

Turn to Me

Isaiah 45:22

On January 6, 1850, a 15-year-old Charles Spurgeon headed out of his home to attend the chapel he and his family belonged to in Colchester, England. The weather was quite snowy and bitter cold, and the rest of his family remained home. As he trudged through deep snow, he decided the effort to get several more blocks to his chapel was too difficult. So he diverted, instead, into a small Primitive Methodist chapel on Artillery Street. The winter weather impacted that church's attendance as well, and there were only a handful of people in attendance that morning. The regular preacher himself was unable to get there, and the highest-ranking person in the church was a thin layman who helped care for the building. Wanting to be faithful for those who made the effort to get out, he undertook to preach an unprepared and unrefined sermon from Isaiah 45. That uneducated man stood, read the text, and began to hold forth its truth one phrase at a time, with no particular rhetorical skill. Focusing at one point on the teenage Spurgeon, he said, "Young man you look very miserable. You must look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but look and live!"

While we will not replicate that sermon precisely, we are going to take this God-breathed text, so powerful and plain, and remind ourselves of the unspeakable kindness and beauty of God's salvation in Christ. Pray with me that God would again anoint its preaching, and use this passage to bring those who would believe into his kingdom, and possibly raise up another Spurgeon to preach America and the nations to Christ.

Isaiah 45:22 — "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!

For I am God, and there is no other.

PRAY

Turn. Here the graciousness of our God is made plain. Turn from looking for your own source of life, for there is no life apart from God. He alone has life in himself. In the command to turn from our ways we are confronted with the reality that our ways are not ways of life and blessing. Indeed, the ways that we walk in on our own are ways of death — even if we fool ourselves and try over and over again to convince ourselves that "this time I've got it right!" **There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. (Proverbs 14:12)** You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the

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power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 2:1–2)

Apart from God, we march to a demonic drumbeat with the rest of the rebellious world. But God is rich in mercy, calling us to turn and look, opening our blind eyes— to turn and hear his voice, unstopping our deaf ears, giving us a new heart to see the life, beauty, and kindness of the Lord.

Further, note that it is a **personal command**— a command to every individual. No one is exempt. We are obligated to turn to him, or **we will individually suffer the eternal consequences of individual rebellion**. It is true that God calls his people in a broad way to come to him. But salvation does not come through some national citizenship, or some family inside track. Salvation comes to an individual as that person hears God’s effectual call and turns in faith to Jesus. It is to the individual **“whoever”** that believes that he gives eternal life, who does not perish, who is not condemned. Hear his command, whoever, and turn to him and live!

His command requires no price in the hand. It is free to all who hear and turn in faith. As we read in the Call to Worship, **Come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!** The only thing we bring to the table of salvation is the sin that made God’s sacrifice necessary. It is not that salvation had no cost, but that ***Jesus paid the price, and we receive it in turning to him.***

Turn to Me. It is not merely that God calls us to turn from our way and choose some different way. He calls us to turn to him. He is the source of life. As the Lord Jesus said, **I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me. (John 14:6)** To acknowledge that some particular path I’m on has **failed me** at some point, and then use the world’s wisdom, or some inclination of what I think is best to choose another godless way **does not help**. It still leaves me in the grip of sin’s death. The repentance that the Bible speaks of involves turning, not just from what you do, but what you are. We are sinners by nature, and we are called, not just to turn from a particular sin, but to turn from sinning to Christ and his holiness.

Consider unhelpful forms of turning from one destructive thing without ever coming to life in Christ. A man is a drunk and alcoholic. He is arrested for a DUI, and later another. His attorney tells him that if he gets a third one, he will go to jail for a very long time. So he says to himself, my drinking has already caused my family thousands of dollars and embarrassment. I can’t even afford to buy my children new shoes. And if I keep drinking, I will be separated from my family for years, and will miss

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seeing my children grow up. I see the wickedness of my drunken ways, and today, I am never going to drink again. I see that I have been using alcohol as an escape from the pressures of my job and life in general. So now, I am going to take up fishing as a way of coping with life. He did turn from one worthless way, and replaced it with another.

Or perhaps someone else who has been destroying both their mind and soul through the use of porn. At some point, they realize that their mind is in the demonic grip of depravity and moral deviancy. They can no longer escape images and base drives that are infecting their relationships. So this person says I am destroying myself with the issues of my thoughts and my body. I am going to immediately turn from this and take up pickleball. Or woodworking. Or delivering Meals on Wheels. While some senior adult may be very grateful for a hot meal, that is not going to address the fundamental need of the soul, and that is to be right with God. If we are to live, we must turn to him. It will do us no good to turn from one worthless thing to another, no matter how much we might perceive the improvement of this worthless thing over another. I must turn to God for my very life, or I will perish; there is life in no other.

Oh, how the mercies of God are on display as he calls us to turn to him! First, in that he calls us *at all!* We are rebels who have despised and hated God and his ways. Here is love demonstrated in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Our sin debt becomes his. Second, we see his mercies in that he does not call us to make superficial moral improvement. We can't fix ourselves. So he gives us his perfect righteousness. He does not suggest that we merely reduce our sinful offenses against him while he covers the price. He does not call us to self-improvement. He calls us to an end of unrighteousness so that we can have the righteousness of Christ.

Turn to me and be saved. Salvation is in Christ alone. And salvation is what we must have, or a sinner's hell faces us forever. Consider our desperate situation apart from Christ. We are sinners at the very core of who we are, and that marks us as enemies of God. A state of war exists between us and God simply because of the nature of our sinful hearts. But we are not merely sinners by nature, but sinners by omission and commission. What God says not to do we do. What God says that we are to do, we don't do. **Sin is any want of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God.** And with each failure to live as holy God requires, his righteous wrath is stored up, heaped up as a just punishment against that sin, and every sin. It is the wrath of God that we must be saved from— or

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more precisely, we must be saved from God himself. Salvation is being saved from the wrath to come.

Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! Salvation is open to every tribe, tongue, people and nation. This is the gospel that is the power of God for salvation: everyone who believes, the Jew first and also the Greek are saved by faith in Jesus. God is no respecter of persons, but ordains that Jew and Greek, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, and free, rich and poor, male and female, are all saved by Christ, and are all one in Christ Jesus. He is the one who became the substitute for people from every tribe and language and people and nation, and was slain. By his blood he ransomed people for God and made them a kingdom and priests to God. And so his call to turn to him is universal and without distinction.

Lastly, there is no other God, than the God of the bible who calls us. There is no other source of salvation. We have already heard Jesus, **John 14**, say, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.”** In **John 10** he says, **“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”** I know a young man who, after some time now, has become aware of his soul’s trouble. But root rebellion against God drives him to look at all sorts of false religions with all kinds of false gods. To that young man, and to everyone else hearing this, I repeat the plea of an unskilled, untrained preacher from 175 years ago — poor in speech, but rich in Christ, who now enjoys his reward: You must look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but look and live!

And to those whom God has caused to hear, and caused to see, and caused to come, consider the stunning, immeasurable grace God has poured out on you who believe. Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor that we, through his poverty, might become rich. For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. All glory forever be to Christ.

PRAY