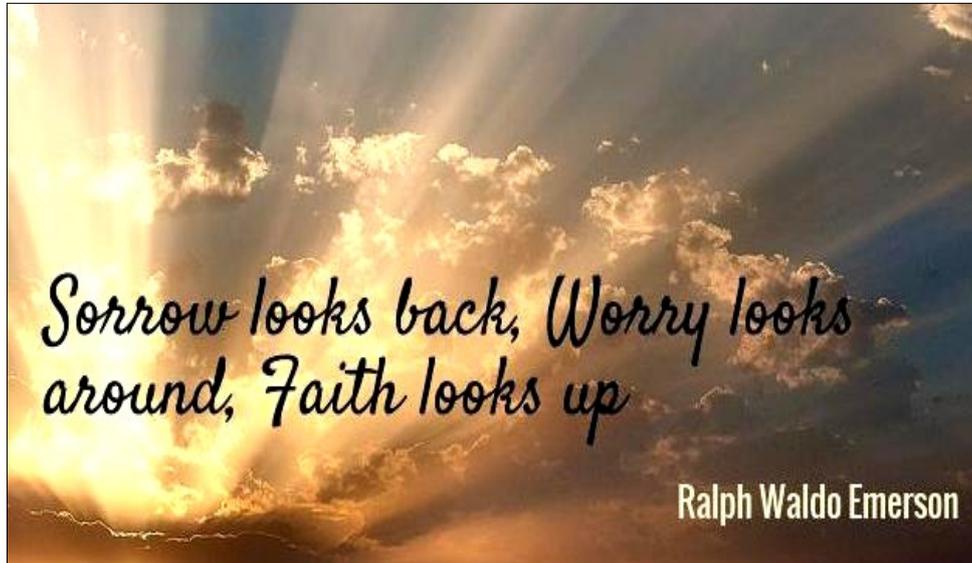


True Looking



Peter McArthur

Proverbs 4:25-27 (NASB)

Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet and all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right or to the left; turn your foot from evil.

Hebrews 12:2 (NASB)

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.

Christians need to have a **CLEAR OBJECTIVE**. Sadly it's too obvious in today's society that many believers who claim to be "led of the Spirit" live their daily lives without any discernment, without understanding the grander purposes of the Father, and who are either just waiting for the Messiah to return, or to die and go off to enjoy heaven.

The direction of our spiritual gaze is VERY important for our spiritual growth and development. Scripture gives many warnings about the hazards we face when we look at the wrong thing, take the wrong direction, admire the wrong person, get jealous about the wrong situation, etc. So let's spend a little time delving into some precious truths about the dangers of wayward looking. Here are some "lookings" we should try to avoid, as much as possible.

- ☹ The **backward** look
- ☹ The looking **around**
- ☹ The **short-sighted** look
- ☹ The **self-ward** look
- ☹ The **inward** look

Instead of these earth-bound lookings, we can and perhaps, should learn to cultivate this:

- ☺ The **upward** look (toward the heavenlies).

The **BACKWARD** look

Psalm 78:40-41

How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert. Again and again they tempted God and pained the Holy One of Israel.

Israel spoiled the whole course of their natural and even spiritual objectives for 40 years. So it was that others actually received their blessings, all because they kept looking back to how life was in Egypt.

The looking **AROUND**

Numbers 13:33

There also we saw the Nephilim and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.

The spies in the land only saw themselves as grasshoppers and the enemy as giants. That mental image robbed them of their inheritance and so it was given to others. What an awful price to pay.

Matthew 14:30

But seeing the wind he became frightened and beginning to sink, he cried out "Lord save me!"

Outward circumstances took Peter off balance when he focussed on the stormy conditions. What might've happened if he didn't; just imagine it! He would've actually kept on walking with Jesus on the water! Maybe, just maybe the rest of the disciples might've got out of the boat and started walking as well.

The **SHORT-SIGHTED** look

2 Corinthians 10:7

You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's so also are we.

Being spiritually short-sighted leads to a narrow horizon. It can actually lead you to not want more! You end up being content with only what you can see. The word "looking" is *blepo* and it means to "observe with (wrong) desire and longing".

The **SELF-WARD** look

Philippians 2:4

Do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others.

Don't be governed by what's happening only to you. The principle of spiritual progress is to "forget self". The Kingdom is more important than "You". The Body is more than "Me". Sadly today we see many "Christian" songs reflect a Me-My-I sentimentality.

The **INWARD** look

Romans 7:18

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

Introspection (worrying and fretting) of the soul is the opposite of TRUE FAITH because it tends to deny God's ability to act and cause change.

Psalm 25:15

My eyes are continually toward YHWH for He will pluck my feet out of the net.

This text is the Scriptural antidote to introspection and self-centredness. Christianity is a religion of DEPENDENCE on God's faithfulness. We should learn to cultivate this as a spiritual habit, a habitual looking away to the Father. Easier said than done of course, but we can do it.

Now we come to the good and very necessary part. This is the TRUE looking!

The **UPWARD** look

Genesis 15:5

And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

Abram kept "looking up" at the stars and hence he kept moving spiritually. This was his FIRST looking so to speak.

Genesis 22:17

I will greatly bless you and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

His SECOND insight was in reference to both the stars and the sand. A second time YHWH enforces Abraham's destiny for him and his seed. He had learnt the earlier way of looking and now was rewarded with further truth. There's a principle for us in this.

2 Corinthians 4: 17-18

For any 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 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.

Whatever earth throws at us is NOTHING compared to the glory yet to come. Practice keeping the ETERNAL in view!

So to re-cap all this we come to some wonderful insights and encouragements. We find these in the Letter to the Hebrews. It's interesting to note that the word "Hebrew" means those in transition!

- ◆The letter encourages us to press on and keep focussed on **eternal things** as our goal. Practice living with Eternity in mind.
- ◆The epistle also shows that **Christ is our great example** and proof that the goal can be reached. It's not out of reach at all.
- ◆**Jesus has gone this very same way.** He kept focused, had a clear objective and has gone the whole way. We do not walk alone on this journey! Jesus said He would never leave nor forsake us!
- ◆Not only that, **He has already arrived** at the final destination of glorious resurrection life.
- ◆He has already done it all for us, and because **He was faithful and accomplished what the Father gave Him to do**, He gives us great confidence that the goal can be attained and the eternal prize finally received.

The Jewish people have a saying:

"To grow in faith we need to know,
Where we **came** from,
Where we are **going**,
And who we **are**."

In other words if we have no sense of purpose and destiny we end being "soul like" which in the original Greek actually means to be "beast like". We are not like that; we have been seeded from above – John 3:3.

Our Christian walk involves a "looking" that gradually transforms us (not "changes" us) so we can more fully understand the fullness of salvation. It's a kind of progressive unfolding awareness about the central theme of Scripture which involves three things: **God's Purpose. God's Process. God's Timing.**

Scripture is full of those who have glimpsed God's eternal purpose and kept their focus. They needed patience, and had to suffer trials. Paul also saw this and kept his focus on the ultimate purpose of the Father's will. Near the end of his life his one great burden was to instruct the saints about God's Great Ultimate Purpose - "to bring many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10).

I normally don't like paraphrases of the Bible but in this case J.B. Phillips makes a very clear point. **"The whole of creation is on tip toe to see the wonderful sight of God's sons coming into their inheritance"** (Romans 8:19). What a thought!

So may we conclude with a quote from one of my favourite Christian writers, Theodore Austin-Sparks.

"There is a goal and there is a prize. We have been called with one high purpose - a purpose so great that the Holy Spirit has considered it worthwhile to fill the whole Bible with the truth of it. For the Bible from beginning to end has to do with a course in relation to a goal, an end, a prize: it is just brimful of Divine speaking concerning Divine purpose, a very great purpose indeed."

So brothers and sisters let us remember this one thing:

**We're living for God.
We have one objective,
and that's to conform to Jesus Christ.
Compared to that,
there's nothing else that really counts!**

Blessings to you,
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