

Vertical Vision Empowers Horizontal Living

Buster Keaton looking expectantly
"The Navigator" 1924

Vertical Vision is a Word centered, Spirit enabled mindset that is continually looking heavenward (Ge 15:5+), looking expectantly toward Christ (Heb 12:2+), looking toward future grace in eternity (1Pe 1:13+), looking toward your citizenship in heaven (Php 3:20+), looking toward all that is true and honorable and right (Php 4:8+), looking for the city which has foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God (Heb 11:10+, Jn 14:3+), a city which endures forever (Lk 21:33+). And the list goes on...

EXPECTANT Looking

Is a great "Antidote" for

APATHETIC Living

The Holy Spirit desires believers to be heavenly minded, not earthly minded, which is one reason that inspired approximately one of every 20-25 verses to speak directly or indirectly about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is axiomatic that what you are looking for will affect what you are living for. Or stated another way, Who you are looking for (Jesus), will (should) radically impact what you are living for. In short, a heavenly uplook is one of the best antidotes for an earthly outlook. Stated another way vertical vision will motivate horizontal living and godliness. If you are looking for Jesus, the chances are very much increased that you will be living for Jesus. The choices you make each day can and will be radically impacted by such vertical vision.

*Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in';
aim at earth and you get neither."*

C S Lewis - "If you read history, you will discover that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next (ED: AKA "VERTICAL VISION").... They all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in'; aim at earth and you get neither."

Vertical Vision is a simple, but powerful Biblical principle to motivate daily growth in Christlikeness! In Titus 2:13+ Paul says we are to be "looking for the Blessed Hope (Phillips = "the glorious dénouement") and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus." In the preceding passage Paul calls for us (enabled by the Spirit) to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present (passing, temporal) age! If you are *looking* for Jesus to return in Titus 2:13+ (Vertical Vision), you are far more likely to be living for Him, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, and instead *living* sensibly, righteously and godly in this present evil age (Horizontal Living)! If we are continually looking for Him, His Spirit will give us the desire and the power (Php 2:13NLT+) to be continually living for Him. This **future** hope (absolute assurance God will do good to us in the future) empowers **present** behavior. Have you allowed the world to weigh you down and cause you to take your eyes off of His return? Are you living more for your passing pleasure than for His glorious appearing? Don't be downcast. Confess it. Repent. And begin to live as if His return could be today (because it COULD BE TODAY!).

[Dr M R De Haan](#) founder of Our Daily Bread ministry kept a motto on his desk which read '**PERHAPS TODAY!**' You will be amazed at what a difference "**a DAY**" will make in your personal perspective, prerogatives and practices! And all God's people say "Yes! Amen! Maranatha!" Play Dinah Washington's [What a Difference a Day Makes](#) and think about our Bridegroom in place of the secular phrases!

Chrysostom commenting on Titus 2:12 said that "worldly things are things which do not pass over with us into heaven but are dissolved together with this present world. A man is very short-sighted if he sets all his heart and expends all his labour on things which he must leave behind when he quits this world. But an even simpler interpretation of worldly desires is that they are for things we could not show to God."

J C Ryle - The servant of God must surely see that there is only one state of mind which befits the man who believes these things. That state is one of *perpetual preparedness* to meet Christ. The Gospel does not call us to retire from earthly callings, or neglect the duties of our stations. It does not bid us to retire into hermitages, or live the life of a monk or a nun. But it does bid us to live like men who expect their Lord to return! *Repentance* toward God, *faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and *holiness* of conduct — are the only true habitual preparations required. The Christian who knows these things by experience — is the man who is always ready to meet his Lord.

As **Warren Wiersbe** says "While we must not ignore our daily duties, we must be careful to live in the light of eternity. By reminding ourselves daily that Jesus may return before the day ends, we will walk carefully so that we will not be caught unprepared when He comes." (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

Alexander MacLaren rightly said "The apostolic church thought more about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than about death and heaven. The early Christians were looking, not for a **cleft** in the ground called a **grave** but for a **cleavage** in the sky called **Glory.**"

In addition to the frequent passages on Jesus' Second Coming, there are many Scriptures which encourage us to live daily with **Vertical Vision**. Below are some examples, but I am confident that you could add many other passages.

In Colossians Paul shows us that vertical vision is a powerful tool for killing the lusts of the flesh. In Col 2:23 Paul says that fleshly decrees and efforts to corral the flesh "are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no (Greek = absolutely no) value against fleshly indulgence." The original NLT paraphrases it "These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, humility, and severe bodily discipline. But they have no effect when it comes to conquering a person's evil thoughts and desires." In fact "these rules" actually have the opposite effect on our fleshly desires, Paul explaining in Romans 7:5NLT that "When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced sinful deeds, resulting in death." Beloved, can you see the paradoxical effect of trying to keep rules and laws in your own power in an attempt to conquer your fleshly desires? What is the effect in that passage? These rules and laws actually stir up the old flesh nature to seek to break the rule or law. Paul says there is a way to corral those persistent fleshly lusts that rise up in all of us. In Colossians 3:1-2NLT+ Paul gives us a command in the present imperative, calling for this to be our habitual practice, our lifestyle. He writes "Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, **set your sights** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God's right hand in the place of honor and power. Let heaven fill your thoughts ([present imperative](#)). Do not think only about things down here on earth," or as the NAS puts it "**Set your mind** on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth." Can you see Paul's charge for us to live with Vertical Vision? In both Col 3:1 and Col 3:2 he is calling for us to continually live with an uplook, with Vertical Vision. The old Puritan writer Thomas Chalmers would also call this "the expulsive power of a new affection" (see article). What is the expulsive power? Vertical Vision, which supplants and replaces Horizontal Vision.

Paul goes on to show the power of Vertical Vision (expulsive power of a new affection) to enable us (in dependence on the Spirit) to daily, moment by moment, to choose to kill sin, explaining (Paul begins with for a term of explanation) "For you have died and your life is hidden (divine passive and perfect tense = hidden in the past and remaining hidden in Christ in the future forever - so even this verb tense points toward the truth of eternal security) with Christ in God (When? When you were saved = past tense salvation = justification). When Christ, Who is our life (When? Now, in this present life of daily, progressive sanctification = present tense salvation), is revealed, then (When? When we see Christ face to face, the One to which our Vertical Vision has been directed) you also will be revealed with Him in glory (When? When we see Him as in 1John 3:2 = glorification = future tense salvation). Therefore (term of conclusion = based on the great truths Paul has just stated in Col 3:1-4) **consider** (command in the aorist imperative = "Just Do It!" motivated by the truth of Col 3:1-4 and empowered by the Spirit of Truth) the members of your earthly body as dead to (KJV = Mortify! NIV = Put to death) immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry." (Col 3:3-5)

While we could say much more about this great passage from Paul, the upshot is that **Vertical Vision** functions to motivate godly **Horizontal Living**. And so we see that true Vertical Vision is not being so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good, but to the contrary is of great earthly good, for it encourages us to discipline ourselves for godliness, Paul explaining that " bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (1Ti 4:8). And so Vertical Vision positively impacts our present and our future!

Outlook determines **outcome**;
and when your **outlook** is the **uplook**,
then your **outcome** is secure
-- Warren Wiersbe

WATCHING AND WAITING - The following are a "string of pearls" taken from God's breathed Word (2 Ti 3:16+). May God our Father Himself, by His Holy Spirit, speak truth to your innermost being regarding the mind renewing, heart reviving power of His Word of "**Vertical Vision**", in the Name of Jesus, the Living Word. Amen

This thought would give me hope, and through my struggle I would eagerly wait until my change comes. I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. And so my soul waits for the Lord more than the watchmen for the morning; indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from

every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. So I will wait for the LORD Who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob. I will even look eagerly for Him. I will watch expectantly for the LORD. I will wait for the God of my salvation, waiting expectantly for God's Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, Who delivers us from the wrath to come. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting eagerly for the hope of righteousness, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ (Who promised) "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done." Maranatha. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Job 14:14, 19:26, 27, Ps 130:6, Titus 2:13-14, Isaiah 8:17, Micah 7:7, 1 Th 1:10, Phil 3:19-20, 1 Cor 15:51-52, 1 John 3:2, Gal 5:5, 1 Cor 1:7, Rev 22:12, 1 Cor 16:22-24)

MARANATHA!

OUR LORD, COME QUICKLY!

"VERTICAL VISION"

VERSES

Beloved are have you losing heart, growing tired and weary in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation? We all have times in our life when dark days come upon us. If you are in one of these times now, let me encourage you to lift your gaze from your temporary struggles and earthly distractions, focusing instead on God's promises and eternal glory.

1 Peter 1:13+ Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, **fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** (Where is your hope -- vertical or horizontal?)

Hebrews 12:1-2+ Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the Author and Perfecter of faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Where are your eyes fixed beloved - on Jesus or on the world which is passing away and even its lusts - 1Jn 2:17+?)

Psalm 25:15 **My eyes are continually toward the LORD**, For He will pluck my feet out of the net. (**APPLICATION** - David implies our feet will get caught in the "nets" of this world, but if we maintain "vertical vision," His Spirit will enable godly "horizontal living!")

2 Timothy 4:8+ in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (**APPLICATION** - Faithfully enduring life's challenges with a focus on the eternal reward awaiting in God's presence will energize "horizontal living.")

Matthew 24:42+ "Therefore **be on the alert**, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

Matthew 25:13+ **"Be on the alert** then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

Mark 13:33+ **"Take heed**, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come.

Mark 13:37+ "What I say to you I say to all, **Be on the alert!**"

Luke 12:37+ (read this commentary note describing one of the most incredible promises in the Bible) "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.

Luke 12:40+ "You too, **be ready**, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

Luke 21:36+ "But **keep on the alert** at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Romans 8:18+ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (**APPLICATION** - Ask God to enable you to view present challenges through the lens of God's promised future glory. This would be a great verse to treasure in your heart as a "balm" when you are suffering. cf 2Co 4:17+)

1 Corinthians 16:13-14+ **Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong** (all 4 are commands in aorist imperative calling for continual need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey) Let all that you do be done in love.

Philippians 3:13-14+ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (**APPLICATION** - Seek daily to maintain a forward-focused mindset centered on Christ's calling and the future glory in His presence.)

Philippians 3:20-21+ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (**APPLICATION** - Maintain a Pilgrim Perspective!)

1 Timothy 4:7-8+ But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline** (present imperative see our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey) yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (**APPLICATION** - Discipline yourself now with an eye of your future "R.O.I." [Return On Investment])

2 Timothy 4:7-8+ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Hebrews 11:9-10+ By faith he (ABRAHAM) lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; 10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Hebrews 13:14+ For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. (**APPLICATION** - Acknowledge the temporary nature of this world and instead long for God's eternal kingdom.)

1 Peter 4:7+ The end of all things is near; therefore, **be of sound judgment** and **sober spirit** for the purpose of prayer. (two commands in aorist imperative calling for continual need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey)

James 5:8+ You too **be patient**; **strengthen** your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. (both are commands in aorist imperative calling for continual need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey)

2 Peter 3:11-12+ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought (dei = must = speaks of necessity! Present tense = continually, habitually calling for continual need to depend on the Holy Spirit) you to be (Present tense) in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for (prosokao in the Present tense) and hastening (speudo in Present tense) the coming of the day of God, because (TERM OF EXPLANATION - WHAT IS PETER EXPLAINING?) of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

2 Peter 3:14+ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

1 John 2:17 And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 2:28+ Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

1 John 3:2-3+ Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Revelation 22:20+ He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Daily Light on the Daily Path Vertical Vision

We look not at the things which are seen ...

while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 1

For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. 2

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. 3

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. 4

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 5

"There the wicked cease from raging, And there the weary are at rest. 6

For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 7

and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." 8

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 9

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 10

1 2Co 4:18; 2 Heb 13:14; 3 Heb 10:34; 4 Luk 12:32; 5 1Pe 1:6; 6 Job 3:17; 7 2Co 5:4; 8 Rev 21:4; 9 Rom 8:18; 10 2Co 4:17;

Here is a great hymn by J. Oatman that could serve as a theme song for "Vertical Vision"...

Higher Ground

[\(listen to beautiful vocal\)](#)

I pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

I want to scale the utmost height
And catch a gleam of glory bright
But still I'll pray till heav'n I've found
Lord lead me on to higher ground

Refrain

***Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on Heaven's table land,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.***

My heart has no desire to stay
Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
Though some may dwell where those abound,
My prayer, my aim, is higher ground.

Refrain

I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.

Refrain

I want to scale the utmost height
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray till Heav'n I've found,

"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Refrain

--J. Oatman, Jr., alt.

RESTING upon the "wind" of God's Spirit, one may soar to heights unattainable by "flapping" the "wings of human endeavor."

VERTICAL VISION EXAMPLES IN LUKE'S GOSPEL

I know at 77 my time is short on this earth compared to most of you reading and so what struck me in Luke's Gospel was the **"vertical vision"** of God's people which **compelled** and **impelled** their **"horizontal living,"** that **uplook** which affected their **outlook** and ultimately their **outcome**. And Dr Luke beautifully **"bookended"** his Gospel with descriptions of saints who were looking up and living for the future, not the present. The practice and pattern of these godly saints challenges me to imitate them for they were looking with spiritual eyes while most of Israel was spiritually blind, which sounds a lot like the culture we are now experiencing in America!

I cannot say it better than Luke said it and here are his 4 examples of "vertical vision"...

(1) Luke 2:25+ And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking (prosdechomai in present tense) for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Looking is the verb [prosdechomai](#) which means to look with earnest expectation, to receive to one's self, to receive into companionship, to look forward to some event, in this context to the arrival of some Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. The verb has the idea of putting out the "welcome mat" for the expected special Guest. The verb is in the present tense which describes this as Simeon's daily, continual practice. We don't know how long he had been looking, but clearly his looking impacted his living -- righteous and devout. Indeed, it always does (or should) -- if I am looking for the Messiah to return any day (as Simeon was looking for the first coming any day), I am much more likely to be motivated to live for Him in the power of the Spirit Who was also upon Simeon.

(2) Luke 2:38+ At that very moment she ([Anna the prophetess](#) - Lk 2:36, 37+) came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were (present tense continually) looking ([prosdechomai](#)) for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Dr Luke uses the same verb for looking to describe the believing Jewish remnant in Israel who were looking for the Redeemer. They were habitually looking for the redemption (the Redeemer Who would accomplish the redemption). The **NLT** says Anna "talked about Jesus to everyone who had been waiting for the promised King to come and deliver Jerusalem." I am challenged to emulate Anna's passion to continually proclaim the promised King I am looking for.

(3) Luke 23:50-51+ And a man named [Joseph](#), who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting (again the verb [prosdechomai](#) in present tense) for the kingdom (and King) of God.

So from the cradle (Luke 2) to the cross, from the womb to the tomb (Luke 23) there were godly saints looking eagerly for the Messiah and choosing to live righteously for Him (enabled by the Holy Spirit) (See Remnant of Israel). It seems Luke wants to leave us with the vital truth that Who you are **looking for** will dramatically impact Who you are **living for**. So once again I am challenged by the Bible's repeated call to live this short "horizontal" life with "vertical vision." As John says "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." (1Jn 2:17+)

(4) There is one more beautiful use in Luke's Gospel of the same verb ([prosdechomai](#)) and it is in the context of one of the most incredible passages (to me) in all of God's Word. It comes from the lips of our Lord Himself in the context of describing a spiritual heart checkup, regarding earthly/temporal treasure versus heavenly/eternal treasure. Luke quotes our Lord...

Luke 12:33-40+ **"S**ell ([aorist imperative](#)) your possessions and give to charity; **m**ake ([aorist imperative](#)) yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. 34 "For (term of explanation explaining why obey the commands just given) where your **treasure** is, there your **heart** will be also. 35 **"B**e dressed ([present imperative](#) - only possible by

continual reliance [on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) in readiness, and *keep your lamps lit* (cf Mt 25:7-13). 36 "Be like men who are **waiting** ([prosdechomai](#) in present tense - as their lifestyle) for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that (term of purpose - purpose of practicing "vertical vision") they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. 37 "**Blessed** are those slaves ([doulos](#)) whom the master ([kurios](#) translated "Lord" >600x in NT) will find on the alert ([gregoreuo](#) in present tense ~ "ever ready") when he comes; truly (AMEN - speaks of strong affirmation of what follows, probably because it is in the category of "unbelievable!") I say to you, that he will gird himself *to serve*, and have them recline at the table (views the end-time messianic banquet Lk 13:29+; Lk 14:15-24+; Lk 22:27-30+; Rev 19:9+), and will come up and **wait** ([diakoneo](#) used of a waiter of tables) on them. 38 "Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third (Roman time - 9 pm -3 am or 10 pm - 6 am Jewish time, but either way at night when one is least alert!), and finds *them* so, **blessed** are those *slaves*. 39 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 40 "You too, be ready (present imperative - again a call to rely continually on the Spirit to obey); for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

Someone has called this the greatest promise in the Bible. Jesus describes a double blessing for those who have "vertical vision" and are waiting expectantly for Messiah's return, those saints who are ever ready and ever on the alert even in the late hours of the night (cf Ro 13:11,12+), because for them (in an act I would not believe if it were not in God's inspired, inerrant Word) the Lord will gird Himself and serve us, giving us His perfect example of not having come to be served but to serve (Mk 10:45+, Jn 13:14-17). Oh, to be found living like [Simeon](#), [Anna the prophetess](#), the believing Jewish remnant, and [Joseph of Arimathea](#), always looking toward the eastern sky, always living for HIm, thinking this could be the glorious day that we see Him face to face! Maranatha, O come Lord. Amen

John MacArthur - This remarkable statement pictures Christ, at His return, ministering as a servant to believers. In the future, believers will be honored and rewarded when Jesus Himself serves them at the great heavenly banquet (Luke 12:37). Even that, however, will be the result of His grace. Never, either in this world or in heaven, will believers merit anything God lavishly gives them.

Robert Stein - The image of the "Lord" serving his servants at the parousia is unexpected and powerful. How blessed indeed are those whom the Lord will serve when he returns! (New American Commentary – Volume 24: Luke)

Darrell Bock - Jesus will be so pleased with those who wait for him that he will serve them at the great banquet table, which pictures final eschatological blessing (Luke 13:29; 22:30; Rev. 19:9)

VERTICAL VISION IN LUKE 16:9+ - Finally there is one other passage that indirectly relates to vertical vision in the sense that if we are looking into eternity, it will prompt certain actions in time. Luke describes this is Luke 16:9 quoting Jesus Who declares "And I say to you, **make** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness (money is neutral but this description refers to how it is often used in a fallen world), so that (term of purpose) when (not "if" but "when" - money will no longer be relevant in the future) it fails, they will (prophetic promise) **receive** ([dechomai](#) - "put the welcome mat out for") you into the eternal dwellings (refers to our future in heaven, thus the allusion to "vertical vision")."

So how can we in time apply this passage so that it impacts our eternity and our "welcome" by others? Clearly we can give of our money, but we can also "**make friends**" by giving of our time in interceding for souls of those who are lost. God's Spirit used this verse to remind me to renew my praying daily for the **Unreached People Groups** using the daily email sent from [Joshua Project](#). Prior to this reminder from our Lord Jesus, I had become somewhat lackadaisical in doing this, but Jesus' command reminded me to **trust and obey** and the way to obey and make friends who will welcome me into eternity was to pray daily for the Unreached People Groups. I am absolutely 100% convinced that I will see saints from each of the people groups I (and 1000's of others) have been praying for, because of God's sure word in Revelation 5:9+ says "And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from **EVERY tribe and tongue and people and nation** (i.e., **EVERY UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP!**)."

THOUGHT - Heaven and earth will pass away but not God's **Word** nor God's **people** - both endure eternally. So my encouragement to you dear brothers and sister in Christ is to redeem the time today to store up for yourselves treasure in heaven (Mt 6:20+) by daily praying for an **Unreached People Groups**. Dr John Piper used this same material to pray daily with his family for the unreached peoples. You will not regret this Spirit energized discipline of grace throughout eternity!!! At the time of this writing (11/18/2022) the people group of the day are the Muslim Thai in Thailand numbering 1,364,000 and NOT ONE SINGLE KNOWN BELIEVER. Revelation 5:9 guarantees there will be one or more believers from this people group and we have the incredible privilege of participating in their redemption through intercession. Don't miss this opportunity of a

lifetime! Here is the link to Joshua Project -- <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday> -- you can set up an email describing the hidden people group of the day and also receive a reminder on your phone if you forget to pray for the people group that morning. Praying for these lost souls takes only a few moments in time, but will "make friends" who will welcome you into eternity! May our Father, by His Spirit give you "vertical vision" so that you seek to "make friends" for eternity, doing so for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

PSALM 42:6, 11

Psalm 42:6 O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

Therefore - Always be alert to this **term of conclusion** asking what it is it "there for?" Some uses will be very obvious as in the present passage, but other uses will not be so obvious and will force you to re-read the preceding context to determine what the writer is concluding. In this case, the psalmist concludes that his inner feeling of hopelessness calls for immediate action. His "antidote" for those "horizontal" thoughts ("**horizontal vision**") that drag him down is to inject "vertical" thoughts ("**vertical vision**"). In other words, instead of focusing on the problem, focus on the Problem Solver. Instead of looking horizontally (in a sense at what one sees on an earthly plane), make the choice to set the eyes of your heart vertically, looking at heavenly things. The first is temporal and passing, while the second is eternal and forever.

When you come to that place in your life where you discover that Jesus is all that you have, you then discover that Jesus is all that you need!

I remember Thee - This is an act of faith, for faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1+). The psalmist cannot literally "see" God, but in choosing to "remember Thee" he is choosing by faith to "see" God.

As Paul said now in these mortal, temporal bodies, "we walk by faith, not by sight." Indeed, earlier Paul had written "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen ("**horizontal vision**"), but at the things which are not seen ("**vertical vision**"); for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18+)

Other passages on Vertical Vision

For momentary, light affliction (horizontal living) is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison (vertical vision), while we look not at the things which are seen (horizontal vision), but at the things which are not seen (vertical vision); for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18+)

I remember Thee - This is one key to battling recurring despair, despondency or depression. What does the psalmist remember about God? He does not specifically say in this verse but read the following lines (especially Psalm 42:8). The **what** is not as important as the **Who!** When we set our minds on the things above ("**Vertical Vision**" - Col 3:2-note cp Col 3:1-note), the things of this world (including despair) "will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." ([Pause and sing "Turn Your Eyes on Jesus"](#)) Peter says it this way "Therefore, gird (prepare) your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, **fix your hope** (aorist imperative) completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ ("**Vertical Vision**"). (1 Peter 1:13+) So say to your soul, "Soul, remember God. Remember His attributes. Remember His power. Remember His imminent return! Remember that your Jesus Who holds the entire universe together by the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3-note) is able to hold you in the midst of the raging storm! Jesus came to turn our darkness into light and to transform our despair into hope. Indeed, the One Who holds the universe intact will never lose His grip on you!"

Psalm 42:11 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? **Hope in God** (VERTICAL VISION), for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

- Recommended Resource for Restoring Your "Vertical Vision" - [Fix Your Eyes on Jesus by Anne Ortlund](#)

LAMENTATIONS 3:18-25

We see this same spiritual dynamic at work in the life of the "weeping prophet" Jeremiah who recorded...

So I say, "My strength has perished, And so has my hope from the LORD."

19 Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness.

20 Surely my soul remembers And is bowed down within me.

21 This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. (Vertical Vision)

22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning; Great is Thy faithfulness.

24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him."

25 The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him.(Lam 3:18-25)

Notice how Jeremiah recalled to his mind truths about God, specifically His ceaseless lovingkindnesses (plural - cp the psalmist's remembrance of Jehovah's lovingkindness in Ps 42:8) and His never failing compassions (plural!) And so in this short passage we see the prophet traverse from the slough of despond ("my hope" perished ~ "**horizontal vision**") to the fountain of hope ("therefore I have hope" ~ "**vertical vision**") because he choose to remember God. He choose to recall that the anchor of God's faithfulness holds firm in the strongest storms! When you are in despair the last place you want to go is to the Word of God (and the God of the Word), but it is then that we must cry out for His help in time of need (just in the nick of time, cp Heb 4:16-note = "appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it" - Amplified), knowing that even the power to cry out is provided by His all powerful Spirit Who will not allow us to be tested beyond what we are able to endure (read 1 Corinthians 10:13-note).

So next time **despair** "knocks", enabled by the Holy Spirit, send Philippians 4:8-9 to "answer the door"....

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, **let your mind dwell** (present imperative - only possible to obey as we surrender to and depend on the indwelling Spirit) on these things ("**Vertical Vision**"). The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, **practice** (present imperative) these things; and the God of peace shall be with you. (Philippians 4:8-9-note)

OTHER SCRIPTURES SHOWING VERTICAL VISION

And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for (present tense = not just occasionally but as your lifestyle, looking daily for - VERTICAL VISION) the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. (Luke 2:25+)

At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for (present tense = not just occasionally but as your lifestyle, looking daily for - VERTICAL VISION) the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:38+)

In Romans 13 **Paul** clearly links **holy looking** with **holy living** writing (carefully observe the many *time sensitive* words or phrases - in **green font**)...

Do this (WHAT? cf Ro 13:10), knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness (CF "DISSIPATION AND DRUNKENNESS" in Lk 21:34), not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But **put on** (aorist imperative - Do this now! Do not delay! With a sense of urgency!) the Lord Jesus Christ (CLOTHE YOURSELVES WITH "GARMENTS BY JESUS!" SPEAKING AND WALKING LIKE HE WOULD, DOING SO BY THE POWER OF HIS SPIRIT), and **make no provision** (**present imperative with a negative** = EITHER STOP DOING THIS OR DO NOT BEGIN) for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (Romans 13:11-14+)

But **seek** (present imperative = command to make this your habitual practice to seek - see our need to depend

on the Holy Spirit to obey) first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (Mt 6:33+)

Looking for (present tense = not just occasionally but as your lifestyle, looking daily for) and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! (2 Peter 3:12+)

Comment: Joni Eareckson Tada asks "Why all the verbs in the present tense? Because God **wants** to get your heart beating with a present-tense excitement, a right-around-the-corner anticipation of Heaven. Isn't that the way strangers on foreign soil are supposed to feel about their homeland?"

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2+)

Comment: Our eyes gaze at that which captivates our heart. If worldly, fleshly desires creep into our heart, they will obscure our moral vision and our ability to see Jesus as we should. Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and the invisible things of eternity is the best way to live in a visible world which is passing away.

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.

— Esther Kerr Rusthoi

When the heart has lost interest in the invisible,
memory is brittle relative to things spiritual.
-- Williams

Corrie Ten Boom said it this way

Look around and be distressed.
Look inside and be depressed.
Look at Jesus and be at rest.

The principle is clear that the more the heaven and longing to see the face of Jesus engages our heart, the less will the passing shadows of the earthly seduce and sink down our hearts. What you are **looking** for will determine what you are **living** for -- are you looking for the visible and temporal or the invisible and eternal?

Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus.

Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.

THOUGHT - Wear are your eyes? On the present, passing pagan world or on the perfect eternal world to come? It makes all the difference in how you meet adversity and difficulty in this present life. See Vertical Vision. May we resolve enabled by the Spirit to emulate **Jonathan Edwards** who wrote...

- Where will all of our worldly enjoyments be, when we are laid in the silent grave?
- Resolved, to live as I shall wish I had done, when I come to die.
- Resolved, to live as I shall wish I had done, ten thousand ages hence.
- **Lord, stamp eternity on my eyeballs!**

Phil Newton - Charles H. Spurgeon, the best-known preacher of the 19th century, faced times of melancholy despair. On one such occasion he was taking a holiday and slipped into a Methodist Church for Sunday worship. He said, "I felt at that time very weary, and very sad, and very heavy at heart; and I began to doubt in my own mind whether I really enjoyed the things which I preached to others. It seemed to be a dreadful thing for me to be only a waiter, and not a guest, at the gospel feast." The man conducting the service was an engineer, and rather than developing his own sermon, he had borrowed one of Spurgeon's. He did not know that the London pastor was in his service. As he preached, Spurgeon commented, "The tears flowed freely from my eyes; I was moved to the deepest emotion by every sentence of the sermon, and I felt all my difficulty removed, for the gospel, I saw, was very dear to me, and had a wonderful effect upon my own heart." He later introduced himself to the shocked speaker, and told him that it was just the

sermon that he needed to hear [C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography: The Full Years, vol 2, 365-366]. If someone like Spurgeon occasionally struggled with doubts due to his bent of personality, do not be surprised if that happens to you. Like Spurgeon, find your assurance once again in the gospel. (Sermon on Matthew)

William Blackstone - from his online free 194 book [Jesus is Coming](#)

A Practical Doctrine

We have asserted that this truth of the coming of the Lord is eminently practical. In proof of this, we here: append the following references, to show how Jesus and the Apostles used the prophecies of His coming again as a motive to incite us.

1. To watchfulness,- Mat. 24:42-44; 25:13; Mark 13:32- 37; Lu. 12:35-38; Rev. 16:15.
2. To Sobriety,- 1 Thes. 5:2-6; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8.
3. To repentance,- Acts 3:19-21; Rev. 3:3.
4. To fidelity,- Mat. 25:19-21; Lu. 12:42-44; 19:12-13.
5. Not to be ashamed of Christ,- Mar. 8:38.
6. Against worldliness,- Mat. 16:26-27
7. To moderation or mildness,- Phil. 4:5.
8. To patience,- Heb. 10:36-37; James 5:7-8.
9. To mortification of fleshly lusts,- Col. 3:3-5.
10. To sincerity,- Phil. 1:9-10.
11. To the practical sanctification of the entire being,- 1 Thes. 5:23.
12. To ministerial faithfulness,- 2 Tim. 4 :1-2.
13. To induce obedience to the Apostle's injunctions,- 1 Tim. 6:13-14.
14. To pastoral diligence and purity,- 1 Pet. 5:2-4.
15. To purify ourselves,- 1 John 3:2-3.
16. To abide in Christ,- 1 John 2:28.
17. To endure manifold temptations and the severest trial of faith,- 1 Pet. 1 :1.
18. To bear persecution for the sake of our Lord,- 1 Pet. 4:13. I
19. To holy conversation and godliness,- 2 Pet. 3:11-13.
20. To brotherly love,- 1 Thes. 3:12-13.
21. To keep in mind our heavenly citizenship- Phil. 3:20-21.
22. To love the second coming of Christ,- 2 Tim. 4:1-8.
23. To look for Him,- Heb. 9:21,28
24. To confidence that Christ will finish the work,- Phil. 1:6.
25. To hold fast the hope firm unto the end,- Rev. 2:25; 3:11.
26. To separation from worldly lusts and to live Godly,- Titus 2:11-13.
27. To watchfulness because of its suddenness,- Lk 17:24-30.
28. To guard against hasty judgment,- 1 Cor. 4:5.
29. To the hope of a rich reward,- Mt. 19:27-28,
30. To assure the disciples of a time of rejoicing,- 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thes. 2:19.
31. To comfort the apostles in view of Christ's departure from them,- John 14:3; Acts 1:11.
32. Practical faith in the second coming, is a crowning grace and assurance of blamelessness in the day of the Lord,- 1 Cor. 1:4-8.
33. It is the principal event for which the believer waits,- 1 Thes. 1:9-10.
34. It is declared to be the time of reckoning with the servants,- Mt. 25:19.
35. Of judgment for the living nations,- Mt. 25:31-46.
36. Of the resurrection of the saints,- 1 Cor. 15:23.
37. Of the manifestation of the saints,- 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:1.-
38. It is declared to be the source of consolation to those who sorrow over the dead who sleep in Jesus,- 1 Thes. 4:14-18...,
39. It is declared to be the time of Tribulation to unbelievers,- 2 Thes. 1:7-9.
40. It is proclaimed every time the Lord's Supper is celebrated,- 1 Cor. 11:26.

Such are some of the uses made of this doctrine in the New Testament. It is employed to arm the appeals, to point the arguments, and to enforce the exhortations. What is there more PRACTICAL in any other doctrine we would that we had space to give the passages referred to in full. But it will be a greater blessing to you, dear reader, if you will go to the Word and search them out.

We have made no distinction between those passages which refer to the Rapture, and those which refer to the Revelation, both

classes being equally used as a motive for the practical purposes mentioned.

The following outline and arrangement of Scripture has been taken principally from a little pamphlet published in London. It is a concise view of the pre-millennial coming, with plain proof-texts of the same, conveniently arranged for reference and study. As the texts cited are necessarily brief, it will be found of great profit to read the context of each in the Word.

We believe it will enable every prayerful reader to apprehend the order of events that pertain to the coming of Christ, both as THE BRIDEGROOM and as THE KING.

Proverbs 23:17-18 HOPE Future-Tense Living - from [Ray Pritchard](#)

Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord. There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off. Proverbs 23:17-18

Envy makes sense if this world is all there is; it makes no sense at all if there is another world to come. If you believe you have “future hope,” you won’t waste time envying sinners, for their present prosperity won’t last forever. Soon enough, they will be judged, but those who fear the Lord have a “future hope” that can never be cut off. In the meantime, believers are to look up to the Lord and look ahead to the promised reward.

to wait on something because you know that the thing you are waiting for will happen because the person you are waiting on is trustworthy.

The word hope in Hebrew means first to wait, then to wait expectantly. The concept is very close to our English word confidence. An expanded definition would be “to wait on something because you know that the thing you are waiting for will happen because the person you are waiting on is trustworthy.”

You have a choice to make. Either you choose to live like everyone else or you choose to wait on the Lord. What credit is it if you trust God because you have a mate, a house, a job, a happy home, a secure future, and good health? What will you do when you lose your mate, your job, your home, your family, your security, your reputation, your connections, and your health? When life tumbles in, what then?

That’s what hope is all about. It’s choosing to put your confidence in God alone. It’s believing that He has answers to questions you can barely understand. It’s coming to the place where you don’t measure your spirituality by your prosperity. It’s finding rest in your soul because you discover that the things you used to crave aren’t so important anymore.

I think it’s important to remember that this hope has both a present and a future component. In Mark 10:29-30, Jesus reminded His disciples that “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.” God will be no one’s debtor. Even in this life, even amid suffering and persecution, we will still find that it was worthwhile to follow Jesus. That’s an important perspective to keep in mind when we see the wicked apparently prospering while the righteous are overlooked. But our blessing is a hundredfold greater because we know the Lord and the wicked don’t. And we are surrounded by fellow believers who are like family to us.

Don’t worry about evildoers. Let them enjoy their little moment in the sun. And don’t waste a moment wishing you could be like them. Put your hope in the Lord and keep on moving ahead. We’ve got it better now, and this is only the beginning.

Father, forgive us for doubting Your promises about the future. Help us to live in the light of eternity. Amen.

- Name four ways the wicked prosper today. List several reasons that God doesn’t judge them right now.
- Can you think of an area of your life where you are being forced to put your trust in God alone?

Vertical versus Horizontal Vision - Years ago, a minister waited in line to have his car filled with gas just before a long holiday weekend. The attendant worked quickly, but there were many cars ahead of him in front of the service station. Finally, the attendant motioned him toward a vacant pump. “Reverend,” said the young man, “sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip.” The minister chuckled, “I know what you mean. It’s the same in my business.” If ours is an eternal perspective, we will gripped by the biblical truth that our brief earthly sojourn is designed to prepare us for an eternal heavenly citizenship. The more we align ourselves with this perspective, the more it will have an impact on our short-term and long-term priorities. (Kenneth Boa)

Abram's Bad Example of Horizontal Vision - Genesis 12:10-20-note gives us an example from Abram's life of choosing

"Horizontal Vision" over "Vertical Vision." As Warren Wiersbe says Abram "moved from confidence to fear. When you are in the place of God's choosing, you don't ever need to be afraid; for faith and fear cannot dwell in the same heart (Isa. 12:2; Mark 4:40). The fear of God is the fear that conquers every fear (Ps. 112; Isa. 8:13); but "the fear of man brings a snare" (Prov. 29:25, NKJV). God had repeatedly said "I will" to Abraham, but now Abraham was saying "They will" (Gen. 12:12, italics added). He took his eyes off the Lord and started looking at people." Abram reasoned within himself, rather than praying outside himself. He feared for his life and forgot his right fear of God. He reasoned that Pharaoh would see Sarai's beauty, covet her and kill him to fulfill his lusts. He forgot that God had given him a promise to bless the world through a seed (descendant) from his and Sarai's line, something that could not have occurred if he were killed! In short, he looked at the (possible) problem instead of looking at his Protector!

Charles Swindoll - Our past is like an art gallery. Walking down those corridors of our memory is like walking through an art gallery. On the walls are all of yesterday's pictures: our home, our childhood, our parents, our rearing, the heartaches, the difficulties, the joys and triumphs as well as the abuses and the inequities of our life. Since Jesus Christ our Lord is the same yesterday and today and forever, then we can take the Christ of today and walk with Him into our yesterday and ask Him to remove the pictures that bring bad or defeating memories. In other words, the Christian can let Jesus invade yesterday and deal with those years of affliction—those years which the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:25–26)—and remove those scenes from the corridors of our lives. I have them. You have them. We need to let Him leave the murals that bring pleasure and victory and take down from the walls those things that bring **despair** and defeat. (David: A Man of Passion and Destiny)

Here is a devotional from [Dennis Fisher](#) that emphasizes the value of "Vertical Vision" over "Horizontal Vision" - [Perspective From The Clouds](#) (Read: Job 3:3-5; 42:5-6) "I have heard of You . . . but now my eye sees You." (Job 42:5) In 1927 the silent film *Wings*, a World War I film about two American aviators, won the first Academy Award for Best Picture. When it was being filmed, production stopped for several days. Frustrated producers asked the director why. He responded: "All we have is blue sky. The conflict in the air will not be as visible without clouds. Clouds bring perspective." He was right. Only by seeing aerial combat with clouds as a backdrop could the viewer see what was really going on. We often wish for blue skies instead of storm clouds. But cloudy skies may reveal God's faithfulness. We gain perspective on how God has been faithful in our trials as we look back on the clouds. At the beginning of his terrible suffering, Job lamented: "May the day perish on which I was born . . . May a cloud settle on it" (Job 3:3-5). His experience of despair continued for a long time until God spoke. Then Job exclaimed, "I have heard of You . . . but now my eye sees You" (42:5). Job had encountered the sovereign Creator, and that changed his perspective on God's purposes. Do clouds of trouble fill your skies today? Sooner than you think, God may use these clouds to help you gain perspective on His faithfulness. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God, give us wings to rise above
The clouds of trial that block the sun,
To soar above gray skies and see
The love and goodness of Your Son.
—Sper

Often the clouds of sorrow reveal the sunshine of His face.

—Jasper

INSIGHT: In Job 3:3-5, we have what many Bible scholars call Job's soliloquy. After a time of quiet agony, the great Old Testament saint breaks his silence and lets out his anguish. He calls for darkness and then destruction to overwhelm him. Instead of seeing God's light-filled and good creation, Job feels he is living in a world of darkness. But in Job 42:5-6, we see the resolution to Job's conflict. Out of the whirlwind, God challenges Job and points to creation as a witness to His reality. Although he is never told that his sufferings are the result of spiritual warfare from the devil, Job submits to the sovereignty of God and experiences restoration.

Dave Branion's devotional "[Out Of The Darkness](#)" is based on Psalm 77:1-15 where Asaph writes "I cried out to God . . . Who is so great a God as our God?" (Psalm 77:1,13). Branion writes "I don't know what desperate situation gripped Asaph, the writer of Psalm 77, but I've heard, and made, similar laments. Over the past dozen years since I lost my daughter, many others who have experienced the loss of a loved one have shared with me heartbreakingly sentiments like these: Crying out to God (Ps 77:1). Stretching empty arms heavenward (Ps 77:2). Experiencing troubling thoughts about God because of horrible circumstances (Ps 77:3). Enduring unspeakable trouble (Ps 77:4). Cowering under the feeling of being cast aside (Ps 77:7). Fearing failed promises (Ps 77:8). Fearing a lack of mercy (Ps 77:8). **But a turnaround occurs for Asaph** in Ps 77:10 through a **recollection of God's great works**. Thoughts turn to God's love. To memories of what He has done. To His marvelous deeds of old. To the comfort of God's faithfulness and mercy. To reminders of God's wonders and greatness. To His strength and redemption. **Despair** is real in this life, and answers do not come easily. Yet in the darkness—as we remember God's glory, majesty, power, and love—our despair can slowly subside. Like Asaph, we can rehearse God's acts, especially the salvation He brought through Jesus, and we can return to

where we once were—resting gratefully in His mighty love. Lord, we cannot fathom the depth of Your character or the wisdom of Your actions when trouble visits us. Help us to inch our way back into Your arms through a rehearsal of Your goodness and a recollection of Your glorious love.

Branon then writes "Remembering the past can bring hope to the present." I would add the qualifier that we must remember the past times when God has moved in our lives, when the hand of the Almighty took hold of our stumbling hand, when in our weakness, we experienced the very real truth that His grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9), etc. In other words like the psalmist say "**Therefore I remember Thee!**" ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The principle is clear that the more the heaven and longing to see the face of Jesus engages our heart, the less will the passing shadows of the earthly seduce and sink down our hearts. What you are **looking** for will determine what you are **living** for -- are you looking for the visible and temporal or the invisible and eternal?

Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus,

Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.

FOCUS- As it relates to renewing out mind

Missionary pilot Bernie May writes,

One of the most difficult lessons to teach new pilots about landing on short, hazardous airstrips is to keep their eyes on the good part of the strip rather than on the hazard. The natural tendency is to concentrate on the obstacle, the danger, the thing he is trying to avoid. But experience teaches us that a pilot who keeps his eye on the hazard will sooner or later hit it dead center.

Bernie May sums it up by saying that experienced pilots focus their attention solidly on the track they want the plane to follow, keeping the hazards in their peripheral vision only.

When Christ and His interests are the focus of our lives, the lure of the old life remains in the corner of our eye, while we aim to land squarely in the center of God's will. What "hazards" sometimes divert your attention from Jesus? What positive, God-honoring actions can you concentrate on doing instead.

Spurgeon writes that

In our Christian pilgrimage it is well, for the most part, to be looking forward. Forward lies the crown, and onward is the goal. Whether it be for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love, the future must, after all, be the grand object of the eye of faith.

Looking into the future we see sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect, and fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Looking further yet, the believer's enlightened eye can see death's river passed, the gloomy stream forded, and the hills of light attained on which standeth the celestial city; he seeth himself enter within the pearly gates, hailed as more than conqueror, crowned by the hand of Christ, embraced in the arms of Jesus, glorified with Him, and made to sit together with Him on his throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with the Father on his throne.

The thought of this future may well relieve the darkness of the past and the gloom of the present. The joys of heaven will surely compensate for the sorrows of earth. Hush, hush, my doubts! Death is but a narrow stream, and thou shalt soon have forded it. Time, how short-eternity, how long! Death, how brief-immortality, how endless! Methinks I even now eat of [Eshcol's](#) clusters, and sip of the well which is within the gate. The road is so, so short! I shall soon be there.

When the world my heart is rending
With its heaviest storm of care,
My glad thoughts to heaven ascending,
Find a refuge from despair.

Faith's bright vision shall sustain me
Till life's pilgrimage is past;

Fears may vex and troubles pain me,
I shall reach my home at last.

Bubbles On The Border - Stuck in a long line at the US-Canada border, Joel Schoon Tanis had to do something to lighten the mood! He reached for his bottles of bubble-making solution, bounded out of the car, and began blowing bubbles. He handed bottles to other drivers too, and he says that "soon there were bubbles everywhere... It's amazing what bubbles do for people." The line didn't move any faster, but "suddenly everyone was happy," Joel says.

"What we see depends mainly on what we look for," said British statesman John Lubbock (1834–1913). A good attitude and the right focus help us to handle life joyfully, even though it doesn't change our circumstances.

Paul encouraged the Corinthians in their trials: "Do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Co 4:18).

So what's unseen and eternal that we can look at? The character of God is an excellent place to focus. He is good (Ps 25:8), He is just (Is 30:18), He is forgiving (1Jn 1:9), and He is faithful (Dt 7:9).

Pondering God's character can give us joy in the midst of our struggles. — by Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The eyes of faith when fixed on Christ
Give hope for what's ahead;
But focus on life's obstacles,
And faith gives way to dread.

—D. De Haan

**When Christ is the center of your focus,
all else will come into proper perspective.**

A Gift Of Hope - He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. —Judges 13:5 - When a powerful typhoon swept through the city of Tacloban, Philippines, in 2013, an estimated 10,000 people died, and many who survived found themselves homeless and jobless. Necessities became scarce. Three months later, while the town was still struggling to dig itself out from the destruction, a baby was born on a roadside near Tacloban amid torrents of rain and strong wind. Although the weather brought back painful memories, residents worked together to find a midwife and transport the mother and newborn to a clinic. The baby survived, thrived, and became a symbol of hope during a time of despair. Forty years of Philistine oppression marked a grim period in Israel's national history. During this time, an angel informed an Israelite woman that she would give birth to a special son (Judg. 13:3). According to the angel, the baby would be a Nazirite—a man set apart to God—and would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (v.5). The infant, Samson, was a gift of hope born in a troubled time. **Trouble is unavoidable, yet Jesus has the power to rescue us from despair.** Christ was born "to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace" (Luke 1:76-79). Lord, help me to see beyond my circumstances and put my hope in You. All authority and power are Yours. Remind me of Your goodness, and let me rest in Your love. Jesus is the hope that calms life's storms. ([Jennifer Benson Schuldt](#)) ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dennis Fisher has written a devotional entitled [God's Enduring Word](#) - Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Matthew 24:35 At the beginning of World War II, aerial bombings flattened much of Warsaw, Poland. Cement blocks, ruptured plumbing, and shards of glass lay strewn across the great city. In the downtown area, however, most of one damaged building still stubbornly stood. It was the Polish headquarters for the British and Foreign Bible Society. Still legible on a surviving wall were these words: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Jesus made that statement to encourage His disciples when they asked Him about the "end of the age" (v. 3). But His words also give us courage in the midst of our embattled situation today. Standing in the rubble of our shattered dreams, we can still find confidence in God's indestructible character, sovereignty, and promises. His enduring Word assures us of His unfailing love. The psalmist wrote: "Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens" (Ps. 119:89). But it is more than the word of the Lord; it is His very character. That is why the psalmist could also say, "Your faithfulness continues through all generations" (Ps 119:90). As we face devastating experiences, we can define them either in terms of despair or of hope. Because God will not abandon us to our circumstances, we can confidently choose hope. His enduring Word assures us of His unfailing love. Thank You, Lord, for the gift of Your Word. Thank You for its truth, its timelessness, and the guidance You give us by that Word. Help us believe and trust everything You say. We can trust God's

All Safe! All Well! - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1 - In January 1915, the ship Endurance was trapped and crushed in the ice off the coast of Antarctica. The group of polar explorers, led by Ernest Shackleton, survived and managed to reach Elephant Island in three small lifeboats. Trapped on this uninhabited island, far from normal shipping lanes, they had one hope. On April 24, 1916, 22 men watched as Shackleton and five comrades set out in a tiny lifeboat for South Georgia, an island 800 miles away. The odds seemed impossible, and if they failed, they would all certainly die. What joy, then, when more than four months later a boat appeared on the horizon with Shackleton on its bow shouting, "Are you all well?" And the call came back, "All safe! All well!" What held those men together and kept them alive over those months? Faith and hope placed in one man. They believed that Shackleton would find a way to save them. This human example of faith and hope echoes the faith of the heroes listed in Hebrews 11. Their faith in the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" kept them going through great difficulties and trials (Heb. 11:1 nkjv). **As we look out upon the horizon of our own problems** (Ed: I call this "horizontal" thinking or "horizontal vision"), may we not despair. **May we have hope through the certainty of our faith in the One Man—Jesus, our God and Savior** (Ed: I call this "vertical" thinking or "vertical vision"). Thank You, Father, for the promise of forgiveness made possible by Jesus. May that promise lighten the darkest of our days. The hope of Jesus shines brightly even on our darkest day. We can take courage and hope from those who have preceded us in the life of faith. The author of Hebrews lists many examples of people who acted in faith despite their circumstances and despite the fact that they had not yet received what "had been promised" (Heb 11:39). This is why Hebrews 11 begins by saying that "faith is the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (J.R. Hudberg) - [By Randy Kilgore](#)

Spurgeon on I remember Thee - Oh, what a mercy it is to be able to look back upon our past experiences of God's mercy! How delightful it is to remember what the Lord was, to us in days gone by, for he is the same God still. When you are like in the great storm, when neither sun, nor moon, nor stars for many days appeared, it is very pleasant to remember that the sun, moon, and stars did shine in the past, and that they will shine forth again. From the little hill I will think of all thy former love, — all the sacred spots where thou hast met with me, all the lonely places where thou hast been my comfort, and all the joyful regions where thou hast been my glory. I will think of these, and take comfort from them, for thou art an unchanging God.; and what thou didst for me aforetime, thou wilt do for me again and yet again. Is it not a blessed thing that, even when he is down, he says, " Oh, my God"? He gets hold of his God. He has lost his company, but he has not lost his God. See—" my soul"- " my God." His God is as much his as his soul is his. He puts them together—" my God "- " my soul." Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonite, from the hill Mizar. Were these places where he was then wandering? He would remember God wherever he was. He would remember happier days—seasons long past when he did walk in fellowship with God. So let us remember how he kept his tryst with us in former days of sorrow,—how he manifested himself unto us as he does not to the world. He will do the same now. Let us be of good courage.

Life's Darkest Moments - An angel touched [Elijah], and said to him, "Arise and eat." —1 Kings 19:5 - Charles Whittlesey was a hero's hero. Leader of the so-called "Lost Battalion" in World War I, he was awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery when his unit was trapped behind enemy lines. When the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was dedicated, Charles was chosen to serve as pallbearer for the first soldier laid to rest there. Two weeks later, it is presumed that he ended his own life by stepping off a cruise ship in the middle of the ocean. Like Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-7), Charles was publicly strong, but in the quiet, post-public moments, his feelings of despair set in. People today frequently face situations bigger than they can handle. Sometimes it's temporary despair brought on by fatigue, as in Elijah's case. He had been part of a great victory over the prophets of Baal (1 Ki 18:20-40), but then he feared for his life and ran into the wilderness (1 Ki 19:1-3). But often, it's more than despair and it's more than temporary. That's why it is imperative that we talk about depression openly and compassionately. God offers His presence to us in life's darkest moments, which enables us, in turn, to be His presence to the hurting. Crying out for help—from others and from God—may be the strongest moment of our lives. Father, grant us the candor to admit to each other that sometimes life overwhelms us. And grant us the courage to help others find help—and to seek it when we need it. Hope comes with help from God and others. ([Randy Kilgore](#))

Remembering Our Father's Words - I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life. —Psalm 119:93 - Jim Davidson was climbing down Mount Rainier when he fell through a snow bridge and into a crevasse (a pitch-black, ice-walled crack in a glacier). As Jim stood bloodied and bruised in that dark ice cave, he reflected on his childhood and recalled how his father had repeatedly reminded him that he could accomplish great things if he pressed through adversity. Those words helped to sustain Jim as he spent the next 5 hours climbing out of that dark ice cave to safety with very little gear and under extremely difficult circumstances. The psalmist seemed to climb out of his own crevasse of affliction and pain by recalling his heavenly Father's words. He admitted that if God and His Word had not sustained him with joy, he would have died in his misery (Ps. 119:92). He expressed full confidence in the Lord's eternal Word (Ps 119:89) and in the faithfulness of His character (Ps 119:90). As a result of God's

faithfulness, the psalmist made a commitment never to forget God's words to him because they had a central part in rescuing his life and bringing him strength. In our darkest caves and moments of affliction, our souls can be revived by our Father in heaven when we recall and fill our minds with His encouraging words. Thinking It Over - What crevasse of discouragement are you currently in? How can you use this time as an occasion to revive your soul by filling your mind and heart with God's Word? Remembering God's words revives our soul. ([Marvin Williams](#))

I Am Not Forgotten - Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. —Psalm 33:20 - Waiting is hard at any time; but when days, weeks, or even months pass and our prayers seem to go unanswered, it's easy to feel God has forgotten us. Perhaps we can struggle through the day with its distractions, but at night it's doubly difficult to deal with our anxious thoughts. Worries loom large, and the dark hours seem endless. Utter weariness makes it look impossible to face the new day. The psalmist grew weary as he waited (Ps. 13:1). He felt abandoned—as if his enemies were gaining the upper hand (v.2). When we're waiting for God to resolve a difficult situation or to answer often-repeated prayers, it's easy to get discouraged. Satan whispers that God has forgotten us, and that things will never change. We may be tempted to give in to despair. Why bother to read the Bible or to pray? Why make the effort to worship with fellow believers in Christ? But we need our spiritual lifelines most when we're waiting. They help to hold us steady in the flow of God's love and to become sensitive to His Spirit. The psalmist had a remedy. He focused on all that he knew of God's love, reminding himself of past blessings and deliberately praising God, who would not forget him. So can we. Lover of my soul, who draws close in the darkest and longest night, please keep me trusting You, talking to You, and leaning on Your promises. God is worth waiting for; His time is always best. All believers go through times of frustration due to unanswered prayer. Yet the Scriptures provide hope for this apparent dilemma. Psalm 13 illustrates the release that grows out of praying through a problem. David asks God four times "how long" he must wait to get an answer to prayer (Ps. 13:1-2). Eventually he understands that his perspective has not been a divine one. He then asks God to "give light to my eyes" so that he can have the strength to endure opposition (Ps. 13:3-4). David redirects his heart to trust in God's unfailing mercy. The Hebrew word for "mercy" here is hesed, which connotes enduring, unfailing, and gracious care. With a new perspective, David now sings of God's goodness with petitions of praise (Ps. 13:5-6). ([Marion Stroud](#))

I See Jesus

by Annie Johnson Flint

I don't look back: God knows the fruitless efforts,
The wasted hours the sinning, the regrets;
I leave them all with Him Who blots the record,
And mercifully forgives, and then forgets

I don't look forward, God sees all the future,
The road that, short or long, will lead me home,
And He will face with me its every trial,
And bear for me the burdens that may come.

I don't look round me: then would fears assail me,
So wild the tumult of earth's restless seas;
So dark the world, so filled with woe and evil,
So vain the hope of comfort or of ease.

I don't look in; for then am I most wretched;
Myself has naught on which to stay my trust;
Nothing I see save failures and short-comings,
And weak endeavors crumbling into dust.

But I look up -- into the face of Jesus,
For there my heart can rest, my fears are stilled.
And there is joy, and love, and light for darkness,
And perfect peace, and every hope fulfilled.

Look up! (J. R. Miller, "Unto the Hills!" A Meditation on Psalm 121)

"I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1-2

It is good always to look up. Thousands of people dwarf their lives, and hinder the possibilities of growth in their souls—by looking

downward. They keep their eyes ever entangled in mere earthly sights, and miss the glories of the hills that pierce the clouds, and of the heavens that bend over them!

A story is told of a boy who one day found a gold coin on the street. Ever after this—he kept his eyes on the ground as he walked, watching for coins. During a long lifetime, he found a good number of coins—but meanwhile he never saw the flowers and the trees which grew in such wondrous beauty everywhere; he never saw the hills, the mountains, the sweet valleys, the picturesque landscapes; he never saw the blue sky. To him, this lovely world meant only a dusty road, dreary and unbeautiful, merely a place in which to look for coins.

This really is the story of the life of most people. They never lift their eyes off the earth! They live only to gather money, to add field to field, to scheme for power or to find pleasure. Or, if their quest is a little higher, it is still only for earthly things. They never lift up their eyes to God! There is no blue sky in their picture. They cherish no heavenly visions. They are without God in the world.

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Colossians 3:1-2

I will look up! (James Smith, "Daily Bible Readings for the Lord's Household")

"In the morning, O Lord, You hear my voice. In the morning I lay my requests before You — and I will look up!" Psalm 5:3

This was the Psalmist's determination in the morning — and it should be ours.

Preserved and protected through the night — we should look up with gratitude, and praise our God for His goodness.

Aware of our dependence and needs — we should look up and beg mercies of our Almighty God for the new-born day.

Sensible of our foes and dangers — we should look up and pray to be kept, guided, and sanctified by our ever-present God.

If we look within — it will dispirit us;
if we look around — it may distract us;
if we look back — it may awaken fears;
if we look forward — it may arouse foreboding!
But if we look UP to God — it will preserve . . .
the head from swimming,
the heart from sinking,
the feet from slipping, and
the hands from hanging down!

Beloved, let us look up!
There our loving Father is!
There our interceding Savior is!
There all our supplies are!
There our everlasting home is!

Let others look where they will, "I will look up!"

If we look up to God in faith — then He will look down upon us in mercy; and looking, He will supply all our needs!

Look up!
(James Smith, "A New Year's Motto" 1865)

"Look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near!" Luke 21:28

The time of his second coming approaches, and it befits his disciples to think of that event, and diligently prepare for it. But if we do not witness the descent of our Lord in the clouds — death will soon come and usher us into his presence; and before that we may be

exposed to many and painful troubles, so that the direction given by our Lord to his disciples may be just suitable, "Then look up!"

We are entering upon a new year, we shall have . . .

- new toils,
- new trials,
- new temptations,
- new troubles.

First, the OCCASIONS to which this advice is applicable. There may be national calamities — such as pestilence, famine, or war; but whatever comes upon the nation, the Christians in it should "look up"

There may be persecution — laborers may lose their jobs, cottagers their cottages, and children many of their comforts, for Christ's and conscience' sake. While the sword of the magistrate is sheathed, the pen, the tongue, the frowning countenance — persecutes some; the withholding employment or custom persecutes others; but if persecution should rage against any of us this year, let us "look up."

Providence may frown and throw us into perplexity and difficulty; losses and crosses may become almost our daily lot; we may think that God is turned against us, and that everything is contrary to us; but when our circumstances are most trying, when our souls are ready to faint within us — then let us remember the Lord has engaged for us by promise and by covenant, and let us "look up."

We may be called to change our residences, and leave dear friends and connections behind us; or, what is worse, our friends may be alienated from us, and turn against us; but if every friend frowns upon us, even if father and mother forsake us, or if we be removed to the ends of the earth — let us remember that our God is the same to us, and that he is ever near us; therefore let us "look up."

If death should enter in at our windows, and take away the desire of our eyes with a stroke; if our parents should die, our children be removed, or our wives or husbands be laid in the grave; though lover and friend be removed far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness, still, whatever death may do — let us determine that we will "look up."

If darkness becloud our evidences, obscure our path, and throw its gloom over our minds; if discouragement brood over our souls, or place stumbling-blocks in our way; if all our past experience appear questionable, and our acceptance with God at present doubtful, still let us not give way or yield to despondency — but let us "look up."

If thrown on the bed of sickness, racked with pain and fainting with weakness; if death stand before us, and the grave appear ready for us; if eternity throws its revealing light upon us, or draws back its curtain to us — let us not tremble, or shake with fear, but let us "look up."

We will now notice —

Secondly, the DIRECTION our Savior gives: "Then look up!"

- Do not look back — as Lot's wife did.
- Do not look within — as too many do.
- Do not look around — as David did.

But "look up!" Look up to God — He is your Father, your Friend, your Savior. He can help you. He will help you. He says, "Look unto Me, and be delivered — for I am God!"

Look up for light to guide you — and He will direct your path.

Look up for grace to sanctify you — and the grace of Jesus will be found sufficient for you.

Look up for strength to enable you to do and suffer God's will — and His strength will be made perfect in your weakness.

Look up for comfort to cheer you — and as one whom his mother comforts, so will the Lord comfort you.

Look up for courage to embolden you — and the Lord will give courage to the faint; and to those who have no might — He will increase strength.

Look up for endurance to keep you — and the God who preserves you will enable you quietly to bear the heaviest burden, and silently to endure the most painful affliction.

Look up for providence to supply you — and the jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run

dry; but God shall supply all your needs, according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Look up in faith — exercising confidence in the Word of a faithful God.

Look up in prayer — asking for what God has graciously promised.

Look up in hope — expecting what you ask in the name of Jesus.

Look up with adoration — and adore the sovereignty, righteousness, and wisdom of God.

Look up constantly — let nothing daunt or discourage you! Rather say, "Our eyes are on the Lord our God until He shows us mercy."

Look up — for this will keep . . .

- the head from swimming,
- the heart from sinking,
- the knees from trembling,
- the feet from slipping, and
- the hands from hanging down!

Well, my friends, what do you say? Will you follow this advice? Will you take this counsel? Will you act upon this direction? He who loves you best, who knows you most, and who always wishes you well — gave it. Take it — and you will never regret it. Act upon it — and you will never repent of it.

It is impossible to say what will happen to us, or what will be required of us this year — but "Look up!" This direction, if properly attended to, will . . .

procure for us all that we need,

secure us against all that we dread, and

make us more than a match for all our foes and fears!

Fellow-Christian, are you fearful? "Look up" and hear Jesus saying to you, "Do not be afraid — I Myself will help you!"

Are you discouraged? "Look up" — and your youth shall be renewed like the eagle's, and fresh light, comfort, and courage shall be given to you!

Are you desponding? "Look up" for Jesus never breaks the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax.

Do not look too much at your sin — look most at the infinitely meritorious blood of God's dear Son!

Do not look too much at self — but look at Jesus, who ever lives to make intercession for you in Heaven.

Are you stripped of your comforts, your props, and your goods? Then look up! He who stripped you — loves you! He will be more than all these to you! He will bind up your broken heart, calm your perturbed spirit, cheer your drooping mind, and fill you with his own peace and happiness.

Look up . . .

for all that you need;
from all that you fear;
through all that would obstruct your way;
and notwithstanding all that would deter you from doing so.

Look up every day, saying with David, "In the morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You and will look up!" Psalm 5:3

Look up in every trial, saying "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help: my help comes from the Lord, who made Heaven and earth!"

- Do not look at your sin — it will discourage you!
- Do not look at your self — it will distress you!
- Do not look at Satan — he will bewilder you!
- Do not look to men — they will deceive, or disappoint you!
- Do not look at your trials — they will deject you!

But do as the church did, look up "until the Lord looks down from heaven and sees" (Lamentations 3:50).

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us — looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith!" Hebrews 12:1-2. Look only, look always, look intently, to Jesus; run looking, work looking, fight looking, suffer looking, live looking, and die looking — to Jesus, who is at God's right hand in glory. Oh, look, look, look to Jesus!

"Behold the Lamb of God, who bore
Your burdens on the tree;
And paid in blood the dreadful score —
The ransom due for Thee!

Look to Him till the sight endears
The Savior to your heart;
His pierced feet — bedew with tears,
Nor from His cross depart!

Look to Him till His dying love
Your every thought control;
Its vast constraining influence prove,
O'er body, spirit, soul.

Look to him, as the race you run,
Your never failing Friend;
Finish He will, the work begun,
And grace — in glory end!

Looking For Jesus

James Smith (1842)

"We look for the Savior — the Lord Jesus Christ." Philippians 3:20

The first Christians kept the second coming of Christ continually in view; they constantly expected it, and are spoken of as "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Savior Jesus Christ," Titus 2:13; Philippians 3:20; as waiting "for God's Son from Heaven, even Jesus, who has delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 1:7.

The scriptures always represent the second coming of Christ as sudden and unexpected; "The day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them." 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3. "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments." Revelation 16:15. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." 2 Peter 3:10. "Watch, therefore, for you know not what hour your Lord is coming." Matthew 24:42.

The Lord informs us He will come quickly — "Behold, I come quickly!" Revelation 22:7, 12, 20. "The Lord is at hand." Philippians 4:5.

He will come gloriously — "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day." 2 Thessalonians 1:7-11; Dan. 7:9-11. "Behold, the Judge stands before the door." James 5:9; Acts 17:31.

He will come in wrath — hence, the day of His coming is called "the day of wrath," Romans 2:5; "the great day of His wrath." Revelation 6:17.

He will come for salvation — "To those who look for Him, shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Hebrews 9:28. "It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Romans 13:11. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith until salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:5-8.

We are warned that in the last days there shall come scoffers, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" 2 Peter 3:4. These

give heed "to seducing spirits," 1 Tim. 4:1; "being lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness — but denying the power thereof." 2 Tim. 3:4, 5.

But of the coming of Jesus — Enoch prophesied, Jude 14; Christ Himself preached it, Matthew 16:27; and the church expected it! 1 Thessalonians 3:13.

Believer, are you looking, waiting, and preparing for the coming of Christ? You profess to expect Him — to believe that He will come, both to punish the wicked and reward His servants? "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat!" 2 Peter 3:11-12

The scriptures, which you profess to reverence, exhort you to watch, because you know not the day nor hour wherein the Son of Man comes, Matthew 25:13-30; to be sober, lest that day overtake you as a thief, 1 Thessalonians 5:4-9; to be patient, waiting for Christ, 2 Thessalonians 3:5; to strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws near, James 5:7-11; to be diligent, that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless, 2 Peter 3:14; to "abide in him, that when He shall appear you may haveconfidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." 1 John 2:28.

Do you believe that you must then stand before His judgment-seat? 2 Corinthians 5:10, 11; that judgment must first begin at the house of God? 1 Peter 4:17; that you must give an account of yourself? Romans 14:10-13; that you must be judged and rewarded according to your works? Matt 16:27; 10:41, 42, Romans 2:6; 1 Corinthians 3:8; Ephesians 6:8; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 2:23; 22:12-15. Consider these scriptures, and may the Lord give you understanding.

And you who are careless and indifferent in reference to the second coming of Jesus, I have a word for you. You must witness it — you are deeply interested in it; for, "Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him," Revelation 1:7, and shall cry, "Hide us from the face of Him who sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!" Revelation 6:16. All the tribes of the earth shall mourn when "they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory. Matthew 24:30.

O sinner! what a state, what a situation will you be in! And yet you are secure, though you have nothing to assure you that you shall not be brought into this situation this day, or this night. Christ will come — He will come as a thief, in a day you think not, and in an hour you are not aware of; for of that day and of that hour knows no man. Matthew 24:36:51; and if that day should find you without Christ, under the law, and living in pleasure — it will fix your doom forever; for then it shall be said, "He who is unjust — let him be unjust still; and he who is filthy — let him be filthy still." Revelation 22:11.

But you who believe your Savior's word, long for His coming, wait His approach, and are preparing to meet your God — happy are you; rejoice, and be exceeding glad. "Now you are the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what you shall be; but we know, that when He shall appear, you shall be like Him; for you shall see Him as He is!" 1 John 3:2. "When Christ, who is your life, shall appear — then shall you also appear with Him in glory." Colossians 3:4.

Now, you are called to suffer with Him; "then, you shall be glorified together." His glory shall be revealed in you, at the manifestation of the sons of God; then shall you be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God; then shall you enjoy the adoption, even the redemption of the body. If, then, you hope for such things, see that with patience you wait for them; for "He who shall come will come, and will not tarry." Romans 8:17-26; Hebrews 10:35-38. "Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke 21. 36

To conclude — Are you living as a part of the Bride of Christ? As not your own — but His? Are you aiming to glorify Him in all things? Are you joining the Church in her cry, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly"? Revelation 22:20. If so, "at that day you shall say, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is Jehovah; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Isaiah 25:9. Then shall you take your place "before the throne of God, and

serve Him day and night in His temple, and He who sits on the throne shall dwell among you. You shall hunger

no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on you, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and shall lead you unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes." Revelation 7:15-17. "He who overcomes shall sit down with Jesus on his throne." Revelation 3:21. "They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads, and they shall reign forever and ever!" Revelation 22:4, 5.

Look up today, O parched plant!

Charles Spurgeon

"I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing." Ezekiel 34:26

Here is sovereign grace, "I will send down showers." Is it not sovereign, divine mercy--for who can say, "I will send down showers," except God? There is only one voice which can speak to the clouds, and bid them beget the rain, "Who sends down the rain upon the earth? Who scatters the showers upon the green herb? Do not I, the Lord?" Grace is the gift of God--and is not to be created by man.

It is also needed grace. What would the ground do without showers? You may break the clods, you may sow your seeds--but what can you do without the rain? As absolutely needful, is the divine blessing. In vain you labor--until God bestows the plenteous shower, and sends the needed grace down!

Then, it is plenteous grace. "I will send down showers." It does not say, "I will send them drops," but "showers." So it is with grace. If God gives a blessing, He usually gives it in such a measure that there is not room enough to receive it. Plenteous grace! Ah! we need plenteous grace . . .

to keep us humble,
to make us prayerful,
to make us holy,
to make us zealous,
to preserve us through this life,
and at last to land us in heaven!

We cannot do without saturating showers of grace!

Again, it is seasonable grace. "I will send down showers in season." What is your season this morning? Is it the season of drought? Then that is the season for showers. Is it a season of great heaviness and black clouds? Then that is the season for showers. "I will send down showers in season."

And here is a varied grace. "I will give you showers of blessing." The word is in the plural. All kinds of blessings God will send. All God's blessings go together, like links in a golden chain. If He gives converting grace, He will also give comforting grace. He will send "showers of blessing." Look up today, O parched plant--and open your leaves and flowers for a heavenly watering!

The Expectation of Eternal Life

William Nicholson, 1862

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life"
Jude 21

This poor world is full of sin, sorrow, pain, and death. If we had this life only — we would be most miserable. But the Christian has an unfailing hope of a holier, happier, sublimer, and more durable world than this. This hope supports him in every scene of earthly conflict and distress.

As the mariner tossed by the storm and tempest, hopes to gain the desired haven;
as the traveler fatigued by the perils and toils of his journey, hopes to reach his own beloved home;
as the soldier harassed by conflict in the field of battle, hopes to conquer and to wear the victor's crown
— so the Christian pilgrim in the midst of his strenuous labors, hopes that he will . . .
successfully brave all the storms of life,
finish his course,

fight the good fight of faith, and
then lay hold on eternal life in his Father's house above.

How beneficial the advice of the Apostle in the context! He refers to a prediction of Christ's respecting the enemies of Christ and of Christians, "mockers in the last time." etc., verse 17-19. And this has come to pass in the present time. Look around and see. They may be mockers of Christianity — but they have no weight. See their characters described. But Christians are to cleave to Christ, and look for Heaven, verse 20, 21.

I. The Great Object of Christian Expectancy. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

1. Believers come to this eternal life immediately after death, and fully after the resurrection of the body.
2. This life will be enjoyed in Heaven. The residence of the ever blessed God, his palace of splendor, the habitation of his holiness, the place where his honor dwells — the dwelling-place of angels and perfected spirits.

It is a place of inexpressible felicity, as it appears from its names. It is called . . .

- a paradise;
- a building from God;
- a mansion of God;
- a heavenly city;
- a better country;
- an unfading inheritance;
- an eternal kingdom;
- an unfading crown of glory;
- peace, rest, and joy of the Lord.

3. It will be a life of complete purity. Sin, in this world, is the great source of estrangement from God — it is that which constantly vexes and distresses the soul. But in Heaven sin can never enter to defile, "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life!" Revelation 21:27.

The Church in its triumphant state shall be faultless, Jude 24; Ephesians 5:26-27.

They shall be "like God;" 1 John 3:2; Psalm 17:15.

4. It will be a life of perfect happiness. There is no perfect happiness in this world. Life here is like the sea — like the atmosphere, and the mutations of weather — calms and storms, sunshine and clouds.

Sorrow is frequently the lot of God's people. Some are afflicted under the hand of God — or mourning the loss of relatives or friends — or sunk into deep adversity. Some are weeping over the sins of others, parents over their children, pastors over their flocks, and Christians over the wickedness of the world.

All the causes of evil will be annihilated in Heaven:

- sin shall distress no more,
- Satan shall tempt no more,
- sickness shall pain no more,
- the tyrant shall oppress no more,
- death shall bereave and destroy no more.

"Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes!" Revelation 7:16-17

Their joy will surpass that of the Israelites when they listened to the announcement of Moses, "Your enemies which you see today, you shall see no more forever."

5. It will be a life of substantial honor. They will be raised to a kingdom! "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom!" Luke 12:32. Here on earth, they are counted as lowly and base, but there they will be recognized as the seed-royal of Heaven! What can be received, more than a kingdom? It is the highest dignity known on earth. Who can be higher than a king? — than a priest? "He has made us kings and priests to His God and Father!" Revelation 1:6

It will be a life of honor which conquerors obtain. Crowns of victory are in reserve! "Everlasting joy upon their heads." Here they wear a crown of thorns — but there they will wear a diadem of glory!

It will be an incorruptible crown, not a fading laurel, etc. 1 Corinthians 9:25. No length of time will terminate the dominion of the saints, or tarnish the luster of their crowns. They shall reign forever and ever.

It is called a crown of righteousness, 2 Timothy 4:7. It was purchased by the righteousness of Christ, and is given, wholly for his sake, to none but His redeemed people.

It is a crown of life, meaning they shall never die! "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him!" James 1:12; Revelation 2:10.

It is a crown of gold, Revelation 4:4, to denote the priceless and lasting honor to which they will be advanced, and the superlative wealth of the kingdom which they will possess.

They shall sit upon a throne — the throne of Christ, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne!" Revelation 3:21; that lofty throne, that expansive throne, in which he will make room for all his faithful soldiers.

6. It will be a life of rich enjoyment.

A. Heaven is represented as a feast; "Many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast" Matthew 8:11.

B. Heaven is represented as a marriage supper; "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" Revelation 19:9.

C. Heaven is represented as a life of enjoyment in the best society — God himself, angels, and glorified saints.

D. Heaven is represented as enjoyment of the beatific vision of God, when we shall see him face to face, and understand the mysteries of creation, providence, and grace. Then shall light penetrate the soul, and satisfy it, so that whatever in this world was enrapt in mystery, shall be transparent and equitable there, while the soul will exclaim, "You have done all things well!"

7. To crown all, it is called eternal life. Most of the Scriptural representations of Heaven are combined with adjectives expressive of endless perpetuity. Hence Heaven is called . . .

- the everlasting kingdom,
- the incorruptible inheritance,
- the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, etc., etc. etc.

If a miser could insure his wealth for eternity, that alone would be Heaven enough for him — but it is his misery when he dies, that he can carry none of his riches away with him.

But he who lays up treasure in Heaven need not fear moth or rust, or thief — all is eternally secure.

There shall be no night there, no danger to be apprehended, no darkness to fear. The glory of God and the Lamb are the light of the celestial city, and the nations of them that are redeemed shall walk in the light thereof.

II. The Source of Eternal Life: "The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

This is its only source, whatever may be the pretensions of man. The sacred writers uniformly so represent the incarnation and the ignominious sufferings and death of Jesus, as the source of eternal life. It is so ascribed, because:

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ announced it; and that more clearly than any who had preceded him. See John 3:16, 36. "He has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light." He has poured a flood of light upon those dark things. How limited was the knowledge of Socrates and Plato, and all the sages of Greece and Rome respecting a future state. But it was amply revealed by Christ.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ has procured it. He by fulfilling the law, enduring its curse, dying the death of the cross — satisfied all the claims of Divine justice, and unbarred for man the gates of paradise. His precious blood falling upon the soul, is the believer's passport to endless life! 1 John 5:11, 12.

3. Our Lord Jesus Christ bestows it, John 17:22. Eternal life is his gift. "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish — ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand!" John 10:28

4. Our Lord Jesus Christ prepares us for it. By his Spirit he enlightens the mind to perceive and feel that sin has separated from God, and will debar from eternal life. He leads the soul to the cross of Christ — there it is stripped of vileness, and robed with Divine acceptance. The Spirit carries on the work begun, and performs it unto the day of the manifestation of the sons of God

III. The Conduct of the Expectants of Eternal Life.

1. They are to keep themselves in the love of God. This supposes they are already interested in the love of God, and they love him. "Keep yourselves in the love of God!" This supposes danger — danger of the loss of the Divine favor. To keep in the love of God, the Apostle recommends:

(1.) Faith; verse 20. "Build yourself up in your most holy faith." What is this but constant dependence upon Christ for salvation; resting upon the only sure foundation. This foundation is stable and durable; so are those who rest upon it. It is the living stone, 1 Peter 2:4, imparting life, energy, communion, hope, and happiness to all who rest upon it. Building implies progression.

(2.) Prayer, verse 20. "Praying in the Holy Spirit." See also Romans 8:26. Prayer fetches down omnipotence from Heaven, to the otherwise poor, feeble Christian.

By these two, building, etc., praying, etc., the Christian is made strong to resist temptations, from every source, not to depart from the living God.

2. They are to look for Eternal life.

(1.) They are to expect it as matter of absolute certainty. It is no visionary object, but is founded on an immutable basis, Titus 1:2. Christ not only had the words of eternal life, but the title-deeds of that vast inheritance, and has transmitted them to all his followers, and those who believe now enter into rest.

(2.) They are to look for it with humble expectation and deep abasement.

(3.) They should wait for it with joyful and intense desire.

(4.) They should live in a daily state of preparation for it. So that when they hear the announcement, "Behold the bridegroom comes!" they may be ready and go forth to meet him!

Keep Looking Up! **George Everard, 1881**

A sailor lad was climbing the mast for the first time. After a while he began to grow dizzy, and feared lest he might fall. "What shall I do?" he anxiously cried out to the captain, who was watching him from below. "Keep looking up, my boy!" was the answer he received. He obeyed, and soon lost his fear, so that he was able steadily to move along the rigging.

In another and a more important sense, this direction is applicable to every Christian. Whatever your position is, whatever are your fears or dangers — keep looking up! Think of God, of your soul and its salvation, of Christ, and of forgiveness through Him. Lift up your eyes to Him who dwells in the heavens. Expect help from above. Your Father is ever ready to support you. Your Almighty Savior is ever pleading your cause. Therefore you can never be disappointed. The look of faith will ever have a response from the heart and hand of God.

Keep looking up! This is what David did. He was surrounded by foes and dangers. He was hated by Saul, who sought him every day to kill him. He was often in the greatest peril, but his spiritual sight was ever heavenward. "I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, who has made Heaven and earth." "My eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net." Nor did he look in vain. The Lord delivered him from all his enemies, and set him upon the throne of the kingdom. He was ever with him, and prospered him on every side.

Keep looking up! This is what Jehoshaphat did. He was compassed about by a great host of adversaries. Various powers united together for the destruction of Jerusalem; but Jehoshaphat set himself to seek the Lord. He gathered the people for prayer and supplication; and he kept looking up for help. He said: "O our God, will You not exercise judgment upon them? For we have no might to stand against this great company that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You!" 2 Chronicles 20:12. And God regarded him, and sent him deliverance — before a blow was struck, the confederacy was broken up and the army scattered. The people had but to rejoice and praise the Lord.

Keep looking up! Be sure that the Lord cannot disregard the upward glance of the weakest of His children as they turn to Him.

Imagine a little child in fear and trembling. Perhaps the peril is great, and he cannot speak, but he turns a wistful look for help to his father or mother who is near. Would any parent disregard such a look? Would not the father or mother run to support the child who thus appealed to their love? And shall it not be so with our Father in Heaven? Has He not far more than any parent's love? Will He refuse to help and comfort the one who thus relies upon Him?

Keep looking up! Here is a message for the anxious, seeking soul. You desire salvation. You know something of your sin and misery. You feel that you are lost and wretched and undone. But all seems dark and hopeless. But look up.

Look straight up to Jesus! Not to your faith, not to your repentance, not to anything in yourself or anything you can do; looking downwards to these will make you wretched — therefore look up to Jesus only. He died for your sins, and now pleads your cause. He saves to the uttermost, the greatest sinners, and rejects none who trust in Him.

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for you!"

Keep looking up! Here is a message for a believer who would hold fast and make progress in grace and holiness. From first to last, the strength is in Jesus, and not in yourself. You have no power to stand for a moment, or to advance one step along the narrow way. But keep looking up, and all will be well.

You will be kept from falling. While Peter looked to Jesus, he was able to walk in safety over the rough and boisterous waves; but when he looked off from Him he began to sink. So fix your eye constantly on the Savior.

He can bring you through a thousand temptations;
He can hold you up and keep you safe;
He can strengthen you with might by His Spirit in the inner man;
He can endue you with wisdom and power for every call of duty;
He can make you, day by day, more holy and more like Himself in all things.

As you keep looking to Him, He will transform you into His lovely image by the renewing of your mind. "We, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Keep looking up! Here is a message for the pilgrim who is cast down and sorely tried by the difficulties and sorrows of the way. You are passing through much tribulation. You have to endure days and nights of suffering, or perhaps it may be you have to witness the failing health of one dear to you. Or perhaps your means are very insufficient, and you look in vain for friends to assist you.

But whatever is the trial — look above it. Don't fix your eye on that bitter trial, on that dark providence — but on Him who sits above the water-floods. When you can't see His hand — trust His heart! Be sure that there is a silver lining in the dark cloud, and that redeeming love has appointed all your sorrow. Christ Himself is ever near you. He is by your side, close by you in tender pity and compassion. He will never fail you, nor ever forsake you. He will make all things work together for your good. He will bring you through all your wilderness journeys, to His bright House of Glory. Therefore keep looking up.

The Coming of the Lord, The Crown and Consummation of Spiritual Life

Octavius Winslow

"Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:13.

Could this volume close with a theme more appropriate to our subject, or more animating to the believing soul, than the present- the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the crown and consummation of the Spiritual life of His saints? There are three revelations of the Lord Jesus spoken of in the Scriptures, with each one of which our spiritual life is essentially connected. His first revelation is His coming in the flesh to accomplish the salvation of His Church. His second, is His spiritual revelation in His saints. "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." His third revelation is that which is now to engage our thoughts. "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Such is our present subject- the Second Coming of Christ to complete and crown the spiritual edifice of His kingdom in His people. Between His first and second Coming there are strong points of analogy, as there are of contrast. These, however, will incidentally appear in the progress of our subject. We have only to premise- to prevent disappointment- that we are now concerned with the fact, and not with the mode of our Lord's Coming. Our object is simply to treat the subject, not so much in its relation to the

structure of prophecy, as in its connection with the perfection and crown of the spiritual and glorious life of the Church-the 'grace'-that is, the glory- that is to be 'brought unto it at His revelation.' The Coming of the Lord in His glory, is the Hope- "the blessed Hope" -of the Christian Church, even as the coming of the Lord in His humiliation was the long-predicted and looked for hope of the Jewish Church. A Savior to come has in all ages and dispensations been the expectation of God's people. The terms which set forth this doctrine are decided and impressive. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all those who believe." "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I ask God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is a notable and instructive fact that, very rarely is the event of the believer's death- in other words, the believer's going to Christ- employed in the sacred writings as an argument to holiness, or an incentive to preparation; while, on the other hand, the Appearing of the Lord- or Christ's coming to him- is constantly set forth as a motive to diligence and watchfulness, comfort and prayer.

But let us not be misunderstood. We are far from looking with a cold and indifferent eye upon the fact of the Christian's going to Christ. It is indescribably blessed, and ought never to be foreign to our thoughts. "To die is gain." "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." "Having a desire to depart and be with Christ." The thought that, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, my 'soul may be as the chariots of Amminadab,' bearing me into the presence of the 'King in His beauty' is a solemn and sanctifying one. The death of the believer is a covenant mercy, as much in the covenant of grace as any covenant blessing. "All things are yours- death." It is therefore the privilege of the Christian to die; and he may be assured of this, that, as his death is in the covenant, so the covenant has provided for all the circumstances and exigencies of the impressive event. 'Grace' dying grace- will be brought unto him in death, even as 'grace' glorifying grace- will be 'brought unto him at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'

But, the pole-star of the believer is the Coming of the Lord. Thus is he taught to look above and beyond death- to Him who "has abolished death," and His coming as the "Resurrection and the Life" of all who believe in Him. The adaptation of this doctrine-the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ to the constitution of our being, will appear obvious to every individual who has studied the philosophy of human nature. Is death, we ask, an object of dread to the natural mind in general? Far from it! With no event in human history is man more familiar- none does he less fear- and for none is so little preparation made- as death. It is a fact patent to every mind that men brave death in almost every form from considerations the most puerile and insignificant. Challenge their bravery, insult their people, and they will hasten to vindicate the one at the cannon's mouth, and resent the other at the point of the sword. Death is not the 'king of terror' to such. Thus, we may urge it as a motive to conversion with all the fervor and eloquence we can command, and yet fail to inspire one alarmed feeling, or rouse one serious thought.

But, change the theme- hold forth the Second Coming of the Lord to judge the quick and the dead- portray the august scene- the great white throne- the descending judge- the unfolding books- the trumpet sound- the graves opening- countless myriads crowding up to the judgment seat- the solemn decision- the shrieks of the wicked, rising far above the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds. "Mountains! rocks! fall on us!" -and you have touched a chord of feeling, and have unsealed a fount of thought, which the most vivid and impressive presentation of death would never have effected.

But let us direct our thoughts to this august event as it relates to the final glory of the saints. Not to speak prophetically, what are some of its most prominent and impressive features? The Coming of the Lord will be Personal. With the Personality of Christ we deal too faintly. Oh, it is not with the gospel of Christ or with the Church of Christ- or with the Ordinances of Christ or with the Ministers of Christ- we have mainly to do; but with CHRIST HIMSELF! "Come unto ME, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is the gracious invitation. Oh truth most divine! oh privilege most precious! that teaches me to repair- not to a creed, or to a dogma, or to a system- but, to a PERSON: that Person God in my nature! One like myself- a personal Savior, and personal Friend- "touched with the feeling of my infirmities."

Now such will be the revelation of Jesus Christ at His Second Coming. It will not be a spiritual, but a Personal, revelation of our Lord. The angels, at His ascension, preached the Personal Coming of Christ. "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven." Blessed hope! That same Jesus- in the same form will come Himself to raise His saints, and present them as a "glorious Church" to His Father.

But, oh, how changed! No mock-majesty invests Him now! no thorn-crown is upon His head! no reedy-scepter is in His hand! no look of anguish shades His brow! He comes in His proper personal glory, and before His face the heaven and the earth flee away!

The revelation of the Lord will be Visible. "Every eye shall see Him." Magnificent spectacle! Appalling thought! -magnificent to those who loved, confessed, and served Him here below: appalling to those who, living and dying as Balaam, take up his melancholy lamentation- "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not near." Oh how the imagination droops its wing in the attempt to soar to the splendor and sublimity of that spectacle- Christ visible to every eye!

Pause, then, for a moment, and contemplate, with the eye of faith, or if you have no faith, with the eye of imagination, this tremendous scene. Look at that point, far away in the ethereal regions, where the gradually lessening form of our Savior

disappeared from the gaze of His disciples, when He ascended to heaven. In that point see an uncommon, but faint and undefined, brightness just beginning to appear. It has caught the roving eye of yon careless gazer, and excited his curiosity. He points it out to a second, and a third. A little circle soon collects, and various are the conjectures which they form respecting it. Similar circles are formed, and similar objections made, in a thousand different parts of the world. But conjecture is soon to give place to certainty-awful, appalling, overwhelming certainty. While they gaze, the appearance, which had excited their curiosity, rapidly approaches, and still more rapidly brightens. Some begin to suspect what it may prove; but no one dares to give utterance to his suspicions. Meanwhile the light of the sun begins to fade before a brightness superior to his own. Thousands see their shadows cast in a new direction, and thousands of hitherto careless eyes look up at once to discover the cause. Full clearly they see it; and now new hopes and fears begin to agitate their breasts. The afflicted and persecuted servants of Christ begin to hope that the predicted, long-expected day of their deliverance is arrived. The wicked, the careless, the unbelieving, begin to fear that the Bible is about to prove no idle tale. And now fiery shapes, moving like streams of lightning, begin to appear indistinctly amid the bright, dazzling cloud which comes rushing down as on the wings of a whirlwind. At length it reaches its destined place. It pauses: then, suddenly unfolding, discloses at once a great white throne, where sits- starry, resplendent, in all the glories of the Godhead- the Man Christ Jesus. Every eye sees Him; every heart knows Him.

Too well do the wretched, unprepared inhabitants of earth now know what to expect, and one universal shriek of anguish and despair rises up to heaven, and is echoed back to earth. But louder, far louder, than the universal cry, now sounds the last trumpet; and far above all is heard the voice of the Omnipotent, summoning the dead to arise and come to judgment. New terrors now assail the living on every side, no, under their very feet, the earth heaves as in convulsions; graves open, and the dead come forth; while, at the same moment, a change, equivalent to that occasioned by death, is effected by Almighty power on the bodies of the living. Their mortal bodies put on immortality, and are thus prepared to sustain a weight of glory or of wretchedness which flesh and blood could not endure. Meanwhile, legions of angels are seen, darting from pole to pole, gathering together the faithful servants of Christ from the four winds of heaven, and bearing them aloft to meet the Lord in the air, where He causes them to be placed at His own right hand, preparatory to the sentence which is to award to them everlasting life.

Christian, if you would gain more and greater victories over the world than you have ever done, bring this scene often before the eye of your mind, and gaze upon it until you become blind to all earthly glory. He who gazes long at the sun becomes unsusceptible of impressions from inferior luminaries; and he who looks much at the Sun of Righteousness, will be little affected by any alluring object which the world can exhibit.

It will follow from this exceedingly graphic description that the Coming of the Lord will be a visible spectacle- a spectacle seen by every eye; but especially and more gloriously so to the enraptured vision of the saints. "Behold, He comes With clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him." This is not a minor feature of the august event; it is one which the believing mind delights to anticipate.

A Savior seen is an object both to faith and sense. A believing sight of Christ is the spiritual life of the soul. Until He is thus seen, He must be an unknown and an unapplied Savior. The uniform teaching of the Bible is consonant with this truth. "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Responsive to the divine invitation of the Old Testament is the evangelist's invitation of the New. "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." And all this harmonizes with the writing of the Apostles- "Looking unto Jesus."

Such is the action of faith. Looking to Christ is believing in Christ. It was by a look- a look of faith- that the serpent-stung Israelite was healed. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Oh what a guilt-removing, heart-cheering, soul-saving truth is this! Penitent sinner! a look of faith at Jesus will bring an immediate and free salvation to your soul. However distant the Object or dim the sight, one glance of Christ is life! Sensible of the moral virus circulating through your entire being- made to know the plague of your own heart arrived at the end of all human remedies- like the poor woman in the gospel, having "spent your all on physicians, and are nothing bettered, but rather grown worse"- now behold the Lamb of God! look and live!- look and be forever healed of your plague!

All your merit is in Christ all your salvation is in Christ: all your help is in Christ. "Christ is all, and in all," of your hope of heaven. And this salvation is yours on one condition only- that you receive, and do not merit it; that you accept, and do not purchase it. It is the free- unpurchased and unpurchasable- gift of God. "By grace are you saved." "It is of faith that it might be by grace." "By the works of the law shall no man living be justified." Oh, if you, a poor sin-laden soul- longing to find rest will but cast overboard the oar of your own doings, with which you are 'toiling in rowing' to get to heaven, and accept in faith the finished work of Christ, that weary soul of yours soon would find the rest for which it sighs!

But this first saving sight of Christ is the commencement of a series of yet clearer, more sanctifying and assimilating views of the same ineffable Object. The history of spiritual life- and this is one of its brightest 'lights'- is a continuous "looking unto Jesus." It is a looking to Jesus, and learning; looking to Jesus, and admiring; looking to Jesus, and loving; looking to Jesus, and obeying; looking

to Jesus, and suffering; living and dying, still looking unto Jesus, until the dim but ravishing vision of earth is changed for the full, beatific vision of heaven!

This will be the "grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ"- the unveiled sight of our glorified Redeemer. "We shall see Him as He is." To have seen Him by faith in His humiliation was a marvellous, soul-saving spectacle: but, to see Jesus in His glory- our true Joseph- "taken from prison and from judgment," and highly exalted with 'a name which is above every name,' coming in the clouds of heaven, escorted by angels, encircled by saints, and on His head the jeweled diadem of the universe, oh, this will be a spectacle, transcending and eclipsing all others! What a sanctifying effect should this hope have upon our mind! what a molding, unearthly influence should it exert upon our life! "Every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He (Christ) is pure." Thus the doctrine of the Coming of the Lord is one of the most practical, as one of the most consolatory, truths of the Bible. It is impossible fully to believe it, much less to receive it in the heart, and be insensible to its Christ-endearing and Christ-assimilating power. Surely the believer, whose heart is in heaven where Christ its treasure is, will be in frequent and close communion with his absent Lord; and the Church, as a Body, 'looking for and hastening unto the Coming of the Lord,' will long for the cry that shall break the stillness of the midnight hour- "Behold, the BRIDEGROOM comes; go out to meet Him!"

Lord, may I be found waiting and watching and praying for Your appearing! To see You, be this the ardent desire, the highest ambition of my soul: and whether I cross the river to come to You, or You do cross the river to come to me, let my lamp be daily trimmed and brightly burning, lest, "coming suddenly, You find me sleeping."

We can only allow ourselves a passing glance at two events consequent upon the Coming of the Lord, which must ever be radiant with hope, and replete with a soothing and sanctifying power, to the Christian mind- the first, the believer's Resurrection. This is "the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is termed "the First Resurrection," a thousand years intervening between it and the Second. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Could we fix your mind upon a blessing connected with the Coming of the Lord more glorious and precious than this?

The Resurrection of Christ was the crown and consummation of His humiliation; the Resurrection of the Christian will be the crown and consummation of his glory- the edifice of his spiritual life will then receive the 'top-stone, amid the shoutings of grace, grace unto it!' "Blessed is the pen" -so wrote an aged saint nearing her heavenly flight "and blessed the heart that indites it, that gives one cheering view of the mighty blessings that await the sleeping dead! The dust of the Christian reposes in quietude until the voice of Jesus rouses the slumberer perfected in His own beauty. Happy Christian! your journey may be a thorny one, and 'the last enemy' may be even now approaching; but, courage! the time is coming when this identical body- re-united to the soul- will be raised a glorious body- the soul increasing in knowledge, beauty, and bliss, through the countless ages of eternity. Oh the glory and the happiness of that moment, who can fully describe! Lord, increase my faith!" (Mary Winslow)

Such is the animating influence of a simple faith in the hope of the Resurrection, and such the spiritual breathing which that hope inspires! Who would not strive after holiness, "if by any means"- by the most strenuous exertions- he might, with the Apostle, "attain unto the resurrection of the dead;" and, with all who have departed this life in the Lord, have part in the First Resurrection. The re-union and the recognition of the saints stand high up in the catalogue of blessings synchronizing with this revelation of Jesus Christ.

One of the saddest and bitterest sorrows of earth is the separation, by death, from those we love. Oh the pang of receiving the last sigh- of catching the last look- of listening to the last word- of one who was to us in life more precious than life itself! But, the gospel unveils the hope of a re-union, and even before the risen body- of a recognition of all the holy dead! "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.... Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Who longs not for the "grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ"?

"Oh thrilling thought, that I shall be
With Him who shed His blood for me,
Where nothing from Him can sever!
Where I, with sainted hosts above,
Overshadowed by the Holy Dove,
Shall banquet on His boundless love,
And know that word- 'forever'.

"Oh thrilling thought, to see Him shine,
For evermore to call Him mine!
With Heaven-all Heaven-before me;
To stand where angel myriads gaze,
Amid the illimitable blaze,

While He the Godhead full displays
To all the sons of glory."

And now will come the crown and consummation of our spiritual life! Unshaded by a cloud- uneclipsed by an object- it will shine forth as the sun in its meridian glory, ever deepening, ever widening with its new orbit of life and knowledge, of happiness and splendor. No shadows will dim it no doubts will disturb it- no fears will ruffle it- no sin will taint it now; but, lost in the Infinite Ocean "Where flows this river down to us," it will be swallowed up in God, and "God Shall Be All in All!"

Be watchful; be diligent be holy; for the Coming of the Lord draws near! The events flow transpiring in the world's history indicate its approach. The "signs of the times" are pregnant with profound and solemn significance. The 'fig-tree' blossoms! The Jews are hastening to their own land- the Turkish power is drying up- the nations of Europe are arming- earthquakes, and judgments, and rumors of war are, to the intelligent and observant eye- if not proximate signs of the Lord's Coming- yet are indices of a most ominous and significant character! "When these things begin to come to pass, then LOOK up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near." Be this our holy and constant attitude- under all circumstances looking up, waiting and watching our Lord's appearing.

"Look up! when all around is bright,
And sunshine gilds each day;
When every earthly, sweet delight,
Is strewed along the way.

"Look up! and bless the God above,
Let gratitude arise;
Forget not Him, who in His love
Your every need supplies.

"Look up! when all is darkness round,
Your heart with grief oppressed;
When sorrow's darkest shadows drown
The joys within your breast.

"Look up! in earnest, faithful prayer
All is in mercy given;
Your every grief, your every care,
Is meted out in Heaven.

"Look up to Jesus! who has shed
His precious blood for thee;
Oh, raise your weary, drooping head,
And His salvation see!

"Look up! for strength and heavenly might
Upon your Savior wait;
And He shall make your Shadows Bright,
And crooked places straight.

"Look up! when death is hastening on
When life is almost over;
The victory then will soon be won,
And joys for evermore!

"Look up! by steadfast faith and see
The land of holy rest,
Where saints through all eternity
Shall be with Jesus blest.

"Look up! and hail your Coming Lord
He comes to call for you;
To burst your chain-to break your cord,
And set His prisoner free!"

"Until the Day breaks, and the shadows flee away, I will get to the Mountain of Myrrh, and to the Hill of Frankincense."

RESOLVE NEVER TO FORGET THE EYE OF GOD

- **Source** - J C Ryle's recommended book - [Thoughts for Young Men](#) (a classic! And good for OLD MEN!!!)
- See the reviews, then take a few moments to soak in Ryle's wise "thoughts" - [395 ratings](#)

The eye of God! Think of that. Everywhere, in every house, in every field, in every room, in every company, alone or in a crowd, the eye of God is always on you. "The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good" (Proverbs 15:3+), and they are eyes that read hearts as well as actions.

Endeavor, I beg you, to realize this fact. Remember that you have to deal with an all-seeing God, a God who never sleeps, a God who understands your thoughts, and with whom the night shines as the day. You may leave your father's house, and go away, like the prodigal, into a far country, and think that there is nobody to watch your conduct; but the eye and ear of God are there before you. You may deceive your parents or employers, you may tell them lies, and act one way before their faces, and another behind their backs, but you cannot deceive God. He knows you through and through. He heard what you said as you came here today. He knows what you are thinking of at this minute. He has set your most secret sins in the light of His countenance, and they will one day come out before the world to your shame, except you take heed.

How little is this really felt! How many things are done continually, which men would never do if they thought they were seen! How many matters are transacted in the rooms of imagination, which would never bear the light of day! Yes; men entertain thoughts in private, and say words in private, and do acts in private, which they would be ashamed and blush to have exposed before the world. The sound of a脚步 coming has stopped many a deed of wickedness. A knock at the door has caused many an evil work to be hastily suspended, and hurriedly laid aside. But oh, what miserable folly is all this! There is an all-seeing Witness with us wherever we go. Lock the door, pull down the blind, turn out the light; it doesn't matter, it makes no difference; God is everywhere, you cannot shut Him out, or prevent His seeing. "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13+). Young Joseph understood this well when his employer's wife tempted him. There was no one in the house to see them, no human eye to witness against him; but Joseph was one who lived as seeing Him that is invisible: "How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9)

Young men, I ask all of you to read Psalm 139 **ED**: **ESPECIALLY** Ps 139:23, 24⁺!. I advise all of you to learn it by heart. Make it the test of all your dealings in this world's business: say to yourself often, "Do I remember that God sees me?"

Live as in the sight of God. This is what Abraham did, he walked before Him (**ED**: See Ge 17:1+ - "Before" = [paniyim](#) = face). This is what Enoch did, he walked with Him (Ge 5:22+). This is what heaven itself will be, the eternal presence of God. Do nothing that you would not like God to see. Say nothing, you would not like God to hear. Write nothing, you would not like God to read. Go no place where you would not like God to find you. Read no book of which you would not like God to say, "Show it to Me." Never spend your time in such a way that you would not like to have God say, "What are you doing?"

WHAT'S YOUR THEME SONG?

In Genesis 13:3 we read the story of Abram (after his faith had failed God's "famine test" and he went to Egypt Ge 12:10ff) who returned from Egypt and "went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai."

Abraham's theme song was "[This World is Not My Home](#) (play)." Is this your "theme song" dear disciple of Christ? Can you sing it with sincerity and [gusto](#)? If not, you need to learn the words, so that you too can live (and sing) like Abraham, as alien, as in a foreign land, for we are to be **IN** the world but not **OF** the world, beloved (Jn 17:14, 15, 16, cf Col 3:2-4⁺). I am a retired physician in my 70's and have 2 close physician friends also in their 70's who are retired and both are building new, expensive vacation homes far away from their hometown of Austin, Texas. One is a non-believer with whom I have shared Christ (but we have not seen the end of his story yet I pray), so this just might be the best home away from home he will ever experience. The other is a believer, perhaps a little like Lot, but a righteous man by faith (cf 2Pe 2:7⁺). Sadly, he is storing up for himself treasure on earth and not in heaven, for at age 77 he does not have that long to enjoy his new vacation home. I do not mean to be critical, but mention these two men to illustrate how tempting it is for all of

us to store up for ourselves treasures on earth and forget that we are aliens and strangers (1Pe 1:1±, 1Pe 2:11±) who have the inestimably precious privilege of storing up for ourselves eternal treasure in heaven (Mt 6:20±, cf 1Pe 1:4-5±, 1Ti 4:8±). Where is your heart beloved? Is your treasure on earth or is it in heaven because that is the test? (see Mt 6:21±) Are you content with a "tent" now, knowing Jesus is preparing for you a "mansion" in heaven in the future (Jn 14:3±)?

PURITAN STEPHEN CHARNOCK

*As there is not a moment but we are under His mercy,
so there is not a moment that we are out of His presence*

As there is not a moment but we are under His mercy, so there is not a moment that we are out of His presence (Pr 15:3+). Let us therefore look upon nothing, without thinking Who stands by, without reflecting upon Him in Whom it lives, and moves and hath its being... Let us not bound our thoughts to the creatures we see, but pierce through the creature to the boundless God we do not see (2Cor 4:18+, 2Cor 5:7+): we have continual remembrances of His presence; the light whereby we see, and the air whereby we live, (all things) give us perpetual notices of (God)... Yea, what a shame is our unmindfulness of (God), when every cast of our eye, every motion of our lungs, jogs (our memory of God)... How shall we do to be (more) serious? **Mind God's presence.** How shall we avoid distractions in service? **Think of God's presence.** How shall we resist temptation? **Oppose to them the presence of God.**' (See related topic Expulsive Power of a New Affection).

The Christian on His Watch-tower

George Everard, 1866

In rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah's workmen combined a triplet of duties — watching, working, praying. With a weapon in the one hand, they guarded against their foes. With a trowel in the other hand, they labored at their work. With a heart toward Heaven, they prayed to their God.

The servants of Christ must do likewise: it is the Master's own teaching. "Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It is like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch." (Mark 13:33, 34.) On the first of these duties, let me here address a few words of counsel, and reserve the two latter for the following chapter.

Watch against sin. You have three great foes whom you are pledged to renounce — the world, the flesh, and the devil — but sin is the spear or the arrow by which alone any one of them can injure you. Therefore, if you watch against sin, you watch against all.

Be on your guard, because of the hidden peril of sin. The bird sees not the net set for her destruction — nor the fish the hook beneath the tempting bait. Alike unseen at the time, is the danger by which the sinner is afterwards overtaken. What did Eve know of the untold wretchedness that would follow her disobedience? Or the Israelites, led into sin by Moabite women, of the thousands that would be slain that very day? Or, when they murmured, of the serpents that would destroy them? Little did Gehazi, carrying away the talents and the clothing, foresee the leprosy that would cleave to him. Nor did Ananias and Sapphira imagine the speedy discovery that would follow their agreement in falsehood.

Nor, my reader, can you tell, when you yield to the Tempter, when in anything you act against your conscience — to what sore evils and miseries it may lead? It has been said, "The devil leads the sinner down a winding staircase." One step in sin leads to another, and that to one still lower — and you never know where the final end may be.

Before you sin, consider the sorrow of a possible repentance. Of course you may hereafter repent of the sin you now commit — but will not the bitterness of the sorrow connected with it far outweigh any pleasure or profit it may give you now?

Consider also the woe of a possible impenitence. You may repent — but you may not. And if so, what follows? What but the worm that never dies — and the fire that is never quenched?

In watching against sin, be careful never to act the part of the Tempter. Bitter must have been the remembrance of his own crafty persuasiveness, when the old prophet of Bethel heard of the death of the man of God whom he had brought back. And who can tell the bitter remorse that may be felt even here, if by any word or deed of ours, we have turned the scale for death in the history of a fellow-man? "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence comes. It were better for him that a

millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea!"

Be equally guarded in never being persuaded against your conscience. Clever reasons may be suggested for your compliance with the request made to you — the advantage it may afford — the example of others, even Christians — the frailty of youth — the slightness of the sin, etc. But do not hearken. Have the courage to say "No!" and stick to it — and you will gain a great victory — you are one of God's heroes. "Blessed is the man who endures temptation."

"Flee youthful lusts." Mark the expression. "Flee" as from a house infected with the plague! Flee, as from a serpent whose poison is death. In thought, word, and deed — be pure, be chaste. Say "good bye" forever to any companion in whose society you are not safe from allusions to evil. Keep far from any place where there may be danger. Be like Joseph. Utterly abhor all such iniquity. Say, "How shall I do this great wickedness — and sin against God?"

Shrink from the least approach to profane conversation. There is nothing manly about such a way of speaking. The noblest spirits the world has ever known, have cherished the most profound reverence for the Most High God.

Watch against pride of every kind. Boasting speech, arrogance, self-glorying — little befit a follower of the Lamb. Be not proud of wit — or wealth; of your person — or bodily strength. A very small worm may soon destroy your pleasant gourd. Like Jonah's, it may wither in a night. More than all other, guard against spiritual pride. Keep on the low ground. Do not think that you have reached a higher standard of knowledge or of grace than others. Be you content to walk in the old paths, to keep low at Christ's footstool, to love your fellow-Christians of every name, and spend your life in doing all the good you can.

Watch against the indulgence of any wrong temper. Avoid ruffling your own spirit or disturbing the comfort of those about you. Do not be irritated if others do not act always as you wish. Expect many contrary winds. Check yourself at once, when you find passion rising — keep it down with a high hand. Do not be sarcastic, or sullen, or silent — when something is amiss. Try to overcome that pettishness which is often worse than sudden anger — a sitting still for half-an-hour without speaking a word; the unkind look, the refusal to be pacified, the sharp, curt "yes," or "no."

Nor is it fitting that a Christian should manifest a cold, frozen manner. Natural temperament has much to do with this; but surely it is more Christ-like to manifest love, as well as feel it. An icy chilliness deadens sympathy and cuts up by the root many of life's purest pleasures. It hinders usefulness and puts a stumbling block in the way of young inquirers. Far better is it to live in Italy, than Siberia. The warm sun of kindness is better every way, than the frost of harshness and indifference.

With reference to temper, let me remind you to be considerate for the feelings of servants and dependents. They are of the same flesh and blood as yourself, and you are bound so to regard them. None can tell what disquietude is caused, and harm done by young people being harsh, exacting, or dictatorial to those about them. Instead of this, be kindly and forbearing. Do all you can to make them happy, and to win them for Christ. Remember, a servant brought to repentance and faith, is a soul saved from Hell, and another jewel in the crown of the Redeemer.

Keep off the border land between right and wrong. Fear the least sin more than the greatest suffering. Maintain a conscience void of offence. Reckon no sin to be a light matter. Little acts of dishonesty, of selfishness, of neglect, the love of dress, petty deceipts, half untruths — who can tell how great the guilt of these things in the sight of our Judge? "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults."

Watch for the Lord's appearing.

The right position for every Christian is that named by the Apostle, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ!" Apart from all disputed questions, the coming of Christ is the great object of hope and expectation. Ever has it been the cry of His Church, and never should it be more so than now, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly!" Though we may rejoice that His servants are carrying the Gospel into all lands, though many come from east and west to sit down in His kingdom — yet, side by side with this, error abounds and unbelief spreads wide in nations and in Churches that are called by His name. Well, then, is it that the young Christian should stand on his watch-tower, eagerly looking for that glorious day, as the Jewish watchmen would look out for the first beams of the rising sun.

"That day" will reveal much of the mystery of God's dealings with our world, and put an end forever to all that opposes itself against the Lord and His Christ. The thought of "that day" will likewise animate you to the exercise of every Christian grace and duty. Regarding Christ as near at hand, you will . . .

- guard against all that may offend His all-searching eye,
- diligently employ the talents He commits to you, and
- be patient in suffering, knowing that in a little while, the days of your mourning shall be ended.

Perhaps in nothing will this spirit of watchfulness give plainer guidance than as to the Christian's separation from the world. Twice does our Lord speak of His own, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world." And so is it written in James, "True religion and undefded before God and the Father is this to keep himself unspotted from the world." And again, "Don't you know that friendship of the world, is enmity with God?"

But the difficult problem is — How can the Christian practically manifest this separation? How far may you mix in general society? Where can you draw the line between one scene of recreation and another? Which invitations shall you accept — and which decline? What deference is due to the wishes of parents, when they conflict with your own conscientious scruples? How may you perform all the social duties that pertain to your position in life — and yet live in deed and in truth as a citizen of the heavenly Zion?

These are questions by no means easy to be answered. It seems to me clearly impossible to lay down any rules that will determine all such cases. Each case requires prayerful consideration and a desire to please God and not self.

But may not the subject of Christ's return afford a clue to direct you? It is clearly your duty to watch and pray always, to have your lamps trimmed, to be ready at any hour for the Bridegroom's approach. You cannot, therefore, safely frequent any scenes where this would be impossible.

It is likewise your duty never in any company to be ashamed of Christ, but to be prepared, as occasion may demand, boldly to confess His name before men — remembering that only thus can you receive the promise that He will confess your name at His coming before His Father and the Holy angels. If, therefore, from any place the name of Christ and the subject of religion is banished by common consent — is that the right position for one who professes to love Him as their Lord and Savior?

It is moreover your duty and privilege, in anticipation of the joyful welcome Christ will bestow upon the faithful when He appears, to rise far above mere morality — even . . .

- to live as strangers and pilgrims here,
- to keep yourselves in the love of God,
- to witness for Christ by a very self-denying life,
- to utilize time and means, strength of body and spirit,
- to be active in your Master's service.

Whatever, therefore, interferes with this — to you is sin. "To him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin." If, therefore, by late hours you turn recreation from its proper intention of refreshing you for other work, if you thus over-tax strength and hinder devotion, if you use your Lord's money to no profit, if you waste your substance in dress or luxury — are you not sinning against Christ, and marring the effectiveness of your service for Him?

"Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things." "The end of all things is at hand — be therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He comes shall find watching; truly I say unto you, He shall gird Himself and make them to sit down to eat, and will come forth and serve them."

PRAYER.

O God, my Father in Christ, I come to ask You for a watchful spirit. Teach me to avoid the very least approach to evil. Give me a tender conscience. Keep me from every wrong temper and disposition. Keep me from sin in thought, word, or deed. I ask You also to prepare me for the great day of Christ's appearing. May I cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. May I purify myself, through Your Spirit, even as Christ is pure. And O my Father, keep me from all the snares and allurements of this present evil world. Keep me far from the brink of danger, and very near to Yourself. In all doubtful matters, give me heavenly wisdom, that I may know what things I ought to do — and give me grace faithfully to perform the same. When this world and all within it shall be destroyed, grant that I may be found among Your elect, safe in Your kingdom forever. Hear me, O my Father, and fulfill all my petitions, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

WATCHING AND WAITING (Scriptures that speak of "Vertical Vision") - This thought would give me hope, and through my struggle I would eagerly wait until my change comes. I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. And so my soul waits for the Lord more than the watchmen for the morning; indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. So I will wait for the LORD Who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob. I will even look eagerly for Him. I will watch expectantly for the LORD. I will wait for the God of my salvation, waiting expectantly for God's Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, Who delivers us from the wrath to come. For our citizenship

is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait (in great anticipation and patience) for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. For we through (the enabling power of) the Spirit, by faith, are waiting eagerly for the hope (absolute certainty) of righteousness, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ (Who promised) "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done." Maranatha. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Job 14:14, 19:26, 27, Ps 130:6, Titus 2:13-14, Isaiah 8:17, Micah 7:7, 1 Th 1:10, Phil 3:19-20, 1 Cor 15:51-52, 1 John 3:2, Gal 5:5, 1 Cor 1:7, Rev 22:12, 1 Cor 16:22-24)

MARANATHA!

**OUR LORD,
COME QUICKLY!**

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Vertical versus Horizontal Vision - Years ago, a minister waited in line to have his car filled with gas just before a long holiday weekend. The attendant worked quickly, but there were many cars ahead of him in front of the service station. Finally, the attendant motioned him toward a vacant pump. "Reverend," said the young man, "sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip." The minister chuckled, "I know what you mean. It's the same in my business." If ours is an eternal perspective, we will gripped by the biblical truth that our brief earthly sojourn is designed to prepare us for an eternal heavenly citizenship. The more we align ourselves with this perspective, the more it will have an impact on our short-term and long-term priorities. (Kenneth Boa)

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Abram's Bad Example of Horizontal Vision - Genesis 12:10-20-note gives us an example from Abram's life of choosing "Horizontal Vision" over "Vertical Vision." As Warren Wiersbe says Abram "moved from confidence to fear. When you are in the place of God's choosing, you don't ever need to be afraid; for faith and fear cannot dwell in the same heart (Isa. 12:2; Mark 4:40). The fear of God is the fear that conquers every fear (Ps. 112; Isa. 8:13); but "the fear of man brings a snare" (Prov. 29:25, NKJV). God had repeatedly said "I will" to Abraham, but now Abraham was saying "They will" (Gen. 12:12, italics added). He took his eyes off the Lord and started looking at people." Abram reasoned within himself, rather than praying outside himself. He feared for his life and forgot his right fear of God. He reasoned that Pharaoh would see Sarai's beauty, covet her and kill him to fulfill his lusts. He forgot that God had given him a promise to bless the world through a seed (descendant) from his and Sarai's line, something that could not have occurred if he were killed! In short, he looked at the (possible) problem instead of looking at his Protector!

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Charles Swindoll - Our past is like an art gallery. Walking down those corridors of our memory is like walking through an art gallery. On the walls are all of yesterday's pictures: our home, our childhood, our parents, our rearing, the heartaches, the difficulties, the joys and triumphs as well as the abuses and the inequities of our life. Since Jesus Christ our Lord is the same yesterday and today and forever, then we can take the Christ of today and walk with Him into our yesterday and ask Him to remove the pictures that bring bad or defeating memories. In other words, the Christian can let Jesus invade yesterday and deal with those years of affliction—those years which the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:25–26)—and remove those scenes from the corridors of our lives. I have them. You have them. We need to let Him leave the murals that bring pleasure and victory and take down from the walls those things that bring **despair** and defeat. (David: A Man of Passion and Destiny)

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Here is a devotional from [**Dennis Fisher**](#) that emphasizes the value of "Vertical Vision" over "Horizontal Vision" -

Perspective From The Clouds (Read: Job 3:3-5; 42:5-6) "I have heard of You . . . but now my eye sees You." (Job 42:5) In 1927 the silent film *Wings*, a World War I film about two American aviators, won the first Academy Award for Best Picture. When it was being filmed, production stopped for several days. Frustrated producers asked the director why. He responded: "All we have is blue sky. The conflict in the air will not be as visible without clouds. Clouds bring perspective." He was right. Only by seeing aerial combat with clouds as a backdrop could the viewer see what was really going on. We often wish for blue skies instead of storm clouds. But cloudy skies may reveal God's faithfulness. We gain perspective on how God has been faithful in our trials as we look back on the clouds. At the beginning of his terrible suffering, Job lamented: "May the day perish on which I was born . . . May a cloud settle on it" (Job 3:3-5). His experience of despair continued for a long time until God spoke. Then Job exclaimed, "I have heard of You . . . but now my eye sees You" (42:5). Job had encountered the sovereign Creator, and that changed his perspective on God's purposes. Do clouds of trouble fill your skies today? Sooner than you think, God may use these clouds to help you gain perspective

on His faithfulness.

God, give us wings to rise above
The clouds of trial that block the sun,
To soar above gray skies and see
The love and goodness of Your Son.

—Sper

Often the clouds of sorrow reveal the sunshine of His face. —Jasper

INSIGHT: In Job 3:3-5, we have what many Bible scholars call Job's soliloquy. After a time of quiet agony, the great Old Testament saint breaks his silence and lets out his anguish. He calls for darkness and then destruction to overwhelm him. Instead of seeing God's light-filled and good creation, Job feels he is living in a world of darkness. But in Job 42:5-6, we see the resolution to Job's conflict. Out of the whirlwind, God challenges Job and points to creation as a witness to His reality. Although he is never told that his sufferings are the result of spiritual warfare from the devil, Job submits to the sovereignty of God and experiences restoration.

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Dave Branor's devotional "[Out Of The Darkness](#)" is based on Psalm 77:1-15 where Asaph writes "I cried out to God . . . Who is so great a God as our God?" (Psalm 77:1,13). Branor writes "I don't know what desperate situation gripped Asaph, the writer of Psalm 77, but I've heard, and made, similar laments. Over the past dozen years since I lost my daughter, many others who have experienced the loss of a loved one have shared with me heartbreakingly sentiments like these: Crying out to God (Ps 77:1). Stretching empty arms heavenward (Ps 77:2). Experiencing troubling thoughts about God because of horrible circumstances (Ps 77:3). Enduring unspeakable trouble (Ps 77:4). Cowering under the feeling of being cast aside (Ps 77:7). Fearing failed promises (Ps 77:8). Fearing a lack of mercy (Ps 77:8). **But a turnaround occurs for Asaph** in Ps 77:10 through a **recollection of God's great works**. Thoughts turn to God's love. To memories of what He has done. To His marvelous deeds of old. To the comfort of God's faithfulness and mercy. To reminders of God's wonders and greatness. To His strength and redemption. **Despair** is real in this life, and answers do not come easily. Yet in the darkness—as we remember God's glory, majesty, power, and love—our despair can slowly subside. Like Asaph, we can rehearse God's acts, especially the salvation He brought through Jesus, and we can return to where we once were—resting gratefully in His mighty love. Lord, we cannot fathom the depth of Your character or the wisdom of Your actions when trouble visits us. Help us to inch our way back into Your arms through a rehearsal of Your goodness and a recollection of Your glorious love.

Branor then writes "Remembering the past can bring hope to the present." I would add the qualifier that we must remember the past times when God has moved in our lives, when the hand of the Almighty took hold of our stumbling hand, when in our weakness, we experienced the very real truth that His grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9), etc. In other words like the psalmist say "**Therefore I remember Thee!**"

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A Gift Of Hope - He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. —Judges 13:5 - When a powerful typhoon swept through the city of Tacloban, Philippines, in 2013, an estimated 10,000 people died, and many who survived found themselves homeless and jobless. Necessities became scarce. Three months later, while the town was still struggling to dig itself out from the destruction, a baby was born on a roadside near Tacloban amid torrents of rain and strong wind. Although the weather brought back painful memories, residents worked together to find a midwife and transport the mother and newborn to a clinic. The baby survived, thrived, and became a symbol of hope during a time of despair. Forty years of Philistine oppression marked a grim period in Israel's national history. During this time, an angel informed an Israelite woman that she would give birth to a special son (Judg. 13:3). According to the angel, the baby would be a Nazirite—a man set apart to God—and would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (v.5). The infant, Samson, was a gift of hope born in a troubled time. **Trouble is unavoidable, yet Jesus has the power to rescue us from despair.** Christ was born "to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace" (Luke 1:76-79). Lord, help me to see beyond my circumstances and put my hope in You. All authority and power are Yours. Remind me of Your goodness, and let me rest in Your love. Jesus is the hope that calms life's storms. ([Jennifer Benson Schuld](#))

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Dennis Fisher has written a devotional entitled [God's Enduring Word](#) - Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Matthew 24:35 At the beginning of World War II, aerial bombings flattened much of Warsaw, Poland. Cement blocks, ruptured plumbing, and shards of glass lay strewn across the great city. In the downtown area, however, most of one damaged building still stubbornly stood. It was the Polish headquarters for the British and Foreign Bible Society. Still legible on a surviving wall were these words: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Jesus made that statement

to encourage His disciples when they asked Him about the “end of the age” (v. 3). But His words also give us courage in the midst of our embattled situation today. Standing in the rubble of our shattered dreams, we can still find confidence in God’s indestructible character, sovereignty, and promises. His enduring Word assures us of His unfailing love. The psalmist wrote: “Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens” (Ps. 119:89). But it is more than the word of the Lord; it is His very character. That is why the psalmist could also say, “Your faithfulness continues through all generations” (Ps 119:90). **As we face devastating experiences, we can define them either in terms of despair or of hope. Because God will not abandon us to our circumstances, we can confidently choose hope.** His enduring Word assures us of His unfailing love. Thank You, Lord, for the gift of Your Word. Thank You for its truth, its timelessness, and the guidance You give us by that Word. Help us believe and trust everything You say. We can trust God’s unchanging Word.

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All Safe! All Well! - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1 - In January 1915, the ship Endurance was trapped and crushed in the ice off the coast of Antarctica. The group of polar explorers, led by Ernest Shackleton, survived and managed to reach Elephant Island in three small lifeboats. Trapped on this uninhabited island, far from normal shipping lanes, they had one hope. On April 24, 1916, 22 men watched as Shackleton and five comrades set out in a tiny lifeboat for South Georgia, an island 800 miles away. The odds seemed impossible, and if they failed, they would all certainly die. What joy, then, when more than four months later a boat appeared on the horizon with Shackleton on its bow shouting, “Are you all well?” And the call came back, “All safe! All well!” What held those men together and kept them alive over those months? Faith and hope placed in one man. They believed that Shackleton would find a way to save them. This human example of faith and hope echoes the faith of the heroes listed in Hebrews 11. Their faith in the “substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” kept them going through great difficulties and trials (Heb. 11:1 nkjv). **As we look out upon the horizon of our own problems** (Ed: I call this “horizontal” thinking or “horizontal vision”), may we not despair. **May we have hope through the certainty of our faith in the One Man—Jesus, our God and Savior** (Ed: I call this “vertical” thinking or “vertical vision”). Thank You, Father, for the promise of forgiveness made possible by Jesus. May that promise lighten the darkest of our days. The hope of Jesus shines brightly even on our darkest day. We can take courage and hope from those who have preceded us in the life of faith. The author of Hebrews lists many examples of people who acted in faith despite their circumstances and despite the fact that they had not yet received what “had been promised” (11:39). This is why Hebrews 11 begins by saying that “faith is the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” (J.R. Hudberg) - [By Randy Kilgore](#)

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Spurgeon on I remember Thee - Oh, what a mercy it is to be able to look back upon our past experiences of God’s mercy! How delightful it is to remember what the Lord was, to us in days gone by, for he is the same God still. When you are like in the great storm, when neither sun, nor moon, nor stars for many days appeared, it is very pleasant to remember that the sun, moon, and stars did shine in the past, and that they will shine forth again. From the little hill I will think of all thy former love, — all the sacred spots where thou hast met with me, all the lonely places where thou hast been my comfort, and all the joyful regions where thou hast been my glory. I will think of these, and take comfort from them, for thou art an unchanging God.; and what thou didst for me aforetime, thou wilt do for me again and yet again. Is it not a blessed thing that, even when he is down, he says, “Oh, my God”? He gets hold of his God. He has lost his company, but he has not lost his God. See- “my soul”- “my God.” His God is as much his as his soul is his. He puts them together- “my God” - “my soul.” Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonite, from the hill Mizar. Were these places where he was then wandering? He would remember God wherever he was. He would remember happier days-seasons long past when he did walk in fellowship with God. So let us remember how he kept his tryst with us in former days of sorrow,-how he manifested himself unto us as he does not to the world. He will do the same now. Let us be of good courage.

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Life’s Darkest Moments - An angel touched [Elijah], and said to him, “Arise and eat.” —1 Kings 19:5 - Charles Whittlesey was a hero’s hero. Leader of the so-called “Lost Battalion” in World War I, he was awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery when his unit was trapped behind enemy lines. When the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was dedicated, Charles was chosen to serve as pallbearer for the first soldier laid to rest there. Two weeks later, it is presumed that he ended his own life by stepping off a cruise ship in the middle of the ocean. Like Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-7), Charles was publicly strong, but in the quiet, post-public moments, his feelings of despair set in. People today frequently face situations bigger than they can handle. Sometimes it’s temporary despair brought on by fatigue, as in Elijah’s case. He had been part of a great victory over the prophets of Baal (1 Ki 18:20-40), but then he feared for his life and ran into the wilderness (1 Ki 19:1-3). But often, it’s more than despair and it’s more than temporary. That’s why it is imperative that we talk about depression openly and compassionately. God offers His presence to us in life’s darkest moments, which enables us, in turn, to be His presence to the hurting. Crying out for help—from others and from God—may be the strongest moment of our lives. Father, grant us the candor to admit to each other that sometimes life overwhelms us. And grant us the courage

to help others find help—and to seek it when we need it. Hope comes with help from God and others. ([Randy Kilgore](#))

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Remembering Our Father's Words - I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life. —Psalm 119:93 - Jim Davidson was climbing down Mount Rainier when he fell through a snow bridge and into a crevasse (a pitch-black, ice-walled crack in a glacier). As Jim stood bloodied and bruised in that dark ice cave, he reflected on his childhood and recalled how his father had repeatedly reminded him that he could accomplish great things if he pressed through adversity. Those words helped to sustain Jim as he spent the next 5 hours climbing out of that dark ice cave to safety with very little gear and under extremely difficult circumstances. The psalmist seemed to climb out of his own crevasse of affliction and pain by recalling his heavenly Father's words. He admitted that if God and His Word had not sustained him with joy, he would have died in his misery (Ps. 119:92). He expressed full confidence in the Lord's eternal Word (Ps 119:89) and in the faithfulness of His character (Ps 119:90). As a result of God's faithfulness, the psalmist made a commitment never to forget God's words to him because they had a central part in rescuing his life and bringing him strength. In our darkest caves and moments of affliction, our souls can be revived by our Father in heaven when we recall and fill our minds with His encouraging words. Thinking It Over - What crevasse of discouragement are you currently in? How can you use this time as an occasion to revive your soul by filling your mind and heart with God's Word? Remembering God's words revives our soul. ([Marvin Williams](#))

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I Am Not Forgotten - Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. —Psalm 33:20 - Waiting is hard at any time; but when days, weeks, or even months pass and our prayers seem to go unanswered, it's easy to feel God has forgotten us. Perhaps we can struggle through the day with its distractions, but at night it's doubly difficult to deal with our anxious thoughts. Worries loom large, and the dark hours seem endless. Utter weariness makes it look impossible to face the new day. The psalmist grew weary as he waited (Ps. 13:1). He felt abandoned—as if his enemies were gaining the upper hand (v.2). When we're waiting for God to resolve a difficult situation or to answer often-repeated prayers, it's easy to get discouraged. Satan whispers that God has forgotten us, and that things will never change. We may be tempted to give in to despair. Why bother to read the Bible or to pray? Why make the effort to worship with fellow believers in Christ? But we need our spiritual lifelines most when we're waiting. They help to hold us steady in the flow of God's love and to become sensitive to His Spirit. The psalmist had a remedy. He focused on all that he knew of God's love, reminding himself of past blessings and deliberately praising God, who would not forget him. So can we. Lover of my soul, who draws close in the darkest and longest night, please keep me trusting You, talking to You, and leaning on Your promises. God is worth waiting for; His time is always best. All believers go through times of frustration due to unanswered prayer. Yet the Scriptures provide hope for this apparent dilemma. Psalm 13 illustrates the release that grows out of praying through a problem. David asks God four times "how long" he must wait to get an answer to prayer (Ps. 13:1-2). Eventually he understands that his perspective has not been a divine one. He then asks God to "give light to my eyes" so that he can have the strength to endure opposition (Ps. 13:3-4). David redirects his heart to trust in God's unfailing mercy. The Hebrew word for "mercy" here is hesed, which connotes enduring, unfailing, and gracious care. With a new perspective, David now sings of God's goodness with petitions of praise (Ps. 13:5-6). ([Marion Stroud](#))