

LOOKING UP

May-June 2022

*"...look up, and lift
up your heads."
Lk. 21:24*

Faith Distilled

BY PASTOR JASON SALMI

Here's a thought experiment: Imagine that you were visiting a prison just as one of the inmates was about to be led to the place of his execution. He's suddenly overcome with emotion and begins to cry out that he's not ready to die. The warden, knowing that you are a Christian, grabs you by the arm and quickly pulls you into a room. He then takes the condemned man in his shackles and brings him into the room. Looking at his watch, the

warden says to you, "I have to take him away in five minutes. You're a Christian...and this man's about to meet God. Get him ready."

Granted, this is a highly unlikely scenario. Yet thinking about something like this can be very helpful in thinking through what it is to be a Christian. After all, the only way to "get someone ready" to leave this life and stand before God is to make them a Christian. Besides, even if this particular set of circumstances isn't likely to happen to you anytime soon, nevertheless we have a

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Regular Schedule

Sunday

9:45 AM Sunday School
11:00 AM Worship service

Holy Communion

2nd & 4th Sunday of the month

Meal

2nd Sunday of the month

Board Meeting

7:00 PM 1st Tuesday
of the month

Ladies Bible Study

10:00 AM Wednesdays

Youth Group

TBA

Friday Night Bible Study

7:00 PM Location TBA

Scriptural mandate as believers to figure out how we could, at the drop of a hat, share at least the fundamentals of the Christian faith: "...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you..." (1 Peter 3:15) In the thought experiment above, you'd have a man sitting before you who would be in desperate need of hearing, "a reason for the hope that is in you."

So where would you start? Would you ask him how often he'd been to church in the last few years? Find out what his family's faith had been like? Most of us would quickly write those off as irrelevant. Perhaps you could ask what he'd done to be sentenced to death. Maybe try to figure out if he was really sorry for having committed that crime? Under other circumstances, those would be fine topics to pursue, but your time is limited. Every minute is precious. You need to find a way to share the most basic, core message of salvation. You need the Bible distilled down to its most concentrated essence.

The central message of the entire of the Bible, as pertaining to salvation, can be summed up in two simple words; Law and Gospel. In fact this is such a simplification that it can easily be overlooked or overcomplicated. But remembering these two words can prepare you to explain to anyone regarding, "the reason for the hope that is in you," without any time needed to prepare.

The Law is this: That, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23) and, "the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) Therefore, every single person, regardless of the life they've lived, and whether we'd judge it to be either good or bad, stands guilty before God and deserves His righteous condemnation.

And the Gospel is this: That, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life," (John 3:16) and Jesus, "was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." (Romans 4:25)

Here's the end of the thought experiment: As you finish telling the condemned man that Jesus died for his sins and rose again from the dead, the warden opens the door and takes the man away. And the question is this; was proclaiming the Law and the Gospel enough for the man to be saved? According to John 3:16, as well as Jesus' clear testimony to the repentant thief on the other cross, the answer is, "Yes."

I pray that contemplating the central message of Christianity in this way will help you to more easily share your faith whenever the opportunity arises.

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Looking Ahead

May 18th
Lego Car Derby

May 19th
Red Cross Blood Drive

May 29th
No Church (Memorial Day
Camp Out)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Mt. 28:19-20