

THE PIERCED ONE PIERCES THE HEART

NO. 575

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”
Zechariah 12:10

THIS prophecy, first of all, refers to the Jewish people, and I am happy that it confirms our hearts in the belief of the good which the Lord will do unto Israel. We know of a surety, because God has said it, that the Jews will be restored to their own land, and that they shall inherit the goodly country which the Lord has given unto their fathers by a covenant of salt forever. But better still, they shall be converted to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall see in Him the house of David restored to the throne of Israel.

The day is coming, when they shall see in Jesus of Nazareth, that Messiah for whom their saints looked with joyful expectation, of whom the prophets spoke with rapture, but who was despised and rejected of their blinded sires. Happy day! Happy day! when our Jewish brethren shall all be found worshipping before the Lord of hosts, through their great High Priest, who is a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.

We must remember the prophecy concerning this thing. We must inquire of the Lord concerning His promise, we must expect its fulfillment, labor for it, and then beyond a doubt, when the due season shall have arrived, Israel shall own her King, and upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured out.

We intend to hear our text, upon the present occasion, as it speaks to ourselves. A great mistake is very common among all classes of men—it is currently believed that we are first of all to mourn for our sins, and then to look by faith to our Lord Jesus Christ. Most persons who have any concern about their souls, but are not as yet enlightened by the Spirit of God, think that there is a degree of tenderness of conscience and of hatred of sin, which they are to obtain somehow or other, and then they will be permitted and authorized to look to Jesus Christ.

Now you will perceive that this is not according to the Scripture, for, according to the text before us, men first look upon Him whom they have pierced, and then, but not till then, they mourn for their sin. This is the common folly of men, they look for the effect in order to produce the cause. They forget the old proverb and put the cart before the horse. But our text plainly indicates what is the cause, and puts it first, assuring us that the effect will follow.

Repentance is in no sense a title to faith in Christ. It is, on the other hand, a legitimate consequence of faith. In certain diseases, the surgeon aims at producing an outward eruption which carries off the internal poison, and so assists in the cure. But no man would be justified in refraining from medical advice until he could see the eruption in his skin, that being a healthy sign, a prognostic of cure, a result of medicine, and by no means a preparation for it.

So repentance is the bringing into our own sight the sin which lurks within. It is a result of the medicine of faith. But we should be foolish indeed if we refused to believe until we saw in ourselves that repentance which only faith can produce. That repentance which is unattended by faith in the Lord

Jesus, is an evil repentance which worketh wrath, and only sets the soul at a greater distance from God than it was before.

Sweet, heart-melting, reconciling repentance brings the soul to love the Lord, and to hope in His mercy—this precious gem always glitters on the hand of faith, and nowhere else. Without faith it is impossible to please God, and consequently, an unbelieving repentance has nothing in it acceptable to God. Unbelieving repentance may be so deep as to drive us to hang ourselves, like Judas, but its only result would be to secure for us Judas's doom.

Without faith, if our hearts could break, if our eyes could become perpetual fountains of tears, yet our repentance would in no way whatever be regarded by God except as a continuance of our sin, since we should really be rejecting the Lord Jesus, and setting up our own bitterness of soul in competition with the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us be quite clear on this point then, to start with, that it is not mourning for sin which causes or prepares the way for our looking to Christ. But it is our looking to Jesus which makes us weep and mourn for Him, and works in us the sweet bitterness of true repentance.

We will consider three points—first, *what there is in a sight of the pierced One to make us mourn*. Secondly, *what is the character of true mourning for sin*. And thirdly, *what is that which connects Jesus and this true mourning*. The text tells us that *looking* does it all—“They shall *look* upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.”

I. WHAT IS THERE IN A SIGHT OF JESUS TO MAKE US MOURN FOR SIN?

Let us not answer this question merely in a doctrinal fashion, but as we proceed let us pray that the Holy Ghost may bring our minds to feel the melting force of the great sacrifice on Calvary, so that we may bedew His cross with tears of holy penitence. Come with me, brethren, to Golgotha's terrible mount of doom, that we may sit down and watch the death-pangs of the great Lover of men's souls.

There on that transverse wood bleeds the incarnate Son of God. His head yields ruby drops where the throne-crown has pierced it. His hands and feet flow with rivulets of blood. His back is all one wound. His face is marred with bruises, and filthy with the spittle of the mockers. His hair has been plucked from His cheeks. His eyes are bloodshot. His lips are parched with fever. His whole body is a mass of concentrated agony.

He hangs yonder in physical pain impossible to be fully described, while the misery of His soul, crushed beneath the wheels of the chariot of justice, constitutes a woe far more terrible. His soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, while His body is as a cup full to the brim with grief—what if I say a sponge saturated with infinite miseries! While Jesus bleeds on yonder tree, our hearts bleed too. If we have tears at any time, let us shed them now, for now or never must we weep.

The first cause for deep sorrow lies *in the excellence of the Sufferer's person*. He who hangs there is no other than that Son of God before whom angels veil their faces with their wings. He is Lord of heaven and earth—concerning Him the Father said of old, “Let all the angels of God worship him.” At His behests the cherubim and seraphim fly to the utmost verge of space, glad to be the messengers of His good pleasure.

He is the light and brightness of heaven, the express image of His Father's glory. “Without him was not anything made that was made,” and by Him all things consist. And yet the King of heaven lays aside His crown, strips Himself of His purple, takes off His golden rings, becomes an infant of a span long, and after a life of suffering yields Himself to a slave's death upon the wretched gibbet of the cross.

My soul, do you not sorrow that so divine a person should sink so low? Think of the purity of His character as man! In Him was never any sin, and yet He suffers. His whole life was spent in doing good. Unselfishly He spared not Himself, and now men do not spare Him their worst cruelty. He gives food to the hungry, health to the sick, life to the dead. He has not time for Himself so much as to eat bread. He shuns no labor for the good of others. He seeks no ease for Himself. And yet the men whom He would bless conspire to curse Him.

He lives a life of perfect holiness, in no way causing any to offend. His life is the pure light of the sun of love, it has no darkness whatever in it. His acts are as a river flowing with crystal streams of lovingkindness, untainted by selfishness or ambition, and yet He bleeds. Heaven's brightest jewel is cast into the mire, earth's purest gold is trodden in the streets. He who is of heaven the sun, suffers an eclipse. He who is of earth the brightest star, is hidden beneath black clouds.

O Thou immaculate man, shall I see Thee bleed without compassion? O Thou Almighty God, shall I see Thee incarnate in the flesh, suffering throes and pangs unworthy of Thy Godhead, without feeling the commiseration of my soul stirred towards Thee? Can we, brethren, think of the beauty of our Lord, without being filled with bitterness of soul for Him? Shall those eyes, which are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, which once were washed with milk, now be drowned in tears of blood?

His cheeks, which are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers shall these be given to them who pluck off the hair? Those hands which are set with jewels, shall they be pierced? Shall His legs, which are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold, become all bespattered with the stream of His heart's gore?

Oh! here is sorrow if ye will. That precious casket of His body, so rich that heaven's treasures and earth's wealth together could not furnish such another, that dear case of jewels is cast out as an unclean thing, and made a victim without the camp! O, who will give me tears? I weep, I must weep for my sins!

*“My sins, my hateful, cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were,
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.*

*“’Twas you that pulled the vengeance down,
Upon His guiltless head,
Break, break my heart! O burst my eyes,
And let my sorrows bleed.”*

All human eyes, if they were forever full of tears, could not express the woe that one so glorious, so pure, so loving, so condescending, should in His own world find no shelter, and among His own creatures find no friends. But contrariwise, in this world be racked upon the cross, and among His creatures meet His murderers. This should make us mourn bitterly for sin.

Look up again, my soul, and perhaps another word may help to melt you, stubborn though you are. Let us bethink ourselves of *His sufferings*. Remember Gethsemane. In that garden His soul is exceedingly sorrowful. Though He is not in labor, but simply in the exercise of prayer, a sweat comes streaming from every pore. Not the common sweat of men who toil, but O God! it is a sweat of blood—“He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

The pains of hell alone can furnish a fit parallel for the awful misery of Christ that night. And perhaps even there such sufferings were never sustained as Christ endured in the garden. Betrayed by His chosen friend, He is hurried away to the Sanhedrin, and there accused of blasphemy. Oh! cruel charge against the Son of the Highest!

Then He is dragged away to Pilate, and then, away to Herod, to be slandered before both tribunals. Meanwhile, they scourge His back with the scourge, the very thought of which is enough to make a man shudder—it is said to have been made of the sinews of oxen intertwined with pieces of sharp and ragged bone, so that every blow tore through the flesh to the very bone. He is scourged thus, and then beaten with rods.

He is set upon a mimic throne, and crowned with thorns. They spit in His face. They insult His person. They bow the knee and say, “Hail, King of the Jews.” They buffet Him with their hands. Shame never descended to a lower depth—mockery could devise nothing worse than that crown of thorns and that scepter of reed. Away they hound Him, tearing off the purple robe which must have glued itself to

His bleeding flesh—they roughly tear it away, and then, they put on His own garments and hurry Him to the malefactor’s Tyburn.

Rudely, they strip Him, cruelly they fling Him down, savagely they pierce His hands and His feet. They lift up His cross and dislocate His every bone with the jar given to it, as it is fastened in the earth. They sit down to look at Him in derision, and gloat over His pains. The weight of the body tears the nails through His hands, and when the weight falls upon His feet, the nails force themselves in long wounds through the nerves of His blessed feet.

Fever is brought on by His fearful wounds. He is faint with pain. His mouth is dried like an oven. In His extremity He cries, “I thirst!” They thrust vinegar into His mouth—that is the only comfort they will render Him—vinegar mingled with gall! The hot sun scorches Him until He cries, “All my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”

Even the light is denied Him. He hangs shivering in midday-midnight. The thick darkness did but express the darkness which might be felt which covered all His soul. His agonies had become so intense, that they must not be beheld by any onlooker. The darkness, therefore, formed as it were a secret chamber wherein Christ might do battle with His direst griefs. Griefs like Himself, immense, unknown. Godlike sorrows now hold fast the Son of God—only His deity enabled Him to sustain the struggle. The storm passes, and at last, shouting, “It is finished,” with bowed head, He gives up the ghost.

Have we no tears for such sorrows as these? Shall we have no mourning for such griefs? How is it that if we read the story of a common man, suffering by his own folly, we freely weep? And over the silly story of a love-sick maid we will feel our pity stirred? But here on Calvary, where the King of heaven is tortured with unutterable woe, tormented with sorrows so tremendous that they exceed all other griefs as a mountain exceeds the molehills, we are like flints or steel, and scarcely feel compassion move. O God, pour out upon us the spirit of grief and commiseration that we may mourn for Him.

*“Strike, mighty grace, my flinty soul,
Till melting waters flow,
And deep repentance drowns my eyes,
In undissembled woe.”*

Perhaps we have not come to the very center of heart-breaking thought. The wonder is that Jesus Christ should suffer thus *as the result of sin—of our sin*. A young man ran away from home and left his aged mother that he might plunge into sin. After a few shameful years he came back to his country and sought his home. When he knocked at the cottage door he asked for his mother, but she was not there.

“What name did you say, sir? She died years ago.” “And how did she die?” “Well, they say she had a son who treated her with cruelty, and at last left her to indulge his own evil passions. She could not bear it, for she loved him much. She sickened, and no one could comfort her. She died, they say, of a broken heart, and that is her grave over the hedge yonder in the churchyard.”

Well might the sinner turn away with reeling brain and wish himself under the turf at her side. “I slew my mother by my sins.” If he weeps not at this he must be a devil indeed. Jesus Christ, my Lord, hangs on that tree slain by my sins—shall I not sorrow now? Had I never sinned, there had been no need of a Savior for me. Had we never rebelled against God, there would have been no sword of vengeance to plunge into His heart.

*“Was it for crimes that I had done
He groan’d upon the tree?”*

This is sad, indeed. Can you get the thought, my dear friends, that *you* made Christ die—yes, *you*—if there were no other man. You could not, if there had been only you to save—you could not enter heaven without the dying groans of that Savior. There must be an atonement made no less than His great

sacrifice for you, and you alone. Therefore take the whole of it to yourself, and now will you not sorrow at the sight of the pierced Savior?

Let us remember too, as we continue at the foot of the cross, that Jesus Christ does not merely suffer for sin, but He suffers FOR YOU. I do not know, but perhaps this may be the heart-breaker with some who never did repent of sin before. O you who look to Him believingly, Jesus Christ loves your poor guilty soul at such a rate that He suffers all this for you.

I pray you as you look to Him dying upon the cross, forget not that every drop yonder flows for *you*. How could you have despised Him who died for you! Determined to save you He went down to the very lowest depths to bring you up, and yet you have heard the Gospel and neglected it, have lived all these years in sin, have been day after day a neglecter of the Word of God, perhaps a Sabbath-breaker. It may be a swearer, using this very name of Christ to curse by, and yet He suffered this *for you*.

O believing sinner, *for you* these wounds, *for you* that sweat of gore, *for you* that cross, *for you* that spear, *for you* that mangled frame lying in the tomb motionless in the grasp of death! Will not this make you feel that you cannot any longer harbor the lusts which are the enemies of Christ, but that you must cast out, once and for all from your soul these cruel foes which made the Savior bleed?

While I am talking upon this theme, I feel more than at any other time in my own life my own insufficiency. I cry as Esaias did, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," for oh! it needs an angel's tongue to tell out a Savior's grief. Yea, even a seraph might fail. It needs the Savior Himself to tell you in worthy words how He suffered, and what was the love which led Him through the woe. Surely the cross makes sin hateful when we see it by the light of the Spirit of all truth.

One more remark here upon this first point. It should make us mourn for sin when we think that this suffering of Christ for us can be attributed to nothing else than *His own marvelous love towards us who were so undeserving*.

What could have brought Christ from on high except motives of pure affection? Can you conjecture any other cause? Did He want glory? My brethren, was not the glory of heaven enough for Him? Besides, if it could have been possible for Him to need glory, is He not omnipotent? and could He not in a moment have created ten thousand thousand worlds filled with inhabitants all too glad to be permitted to sing His praise? Could He gain anything, let me ask you, by coming here below? and was there anything in you or me to merit what He did?

Far, far away be the accursed thought of merit. But even if we could merit anything, could we merit this sacrifice? Could we merit that bloody sweat? O virtue, you could never merit this. Nay, heroism at its highest point, and self-sacrifice sublime to its most exalted degree, could never merit that the Son of God should die. Sin accomplished what virtue could not. Sin brings the Savior from on high, virtue never could have procured this.

Ah! brethren, the love of Jesus must have been a strange love indeed. We have heard of men who out of love to some poor countrywoman have left their kingdom and their throne to follow her poverty, and lift her up ultimately to their wealth. But who ever heard of the equal of this, that God's own Son, "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that through his poverty we might be made rich"? Worms were never raised so high above their meanest fellow worms, and therefore they could never stoop as Christ did.

If an angel could die for ants, that would look like condescension, but for Christ to die for men is more wondrous far. If the noblest cherubim before the throne should shed his heart's blood for a poor insect, you would think it marvelous, but for God Himself to take a creature's form, to bleed for such insignificant, despicable, worthless things as men—this is a wonder which has set heaven ringing ever since it was known, and will make eternity echo with shouts of praise.

Surely, dear friends, if nought else can make us loathe sin and weep before God, this should do so. And yet, I confess, I spoil the theme. When Mark Antony brings out the body of Julius Caesar, he excites the sympathies of the Roman people by the sight of the mantle of the murdered man. He makes

them weep, and then he cries, “What! weep ye, when ye but behold your Caesar’s vesture wounded! Look ye here—here is himself—marred, as you see, by traitors.” Such speech puts tongues into the silent stones of Rome, whereas, alas! I, poor, worthless creature as I am, talk of my Master, stabbed by ourselves, bleeding out of love to us, at so poor a rate that I cannot stir *your* souls, nor scarce my own. Almighty Spirit, well is it written that You will come to give the spirit of supplication, for except You shall come, we shall neither look to Christ, nor weep, nor mourn because of Him.

II. Secondly, WE ARE TO SPEAK UPON WHAT TRUE MOURNING FOR SIN IS.

It is not necessarily feeling great terrors nor frightful tears, there is no need that you should doubt the mercy of God—all these things may come with repentance, as smoke attends fire, but they are not a part of it. They often spoil repentance—they cannot make it more acceptable.

1. True mourning for sin is *the work of the Spirit of God*. There is no mourning until first the Spirit is poured out. Then men look, and then they mourn. Repentance is too choice a flower to grow in nature’s garden. If you have one sigh after Christ, if you have one particle of hatred of sin, God the Holy Spirit must have given it to you, for poor human nature with its utmost strain can never reach to a spiritual thing. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” True repentance then must come from on high. Lord, send it to us now.

2. True repentance *has a distinct and constant reference to the Lord Jesus Christ*. If you do repent of sin without looking to Christ, away with your repentance. If you are so lamenting your sin as to forget the Savior, you have need to begin all this work over again. Whenever we repent of sin, we must have one eye upon sin and another upon the cross, or better still, let us have both eyes upon Christ, seeing our sin punished in Him, and by no means let us look at sin except as we look at Jesus.

A man may hate sin just as a murderer hates the gallows, but this does not prove repentance. If I hate sin because of the punishment, I have not repented of sin. I merely regret that God is just.

But if I can see sin as an offense against Jesus Christ, and loathe myself because I have wounded Him, then I have a true brokenness of heart. If I see the Savior and believe that those thorns upon His head were plaited by my sinful words, if I believe that those wounds in His heart were pierced by my heart sins, if I believe that those wounds in His feet were made by my wandering steps, and that the wounds in His hands were made by my sinful deeds, then I repent of sin after a right fashion.

Only under the cross can you repent. Repentance elsewhere is remorse which clings to the sin and only dreads the punishment. Let us then seek, under God, to have a hatred of sin caused by a sight of Christ’s love.

3. True repentance *is real and often intense in its bitterness*. The text tells us it is a sorrow like that of one who weeps for his only son. A son is a boon from God. A good son especially, is a treasure to his father’s heart. But here is a dead son before me, I think I hear the father’s cries, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

Here I see an only son, which was not David’s case, for he had Solomon yet spared to him. I think I see the woman at the gate of Nain, with her only son carried out to be buried, making much lamentation, with grievous pomp of heartfelt woe. Ay, and it is not only that, it is the firstborn son, the beginning of the father’s strength, and the man who has watched him and seen himself in his firstborn’s growing form, will not be comforted because his son—his only son, his firstborn son is dead.

Such is true weeping for sin—it cuts to the heart, it pierces to the quick. “Oh!” says one, “I cannot believe in Christ, for I have no such bitterness.” My dear friend, you never will have it till you believe in Christ. You are to trust in Jesus Christ to get this. You are not to feel this, and then trust in Christ. Come, you hard heart, come to Christ to be softened.

Come, you hell-hardened steel, come to Christ to be melted in the furnace of His divine affection. Come as you are, sinner, feeling or unfeeling, and look up to Jesus. There is life in a look at Him, and life for you now, and the first sign of life will be a real and intense sorrow for sin.

4. True sorrow for sin is *eminently practical*. No man may say he hates sin if he lives in it. It will make us see the evil of sin, not merely as a theory, but experientially—as a burnt child dreads fire. We

shall be as much afraid of it as a man who has lately been stopped and robbed is afraid of the thief upon the highway. And we shall shun it—shun it in everything—not in great things only, but in little things.

True mourning for sin will make us very jealous over our tongue, lest it should say a wrong word. We shall be very watchful over our daily actions, lest in anything we should offend, and each night we shall close the day with painful confessions of shortcoming, and each morning awaken with anxious prayers, that this next day God would hold us up that we might be saved.

5. Once again, true repentance is continual. A man does not repent for a few weeks, and then have done with it. Rowland Hill said that repentance was one of the sweetest earthly companions, and the only regret he had in the thought of going to heaven was that his dear friend Repentance could not go with him there. Repentance is the most heavenly thing out of heaven. Well did our hymn say—

*“Lord, let me weep for nought but sin!
And after none but Thee!
And then I would—O that I might—
A constant weeper be!”*

True believers repent to their dying day—they are always repenting. Their life is made up, it is said, of sinning and repenting—I will not say that—believing and repenting is their life, and sin is the disease which mars it. No time can wear away the bitterness of repentance. If a man loses his child, time happily softens his grief. Every other trouble yields to time, but this never does. It is so sweet a sorrow that we can only thank God we are permitted to enjoy and to suffer it until we enter into our eternal rest.

This, then, is true sorrow for sin. But let me say, whatever is or is not true sorrow for sin, I do entreat my hearers not to try and get sorrow for sin before they come to Christ. The Gospel is, “He that believeth in Jesus is not condemned.” Whether you have sorrowed enough for sin or not, if you trust Jesus Christ, you are not condemned.

Your salvation is not procured by your tears, nor by your feelings, but by Him whom you have pierced. Look to Him, away from self. Look not even to your own faith, but look to the object of your faith. Now fixedly behold Him, and trust Him, and your heart will break and be poured out like water before the Lord.

III. WHAT IS THAT WHICH CONNECTS JESUS CHRIST AND THE MOURNING?

How am I to get at Christ? This used to puzzle me. I thought if I could walk a thousand miles to see Him, I would set off joyously. Oh! if I could but fall at His feet and lay hold of Him—I thought this would be very easy—touching the hem of His garment, or crying, “God be merciful to me”—this would be very simple. But this thought long puzzled me—“How can I get to Christ?”

So many fleshly notions mix themselves with our thoughts before we are born again, that we are very much like poor Nicodemus, and say, “Can a man enter his mother’s womb a second time, and be born again?” We have gross and carnal thoughts concerning spiritual things.

Now, our connection with Jesus is a look, not with these eyes of course, but with the eyes of the heart. We all know what it is to look at a thing. We are told to look at a certain subject in politics or science—we are told to look into it. There is nothing to see with your eyes, but you see into it with your mind, and this is the kind of look which is intended here, “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.”

You cannot, with all your looking, see Christ with these eyes, but thinking of Him, and believing in Him, is the look which is meant. In describing this look, let me say that *it is very simple*. Why, looking is not a hard thing! I never heard of a college for training people to look. I never in my life heard of anyone trying to teach another person to look. There may be a defect in people’s eyes, but still if they have any eyes at all, they may look. They may happen to have cross eyes, but a crossed-eyed look at Christ will save the soul. They may have a cataract in the eye, so that there is scarcely a corner left, but it is not

looking with a full eye, it is not looking with a bold eye—it is the looking in any way, the simple act of looking which saves a soul.

A man may not be able to read a single letter in a book, but he can look to Jesus. A man may not be able to spell a word of one syllable, but he can look. A man may have no moral courage, but he can look. He may be destitute of all the virtues, and yet he can look. A man may be a thief, a whoremonger, an adulterer, but he can look. A man may be cast out of society, transported, shut up between stone walls, but he can look.

Looking is a thing so simple, that neither moral nor physical preparations are required. Looking! Such is faith in Jesus Christ. As the sin-bitten ones looked to the brazen serpent, so do we look away from self to Christ, and we live.

Observe, secondly, as it is a simple look, so it is *a look which requires no merit in order to precede it*. We have an old proverb, that “a cat may look at a king,” and certainly a poor man may. There is no hurt done by looking. If the queen were here, I would not ask her leave to let me look, and if there were a crossing sweeper, or a mud-lark, or even a pickpocket here, he certainly would commit no offense by looking.

On the other hand, there would be no merit in looking. Where is the merit of looking at a thing? It is too simple either to need merit before it, or to have merit in it. So you who are the worst of the worst, you who feel nothing in yourself which is good, you who cannot even say that you feel your own emptiness and vileness, nothing of your own is needed to precede that look by way of preparation. Look, look to Jesus as you are, and you shall be saved.

The look which saves the soul, again, should be *an attentive look*. If you have looked to Christ and cannot see anything there to comfort you, look again! Look again! Perhaps each man is comforted in a different way by looking to Christ. One sees Christ to be God, and he says, “Ah! then, He can save me.” Another dwells mainly upon Christ’s being man, and he says, “Ah! then, He can pity me, and be willing to receive me.”

One fixes his eyes upon God’s having appointed Christ to save him—that comforts him. Another remembers the infinite value of Christ’s sufferings, and that cheers him. If one point in Christ does not comfort you, look to another. Keep your mental eye fixed upon what Jesus Christ is.

Ah! my dear friends, I am telling you this, but how difficult it is to make you do it until the Holy Spirit brings you! Why the first thing I get from any of you when I talk to you about your souls is, “O sir, I do not feel.” I know then that you are looking to self. O my dear hearers, you who have some concern about your souls, I would beseech my God to wean you from this which must damn your souls—this looking to self.

Come, I pray you, consider. You are too vile, too sinful ever to have anything good in you to look at. Why will you search for goodness where there is none? “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” You can do so if you look at the cross.

I know you will raise your “buts,” or cry, “But I cannot believe.” There you are looking to your faith instead of Christ. There He hangs! He bears upon His shoulders the sin of man, and whoever trusts Him shall be saved. Can you not trust Him? Not trust your God? Can you not trust Him, your Brother born to bear your adversities? Not trust Him? Why I protest before you all, if I had all your sins upon my shoulders, I could trust Him.

When John Hyatt lay a-dying, someone said to him, “Can you trust Jesus with your soul now?” “Ah,” said he, “I could trust Him if I had a million souls, I could trust Him with them all.” Do not tell me awakened souls you cannot trust your Master. When did He ever lie to you? Whom did He ever cast out? When did He break His promise? Who ever came to Him and was rejected? When did He say to the chief of sinners, “Thy sins shall never be forgiven”? Thousands have been to Him, and He has received them.

I sought the Lord, and He heard *me*. I tried to save myself by feelings of repentance and prayings, but it was all of no avail. At last in sheer despair, I flew like a dove pursued by the hawk, straight away to Jesus Christ, the cleft-rock, and found shelter in His wounds. O that you would do so! Come, I pray you, have done with that self of yours.

*“None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

This look is sometimes a *wondering look*—I know it was to me. When I saw Him hanging on the cross for me, I could not understand such love, and I cannot fathom it now. I can understand some of the things which Christ has done for me, but I cannot make out why He should die for me—why He should love such a heap of filth, such a walking dunghill as man is—why He should give His blood, every drop of which is more costly than rubies, and why He should give His tears, which are richer than diamonds, and why He should give His heart, which is better than a mine of gold, and why He should close those lips which are sweeter than harps of angels, and shut those eyes, which are brighter than so many suns, and all for such a clod of earth, such a rebellious piece of rottenness as man.

Oh! this is marvelous. How can we understand it? We can only fall down before His feet, and while we trust Him, add to our faith a holy adoring wonder.

This look must, in every case, be a *personal one*. You cannot be saved by another man’s faith. I do beseech of all to whom this word shall come, detest, loathe, abominate the lie that any man can perform spiritual acts for another; that a sponsor can promise to renounce the works of the flesh for another; that a man can stand at the font and declare that he believes for another, or promise that an unconscious slumbering baby shall believe in God, or even say in God’s name what he knows is a lie, that the child does believe, when it cannot believe, and probably is asleep at the time and not occupied with any mental operation, much less believing what it never heard, and what it could not understand if it did hear.

O, I pray you, eschew this. The curse of England has been this dogma of baptismal regeneration, for it leads men to shake off their personal responsibility and obligations to God. Your odd fathers and odd mothers, your confirmation, your priests and rural deans, and prebends and canons, and I know not what of man’s invention, can do no more for you than so many witches with their incantations.

You must fly to Christ yourselves, and by simple faith lay hold on Jesus. All this flippery and nonsense of man’s invention must be pulled down. O for a rough hand to pull it down, to let the sinner see that he stands before God, naked and defenseless, except as he flies to Christ, and in the passion and life of Jesus, finds salvation.

A personal faith it must be, and what if I urge you to let it be *immediate* faith? It will be no easier to flee tomorrow than it is today. It is the same thing that you will have to believe tomorrow as it is today—that Jesus Christ gave Himself for your sins. This is God’s testimony, that Christ is able to save. O that you would trust Him.

My soul, you have regretted a thousand things, but you have never regretted trusting Christ in your youth. Many have wept that they did not come to Christ before, but none ever lamented that they came too early. Why not this very day? O Holy Spirit, make it so! Behold, the fields are showing the green ears ready for the harvest. The season advances, and the fields are prophesying the harvest. O that we might see some green ears today, some green ears prophetic of a blessed harvest of souls.

As to myself, I cross this day into another year of my own life and history, and I bear witness that my Master is worth trusting. Oh! it is a blessed thing to be a Christian. It is a sweet thing to be a believer in Christ, and though I, of all men, perhaps am the subject of the deepest depression of spirits at times, yet there lives not a soul who can say more truthfully than I, “My soul doth magnify the LORD, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.” He who is mighty has looked upon me with eyes of love and made me His child, and I trust Him this day as I have trusted Him aforetime.

But now I would to God that this day some of you would begin to trust in Him. It is the Spirit's work, but still, He works through means. I think He is working in your heart now. Young man, those tears look hopeful. I thank God that those eyes feel burning now.

I pray you do not go chatting on the road home and missing any good impression. Go to your chamber, fall upon your knees, cry out to God, entreat His favor. This day let it be! None of the devil's tomorrows—away with them! Away with them! “Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.”

May the Spirit of God constrain you to “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.