

Lift Up Your Eyes

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS
P.O. BOX 18715
BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.
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Grace Publications is a ministry of
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

“Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed” (Psalm 84:9).

According to Genesis 6:16, Noah’s ark had no side windows. The only window was way up above, because God did not want those on the ark to focus on the people and animals perishing in the flood waters. He wouldn’t allow them to see that, so he instructed Noah to have one window—and to see through it, they would have to look up.

Lifting up our eyes is the key to life for a Christian. When we lift up our eyes, we remove our focus from this world and from what is going on around us, and we see the One who is the author and finisher of our faith. Looking up, we see the reality of who God is and who we are in Christ.

The disciples came to Jesus in John 4 and wanted Him to take food. “But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of....My

meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (verses 31-34). Then Jesus told them, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields." Christ was always trying to get the disciples to turn their eyes away from themselves and their temporal needs and to look to God.

As this booklet will show, God doesn't see things as we see them. He looks unto His Son, His Anointed, and the Father is asking us to lift our eyes on high and see Him who does not fail.

Chapter One

THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER SEES OUR POTENTIAL

“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

“Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth” (Isaiah 40:26).

“Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt

surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth" (Isaiah 49:18).

"Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side" (Isaiah 60:4).

Through the Eyes of a Friend

God the Father looks upon His Son, His Anointed One, the Psalmist tells us. And if He looks upon the Son, shouldn't we as Christians also do the same thing? For this reason, He exhorts us to lift up our eyes.

Mary Magdalene sold her body as a prostitute, but Jesus never saw her that way. He saw someone who would be a tremendous woman of God. The Father looked upon Jesus for her, and Jesus looked upon the Cross for her. She looked upon Jesus as the "author and finisher" of her faith. Jesus saw the woman who would be first at the tomb (John 20:1), the woman who would weep as she mistook the resurrected Son for a gardener (John 20:11), the woman whose heart rejoiced when she realized it was Him saying to her, "Mary" (John 20:16). Yes, He saw a

tremendous woman of God.

Think of how the scribes, the Pharisees, and others in the religious crowd must have murmured in the background when Mary was around Jesus. Ultimately, they would declare Him to be “a friend of publicans and sinners.” His only answer to that charge was this: “Wisdom is justified of all her children” (see Luke 7:34-35). Jesus Christ meets people right where they are. He isn’t concerned with what they have done; He wants them to lift up their eyes and look upon Him.

Never a Hopeless Case with God

When we look upon the field of the inner city, rather than seeing it filled with drug addicts and hopeless cases, we need to see living souls who need investment, love, and mercy—who need one-on-one encounters with Jesus Christ and with people who care.

Suppose your pastor were to announce that three people who had each committed murder would be preaching from the pulpit for three consecutive Sundays. First would be Moses, who killed an Egyptian (Exodus 2:11-12). Next would come David, who had Uriah set up to be killed in battle to cover up David’s adultery

with Bathsheba (see 2 Samuel 11). Then we would have Saul of Tarsus, a man responsible for the execution of numerous believers in the early Church (Acts 9). How would you view these preachers? Would you see them as ex-criminals, unworthy of any pulpit? Or, would you look to Jesus and see the fruit of grace and mercy?

Not one of these three would testify of their murders and declare how glorious it was to kill people and then find Jesus. They would look upon God's Anointed One and testify of Him. What God sees and what people see are altogether different. He says, "Know no man after the flesh" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Neither should we know ourselves after the flesh.

I wonder what people thought when Jesus went to Matthew, a crooked tax collector, and simply said, "Follow Me" (Matthew 9:9). Matthew's reputation wasn't the issue. Jesus saw his potential as a Christian, and He went to this tax collector's house for a party, where "many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples" (Matthew 9:10). That must have *really* provoked the scribes and Pharisees! "There He goes again, eating with publicans and sinners."

We must lift up our eyes and look. There is Christ who paid for the sins of the world, Christ who never sees people as they *were*. He never saw Saul of Tarsus as a murderer, He always saw him as Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, one of the greatest servants in the history of the New Testament Church.

God's Focus: The Future

Many would look at Peter and see him cursing and publicly denying the Lord (Matthew 26:72-76). "There he is; some disciple of Jesus Christ *he* is," they would mutter. But that is not what Jesus saw in Peter. He saw the one who would preach the first sermon at Pentecost; He saw Peter's amazing potential.

Don't look down upon anyone. Without a doubt, little children and struggling teenagers among us will be God's heroes some day. Don't judge anyone in the midst of failure. Instead, lift up your eyes on high and see what will happen to that one person when love and mercy get through to his heart and grace arrives in his soul. See him as someone who could be used by Jesus Christ in a moment of time.

The twelve disciples who turned the world upside down, according to Acts 17:6, knew noth-

ing about theology. They didn't study in the great schools of religion. Their education came from walking with Jesus, spending three years in His outdoor Bible college. No one ever built Him a building, and He didn't ask anyone to.

After three years with these Twelve, Jesus went through the pain of seeing them asleep as He wrestled in prayer, sweating drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44-45). While He was on the cross, they stood afar off (Matthew 26:56). Still, Jesus did not look upon their failures; He focused on their futures.

Chapter Two

FOCUS ON POSSIBILITIES, NOT PROBLEMS

“Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth” (Isaiah 40:26).

In John 4, the woman at the well admitted having had five husbands, and the man she was living with was not even her husband. Considering the beautiful principle expressed in Isaiah 40:26, Jesus reached out to her. The disciples didn't like it, so they went for food.

Jesus told this Samaritan woman “all things” that she ever did (John 4:29), and off she went. The disciples then came to Him with food, but He was more than satisfied, looking upon what God would do with this woman. He responded, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet

four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together” (John 4:34-36).

This woman came back with a crowd from the city, and “many more believed because of his own word” (John 4:41). The woman at the well had gone through five husbands and was living immorally with a sixth man outside of marriage. What happened to her? She became the great soul winner of Samaria.

Try to imagine how the disciples felt when they saw her coming. Their minds were on food, and Jesus said, “Lift up your eyes, the fields are white and ready to harvest.” This woman never took a soul-winning course; she didn’t have the “Romans Road” method available to her to help win them to Christ. She just told people what Jesus did for her and brought them to Him. That’s all she did after she was saved and repented.

Who Is Among Us?

Jesus, our Lord, never sees people in their

condition of sin. He sees them in a heavenly love that paid for every sin they ever committed. He sees their possibilities. We never know who may be sitting beside us.

It was a stormy day when, along with just fifteen other people, Charles Spurgeon, at the age of fifteen, went out to hear a speaker. The invitation for salvation was given, and Charles Spurgeon was saved. Spurgeon would go on to become a great servant of God who touched many lives. He wrote a number of books that are still blessing Christians a century after they were first published. Only sixteen came out that stormy day, but among them was a young man who became known as the “prince of preachers.”

The men and women in our churches have the most amazing potential because inside is this throne of mercy, this unconditional love, this understanding that God so loved the world, He died for them. The Father looks upon the Son, and we are to look unto Jesus.

Don't look upon people's failures—if you do, you will end up failing. Don't listen to gossip and look upon what someone just did. Look to Jesus and pray about what the person is going to be some day. Always see what God has done, then look ahead to what He is going to do.

It is so easy to look at our nation and to see only the bad parts, the effects of what fallen men have done. Don't undersell God's ability to bring revival. Don't undersell the effect our prayer can have on the lost. Don't undersell what prayer could do in Washington. Don't undersell the possibilities we have with the love of God. We have an amazing potential in the love of God. By His grace, I have no doubt God will move as we get out the *glorious* gospel of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 4:4-5).

Realizing His Perfect Plan

Peter, James, and John were three fishermen. God said, "They will do. I want to use them." Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. "She will do. I want to use her," God said. Matthew was a tax collector—"He will do. I want to use Him." John Mark left Paul and Barnabas at one point, but even of him God could say, "He will do. I still want to use him too."

When the love and grace of God come into us, our potential is elevated. We see Jesus Christ for who He really is and the love He really has for us. We then realize the Father has a perfect plan. We don't have to earn His love. We don't have to buy it. It is something we keep right on

receiving by grace through faith.

After this takes place, we can see the worst unsaved person around us; then lifting up our eyes on high, we can see the Creator—the One who created these things and who brings out their host by number and calls the stars by name. Let's lift up our eyes. Remember, the only window in the ark was above Noah and his family, because God didn't want them to see the terrible destruction going on outside. "You just look to Me while this is going on," God said to Noah. "I will protect you."

Chapter Three

HOW GOD DOES BIG THINGS

Gideon was a small man in an insignificant tribe. As it is written in Judges 6 through 8, however, God saw Gideon as a general leading an army. “I know Gideon will be afraid, but he is going to defeat the Midianites through My plan,” God said. “He will be a great general, effective in conflict and battles.” With an army of just three hundred, Gideon put the attacking Midianites to flight, and Israel was “in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon” (Judges 8:28). None but God saw Gideon that way. The Lord saw the potential in a little man from a small tribe.

Bad marriages, broken homes, poor decisions—no matter what problems you have had in your life, God doesn’t see those in you—He didn’t even see them when they were going on, except to identify with your suffering and love you in spite of them. The Father is always looking upon the Son. When you started looking

upon the Son, you began to receive reflections of the Son through the Holy Spirit and His nature within you. When you lifted your eyes up above all the things that people see, you saw Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of your faith.

Believe that He can do anything for anybody no matter who they are. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ. Look unto Him.

When I started out preaching, there were only a couple adults and about thirty-five kids in my group. God saw something in those precious folks. He didn't look upon this country preacher. He looked upon what He was going to do by mercy and grace and love.

Then, we moved on to another little church with about twelve to fifteen people and a hole in the floor. God didn't see the smallness of that place or that congregation. God saw that a great work would come out of that small beginning. God was looking upon His Son. He saw what grace would do, what love would do, and what godly people would do when they received His grace and love.

I could tell you so many great things God has done in people's lives. He has always made a way for us. The principle is that God had His work for us. The world looked at us based on

what people said, and God looked at us according to what Jesus said. Jesus had a work He was going to perform, and those in the world thought they could interfere. There was just one problem for them: If the work is of men, it will never succeed. But if the work is of God, nothing can stop it (Acts 5:39).

Through His love and grace, Jesus has always used sinners to glorify His character so that men and women will praise Him, honor Him, and love Him throughout eternity. Jesus doesn't use just anyone. He uses people who will trust His love, trust His grace, trust His provision for rebound, and trust all that He does.

Follow the One with the Scars

In John 20, after Jesus had appeared to the other disciples in His resurrected body, Thomas said that he would not believe unless he could see and touch the nail prints in Jesus' hands. Jesus accommodated him. When Thomas was there, He came to him and said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side ... and Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (John 20:27-28).

At least, Thomas knew enough to follow the

Man with the scars. Thank God, we follow the One who has the scars. Paul wrote, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Galatians 6:17). If you want to know the right way, find the people of God who bear the scars of battle and follow them. That way, you will be victorious.

Thank God for what He is doing in so many lives. Oh, if you could see your potential—if you could just see what God’s Word and God’s Spirit can do in you. If you could understand the love and grace of God, you would never again see yourself in the natural. Don’t look upon yourself that way. See yourself as a living soul under the power and provision of God’s perfect plan. See yourself as someone who can do all things in Christ, who can be used mightily to change a city, a country, the world! God can do that through you. He can do it in any believer because of the way He sees us: hid with Christ in God.

The Father hasn’t seen any sin we have committed since we were saved. David wrote, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned” (Psalm 51:4a), because he saw himself as hid with Christ in God. The Father saw all of our sins upon the Son as He was nailed to the cross (1 Peter 2:24; Hebrews 9:28). There isn’t a sin on our record

any more (Colossians 2:14). When we fail and refuse to come to God and repent, He graciously chastens us so that we will rebound and bring forth peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). There is no condemnation. God just wants us to bring forth those fruits that cannot come forth when we are living wrong. Thank God and lift up your eyes on high.

The Father sees us hid inside of His Son; and when we behold ourselves as who we are inside the Son, seated above with Him, then we will really see what love can do, what faith can do, and what grace can do. We will see what we are becoming, and we won't look at failure as final. Instead, we will see a failure as an opportunity for someone who is ready to rebound and grow in God.

We can't look at someone who is down as being out; we have to see that person as someone who is getting up and ready to run. We are not to see someone who has a weakness as a person who is prone to failing in an area. We need to see that person as someone who is going to be a faith hero for God.

That is why the Father used the people that He used throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. He used foolish things to con-

found the people who thought they were wise, used weak things to confound the mighty, used the base things and the “things that are not” to confound those who would go against Him (1 Corinthians 1:26-30).

No flesh can glory in God’s presence. But of Him, are we in Christ Jesus, who has made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. If any man glory, let him glory in the Lord.

CONCLUSION

It is time believers took their eyes off the world and off each other. Let's take our eyes off circumstances. Let's get them off the bad things that may be going on around us. We have to lift up our eyes on high, get them on Jesus Christ, the One who calls out the host by name. Look unto Him who is the author and finisher of our faith. We won't see anyone as beautiful as Jesus Christ.

I don't want to see as the world sees, I want to see what God the Father sees, what Jesus Christ sees. I am "confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). He will perfect that which concerns me (Psalm 138:8). God is concerned with every believer, so He is perfecting all of us. Do we earn it? Do we deserve it? Absolutely not. He does it all by grace through faith. It is all a process, all mercy, all rebound, all believing. It is

looking, receiving, and going on with Christ as we have never done before.