

Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go, was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall is called Salvation. Up this way therefore did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back. He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a Cross, and a little below in the bottom, a Sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the Cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back; and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the Sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, "He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death." Then he stood still awhile, to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him, that the sight of the Cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. Now as he stood looking and weeping, behold three Shining Ones came to him and saluted him with "Peace be to thee." So the first said unto him, "Thy sins be forgiven"; the second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with a change of raiment; the third also set a mark in his forehead, and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the Celestial Gate. So they went their way. Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing:

*Thus far did I come loaden with my sin;
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,
Till I came hither: What a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?*

*Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the strings that bound it to me, crack?
Blest Cross! blest Sepulchre! blest rather be,
The Man that there was put to shame for me.*

What better example could we find to greater illustrate this truth than that of Charles Spurgeon's own conversion? Due to a snowstorm on that January morning in 1850, he was unable to reach

the place of worship where he was going, so he turned down a side street and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. Only about a dozen people were present. Spurgeon said, "I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved." The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed in. At last, a very simple man, whom Spurgeon referred to as "really stupid," stood up and read the text: "LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH" (*Isaiah 45:22*). The preacher began:

This is a very simple text indeed. It says "Look." Now lookin' don't take a great deal of pain. It ain't lifting your foot or your finger; it's just "Look." Well, a man needn't go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn't be worth a thousand a year to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But the text says, "Look unto Me." Ah! many of ye are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin' there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves...Some of ye say, "We must wait for the Spirit's workin'." You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. The text says, "Look unto Me."

After the good man managed to spin out about ten minutes or so on Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, Spurgeon says:

He was at the end of his tether; then he looked at me under the gallery...just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, "Young man, you look very miserable...and you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved." Then lifting up his hands, he shouted, "YOUNG MAN, LOOK TO JESUS CHRIST. LOOK! LOOK! LOOK! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO DO BUT LOOK AND LIVE!" I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought...I had been

waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, "Look!" what a charming word it seemed to me. Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. Then and there the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I felt I could have sprang from my seat that instant and sang with the most enthusiastic of those Methodist brethren of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before! "Trust Christ, and you shall be saved."

*E'er since by faith I saw the stream,
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.*

Up to this time, preachers had failed to present the gospel to young Spurgeon in a clear and direct manner—"Look to Christ!" This young boy had labored for quite a long time with the deluded notion that he had something "to do"—yea, he said, "fifty things to do!" And all the while, "There was life in a look at the Crucified One." "Oh, that somebody had told me this before!" This experience in his younger days challenged him throughout his whole ministry to tell sinners in every sermon and in a most forthright and understandable way how to be saved.

"Jesus Christ, and him crucified" is God's message to man throughout the Scriptures (*Luke 24:27; 1 Cor 2:2*). There's no other object of faith! Salvation is totally wrapped up in Jesus Christ himself! Christ is the whole of man's happiness: the Sun to enlighten him, the Physician to heal him, the Pearl to enrich him, the Ark to support him, the Rock to sustain him under the heaviest pressures, "As an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (*Isaiah 32:2*).

Jesus declared that the Holy Spirit "shall not speak of himself...he shall testify of me...he shall glorify me...he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto

you" (*John 15:26; 16:13,14*). "If you want to get a man to Christ," Spurgeon says, "the best way is bring Christ to the man."

The glory of Christ and the glory of the Cross is to be the constant theme of every minister of the gospel. The preacher's principal business, yea, perhaps his only business, is to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (*John 1:36*). John the Baptist can be the most eloquent preacher of repentance, the most earnest declaimer against the sins of the times; yet if he remembers not to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God," he's missed his life's work. His chief errand was to herald the Messiah, to bear witness to the Son of God. While he dealt hard with sin, and laid the sword of repentance to its throat; he still knew that nothing could be done unless he pointed out the Lamb of God, by whom the sin of the world is taken away.

When repentance is the sermon, Jesus must be the text and substance of the discourse. He puts life, power, and energy into what else would be but a dead moral essay. "Christ crucified" is *the* message whereby needy sinners find peace, pardon, life, and liberty—"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (*1 Cor 1:23; 3:11*).

The gift of salvation is not purchased, earned, nor worked for in any way by the sinner; it is simply received, as surely as the sunshine is received: free and complete. Grace flows to us through the work and merits of the Saviour, not through anything we could ever do, or endure. Life and peace are not to be claimed on the ground of fitness or goodness, but of need and unworthiness, of poverty and emptiness. The eye of faith is merely to behold Jesus who cried, "It is finished!" and receive the life, the healing, and all the benefits of that death by FREE GRACE.

Looking to Christ is not a work; it is resting in the Saviour, and in all that he accomplished. The gospel does not command us to do anything in order to obtain

life, but offers us life by that which another has done. Like Naaman, the natural man would rather “do some great thing” (2 Kings 5:13); but believers give all the glory to Christ, saying, “This is the Lord’s doing; and it’s marvellous in our eyes” (Psalm 118:23). He’s done it all!

The law says, “This do, and live.” The gospel says, “Believe and live!” This is the only possible way for life to come to those who have broken God’s law, and are condemned by it. Salvation is of faith that it might be by grace (Rom 4:16). Faith has been described as “the venture of a perishing soul upon Christ.” If you can say to the Lord Jesus: “All my trust on thee is stayed, all my help from thee I bring,” that is faith; and Jesus testifies, “Thy faith hath saved thee” (Luke 7:50). We are “justified by faith” (Rom 3:28), but faith does not justify as a work of goodness, but simply as a recipient of promised mercy. Thomas Watson said,

If a man had a precious stone in a ring that could heal, we should say the ring heals; but properly it is not the ring, but the precious stone in the ring that heals. Thus faith saves and justifies, but it is not any inherent virtue in faith, but as it lays hold on Christ it justifies.

The office of faith is not to work, but to cease from working. The gospel message to the unconverted is to cease from every effort and look away to Christ; in essence: “Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD” (Ex 14:13). Israel’s looking to the brazen serpent was a ceasing from all remedies, and letting health pour itself into the body by the eye. When we look upon an object, we’re not *giving* at all, but simply *receiving* the image in view. The eye of faith is not a giver, but a receiver; it receives Christ and all his saving benefits. To him alone belongs all the glory; we have done nothing. Faith is but the instrument, the medium; Christ alone is the satisfaction and the merit.

Our first business does not have to do with faith, but with Christ; otherwise, we’ve turned faith into some great thing

that we do, that is, into a “work.” Salvation comes not by doing, but by receiving—receiving a work already done, a work effected and finished two thousand years ago by him who “was made sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21).

Look not at your believing. You say, “I feel I cannot believe.” You will never believe if you look first at your believing. We are not inviting people to faith, but to Christ. What’s the difference? If you say you would “like to believe a thing”—you never will. The first thing we are to do is ask: “What is this thing I am to believe?” Then will faith come as the result of that search.

Fix your eyes upon him who “suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). See him, who upon that accursed tree, “redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). Look unto him, “who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification” (Rom 4:25). Gaze for awhile at that One who “made peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20). Take your place at the foot of the Cross looking for a Substitute. That’s where salvation is. Make your way to Mt. Calvary and camp out right there under the Cross, till you can say—

*I stand amazed in the presence,
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how he could love me,
A sinner condemned unclean.*

*Alas, and did my Saviour bleed,
And did my Sovereign die?
Would he devote that sacred head,
For such a worm as I?*

*Was it for crimes that I have done,
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree!*

When Moses lifted up the serpent of brass on that pole, those Israelites were to cease completely from doing anything; their eyes were to be totally directed *away from themselves*. The promise was, “Every one that is bitten, when he

looketh upon it, shall live” (Num 21:8). That was their sole instruction: just look! Nothing else. They were not to calculate the size of the serpent to determine the extent of the venom. They were not to lance the wound, and go about sucking out the poison. They were not to take any antivenom or antibiotics of any kind; they were not to apply a tourniquet, not to dress it, or to wrap it; they were not to watch the swelling, apply an ice pack, or consider the discoloration of their flesh; they were not to call for help from their kinsmen, the doctor, or the priest; they were not even so much as to cast another glance at the wound—there was nothing for them but just to believe God, and cease from all their doing, and all their efforts, and all their anxieties, and *look away!* “If a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld...he lived.” He lived!

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14,15). True faith is not a giver, but a receiver. It’s not an actor, but an onlooker. It’s not a builder, but a beholder. ■

—by Dan Shanks

*Not saved are we by trying,
From self can come no aid;
Tis on the blood relying,
Once for our ransom paid.*

*Tis looking unto Jesus,
The holy One and Just;
Tis his great work that saves us;
It is not try, but trust.*

*No deeds of ours are needed,
To make Christ’s merit more;
No frames of mind or feelings,
Can add to his great store;*

*Tis simply to receive him,
The holy One and Just,
Tis only to believe him,
It is not try, but trust.*

Look and Live!

“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” (Zech 12:10).

The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is that wonder-working rod that brings water out of the rock! The stubborn hearts of the sons of men are conquered at Calvary. True brokenness over sin is found when a sinner sees Christ suffering in his stead. The eye of faith looks on mercy and that thaws the heart. Faith persuades of the love of God, and that love sets us to weeping.

The summit of “glad tidings” to sinners is the Cross of Christ. To see a Saviour laying down his life for the hopeless and the helpless is welcome news to the lost, the ungodly, the hard-hearted, the insensible, the lame, the blind, the halt, and the maimed. Calvary is the key to conviction and conversion. There are too many souls waiting on the Holy Spirit to convict their hearts; but true conviction comes not by waiting, but by looking—looking to him whom your sins have crucified! “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.” It is not, they shall mourn and look, but they shall look and mourn.

*Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
Soon dissolves a heart of stone.*

*While I view thee, wounded, grieving,
Breathless on the cursed tree,
Lord, I feel my heart believing,
That thou suffered there for me.*

In the words of John Bunyan, we have a glorious picture painted of this wonder-working miracle flowing through a glimpse of Calvary. The following two paragraphs and poem are taken from his immortal work – *Pilgrim’s Progress*: