

GROWING IN GOD PODCAST



GIG210 – Don't Anxiously Look Around You

Hello, and welcome to this podcast today. I am glad you are joining us. I want to talk about what I will title, *Don't Anxiously Look Around You*. Actually, I was listening to a message last week from my mentor, John Stevens. He brought a message back in 1968 which is still amazingly relevant for us today, and it was called, *Look Not Around Thee*. So I am going to use this title of *Don't Anxiously Look Around You*, and I am going to use some of the points, because it was flowing right along with where I was in my own prayer and waiting on the Lord during this time.

I have been speaking in the last few podcasts about the Cross, and about our daily carrying of the Cross and focus on the Cross. It is important that we recognize that the Cross is not a stopping place, it really is a point of beginning. And so, some of what I want to dive into now in these podcasts deals with where we go from the Cross. I mean, we must have a very close, intimate relationship with this revelation of the Cross. It must be something that we are able to do daily, and know how to function in relationship to ending the old nature through the Cross in our lives. But, at that, we still recognize that the Cross is an experience which is a point of beginning.

I want to emphasize what it talks about in Colossians the third chapter. I am going to start at verse 3. It says, "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." In other words, this is pointing to the fact that when we have that Cross experience in our own lives, when we come into a relationship with Christ that we die and are immersed into His death, that is how we die; but our life then is hidden with Christ in God. So there is something where we transition and move on from there.

Verse 1, if we back up, says, "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above." So we are to not just go to the Cross and die, and that is an end; but it is the beginning of our being raised up with Christ, moving into His Presence. And that is kind of where I want to focus today, because this message I was listening to very much deals with this. What John was talking about comes out of Isaiah chapter 41, and I want to start reading with verse 10 as he did. It says, "'Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'" This part of Isaiah 41 is talking about the battle that Israel was in, talking about the enemies and the quarrels that they were facing; and so, He stops and says, "Hey, don't anxiously look around you." When we find ourselves in times of tribulation, when we find ourselves in times of spiritual warfare, things that are very difficult, what we do not do is begin to look around us; because if we do, we are going to lose the very strength that God has for us.

What I want to do is back up and start reading again at verse 8 in Isaiah 41, and see how this verse 10 comes in the context of what is being spoken of here by the Lord. It says, in verses 8-14,

"But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham My friend, you whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its remotest parts and said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you. Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

“Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored; those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish. You will seek those who quarrel with you, but will not find them, those who war with you will be as nothing and non-existent. For I am the Lord your God, who upholds your right hand, who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.’ Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you,” declares the Lord, “and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.”

This is just so great on many levels. First of all, I think that we need to see, in the time that we are living in – because Israel is at war right now and has been since October 7th of 2023; they are in a place where it is very difficult, very devastating, what is happening to them. And so, these verses from verse 11 on down really, really do apply. And this whole context is about Israel. We have talked a lot about replacement theology and all of that, so we do not just look at these verses and say, “Oh, these are all for us today as Christian believers.” They are speaking very specifically to Israel, to the descendants of Abraham. And again, He emphasizes here that, “You are My servant. I have chosen you and not rejected you.” Israel is not rejected. And so, He is speaking to Israel; and He says, “Don’t anxiously look around you.”

As we are in this podcast right now, I just want to bless Israel, that they find this Scripture and begin to move in it. I mean, if they look around them at what has transpired since October 7th, and what is transpiring even still today in the war that is going on in Gaza and the potential war that is happening in Lebanon, and all that surrounds the area of attacks coming against them, it is difficult; it is hard when you are in a situation like this. And of course, Israel is always a wonderful example to us of how we walk with God. So the Lord speaks and says, “Don’t look around you anxiously. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” So God is going to intervene. Now, we have applied this to Israel – does that mean it does not apply to us? Of course not; it does apply to us, because we are grafted in, as the Scripture teaches us. We are grafted in. Abraham is even mentioned in verse 8, and so, through Abraham we are grafted in to the faith. As Gentile believers in Christ, this very much does apply to us in what we are facing, in what we are going through and the age that we are living in. And we are living in a desperate age, just as Israel right now is going through very precarious times. They are in a time of war. We likewise find ourselves in very difficult times, times of real tribulation, times of very definite spiritual warfare, where we see many, many things unfolding that Christ Himself spoke about. So, what are we to do? Does this not apply to us? Of course it does apply to us, and we are to focus upon that.

I want to go to Luke the twenty-first chapter, and we will see Christ Himself talking about days of difficulty in the end times, which is obviously speaking to us as believers in Yeshua. We are in these times; and just as Israel is in a time of war, and yet is being entreated, “Don’t get your focus on what is going on around you on a natural level,” I believe it is speaking the same thing to us. We are not to be confused and simply focused or intimidated by what we see on a natural level, on a worldly plane that goes on about us; and it is very important that we see that Yeshua addressed these times.

I am going to Luke 21, verses 25-28. It says,

“There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when you

see these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

If you go back and read Luke 21, it is a whole discussion from Christ about the days that we would call the end time. And when we get to verse 28, He kind of is backing up over everything He has been talking about and saying, “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your head, because your redemption is drawing nigh.” So it is very much in alignment with the verses that we read in Isaiah 41 – “when we find ourselves in these desperate times.” Verse 26 of Luke 21 says, “men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world.” And I think as we walk as believers in these days, we do believe that we are in the end times, and that very desperate things can take place; they are called the days of tribulation. And so, again, the encouragement from Christ is that we not get our focus on the things that are happening around us. He says, “Straighten up. Do not be bent over looking at what is going on in the world around you. Do not be bending down, looking into the distance of what is taking place, or what is going to take place. Instead, straighten up,” it says. “Straighten up.” And a lot of people could straighten up right now; it would be a great thing to do. “Straighten up, stand up straight, lift up your head, look up, because your redemption draws nigh.”

When we find ourselves in these times, it is very clear that we are to focus upon the Lord where He is. And as I said in the beginning of this, we have been talking a great deal about the Cross, but the Cross is not an end of something. We do not look at the death process as an ending; it was the beginning for Christ. Remember, He went through the Cross, despising the shame, for the glory that was set before Him. He had to go through the Cross, but it is about everything that transpires from the Cross that was important. And so, for us, if we are going to take up daily our cross and follow Him, it does not mean that you spend all day on the Cross. It means that there is something that we are experiencing through that Cross; and when we do, that is what sets the tone and takes us on from that daily Cross experience and reminder into what God has for us today.

Let’s go back to the verses in Colossians the third chapter. I want to read them the same way. I want to go to verse 3, because it emphasizes the experience of the Cross: “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” But in verse 1 he says, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ.” So see, after the Cross, Christ was raised; it is the Resurrection. The Resurrection is as important as the Cross. If Christ only experienced the Cross, and there was no Resurrection, then we do not have what we are looking for, we do not have eternal salvation. It is all a necessary part of what God was doing to bring about our salvation, to bring about our eternal life in Christ. And so, the Cross was step one, and then we move on. And that is what Colossians is doing, it is beginning by talking about next steps: “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” He is saying the same thing: “Don’t anxiously look around you. Don’t look about yourself. Don’t focus on what the world is going through.” The world is going through what the world must go through. But as believers, our instructions are very, very specific.

At times it is hard for us, even as believers, not to be caught up in what is going on. We find ourselves in an election year and boy, are there a lot of things transpiring surrounding the candidates and what is taking place. We could go into to a whole podcast just about that. The events of the last few days that have happened are amazing. But, even yet, we are not supposed to be focused on the things that are on earth. Those are earthly things. They are happening, they will happen. What Christ talked about will happen. The events even from Isaiah 41 will happen. There will be these traumatic times for Israel

where it is being attacked, and those who are coming against them to quarrel with them, to destroy them. But He still says, even when that is taking place, “Don’t look anxiously around yourself. Don’t get your focus onto that.” If we as believers get our focus on what is going on in the world, we will find that many times we are not focused on God; we are focused on man, or we are focused, worse yet, on demonic powers, or we are focused on Satan himself. We do not want to be focused on those things. We do not want to look at what they are doing. We are not concerned about what they are doing – it is not the reality of the Kingdom that we are reaching for and drawing for.

So we see this very clearly: set your mind on the things above. That is what was being spoken of in Luke: “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up, lift up, lift up your head; look up, reach up.” We should be reaching into the realm where Christ is. That is what Colossians says: “If you have been raised up with Christ, then do not be moved from that place with Christ. Keep seeking the things above where He is.” We are supposed to be there, we are supposed to live there, we are supposed to focus there. I do not think that is emphasized enough about our walk with the Lord. And maybe some people do not even believe we can do that; we are too locked into the world around us, and our human needs and our human problems. Christ Himself said, “Where I am, there shall you be also,” and then He ascended to the right hand of the Father. And we are, in our waiting upon the Lord, in our intercession, in our meditation, we are to be where He is, seated at the right hand of God; and being raised up there to that place with Christ, we are to continue focusing and seeking those things which are there above. We are to see what God is doing. What is the Father doing? It is covered over when we focus on the world, when we focus on the enemy, on the things below. We are to focus on Him – What is Christ doing? What is going on with Christ and the Father? Because without that, our intercession is very, very much hindered.

In concluding this, I just want to emphasize again the three Scriptures that we are talking about. Isaiah 41, verse 10: “Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you.” That is what we are to be aware of. And then going to Luke 21, verse 28: “But when these things begin to take, take place, straighten up, lift up your head, look up, your redemption draws nigh.” And in Colossians, again: “We have been raised up with Christ, so we keep seeking the things above where Christ is, because we are to set our mind on the things above, not on the things that are going on in this earth.”

So just to emphasize these few points: Our focus is not to be on the world around us and on what is transpiring. And I am not saying that is easy to do in the day that we live in, but we are to keep our focus on the Lord. We are to straighten up. We are to rise up. We are to rise into His Presence. I believe that is what it is talking about – not just straightening our back, standing up straight or looking up. No, we are to rise into His Presence and to be with Him, as Christ said we could: “Where I am, there will you be also.” The reason for all of this is so that our intercession will be effective, because what we are to be doing is to be loosing His Kingdom. How did He teach us to pray? “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” If we are beholding His will in heaven, then we are able to loose it into the earth. And that is who we are, and that is what we are to do.

We do that from His right hand, standing with Him in heavenly places, keeping our focus on the things of God and what God is doing today, not upon the things of this earth. I bless us to be able to do this. Father, help us with it. It is not easy, especially in these days in which we are living. But we ask for Your help, we ask for Your strength, we ask You to teach us to walk with You in this way.

Amen.