

Isaiah 45:22 (Maurice Capelle) 122386

Turn Unto Me!, Turn Unto Me! (45:22)

Isa. 45:22

FOREWORD

In Isa. 45:22 the French Bible says "Turn unto Me", where the English Bible has "Look unto Me". The literal meaning of the Hebrew word is "Turn the face", and it is often translated 'turn' in the English Bible. In some of the passages quoted from the Bible we have translated the French literally, instead of quoting from the English Bible.

Read: Ezek. 1:26-28 and Matt. 27:25-61.

After the reading of so important a portion of the Holy Scriptures one ought not to add anything. One fears to tarnish the truths by a miserable commentary. It would be better to imitate the Prophet Ezekiel, who fell on his face to adore the great God Whom he had seen, in this glorious vision, presiding at the government of the universe; and Who here in Matthew has become for us the Man of sorrows.

Perhaps we can adore Him this evening together, being gathered around the throne, to gaze upon Him, the Lamb Who has been slain. And we shall have the privilege of adoring Him during all eternity. But that glorious instant is not yet arrived, the last stone has not yet been added to the building. What a great privilege it is for us, to be able to speak of Him this evening. Certainly the words, the expressions fail us, but we may count on His marvelous grace to enable us to do it.

I am going to try to tell you what sin has done. It has made man a transgressor, judgment a necessity, Satan a tyrant, the world a desert, the earth a pool of tears. It has filled the world with cemeteries; it has founded the faculties of medicine. Of the nations it has made a single front, where man makes war against God. Again it has made man a convict in its galley. Of life it has made a tragedy. It has forged arms, and made laws necessary. It has built the hospitals, erected the scaffolds, raised the prisons. It has made this world a scene of sorrow and ruin. What a list!!! It has separated the child from its mother, the wife from her husband. Of the marvelous creation of God, it has made a poor martyr who sighs and is in travail. It is sin that has brought into this world all this terrible suffering, and that has lasted for thousands of years. The marvelous Paradise has become a desert where thorns and thistles grow. But let us cease. Sin has made... (forgive me the words, I beg you) "the happy God" (1 Tim. 1:11) into "a Man of sorrows, knowing what weakness is, and as One from Whom one hides his face" (Isa. 53:3) He is there between the heaven and the earth, and man passes by in his depth of night.

Dear friends, if your heart remains untouched when we turn our gaze on the cross, that heart will remain always untouched, for God has no other way of saving you. He has given all that He could give; the dearest object of His heart, to win yours.

In the verses which precede those which we have read in chapter 27 of Matthew, we see what man was doing during the watches of the night. Here on earth, men could not ever come to an agreement, not even the children. One plays on the flute in the market place, but the others do not wish to dance: one sings dirges to them, and the others do not want to weep. (Matt. 11:16, 17)

Everywhere there are conferences to banish war, but there is always someone who stops the car of peace. But where it is a question of the Son of God, they all unite to cry: "Crucify, Crucify Him". Election without question, not one blank ballot paper, not one in-valid vote, not one refusing to vote. Satan has won all the votes against Him Who went from place to place doing good, the only Man on Whom the Heaven has opened twice, the Babe of Bethlehem, the Carpenter of Nazareth, the Man Who dried the tears of the widow of Nain, Who made Jairus leap for joy by returning to him his daughter; the Man who satisfied the crowds with bread, and bound up the wounds of the daughter of His people. (Jer. 6:14; 8:11, 21)

Several times during that night the Sanhedrin had been assembled, and the Holy Spirit tells us that towards nine o'clock in the morning those who were passing by reviled Him. Who are those who pass by at the foot of this cross? Those who, the night before, were kept awake by what happened; the unemployed, the curious who were loitering in the streets of the city "which kills the prophets, and which stones those whom God sends to it" (Matt. 23:37) Can you imagine a sight like to that? Sinner, this evening, you are passing by there. Look at this One Who is lifted up. He is dying for your sins, if you accept Him as your Savior. Just look at His head, crowned with thorns; His face still bears the traces of the shameful spitting. I beseech you, look at this face; stop for an instant and you will see the whole extent of the glory of God. It shines in this face covered with contempt. Do you know Who He is? If David had been there with his harp he would have been able to sing one of his favorite hymns: "The Heavens declare thy glory, and the firmament the work of Thy hands" (Psa. 19:1) That is the One Who is there on the cross, hanging between heaven and earth. Listen to what comes from His lips. Oh! listen, lost soul, we beseech of you; Listen!

"I count all My bones. They look, they stare upon Me; they divide My raiment among them" (Psa. 22:17, 18).

Perhaps you will say: these are the unlearned, and "they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16) saying "Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days" (Matt. 27:40) No He had never said that; He said "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19) Here is the reply from His mouth: "Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, unto Me Whom Jehovah has afflicted" (Lam. 1:12) This Scripture is the distress of Jerusalem, but it expresses the sorrow of Christ in that hour.

And is it not for you that He bears these sufferings? And would they be nothing to you who pass by? Can we believe that the heart of man is so hard? Nevertheless it is a faithful picture of how man's heart turns from God.

When He is reviled, He reviles not again, and when He suffers, He threatens not. On the contrary He says again: "Turn unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Isa. 45:22.

Turn ye: that is the condition; unto Me: that is the Person; be saved: that is the result; all the ends of the earth, from one pole to the other pole; those who have lived in the sewers of this world, all can come, all are invited, all can look.

Into the stable of Bethlehem, all can enter: shepherds, kings, slaves, soldiers; at Golgotha, all can see Him: from the monarch on his throne, to the slave who turns the mill, all classes of society can turn towards the Man of Golgotha. He has pardon for each one. And it is He Who is inviting you this evening to turn unto Him. Do not turn to Moses, he condemns you; do not turn to yourself, that is despair; do not turn to the Christians, they have nothing for you, they have only enough for themselves; nor to Christendom, it is bankrupt. All those who are afraid because of their guilt, for all and for each there is one invitation: "Turn unto Me". Hear these words: "and be saved". No uncertainty, no other condition: one single look at the fruit of the tree, and man was lost; one single look at the Man on the Cross and the lost are saved.

"If Thou art Son of God, come down from the Cross". There is no answer, but there are plenty of proofs that He is truly Son of God. He came for the glory of God, His work had been begun. Satan wished to hinder Him from finishing it.

The most powerful and the most marvelous proof is that He remained between the heavens and the earth. He believed in His work, so did God. Death beds are respected; the death penalty inspires a certain pity-for Him, Insult! Dear Savior, in love, Thou didst take the last place. What a sight for the world of angels!! But let us continue. The great of the earth are there, the elders, the doctors of the law, the chief Priests, certainly all educated men, and what do we hear? "He saved others, and He cannot save Himself". I hear and I am forced to say: It is true, Amen.—Oh! do not trust the fate of your soul to them... the wise have not known Him, and they are called "bulls of Bashan". (Psa. 22:13) They have crucified the Lord of Glory. Oh! if only we could find the words to speak of it. But up there Heaven will lend us its dictionary, and with its vocabulary, and in the language of that country, we shall be able.

One day it will be given me to speak of my Savior in a way worthy of Him and of Heaven. What was it which kept Him on the cross? The power of the Roman Empire in that day was great, the habitable world was all obedient to the laws of Caesar. The Roman hammer had been used to forge arms to bring the nations into subjection, and to make idols to mislead them. This same hammer served to forge the nails which were driven into the hands of the Creator of heaven and earth. Sound is heard with difficulty at a great distance, but when the nails were driven into the hands of the Son of God the sound reached even to the heart of the third Heaven and it shuddered. What was passing in the heart of God? Who can say? who can understand? Mystery of love and of justice, one day it will be granted me to fathom you!

Oh! what a privilege for us to be able to speak of it already on earth while waiting to understand it. Do you think, perhaps, that the Roman nails, which left in His hand a wound large enough to put the finger into, do you think that the nails held Him to the cross?

No, it is His love for me and His love for you. To save me He must remain there. They said: "He saved others", and it is true.

In His service down here He saved others, He said: "Thy sins are forgiven". (Luke 7:48), but we must add: not atoned for. Four thousand years passed away, and Scripture calls this time: "The passing by the sins that had taken place before" Rom. 3:25 (J.N.D.)

Let us consider the catalog of the offenses of all the saints of the Old Testament: of Adam, of Eve and of so many others! The stream of time carried them all to Calvary, and all were set to His account, and He must atone for them. Enoch was in Heaven, Elijah had followed him, and their offenses were there, put to His account. And the children? what a multitude had passed from this world into the other! No, the nails did not hold Him, but His love. He could not come down from the cross, my debt, and that of many thousands of others must be paid even to the last farthing.

A poor woman once stole into a magnificent house; her record was charged with many sins; she was not a woman who had sinned in secret; her life was, as it were, placarded on the walls of the city; and when she enters, Simon exclaims: "She is a sinner". (Luke 7:39) In presence of witnesses, Jesus says to her: "Woman, go in peace". (Luke 7:50) And turning to the accusers He says to them: "Her many sins are pardoned". (Luke 7:47) Pardoned, yes, but not atoned for. Now the hour had struck for that. He had saved others from it. We cannot find words to speak more fully of such things; and what shall I say of the woman of Samaria, of the twelve apostles, of the demoniac! He had entered the house of the strong man. (Matt. 12:37; Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21, 22) and had released the prisoners. One is not in prison when one is innocent; their crimes must be atoned for; they were all guilty.

"If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him". But He could not do it. What Zechariah had said must be accomplished: "They will look upon Me Whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10) He could not reign over man in Adam, in his old nature. Those over whom He will reign will have a new heart. Satan must be bound, and so that the head of the serpent may be bruised, the heel of the Savior must be bruised. (Gen. 3:15) His death was necessary for "the confirmation of the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. 15:8).

He was a King without a people, and the subjects of His future empire must be saved. He had said to the twelve: "You will be seated on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28) What a work, and what results.

Oh! an instant, and there is a change....If He does not come down from the cross, men are going to lay the blame on God. One has the impression that these men are saying to God: "We have Him now in our hand. Set Him free, if you can!" What defiance, and God must submit to it. "He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him now".

Take Him out of our hands then. Do you know what God must reply? "I cannot deliver Him; I leave Him to you; you have begun, you have continued, it must be finished. If I deliver Him out of your hands, My Heaven will remain closed forever. You have put Him there. He is going

to die for you".

Oh! do not ask me to speak of these things, that would be too much to ask of me; you expect too much of a man. Soon we shall speak of it up there! We sing in one of our hymns:

"Soon the pilgrim path all trodden
We shall understand Thy Love"

Lord hasten the day!

There are still other witnesses, malefactors, evil men, thieves. That is what the Scripture calls them. These have spoken blasphemously in the same way.

At the cross all classes of human society were represented. We cannot enter into all the details, but how precious it all is to our souls. Man has buried the glory of the Christ under a heap of base deeds and words, but, more magnificent than all the meteors in the bosom of the night, through this veil of ignominy, the form of the Heavenly One is recognized by a robber.

Look at this "Poor Man"; He leaves as an inheritance four things:

1st) To His murderers He leaves His intercession: a few days later some thousands of souls would be saved in the midst of Jerusalem through the preaching of the Apostle Peter. Perhaps among them were some of those who were passing by.

2nd) To a poor robber criminal, cast out by men, He left as an inheritance the Paradise of God.

3rd) In the crowd there was found also a friend who had lain in His bosom; to him He leaves His Mother: "Behold thy Mother". It is possible that we read this passage superficially. Who was this woman? The woman of the stable of Bethlehem. She had brought up the Child. She had known all His life that God had spoken of her in Eden, the woman whose Seed should bruise the serpent; and in the kingdom of Judah had said by the mouth of Isaiah that a virgin should have a Child called Immanuel.

Do you see those two persons? Of whom does one speak when one returns from a funeral, if it is not of the one whom one has just left? One recalls old memories, one speaks of the departed, of his goodness, of what he was like. See those two, Mary and John, speaking of this One Who had left them to go away to Heaven! Ah! how one would have loved to listen to them! Thirty three years she had lived with Him, and John, three years.

4th) To His Mother He said: "Behold thy son". What a support for her, what a companion for the rest of her life, for she was a widow.

But it is noon. Suddenly the sun, wiser than men, veils his face as one who can no longer look upon so horrible a scene, where men have become the murderers of their Creator. The sun, which has been the torch to lighten them, now stretches a veil over creation. Stop, you cannot continue your way! here we are compelled to stop.

When Abraham went with his servants to Mt. Moriah he said to them: "Abide ye here, I and the lad, we will go". We have here before us a scene moving in its silence. Listen, my soul, to such a word: "He was made sin for thee". Do you hear it? The "waves and the billows" (Psa. 42:7) of divine wrath pass over His head. Listen to what He says: "My iniquities have taken hold upon Me". (Psa. 40:12)... My adorable Savior, these are not Thine, but mine! Listen again to these solemn words in the distance: "Sword, awake, (you have slumbered for 40 centuries) smite the Shepherd" (Zech. 13:7) For three hours this sword searches His holy being, but it meets only perfection. Oh! dear Savior, how much longer must we still wait to see Thee? There, we shall fully understand Thy love.

The three hours are past. One hears a cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Many servants of God have asked 'Why'? Jacob, Job at least four times, David, Asaph and many others have put this question, not understanding the reason of their troubles. Knowing the wisdom of God and His love, it only brings out the weakness of those who have put this question. We often act like Joseph, who, when his Father wished to bless his sons, said "Not thus, my Father". (Gen. 48:18) This was a serious mistake for "the Revealer of Secrets". (Gen. 41:45). But how often it happens. The Son of God, would He take His place among those who went before Him on the earth? No, His 'why' is the why of perfection. "My God, My God, for three hours Thy sword has searched My soul, what has it found?" Oh! if God had wished to answer in words, He might have said: "My Son, Thou hast taken their place; Thou didst wish to have them with Thee in the glory; it is because of them that I have been compelled to abandon Thee, for they are all sinners".

But there is another answer, the veil of the temple is rent from the top to the bottom; we enter the holy place. Heaven is opened and all can come to the Father's House. On this door had been inscribed: "Entrance forbidden". But today we find these most precious words: "Boldness to enter" (Heb. 10:19) and every sinner can come.

There is the new and living way consecrated through the veil: that is to say His flesh (Heb. 10:19) Multitudes have passed by this way, blessed be His holy Name.

On the door of death had been written "Exit forbidden", but when He, the Prince of Life enters there, death opens her doors, she confesses "I am overcome, I can no longer hold Him".

After His resurrection many bodies of the sleeping saints arose. But who could open the door of Hades? for we do not know where it is. Luke 16 speaks of this place, but where is the door to be found? So that the bodies of the sleeping saints can rise and appear to many, this unknown door must open, and He holds the keys. (Rev. 1:18) Thus we find three opened doors: the doors of Heaven, of Hades, and of Death.

It is now three o'clock in the afternoon, it is the hour when the lamb is offered in the temple, and when the Levites sing Psa. 22. Picture to yourself this scene; the priest was in the holy place offering incense, and behold! suddenly the veil is rent and man is in the presence of God and does not die! Access to God is opened unto us.

This evening you can enter, and you will be welcomed. But see, the earth trembles! and although her foundations are strong, death is shaken; rocks are rent. Heaven expresses its full satisfaction.

One door remains closed.... It is the door of the human heart.

And yours? Do you not wish to open it to the Lord this evening? Ah, dear soul, if you do not, a day will come when you will find yourself before His closed door! How long has the Lord of Glory been knocking at your door? Oh! let me warn you. After having knocked and waited vainly at the door of your heart, He will close His door of mercy, and when He closes no one can open; you will knock in vain.

When I speak of this, the pages of my Bible tremble between my fingers. Do you wish to commit a sin which the devils would not commit? The Apostle Peter says that there are some evil angels bound "in chains of darkness" (2 Peter 2:4) for the judgment of the great day. Ah! if one went to preach to them that there is a Redeemer for them, what a cry of joy would rise from that place of torment. Those evil spirits who are at liberty formerly asked the Lord Jesus: "Art Thou come to torment us before the time"? (Matt. 8:29) If one had said to them: There is a Savior for you, do you think they would have disregarded Him? I do not think so myself. I find it hard to believe. Do you want to be guilty of this frightful crime, which could not be put to the account of the demons?

Consider, Sinner, it is a solemn question. The devil says to you: "Tomorrow", but tomorrow is a floating island on which you will never be able to set your foot. "Tomorrow" is the road which leads to the town of "Never". Felix said "Tomorrow" in the book of Acts. "Tomorrow" has no brother, it is born alone, it is something fragile and slippery. Tomorrow you could be in a place where the tomorrows and the future are terrible.

"Today, if you will hear His voice harden not your heart" (Psa. 95:7, 8; Heb. 3:7) Standing by this cross there was a Roman centurion. I picture him to myself with his breastplate, his spear in his hand, his brazen helmet on his head. His soldiers had plaited the crown of thorns; and he himself had seen so much: the scourging and the gentleness of the Lamb; When they nailed Him to the cross, the centurion had stayed there. When capital punishment is executed the police are responsible for it. His soldiers had smitten the head of the Savior with a reed, they had reviled Him, and spit in His face. He had let them do it, worthy representative of the kingdom of iron, announced by Daniel the prophet. (Chapters 2 & 7) He had not been to Sunday school, he was a soldier, he had fought for his country and had gained this rank, no doubt distinguished on the field of battle.

Mark tells us that he was "over against", face to face with the Cross. O sinner, see this man and listen to what he says: "Truly, this was the Son of God". He will sing with us the song of Heaven, and you, who since your infancy have been taught the Holy Scriptures which can make you wise unto salvation, will you sing it?

They will come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South (Luke 13:29); where did this man come from? from the North perhaps. And you, who have a pious Mother, will you be cast out? See this poor heathen, a Roman soldier, the door of his heart opens, and listen to what he seems to add: "I have believed, therefore have I spoken" (Psa. 116:10)

We come now to Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, who owns a garden in the capital and a tomb (a cave). Men are so sure of dying that they are concerned beforehand with their burial. It is the only certainty that man has.

The Word tells us that he had hewn this tomb himself. (I think that he had employed workmen, but it is with a purpose that God says things thus in His Book). For it is man who has dug his grave by sin. A man never gives up his place of burial to another, especially if one is in a high position. "With my own hands", Joseph of Arimathea would have said, "I have prepared this tomb, and it is reserved for me". But, behold! another enters it, Jesus; and after having laid down the body and rolled the stone to the door, Joseph goes away. He will be laid there later, but only after his tomb will have been the witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. O death! where are thy terrors? time fails us to speak of this tomb.

It is the Lord Jesus Who puts His own to sleep. It is also He Who awakens them, and many will go to meet Him without passing through death.

The saints of the Old Testament were afraid of death; Hezekiah and Job for example. Job said: "I am forced to come to the King of Terrors" (Job 18:14) while the Apostle can say "I have the desire to depart" (Phil. 1:13)

I remember my Mother; I went to sleep in the evening under her shadow, and awakening in the morning her well-known face appeared in the room to fill my heart with joy, and from my lips came the word "Mother" One word will be on our lips when He will come: "Lord"! "If I awake, I am still with Thee" (Psa. 139:18)

Perhaps you may have friends in the world. When someone sets out on his worldly career, he comes forth with all that youth puts at his disposal. The heathen worship the rising sun, but turn their backs on the setting sun. Dear soul, if you have not Jesus, you will be alone when you come to die. There everyone must leave you, but your sins will remain with you. Sad companions! You will be in the valley of the shadow of death with your sins.

Oh, I entreat you, open your heart to Jesus, and know that in His heart your place is ready, a place for you, who have waited till this hour, so late in the day of grace. For it grows late, the sun is sinking to the horizon, the shadows of night are spreading over the land.

Look unto Him before the coming of eternal night! He is your best friend, the one who loves you best. David was the best friend of Saul; Elijah of Ahab; Jesus, of the sinner. Satan does not love you, your companions do not love you. Without the knowledge of Jesus there is no love in the heart, and you yourself, you do not love yourself: you leave your soul to perish. Is it of so little value to you?

One more word as to this tomb. It has been the eye witness of the victory gained over death. Within its dark walls, see what a battlefield! Everything is in order: the napkin folded up in one place apart, the linen clothes on the ground; it is not like Lazarus who came forth in all his grave clothes. There are angels in this place, for there are trophies of victory there, and that is where the Christian goes, if Christ does not come to receive him.

May you have this happiness! Once more, let me ask you, will you sing with the redeemed "Unto Him Who loves us" (Rev. 1:5)? In Hell you will say: "I am the architect of my own unhappiness". You forge chains for yourself, which will weigh you down through all eternity. I seem to see you fastened to the rack of that place of torment, the vulture of remorse devouring your soul. You will desire one drop of water and it will be refused to you by Him Who thirsted on the cross. "Without will be dogs" (Rev. 22:15). There were some at the foot of the cross, and the Lord met them in His ministry. You will desire the crumbs which fall from the table of the Master, and they will be refused to you. May God have mercy on you, is the cry of my heart. Have mercy on yourself, I entreat you, and you will never regret it: not in this world, and still less in the other.

"The first look at Christ gives Life, and every after look the power of living."

There is life in a look at the Crucified One There is life at this moment for thee; Then look, Sinner, look unto Him, and be saved—Unto Him who was nailed to the tree. Look! Look! Look and live! There is life in a look at the Crucified One, There is life at this moment for thee! Oh, why was He there as the bearer of sin If on Jesus thy sins were not laid? Oh, why from His side flowed the sin—cleansing blood If His dying thy debt has not 'paid?

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