

Jerry Aman--Salvation By Faith

Let's pray:

Lord, we are grateful to Thee. You are the Word, Lord Jesus. Open our ears to hear the Word this morning speaking to us. Lord, grant me the ability to share these thoughts that are on my heart, that I really believe came from You. We look to You today; what could we do without Thee? We cannot even hear Your Word without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. We come under the Spirit's ruling control this morning, and we are looking unto Thee to open our ears to hear and our eyes to see Jesus. We pray in Thy precious name. Amen.

I will be sharing on this matter of faith this morning, and there are two theme verses that I will begin with.

Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith."

Romans 1:17: "The just shall live by faith."

How are you living today? Are you living off of what you eat physically, what you encounter in the world, what you gain, or are you living by faith? It is a critical issue in the life of every Christian, and we need to know what faith is.

Let's pray again:

Lord, we just thank You and praise You. Lord, I just pray that we be a real people of faith. I remember the man who was so desperate over the condition of his son, coming to You, and You said to him, "Believe; just believe. All things are possible." And he said, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." He knew he was not there; he knew he did not have it, but he knew he so desperately needed faith in You. Lord Jesus. Increase our faith, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

I need to say this morning that the inspiration for this message on faith really came from A. W. Tozer, a dear saint in the Lord. For those who have read his works, you will know how precious this brother is. But it is in his book, "The Pursuit of God," and the chapter in the book called, "The Gaze of the Soul," that so touched me. I would encourage all of you to read this book, especially the chapter, "The Gaze of the Soul". It is a very short message but very powerful.

We also have been considering this matter of faith, and we find it in the Book of Romans, which Kenny has touched on. I was impressed as I looked into this matter of faith, that in the book of Romans, which is Paul's opening salvo to the Roman Church, he said in verse 1:8: "Your faith is spoken of throughout the world." This was the thing that Paul was emphasizing with the Roman Church, and he said, "Your faith is known throughout all the known world at that time." That is an amazing statement. So powerful was the faith in the assembly in Rome, that it had affected the assemblies all over the world at that time.

Paul begins to talk in that first chapter of Romans, saying, "Look, I have been wanting to come to Rome, but I have not been able to make it yet, but I do have a great desire to come and share

the gospel with you.” Then he goes on to say, “The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, (see Romans 1:16) and the just shall live by faith” (v. 17). In other words, he is trying to get across the point of how important faith is in relation to righteousness. He is saying basically, “You can never establish a righteousness on your own before God. There are no righteousnesses you can do that will bring you into acceptability with God. There is a righteousness that can only come by faith, and that faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ who becomes our righteousness when we exercise that faith.

We have a righteous robe that can never be dulled or tarnished in any way,, even by the failures in our own lives because it is the righteousness of Christ Himself which we have been robed with. Now of course, we need to be a righteous people, but thank the Lord, we do have the righteousness that is acceptable before God. And when He looks at you, you need to know that what He is looking at is Christ who is your righteousness. That is why you can appear before God. That is why you can be acceptable only in Christ in His righteousness. And the point being, that it is by faith. He says that the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.

Now I would like to begin by looking at the absolute necessity of faith in the Christian life. I will read quite a number of Scriptures, but you will get the point.

Romans 3:28: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

In other words, the only way we can be just before God is through faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, not in our own works.

Romans 5:1-2: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we also have access by faith into this grace.”

Brothers and sisters, faith is so essential. If you want to have peace with God, it will only come through your faith in Christ Jesus, and you can have access into all of God’s grace, but it is always by faith.

Acts 26:18: “That you may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith, that is faith in Me.”

In other words, you have been set apart, and it is through the action of faith that you are set apart, and you receive forgiveness of sins and will receive an inheritance.

Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace are you saved through faith.” It is only through faith.

Ephesians 3:17: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”

We know Christ in our hearts, but what would it be like now that we know Christ in our hearts not to have Him there? The point is that He dwells in your life, and it is by faith.

Galatians 3:26: “For you all are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

Galatians 3:14: “That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

II Corinthians 1:24: “For by faith you stand.”

Brothers and sisters, oftentimes we find ourselves crumbling, but if the faith is there, we can stand.

II Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith and not by sight."

Every day it is a walk of faith.

James 1:6: "Let him that prays ask in faith, not wavering."

I John 5:4: "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

Hebrews 11:6: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them who diligently seek Him."

Often I think when we come to the Lord, we do not realize that He is the Rewarder. In other words, He is pleased to reward us; He is pleased to give to us. But I think we often limit the Lord because we think, "I am coming to the Lord, but I am not worthy to be here." You begin looking at yourself instead of on Him, and you take away the fact of the great Rewarder who stands before you.

Romans 1:17: "The just shall live by faith."

Brothers and sisters, we are exhorted as Christians to live by faith our entire life. Faith is the governing factor in the Christian life, and it is absolutely essential. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Without faith there is no salvation, there is no sanctification, there is no justification, there is no peace with God. Christ is not in your heart. You stand and walk by faith. How can you walk if you do not have faith in this life?

To our spiritual life faith is what breathing is to our physical life. If you stop breathing, you might be able to hold your breath for a little while, but eventually you will pass out. You have to breathe, and in the spiritual life, there has to be faith.

Faith is not in ourselves, of course; it is in Him who is our life. Without faith you just cannot please God. There is no approach to God, no forgiveness, no salvation, no reconciliation, no communion, there is no spiritual life at all without faith.

Our brother T. Austin Sparks said, "Do we not have to daily, continually by faith appropriate His life? What we are in ourselves by our natural nature, we will be to the end of our lives, but what we are by grace and faith is quite another thing. In other words, if we do not live by faith, we are living in the old creation, in the old life. We are not literally living in the kingdom, but by faith we live in newness of life in Christ Jesus.

What is Faith?

What is faith? If it is so vitally important and so indispensable, I think we should know what it is, and whether we have it. From a verse I just read in Hebrews 11:6: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that comes to God must believe that He is."

Remember our brother, Abraham, Paul referred to him as the father of faith.

In Romans 4:3 it says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."

Romans 10:8-9: "The word is nigh thee even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in Thy heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shall be saved."

Brothers and sisters, the keyword in all of these verses is "believe." We must believe! Abraham believed. We believe in our heart, and we gain salvation. So you might conclude that faith is believing. I know many theologians, through whom we often hear, say that faith is implicit trust in God. Faith is taking God at His word, taking His word at His word, confidence, trusting, and believing in His promises. This is really all true, but we need to clarify something here to know what faith is. All of these things are actions of faith, the results of faith. It is not the essence of faith. All of these things are actions of faith. When faith is there, we believe, and things happen. When faith is there, it comes to you. God is working in you; He is speaking to you. Faith is there. The word says that faith is nigh thee. The word of faith is even in your mouth and in your heart. We exercise that faith when it comes by believing, and when we believe, we have. When we have faith, we put it into action through believing. They are so closely linked that you really cannot separate them.

Have we yet discovered what faith is? Well, there is one Scripture in Hebrews 11:1 that seems to define faith.

"Now faith is the substantiating or assurance of things hoped for, the firm conviction of things not seen."

When we have faith, it says that we have assurance of things that we are hoping for. Therefore, spiritually you have them because you have that assurance. But you may not have yet possessed them. I think of Abraham as a perfect example of what we are saying.

Hebrews 11:9-10: "By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, for he looked for a city which had foundations whose builder and maker is God."

That is faith in action. He sojourned in the land of promise, looking for that city. However, he never actually saw it or possessed it physically, but he saw it spiritually. Now John saw that city as well, and in the book of Revelation John tried to describe to us what that city is and what it looks like. But Abraham was also given a glimpse of this city, and it so attracted him that he went out not knowing where he was going. He went out by faith not knowing. So believing, assurance, conviction of things not seen are things that happen when faith is working, when faith is in operation. This verse once again really does not tell us the essence of faith. It assumes the presence of faith and shows us what it results in rather than what it is. Some things you have to see the outworking of it in order to understand it.

Thomas Kempis was a 15th century saint during the medieval period, and he wrote one of the most famous devotional books there is, and it is called, "The Imitation of Christ." And our brother once said, "I had rather exercise faith than know the definition."

It is apparent that if you really think about the essence of faith, it has to come from God Himself, it has to be out from God. It is a virtue of God. It is a part of the life of God Himself. It is an expression of His life. Now it is similar to love, and I think this will help us all.

I Corinthians 13:4-7: "Love suffers long, love envies not, love seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, it does not rejoice in iniquity but in truth, it bears all things, believes all things, endures all things, love never fails."

The Essence of Love

All of these are the results of love. It is the outworking of love. It is not the essence of love. So then what is the essence of love?

I John 4:8: "God is love."

God is the essence of love. Do you want to know what love is? You will never know what it is unless you know God. I know that a lot of people are searching for love, but it cannot be found outside of God. You will never find the love that does all of these things—suffers long, envies not, seeks not her own, not easily provoked outside of God. You will never have it apart from God in Christ Himself.

The Bible does not say that God is faith, but you will remember that it talks about the gifts. He said that many of these will pass away, but faith, hope and love will remain, but love is the greatest of these. I think it is because love is the motivational energy behind all that He is and all that He does. It is the essence of God Himself, and love is really a part of all the virtues of God when you are talking about His righteousness and how glorious He is. It is all based out of love.

So faith is very similar. The essence of faith is out of God. So where does faith come from? It really is from God. That is important because if it is from God, it means that you yourself cannot work it up. So many people struggle with this matter of faith because they know how important it is, and they try to work it up. "Lord, give me faith, give me faith." It is okay to pray that way, but if you are trying to do it to work it up, it will never happen.

Galatians 2:20: "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God."

Now that is important. It does not say that I live by my faith; it says that I live by the faith of the Son of God. It is the faith of the Son of God that you apprehend, that you live by. We live not by our faith; we cannot generate it.

Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are you saved through faith and that is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

How Do We Get Faith

Romans 10:8: "But what saith the Word? The Word is nigh thee or near thee, the word is even in thy mouth and in thy heart. That is the word of faith which we preach, for if you will confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Verse 17: "So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

Faith comes from God; it is when you hear God. Actually, faith is not far from you. Faith is near you, even in your mouth, if you will just open your mouth. And it is even in your heart; just believe.

It is interesting that the Greek word for, "the word is nigh thee" and also "the word of faith that is in your mouth," is *rhema*. It is a living Word; it is a word spoken to you. Now the Bible in Greek is called *logos*. This is the written Word of God, and thank God for it. But without the Spirit it never comes alive. Christ said, "The letter of the word actually kills you; you cannot handle it, but the Spirit behind the Word brings you life. So it is the living Word that comes to you. Therefore, when we are speaking about the Word and the word of faith, it is a living Word. It is speaking to your heart; it is near you; only believe.

When you have *rhema*, it is more than just receiving understanding. When you receive *rhema* from the Lord, it gives you life; the Spirit gives you life, not just understanding. Yes, you have understanding then, but it also does something in your spirit. You may be praying about a matter, and as you are praying, sometimes the Lord just speaks to your heart, doesn't He? That is *rhema*, that is a living Word. Or many times, as you are in prayer before the Lord about something, he will actually give you a Scripture and makes it very living to you. That is *rhema*, and it builds the faith in your heart, and you say, "Yes, Lord, I believe." So when the Lord is speaking to you a word of faith, it is near you; it is not far away. He says that it is even in your mouth, but you are going to have to say it. If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart, the word of faith is there. You need to respond, and that is faith in action. Faith is put into action. I repeat once again: Where does faith come from, and how do we get it?

Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith."

It comes from looking at Jesus, by keeping your eyes fixed upon Jesus. As we opened this morning and we were singing that song, "Immanuel" which goes through all the virtues of our Lord Jesus Christ and who He is, my heart was lifted, and I think yours was also. Faith was in there; faith was pumping out. It is because it put our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is one of the reasons whenever we assemble together, most of the time we take a short time to look unto Him. Particularly when we come to pray, we begin by looking off to Him. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Are you going to want to pray? He is the Author and Finisher of our faith that is needed for prayer. How are we going to walk through this life every day and live in it? It is by faith, looking off to Him.

Now faith is not a once and done thing. You do not exercise faith once, and then it is all over, you do not ever have to be concerned about it again. Faith is always seeking; faith is always pursuing, faith is always acquiring. Every aspect of our life is affected by whether there is faith or not. We as Christians have to learn to live by faith and not just by our own reasoning. A. W. Tozer said, "Let faith support us when reason fails, and we shall think because we believe, not in order that we may believe."

Proverbs 3:5: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths." In all ways and all things

acknowledge Him. In other words, you are looking off to Him, aren't You? He shall direct your path. The Lord is the Author and Beginning of your faith. It comes from Him; it is out of His life, and brothers and sisters, it is the only place that you will ever find it. He is the beginning of your faith, and He is also the Finisher of your faith, the Completer of your faith. Faith in your life needs to grow, and it grows through exercising it. As you do, you will be strengthened in faith, and your faith will become more mature. He has promised that He will complete that faith in you. Isn't that wonderful? You may say, "Lord, I do not really have much faith." But get your eyes back on the Lord. He said, "Look, you may have little faith, but I will take that little faith, and it will grow." Everything in the spiritual life is accomplished through faith.

Sometimes our faith can be wounded, because things happen that we do not understand. Sometimes we get offended at the Lord. Then what happens? Faith begins to sink, becomes weak. Somebody described it like a boat that was loaded full of faith, but if you punch a hole in the boat, what happens? The boat begins to sink, and that does happen to us. How is that faith restored? How is our faith strengthened once again? It is by looking off unto Jesus, I guarantee you. Looking off unto Jesus is faith in action. It is telling God that you believe Him. When we get down spiritually, it is because most of the time we are looking at ourselves. How much of our Christian life is spent looking at ourselves! We are not what we ought to be, and we know it, but if we continually look at ourselves, we will punch a hole in that boat, and faith will wane. You are looking for something in yourself to build your life on, but you cannot have faith in yourself. Faith can only be exercised in God, and that is how our faith is restored.

I cannot tell you how discouraged and down and out I often get, but it is so simple. It is because I am looking at myself. I am looking for something that is acceptable. The Word of God is so clear. There is nothing in us that is acceptable. Christ is the only thing in our life that is acceptable, and that is where we have to keep our eyes. Oh, you will never live a joyful life if you spend it looking in the wrong place. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Looking off unto Jesus is believing in Him. Looking unto Jesus is believing who He is, believing what He has done, what He has accomplished on the cross, believing what He can do. Our faith rises up when we look off to Him. Oh, how vital looking off to Jesus is to our life! Where we keep the eyes of our heart focused will determine whether we have a vibrant, fruitful, joyful life in Christ or whether we will live a weak, laborious, struggling Christian life.

Colossians 3:7: "Keep on seeking the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God."

Is that where your eyes are? You know when we experience difficulties in our lives, sometimes horrendous difficulties, things we cannot explain why something like this would happen to us. Brothers and sisters, we have to get our eyes off of that issue and onto the Lord. Then we can look back at that issue through the eyes of the Lord. Faith will be strengthened in our hearts in the midst of the most terrible circumstances, but we have to keep our eyes fixed on Him. That is faith; that is believing in Him.

Now let me share the example that Tozer gave, and I think it is so helpful. First of all, we need to look at this example as faith in action.

Numbers 21: 4-9: "As they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea to compass the land of Edom and the soul of the people were much discouraged because of the hardness of the way, and the people spake against God, and they spoke against Moses and said, 'Wherefore have you brought us out of Egypt to die in this wilderness, for there is no bread, there is no water, our soul does not even like this bread that is coming out of heaven. We detest it. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people and many people of Israel died.'"

The Lord got so angry at their lack of faith and response to His goodness for delivering them and bringing them out. He actually sent fiery serpents in judgment among them, and they bit the people and many died.

"Therefore, the people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, (praise the Lord, they recognized that) and against thee. Pray to the Lord that He will take these serpents away from us. Moses prayed, and the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and it shall come to pass that everyone who is bitten by this sin, when he looks upon it, he shall live.' And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it on a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

That was the cure for their sin. They had to look on the serpent of brass. Now let's look in the gospel of John because Jesus refers to this incident when He is talking to Nicodemus.

John 3:3: "Jesus answered Nicodemus and said to him, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"

Verse 12: "If I have told you earthly things and you believed not, how should you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

Verses 14-16: "Jesus said, '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 eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'"

So Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus because he was concerned about being able to make it into the kingdom. He said that it was only one way to make it into the kingdom. There is only one way of salvation from your sin, and that is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. What Tozer said in explaining to Nicodemus how to be saved, how to come into the kingdom of God, he said, "You must believe in your heart." Then he used the serpent in the wilderness to explain it. And of course, you remember what happened with the serpent in the wilderness. He said that if you look upon it, you will be healed of your sin. This is what he is saying, "Looking upon Jesus is the same as believing in Jesus in your heart." And this is what He explained to Nicodemus. In other words, looking upon the Old Testament serpent with physical eyes is the same today and synonymous with believing in the heart upon the New Testament Christ.

Brothers and sisters, I just need to say one thing. Some people might ask, "Why was it a brass serpent that they had to look upon?" Jesus is not a serpent, but remember, that brass serpent was taking on the sins of the people, so that they would not die. It is a type of Christ on the cross

when He took upon Himself the sins of the whole world. That is why the type used is that of a serpent. Therefore, you need to look upon Christ, the sin bearer, and you will be saved. Looking upon Jesus is like believing in Him.

Psalm 34:5: "They looked upon him and they were enlightened, and their faces were not ashamed."

Psalm 123:1-2: "Unto thee I lift up my eyes." So our eyes wait upon the Lord until He has mercy on us. Where is David's eyes fixed until God has mercy? It was upon the Lord Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, his eyes were not fixed on mercy. His eyes were fixed on the Lord from which mercy comes. You see how critical faith is! It is looking upon the One who can give mercy, not on mercy itself. "Lord, I am looking for mercy; I am looking for mercy." Look at the Lord; look at the merciful One. Lord, "You are merciful. I look upon You."

Think of the Lord Jesus Himself. He was always looking up to the Father.

Matthew 14:19-20: "He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven He blessed and broke it, and gave out the loaves, and all did eat."

After the last supper, on the way to the garden the Lord said,

John 17:1: "I say to you, the Son cannot do anything of himself but what He sees the Father do. For whatsoever thing He does, these also do the Son likewise, for the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that Himself doth."

"I can do nothing of myself but what I see the Father do."

He was continuously looking up to the Father. Our Lord Jesus lived by faith; it was a life of faith. His eyes were continually on the Father, and how strong was His faith! We are to live a life of faith, and we know from the Word of God it is through faith that we are transformed into His image, the image of God. It says that our life as Christians should be a continuous life of faith.

The theme verse in Hebrews 12:2: "You run life's race by continually looking off to the author and finisher of your faith."

Faith is like the eye which sees everything in front of it. The eye never sees itself. The eye of faith is always looking in front of it; it never sees itself. Faith is the least self-regarding virtue and is barely conscious of its own existence. Faith becomes like breathing; it should be that way. You are having faith unconsciously without noticing. Faith is always occupied with the object upon which it is looking and pays no attention to itself. While we are looking upon Jesus, we do not see ourselves. Now that is a great blessing. That is our deliverance from our continual struggle with ourselves and our lack of being Christ-like and our failures. The only way to get through this struggle is the blessing of keeping our eyes fixed upon the Lord and not ourselves. Brothers and sisters, how much you will be strengthened! What a relief to look away from ourselves, from our problems, from our circumstances, from our issues, from the people that bother us. Look unto Jesus; that is where we will learn to live in this world. Do not look at yourself; look at the perfect One.

Do you think what I am saying is true? Is this just Jerry talking, encouraging you to look away?

II Corinthians 3:18: "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

We are changed from glory to glory by looking upon the Lord. It is true that it is through a glass dimly. We do not yet see all, but just the glimpse of who He is, His glory changes us. That is the secret of being transformed.

As I read this article by Brother Tozer, it really encouraged me because at that point I was looking a lot at myself and my condition, saying, "Woe is me." But brothers and sisters, it so lifted me, and I was so encouraged by this simple thought of looking off to Jesus.

James 3:17: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then it is peaceful, it is gentle, and easily to be entreated."

Looking off to Jesus is returning to the simplicity of Christ. I have always wondered exactly what it means in returning to the simplicity of Christ. And it is simply looking off unto Jesus. We make faith such a complicated thing. We think we have to work it up, but it is simple; it is looking off to the Author and Finisher of our faith. It is keeping your eyes upon Him. And Tozer put it, "The gaze of our soul upon Him." I think Bible study, prayer, meditation, worship, fellowship, all forms of ministry, all of our activities in our Christian life are all to be done in faith. And we say, "How can that be? How can it always be in faith? What does it mean?" I think it means that behind all of these activities in our Christian life, the thing that will really give them substance, life and meaning is as we are doing these things the eyes of our heart are fixed upon Jesus.

Let me give you an example. We come together for prayer, and we are praying about something. We may be praying about somebody being healed, and our eyes tend to go to the healing. We are focusing on the healing. We are saying, "Lord, I am focusing on what I see as the outcome." Often we do not sense any faith there. But what we should be focusing on is the Healer, the Lord Himself, that we have faith in the Lord who is going to take care of us even in our illnesses, that we believe in the Lord Jesus, and our eyes are upon Him as the One who can keep us. Our eyes are upon Him who is faithful and loves us, and even if we are not healed, we know that He has a reason, and He is working in our life to accomplish something that cannot be worked any other way. So our faith, our hearts, even as we are praying about other matters, need to be focused on Him. I hope that helps.

I think of our worship time together. This was a great example that our brother used. He said, "A hundred pianos tuned to the same tuning fork are automatically tuned to each other. So when we come together for worship, if our eyes are turned to the same tuning fork, which is Jesus Christ, then we will be in harmony with one another, and we will be able to worship as an orchestra, not just as individual instruments tooting our horn here and there. We will be together. That is worshipping in faith, brothers and sisters, because our eyes are upon the orchestra Leader which is our Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

So brother Tozer exhorts us. He said, "Since believing and looking are synonymous, we should live our life of faith by a continuous gaze of our hearts upon Jesus." Now I thought about this, and

in the beginning I said, "Lord, this is a great method to a better life." Then I remembered something that I had read years ago, "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence. It is a wonderful book, but I took it as a method, and it really did not have much effect on me. But I remembered this, and I said, "Lord, I made a mistake; I took this as a method." It is not a method; gazing upon our Lord Jesus is a way of life, not a method. And how great it is to develop a way of life in which your eyes are always on Him, which is the way we are transformed.

In our Bible Study the other night in Luke 14 about the Lord having a feast, and He called the nation of Israel out. He invited them to the supper, and they had all kinds of excuses for not coming. One said, "I have a new ox that I have to work with." Another one said, "I just got married, and I need to go back to my wife." They had all kinds of excuses. The Lord got quite upset with them, and He told the servant, the Holy Spirit, to go out to the poor and the destitute and bring them in. He did not say, "Invite them to come," He said, "Bring them in." The servant came back and said, "Lord, the house is still not full; we do not have a full house for the feast." And then the Lord said, "You go out into the byways, out into the hedges, anywhere you can, and compel them to come in!" He asked the servant, the Holy Spirit, to compel us. When the Lord is speaking to you through the Holy Spirit, He is not inviting you; He is compelling you. When the Lord is speaking to you, He is compelling you.

Where are your eyes looking? Are you looking at yourself, your circumstances, your problems? Brothers and sisters, save yourself; look off to Jesus. Look off to Him. Are you walking away from the Lord? Have you left the Lord? Are you off the path? Have you kind of turned your back on the Lord and your eyes are looking away from Him? There is a way back. You have to turn your head around and look at the Lord.

It is like the prodigal son who went off, found himself with the pigs, eating the cornhusks, and finally he came to his senses. In other words, the Lord woke him up, and He said, "What are you doing in this pigsty? How often we live our spiritual lives in a pigsty! And the Lord said to him, "You are in the wrong place." And he started thinking about his father and how well off he had been with his father. Now his returning to the father was not the highest way of returning because he was still thinking about himself and his poor condition. But he realized that the father was his way of salvation, and he returned to the father. As he approached the father a far way off, he saw his father in the distance, and the father saw him. The father runs to him and embraces him. That is what looking off to Jesus does. It brings us back into the embrace of our Lord and Savior Himself. What a wonderful thing!

Brothers and sisters, the word of faith is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart. BELIEVE.

Lord, we just come today and thank You that You have not made the Christian life a complicated one. Lord, You said it would be difficult and we would pay a cost, a price, but the way of the Christian life is a simple one. I heard that old song in my heart, "Trust and obey, there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." Amen.

