

THE NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE OF LOOKING UNTO JESUS

Isaiah xlv.22 - Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

It was said by Solomon, that "light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun"; and is it not most comely to behold the Sun of righteousness? Yea, the light of the eyes is better than the wandering of the desires. There are two looks that the soul may get; one is of Christ, and the other is of ourselves; and if ye once got a look of Him, I might give you the counsel that Sarah got concerning her husband Abraham, "Let him be to thee a covering of the eyes," Gen. xx, 16. We told you that, in the duty commanded, there are seven things holden forth.

(1) That it is incumbent for all the members of the visible church to look unto Christ for salvation.

(2) That all persons, when Christ begins first with them, have their eyes turned off Him, and on something else.

(3) That we ought to do this immediately, to look unto Him.

(4) That there is such a thing attainable as looking unto Christ immediately for salvation.

(5) That faith is a thing that may be exercised on Christ at a distance. Faith is accompanied with a look, and so it can cast an eye to Christ afar off.

(6) That there are some special times and seasons when a Christian ought to look unto Christ for salvation and seek to be saved by Him.

(7) That the discoveries of Christ that He makes to the soul, are as certain as if we had seen Him with our eyes; therefore, it is called a looking. We shall now show that there is such a thing attainable as looking unto Christ immediately for salvation. For clearing of this, I shall first propose these four considerations. That He is a noble Physician, and can heal all diseases and plagues that a soul can have. I will tell you of ten heart plagues that one look of Christ will heal in you, and set you free from them all.

1st. There is the plague of ignorance, so that you know nothing of God, nor of Jesus Christ; then labour to get a look of Jesus Christ, and that will clear thee and cure thy ignorance, Isa. xxxii, 3, "And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim"; and Psal. xxxiv, 5, "They looked to Him and were lightened," etc. O, but a broad look of Christ would make the mist of darkness to flee far away from us. Now, if this be thine errand (to the table tomorrow), that thou mayest get thine eyes opened, I say, one broad look of the Son of God will be a remedy to thee, and cure thee of the plague of thine ignorance.

2ndly. There is the plague of hardness of heart, which is the plague of many of this generation. I say, one broad look of Christ will heal that, Luke xxii, 61. When Christ turned and looked upon Peter, he remembered himself "and wept bitterly." If thou couldst get one look of Christ, he would make thine eyes rivers of water, and thy head a fountain of tears, as Zech. xii, 10, "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." O but the embracement of a wounded Christ would melt and wound thy heart strongly! O that we could weep tears of blood for our wounding of the Son of God! Believe it, there are many such here that have pierced Him; and now see that you do not bring a spear with you to thrust Him through at this time also.

3rdly. There, is the plague of apostasy and defection from God. Are not our hearts gone a-whoring from Him in all things? And will anything bring us home again, but one broad look of Christ? Then this sore plague will be healed, when Christ will come and stare you in the face, it will make you come home again, Luke xxii, 61. Here is a sad apostasy of Peter, an eminent Christian, both to his spiritual light, his experience and diligence; and what cures all? Even one look of Jesus Christ cures all. Christians, your light, and grace, and experience, and diligence, are exceedingly decayed; and what would heal all this? One look of Christ's face would do it. O for one look of Christ's fair face today to do this!

4thly. The plague of coldness and little love to Christ in exercise. Now, one look of Christ would cure this, Isa. xvii, 7, "At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel." Ye have but low thoughts of Him today; but, O if ye saw Him, then ye would wonder and cry out, "Is it He! Is this undervalued, contemned, and crucified, He!" Yea, a sight of Christ would kindle a glow of love in our hearts to Him that would not be put out again. Cry to Him to heal this plague of coldness.

5thly. There is the plague of self-conceit and pride;" O (says the soul), if I could get my self-pride brought low, then would I sit down and bless Him for One look of Him would do this, Isa. vi, 5, "Mine eyes have seen the Lord"; and what of that? I say, even, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips"; and if we may allude to that, Job vii, 8, "Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not." Job xlii, 5, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." Verse 6, "Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Believe it, the pride of professors speaks their distance from Jesus Christ. Now labour to get a look of Him to heal this plague.

6thly. There is the plague of impenitency. "O, (says the Christian), how shall I be set free from this, that so I may mourn in secret and take up a lamentation for my wrongs done to Jesus Christ? O, for a clear sight of Him." Job

xlii, 5 and 6, "Mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I repent in dust and ashes." One sight of Christ would make you go through all the ten commandments; and ay, when you read them over, ye would weep; and when ye read over that word, Exod. xx, 3, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," ye would sit down and weep over that commandment. What is it that makes us weep so little, but the want of sights of Christ? For a look of Him would be both law and gospel to us.

7thly. The plague of lightness and unstedfastness, so that we cannot bide at one thing a moment. We will have some resolutions tonight, it may be, and some others tomorrow; but all these are as the morning cloud and early dew, they pass away; yet one look of Christ would heal this, Psalm xvi, 8, "I have set the Lord always before me," and what of that? - 'therefore I shall not be moved.' One sight of Christ would make us cry out in humility, "Our mountain stands strong." O Christians, what can ye compare yourselves unto? There is nothing we can be compared unto for instability.

8thly. There is the plague of little growth. Believe it, nowadays Christians are like old merchants, Christians are like old traders that are fallen back, that cannot trade, but live upon their old stock. Now, one look of the Sun of righteousness would heal this plague, as Mal. iv, 2, "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." And what of that?

O great of that, "and ye shall grow up as calves of the stall." But, if this question were put home to us all round about, "When saw ye Him last?" we could not answer one word.

9thly. There is the plague of worldly-mindedness, and love to the things of a present life. O (says the Christian), I would fain be like the kirk in Rev. xii, 1, "that had the moon under her feet," that is, the world. "The world and victory over it is what I want." And also, II Cor. iv, 18, "We look not at the things which are seen," says the apostle. What ails you, Paul, at the things that are seen? "Even I have another thing to Look unto" (says he), that is, "the things which are eternal." Christians, your love to things in the world speaks your great distance from God, and your little looking to Jesus Christ.

10thly. There is the plague of the dominion of our predominant sins amongst us. "O (says the Christian), what would heal me of that? In effect, I know no predominant sin but it is an idol. Now, what would heal me of that ill?" Even one look of Jesus Christ will do it, Isa. xvii, 7, compared with the 8th verse, "At that day shall a man look to his Maker," and what of that? Verse 8, "And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made." What would make this place the grave of our idols? One sight of Jesus Christ would even make a clean sweep of them; one look of Him would heal all their plagues.

And here now I shall clear this a little, what it is to look unto Jesus Christ, and it doth comprehend these four things. (1) A soul, turning away its eyes from all its other idols, and to pray that prayer, to turn away his sight and eyes from all other things beside God, (2) To be convinced of his lost estate without Christ and of his inability to help and save himself out of that lost and hopeless estate. (3) When the soul is under the conviction of all this, to cast up his eyes to Jesus Christ in this case; for, believe it, our eyes pray to him when we cannot speak; yea, tears have a voice unto God: yea, when we can do none of these, our breathing has a voice unto God and He counts it prayer, Lam. iii, 56, "Hide not thine ear at my breathing." (4) It comprehends this - for a soul to wait upon God and depend on Him for an outgate from soul-straits or troubles, either inward or outward; see Psalm cxlv, 15, "The eyes of all wait on thee," etc. O will ye cast up your eyes to Him and say, "O Master, Son of God, save me lest I perish!" But, in the next place,

II. Consider this to provoke you to look unto Him, "All ye ends of the earth look unto me, and be ye saved," says my text. Believe me, there are many that He calls to look to Him, and I charge you to answer to your name when ye hear it called upon, as ye shall answer to Him at the great day.

And, 1st. All that are weary, we call you to look unto Christ. Are there none here that are weary? Deny not

your name, we obtest (adjure) you to look unto Him, search your bosom, answer the call if this be your name.

2ndly. Heavy laden. Are there none here called by this name and that are groaning under the power and stirring of a body of death? O embrace this call and look unto Him! Are there none here called heavy laden? O do they not call you so! Old and young, is not this your name, will ye answer? I obtest you to look unto Him.

3rdly. Are there none here called naked? Are there none here that are without the righteousness of Christ to clothe them with? Are there none here who have any necessity of Jesus Christ? Mistake not your name, but answer to it, as ye would not come under the eternal curse of God, we call you to look unto Jesus Christ and embrace Him.

4thly. Are there none here called poor? Are there none here destitute of grace and all the excellent gifts of Heaven? As ye would not be declared rebels to Christ, answer to your name and embrace the call.

5thly. Are there none here called foolish, blind and ignorant? Yea, are there none such here that are destitute of the saving knowledge of the Most High? Come to Him, "I counsel thee to buy of me eye-salve and gold tried in the fire," Rev. iii, 18. This is my counsel to you this day, that ye come to Him and embrace Him.

6thly. Are there none here called thirsty? Will ye answer

to your name, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," Isa. lv, 1. O come ye thirsty to the waters of life; or will ye be like Hagar, to cast away the child of hope for thirst beside the waters? Now, will ye answer to your name, we obtest you? Are there none so called? Are there none in this side of the house, nor in that side of the house? O will ye not answer? We pray you, embrace Christ.

7thly. Are there none here called money-less folk? But who are these? Even these that have no righteousness of their own and have no confidence in the flesh, or doing of duty, or in their own light, or in their own gifts. Now, I say to such, will ye look to Christ for salvation?

8thly. Are there none here called willing? And, if this be not your name, I know not what it will be. "Whosoever will, let him come," etc. Is it not your will to come; now, is not your name in all these? Then,

9thly. Are there none called strangers to God here? Now, if this be thy name, here thou art commanded to look unto the Son of God. Now, have you missed your name among all these? Cursed be the person (in eating and drinking) that has not his name among all these, and hath his name here and will not answer to it. This is the great proclamation of peace that we proclaim, in the first day, of the feast, that this roll that we have called would look unto Christ. Old atheist, answer to thy name. This is the roll that our Master has sent us to call; and, who knows

if ever this roll shall be called amongst you again. Now, there are none here, but they have heard their names called on. Will ye answer me? Are ye deaf? It shall cost the person dear that will not answer. He shall be forced to answer one day, when he shall be cried unto, "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire"; and, when this question comes to be asked at thee, that was asked at Adam, "Adam, where art thou?" Then shalt thou not be able to avoid answering. Thou shalt be forced to answer then, when all these curses shall be read in your hearing, saying, "Cursed be the man that would not take Christ and serve Him"; and all the congregation shall say Amen. "Cursed be the man that despised Me"; and all the congregation shall say Amen. "Cursed be the man that loveth anything better than Christ"; and all the people shall say Amen. O think ye that ye shall escape then? Will ye read these two places and consider them?

(1) Read Job xxxi, 14, "What then shall I do, when God riseth up? And when He visiteth, what shall I answer Him?" Consider what thou wilt do when God riseth up, and chargeth thee to answer for treading Christ under thy feet.

(2) Consider and read that place, Isa. x, 3, "What will ye do in the day of visitation? To whom will ye flee for help? And where will ye leave your glory?" Is there any city of refuge to hide thee in from Christ when he cometh and reckoneth with thee? If Christ were to come through

this house tomorrow, and to read over all your names that are under- valuers of Him, there would be few left behind. I shall say now unto thee, if thou betrayest the Son of God with a kiss, O shall there be such a traitor at Bothwell-feast* to do such an evil turn to the Son of God! O will ye look unto Him for salvation!

III. Consider this to provoke you to look unto Christ, that He is the most excellent physician that ever was. He has four singular properties of a physician, that no physician in the world beside Him has. 1st. He can cure all diseases with a look and no physician in the earth can do so but He. Now, will ye undervalue such an easy cure as this? 2ndly. He can cure all diseases by His word;"speak the word, and thy servant shall be whole," says the centurion. Now, no physician can do so but Christ. 3rdly. He can heal all diseases by a touch of the hem of His garment: "If I might touch but the hem of His garment, I shall be whole," saith faith, and no physician can do so but Christ. 4thly. He can heal all diseases by His shadow. Never a physician in the world can cure like Him; therefore look unto Him, for there must be much begging, but little buying. Ye must beg much, but ye must not think to buy anything from Him, for He cures for nought; and if ye be willing, ye shall need to do no more, but ask and have from Him, Isa. lv, 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat ;yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

IV. Consider this, that Christ is exceedingly importunate and serious, to have you looking unto Him for salvation; Song iv. 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, (says Christ), my love, my dove, my fair one"; that is, come with me from the places of estrangement; withal it says, come from your beastly lusts and natural estates, from the lions' dens. See Isa, lxxv, 1, "I said, behold me, behold me, to a nation that was not called by my name"; the thing is doubled because it is certain. Now, will none of these things move you to look unto Him? O look unto Him for salvation, and let these considerations that we have named move you to this.

Now, in the second place, I shall propose some evidences of the persons that never looked to Christ for salvation. 1st. These that never mourned for sin, for these that look to Christ, mourn for Him whom they have pierced by their sins, Zech. xii, 10, "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." 2ndly. Was never Christ 's absence your burden? Then thou art a traitor to the Son of God, and an enemy to the cross of Christ. Are there any such here, that never mourned for the body of death in themselves, nor yet for an absent Christ? Then they never looked to Him for salvation. 3rdly. These that give not Christ the pre-eminence in all things, and he that loveth his idols more than Christ; for he that looks to Christ has respect to Him above all things, Isa. xvii, 7, and see also Acts vii, 56. Behold, says

Stephen, he could not speak without wondering and crying, behold! What ails you, Stephen, to wonder so? Even, says he, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God"; he got a look of Christ, and he wonders at Him. Will many of you see the like of this tomorrow? I say if you get a look of the Son of God, ye will esteem Him above all things that ever ye saw. 4thly. Ye never got a look of Christ, that never knew what it was to discern when Christ was present, and when He was absent. O but a person that has looked to Christ can tell these things well; they can write a weekly journal of Christ's motion, so to speak. The spouse in the Canticles can write this journal well, Song ii, 3, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." This is the news of one time, but what news the next week? O sad news and a sad journal, Song iii, 1, "I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not." If ye have looked unto Christ, ye can tell, "Such a day I was in the spirit, and such a day I sat by the river Chebar, and had such a piece of communion with God." But thou that knowest nothing of this in less or more, thou hast never looked unto Christ for salvation. 5thly. These that were never put off their own righteousness, these who could never be taken off from trusting in the covenant of works; and could never say this, if I go to heaven, I must sing that song, Psalm cxv, 1, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory." If thou never won to this, to be dug out of thine own righteousness, and to sing the song of Christ,

thou never lookedst to Him for salvation.

Now, in the third place, we shall speak to this, that a person may be very near Christ, and yet not know of it: John xx, 15. Mary supposed Christ to be the gardener. Now there may be four or five reasons for it. 1st. Fear and anguish of spirit, Luke xxiv, 37. The disciples were terrified and aifrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit when Christ appeared unto them. And likewise, when they saw Him walking on the sea, they knew Him not; so fear may make a soul misken Christ, when He is at their hand. A 2nd reason is, they would so fain have Christ, that when they see Him, they cannot believe it is He. Even like a loving wife whose husband hath been long absent, when she sees him, she can scarce believe that it is he, she would fain have it true; as Jacob would not believe that Joseph. was alive; and Luke xxiv, 41. It is said of the disciples that they believed not for joy. Yea, sometimes they will say folk are mad that tell them good news, they would so fain have it true, and yet think it impossible: Acts xii, 15, these that were in Mary's house said that the maid was mad when she told them that Peter was standing at the door knocking. 3rdly. Their mistakes of Christ makes them misken Him, that they cannot know Him. 4thly. Christ will sometimes be very near us, and He will close our eyes so that we cannot see to know Him: Luke xxiv, 16. It is said of the two disciples that were going to Emmaus, that their eyes were holden, that they should not know Him. 5thly. If Christ alter the way

of His manifestations, we are presently mistaken; yea, if He but change His clothes, we will misken Him. The kirk did not know Christ because He was clothed with red garments, Isa. lxiii, 1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" There Christ comes very near folk, and yet they knew Him not.

In the fourth place, we shall obviate some objections that might be made.

Objection 1 "But I fear I have never looked to Christ, because I knew not the time when I did it."

Ans. 1. Canst thou say that word of the blind man, that I was blind once, but now I see? If thou canst say this, thou art happy, though thou knowest not when. Ans. 2. Perhaps it is not for thy advantage to know the times and seasons of it; for sometimes He steals away the heart, and makes the soul to say, "Or ever I was aware, He made me as the chariots of Amminadib"; or, as the chariots of my willing people, as it is in the original. Ans. 3. Sometimes the kingdom of God comes not with observation, so that folk may discern it. Ans. 4. It is likewise to be observed, that it is thy duty to be more in searching whether thou hast really looked to Christ, than in searching into the time when thou didst look to Christ for salvation.

Objection 2. "But since my coming to Christ, I think that my corruption has gotten more advantage of me, than the first day that ever I looked to Christ; my corruptions stir

me more than ever they did before."

Ans. 1. I say to thee, that is even as Pharaoh with the Israelites; he made them and their tasks heavier, to make them fear to ask going away from him; it is so with you. The devil puts this in your head, that thou mayest be tempted to lie in the old security and not look unto Christ for an outgate. Ans. 2. Impute not that to thy faith and looking to Christ, for it may be from some other thing that thy corruptions stir more, and not from thy looking to Christ. This is a fault among Christians, that cry when anything goes wrong with them, they impute it aye [always] to their faith, and call it unsound, while it is from some other thing, if they tried it well. Ans. 3. Perhaps thy corruption is not grown worse, but thy eyes are more opened that thou seest it better than thou did before thou lookedst to Christ; and therefore mistake it not. Ans. 4. Wrestle against thy corruption. If thou be really wrestling against it, thou shalt have a period of an outgate; therefore keep thy hands well, and hold a grip with them when thou lovest thy feet; bide aye by it.

Objection 3 ."But I have less delight in duty since I looked to Christ than I had before I looked to Him."

Ans. 1. Take that place for your answer, Heb. x, 32: "After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." It may be by reason of the fight of affliction, that all the duties may grow dry and dreary to thee after illumination, and so it may come to pass, that ye have

less delight in duty than before. Ans. 2. The change of a Christian 's exercise makes great alteration in a Christian; and some Christians will wrestle against absence, that will not wrestle against unbelief, but let unbelief overcome them; and from this, their delight grows less to duty than it was before they looked to Christ. Ans. 3. It may proceed from this, that thou knewest not before thou lookedst to Christ, what it was to delight in duty, but from some carnal principle, and now it is abated and therefore thou mistakest.

Objection 4. "But since I looked to Christ, I think I have lost my tenderness, and am more gross than before." Now to this I answer in these two things.

Ans. 1. Christ is trying thee, if thou lovest Him better than these, if thou lovest Him better than tenderness, if thou wilt bide with Him for a whole heart, when it seems not to be so soft as it was. Ans. 2. Christ does so try thy faith, if ye come to Him because ye are not tender, and it may be ye looked not unto Christ when ye lost your tenderness; which says that ye lippen [trust] more to your tenderness than to Christ; therefore He abates it afterwards, that He may try your faith in this.

Objection 5. "But I have none of these sweet effects that folks use to have after they have looked to Christ, such as light, and joy, and comfort, and consolation. I think, therefore, I am not right."

Ans. Comfort thyself with that word, Psalm Kcvi, 11, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart"; it is sown for you.

Objection 6. "But alas! I fear I deceive myself in the matter of my looking to Christ, because many have deceived themselves with it, and may not I also be deceived."

Ans. 1. Fear and presumption are not always sib [nearly related] together, but are contrary one to another. Ans. 2. Ask always the highway to heaven, and go straight forward in it, till thou be on thy march, and beyond the hypocrite, that thou mayest be out of all doubt of it, and not be beguiled, because many are beguiled. Now, what think ye of it? This is the fourth call that we are sent from heaven with to you; will ye not answer to your name? Will ye say this of it once, I am marked four times for non-compearance [not appearing] these eight days? What say ye to it?

Now, this is the last time that we are to preach upon this text, expectants of heaven by profession, shall this be the answer we shall give for you, that ye are marked for non-compearance? What is your answer: Will you look to Him tomorrow? I say, as He has given us commission, cry, O cry to Him, "O Son of God, come and visit us with thy salvation"; and bring Christ with you, or else come not here. This will be a pleasant kirk tomorrow, if He comes with you; it is Christ that has made the loaves to multiply. If all the saints in heaven were admitted to give

advice to you, they would say, bring Christ with you; yea, Abraham, Enoch, Noah, and the twelve apostles, would all say this; yea, and all that ever were in the banqueting-house would say this, bring Christ here. O Bothwell, shall we say this of you, that ye are sick of love? Is there such a thing among you? If ye had this sickness, it would not be unto death; but there are some here that are sick, loathing of Christ, and that is a sickness unto death; yea, there are some that will be here tomorrow, that Christ will propose these three questions to, when they come here.

Question 1. Friend, how camest thou hither? How durst thou come here without a wedding-garment? O stand in awe that this be not the question. O, but this challenge from the Son of God is dreadful; yea, it has been the challenge of many. O lairds and ladies, take heed to this, I love it not when Christ begins to compliment, and call strangers to God, friends. Question 2. Dost thou betray the Son of God with a kiss? Ye that offer to kiss Christ, what will ye answer to this question, when Christ asks it at you?

Question 3. How durst thou come here, that hast lifted up thy heel against Me? Search yourselves with candles, and try that it be not so with yourselves, lest He come to you awfully, and ask these questions of you. O, but it will be dreadful if he do so! Now, Let the Lord bless this word unto you. Amen.