scriptures tremendous information about almighty God relating to him praying to him knowing his power and his goodness you know nothing of that because you've been shut away in a box an animal fleshly structure and you're limited as you would be in a prison not only doomed but limited and so to be saved is to escape and to be free and to be forgiven and out of condemnation out of limitation it's like being in a fire in the upper story of a hotel and you need some sort of an escape ladder to come and rescue you the stairs are on fire there's no other way out to be saved is to be brought out into the open away from the

place of danger and there are so many illustrations we can think of but we're not conscious of our need that's our trouble we don't realise the situation we're in I must have mentioned this before perhaps many times over the years but when I was a youngster and doing military service national service a camp I was on there was an incident there that was almost fatal for some twenty fellows and it was this it was winter time it was very very cold and the billets were only shacks and so on with corrugated iron roofs and the only heating was a sort of coke stove and there would customarily be in these long billets two coke stoves well you can't necessarily heat the billets as warm as toast with those you can only take the chill off so what would happen was this these things you don't see them

today but they have an iron door at the bottom which you can let the air in and of course they have a damper to shut the flue at the top and an iron pipe through the ceiling and the iron door at the bottom and the flue panel are linked by a kind of bar why is that? well it's to stop you opening the bottom and shutting the top to get the stove roaring and red hot so in order to do that you have to dismantle the iron bar but there's a problem and these fellows in this particular billet they'd got their stoves red hot they were as warm as toast in there but they'd gone to bed in that condition with the flue shut and the bottom open and of course as time went on the carbon monoxide poured into the room and began to poison them and they were only saved by somebody going into that billet to

collect something in the early hours somebody was on guard duty or something and he realised the state it was in and all these fellows got out and they were resuscitated went to sick quarters and so on and their lives were just saved but what an illustration fit men dying and they didn't know it they didn't know their danger they were asleep the very gas that was killing them of course deepened their sleep and their unconsciousness and that's how it works with sin we are in this state and condition we don't know we're imprisoned we don't know we're under the condemnation of God we don't even know half the time we're sinning the first time people commit some illicit sexual act they feel bad their conscience speaks but the second and the third and the fourth time and conscience is hardened

and after a while they no longer feel bad and they no longer realise that they're under the wrath and the judgement of God because of sin and society bombards them with this constant information this is alright really enjoy yourself do what you like and so you get to the point where there are people dying of monoxide poisoning as it were and they're asleep to their condition I was asleep to my sinful condition we all are but it's God who breaks in and shakes us and arouses the conscience that we've bludgeoned into insensitivity and makes us aware that we're condemned before him and that's what this text means when it says look unto me and be ye saved you're in a helpless position under condemnation dying because of your sin and shut in to the life only of a higher animal but look at the

words look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth wonderful prophetic language the remotest pagan lands are going to be reached with the loving kindness of the Lord and God's word look unto me there is forgiveness from me there is salvation and remaking of the life with me the very worst sinners the idea is the farthest most remote most distant pagan nations will be called and the poetic language means the worst sinners there are the most deceptive the most violent the most proud of people will hear the call of the gospel look unto me says Christ I can forgive you and change you and make you clean and make you new all sorts and conditions of people we have some friends here tonight I'm sure in a gathering of this size there are bound to be people who are vague as vague

completely indifferent and switched off when we speak about the need for God's forgiveness and new life and heaven no concern I'm enjoying this present life well enough it has its bad moments its difficult times but I'm fixed in with this I have no concern well that's an insult to God I am Godless I do not believe in him I do not want him I do not care at all and yet even for insulting indifference and vagueness there is mercy from the Lord so great is his kindness that this call look unto me oh if the spirit stirs your hearts you'll look then we have some people here tonight I'm sure who have been duped by the teachings of atheism they've drilled it into your ear you're guilty Mark you for believing that unbelief is a sin says the Bible you want that message you like that message so you

accept that message there is no God you are willfully misled says the Bible but nevertheless there is sympathy from the Lord and there is mercy look unto me if you mean it with all your heart and you seek

forgiving love Christ will forgive you there are some people here who would find it very hard to turn to Christ because you are infatuated with your sin you love it it's got a grip on you you can't stop telling lies you can't stop being proud and putting yourself center stage in everything you can't stop whatever your sin or your lust is what's to become of you well the wonderful thing is look unto me depend upon me says Christ I can rescue you I can wash your heart and remake you I can forgive you and make you a different person so this call goes out to the very distant parts of the

earth which is not a geographical matter it's a poetic call meaning that Christ can deal with every kind of person no matter what their sin or conditioning if we look to him and throw ourselves at his feet all the ends of the earth look at this for I am God these are the words they're the words of Christ now I am God and there is none else consider this God is the highest being he is the transcendent God the supreme spiritual being he made everything he made you he's entitled to you he formed you he made you you're not your own you strictly belong to him and you've stolen yourself away but you're accountable to him and he's invincible you cannot escape that accountability he's all knowing he's your lord and owner by right and I must just tell you this you have no greater enemy possible in

life than God you cannot make a greater enemy you may be the kind of person who makes enemies you offend people there are some people who even enjoy making enemies but you make an enemy of God that is utter folly because he calls you into judgement and he sends you into everlasting chains and punishment there is no worse enemy than God not because he's vindictive not because he's cruel but because he is just and he is pledged to punish sin and you make light of him and spurn him and scorn him you are a fool because he's the worst person to make your enemy on the other hand there is no greater friend there is no kinder friend there is no more forgiving friend there is no more loyal and helpful friend amazing that I can have God to be my friend tiny little me speck of dust in his universe

sinner against him worthy of no great merit in this world let alone in the estimation of God and I can have God the mighty infinite creator to be my friend the personal God yes I can and there is no greater friend imaginable your very best friend you could be most happily married your husband, your wife your best friend cannot have you in mind all the time will not come to your defence and protection and help in every situation cannot cope with most of your problems but God to have him as your friend is amazing and wonderful the God of all power and love and comfort and kindness to have Christ as your friend and yet we make him of all people our enemy when he is ready to be our friend look unto me he says and be saved the friendship of the Lord well there is none else to whom else can you

turn but God for the salvation of your soul for a place in heaven for reformation of your character now for real happiness, deep happiness and life you reject him you've no one to turn to you stand on the threshold of eternity at the end of life where are you going without him into judgment reject him that's madness the doctor tells you you've got a very rare disease there is only one person who can help you actually you need surgery there is only one surgeon can do this most critical thing I won't have him you say for some reason or other best known to yourself but says your doctor there is no one else you'll die and that's exactly the situation here in this text that's what the prophet says look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else to

help you to save you to forgive you you must have him why? you're driving there's a dark, dark moor ahead of you the road is going to cross it it lasts for miles your petrol tank shows empty you pass the last station there it says a big sign the last pump before such and such a moor you say I'm not going in there I don't like the look of it what's going to happen to you? you're going to be marooned on the moor of course

you are and you're going to be marooned one day the last day of life in dread, fear, uncertainty, horror you cross the threshold of death no saviour no Christ no forgiveness of God a terrible future for you I will not have that lifeboat but it's the only one we're sinking I am not getting into that lifeboat there is none other, says the Lord I will forgive you I will love

you I will transform you I will put you on the heavenly road I will hear your cries I will discipline you when you offend me but I will make sure you go to everlasting bliss and I will open your eyes to the meaning and purpose of life and give you my truth without him there's no life for the soul there's no understanding of life there's no saviour no pardon no help no heaven there is none other everything we need to hear is in this text has anyone loved like Christ see him on Calvary's cross the supreme demonstration of his love imagine it the eternal son of God if we go to heaven one day and if we see him we'll be just overwhelmed and astonished and amazed he still wears his human body the scripture tells us but his divinity in heaven just shines through it and we grasp his immensity and

his power and his Godhead his purity, his wonder his loveliness everything about him we're astonished and overwhelmed we can't see that now but that he is the saviour who brings us to himself and transforms us see him on the cross of Calvary with his arms outstretched and nails driven through his hands and feet and you know he's not suffering the pain so much from the nails through hands and feet nor the ebbing away of his life blood and his hanging in the terrible scorching sun what he is suffering most of all is the punishment of human sin because he has said to the father all those people who are mine who in the course of time will put their trust in me and come for forgiveness and mercy a new life for all those people put the punishment of all their sin on me and I will bear it away

and an invisible intolerable load of eternal punishment was taken by Christ voluntarily as he purchased the right to forgive and to pardon and to make anew all who put their trust in him have you ever seen such love as that that God would come for us fallen disobedient creatures it is beyond human invention or thought look our time is up look it means desire him believe in him repent before him tell him you need him give your life to him look a look of dependence an asking and trusting look to Jesus Christ and you will know what it is to be converted to him by the power of God and you will know him let's pray together oh God our gracious heavenly father help us all we ask help us this night when the devil comes and suggests to us that this is no truthful message that we can go on in life

as we like we can sin away our years there is no eternity there is no God there is nothing to fear there is nothing to desire oh Lord impress upon our hearts the reality of thy being and existence thy power and purity thy great goodness and thy loving kindness oh Lord we hear the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ apply it to our hearts let us not slip away bring us in faith and in repentance and in trust and save souls even this night Lord bless us all we ask it in Christ's name for his sake Amen

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