

"LOOKING UNTO JESUS"

Hebrews 12:1, 2

Intro: The purpose of this meeting tonight is to remember our Lord Jesus Christ, to remember Him especially in connection with His death. We will take the bread in a few moments to remember His body, His humanity, the fact that He died for human beings, for sinners like we are. His death was substitutional. We will take the cup and drink the fruit of the vine to remember that His death was sacrificial. As was the case with the OT sacrifices, our Lord's offered Himself to God. Hebrews 9:14 involves all Three Persons of the Godhead in our Lord's death on the Cross when it says that He, our Lord Jesus Christ, "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God."

When we think about remembering the Lord, it would seem unbelievable to us that we could forget Him. And yet the Lord knew that we could, and do. We have to confess also to our shame that we do forget Him. We forget what the Cross of Christ means. It would be good if more preachers were like Spurgeon who used to say about preaching, "I take my text and make a bee-line to the Cross."

If we are going to remember the Lord, we obviously have to know Him, and we have to know something about Him which we can remember. We have to think about Him. We have to look at Him! And that is what I want to talk about tonight: "Looking unto Jesus."

I. A UNIQUE EXPRESSION.

The verb that the writer of Hebrews used here is found only one other time in the NT. But, as is sometimes the case, the meaning in the other verse has a slightly different meaning from our text. Here it lit. means to turn our eyes away from one thing, and to fix them on another. The other verse where it is found is Phil. 2:23 where Paul was speaking of Timothy and he said,

Him therefore I hope to send presently,

so soon as **I shall see** how it will go with me.

Paul was using the word there to indicate that he wanted to see clearly how it would go with him. This idea may also be included in Hebrews 12:2, to see clearly. But it also suggests that the verb does not speak of physical sight alone, but of understanding something.

In this case we are not to look at some thing, but to look at a Person. And the name that is used here for the Lord is the name that was given to Him at His birth: "Jesus." And since the form of the verb is a present participle, present tense,

the suggestion here is that we are repeatedly to turn our eyes away from other things, and to turn them toward "Jesus." And when we realize that this is not physical sight, at least for the present, but that which has to do with our thoughts, our understanding, then we begin to get the idea.

God's Word is very practical. The Lord knows that there are times when we have to be thinking about what we are doing at the moment. Many things that we do require strong concentration. And so the writer of Hebrews was not saying that we have to be thinking about the Lord all of the time, but that we need continually throughout the day, as we are able, to turn our thoughts back to the Lord, to think of Him.

The root of this verb (without the prefix) is used in Heb. 11:27 where we are told that Moses "endured, **as seeing** him who is invisible." It was Moses' understanding of the Lord that enabled him to endure all of the trials he had during his life. He knew the Lord. He had a deep, personal acquaintance with the Lord.

So the object of "looking unto Jesus" is to become better acquainted with the Lord, to know Him better every time we look, we think about Him.

Therefore, we are here tonight to do what we need to be doing periodically throughout the day--to remember the Lord, to think about Him, and to learn more about Him.

But I would call your attention to verse before verse 1. Let's call it:

II. THE CONTEXT (Heb.12:1).

We are to be looking at our Lord as we do two other things, and both of these are related to Hebrews 11 where we have many people mentioned and what they did "by faith." What are we to do?

- A. "Laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us."

A "weight" is an encumbrance--anything that holds us back, or that weights us down. We can fill our lives with so many things that we are hindered in running the race. A person can have too many jobs, or a hobby that consumes too much time, or being occupied with sports, or animals or anything else that keeps us from being at our best.

A besetting sin is a sin that seems to be attacking us from all sides, and usually gets the best of us. That is why,

when we come to the Lord's table, we need to examine ourselves. This does not mean that we only examine ourselves when we come to the Lord's table, but we do it here to get us into the habit of doing it all of the time!

If we are going to profit from our time at the Lord's table, we have take oversight of our lives to make sure that nothing is keeping us from "looking unto Jesus" here, and every day that we live.

Our lives can be cluttered up with good things, but things that are not really essential. Or we can grow careless about our sins. These keep us from looking at the Lord and learning about the Lord, not only here at the Lord's Table, but day by day when we need to be learning of Him.

But there is a second part to this:

B. "And let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

We are in a race to win a prize. The race is long, and sometimes difficult. There are many obstacles in the way even without our weights and sins. And so we need "patience" to keep on running. We need, in other words, to persevere. We must not fall by the wayside; we must not give up. That which is going to keep us going, running hard, looking forward to the prize, is that we will be "looking unto Jesus."

When your days seem long and the race hard, take some time to look at Jesus. And then keep looking at Him. Take time during the day when perhaps just for a few minutes you think about Him. That is why we are here tonight: to think about the Lord.

But in order that we may know a little more about what is involved, let us go back to verse 12.

III. "LOOKING UNTO JESUS."

"Jesus" is the incarnate Christ. "Jesus" is the Savior. Jesus is "the Author and Finisher of our faith." As "the Author" we are to know that our faith originates with Him. As "the Finisher" He is the One Who brings us through to the end of the race and then rewards us with the prize.

One of the main reasons that we need to keep "looking at Jesus" is because we need to be continually reminded that our hope of reaching the goal is in Him. We run, but He keeps us running, shows us how to run, and where to run. He is more

than a coach; He is our life and strength and all that we need. When the race is hard and long (which is all of the time), keep "looking unto Jesus." That is when you need Him the most.

But now this second verse suggests that the Lord had a race to run, that He did run it, and the prize given to Him was to be seated at the Father's right hand. How can this help us?

I believe the answer is to be found in answering the question, What was "the joy that was set before Him"?

Remember now we are talking about "Jesus," the God-Man, the Man, Christ Jesus. We are thinking about our Great High Priest Who is touched with all of the feeling of our infirmities, who is able to sympathize with us in all of our trials and testings. We are looking at Him!

What was His main purpose while He was here on earth? How could He possibly think of the Cross as a "joy"?

He certainly did not relish the idea of dying, nor of the way He would die. That in itself was no joy to Him any more than it would be to us.

Was the "joy" the prospect of providing salvation for you and for me, and for all whom the Father had given to Him? I would say, "No." What then was it? "The joy that was set before Him" was the joy of doing on earth that which was pleasing to the Father in heaven. Pleasing the Father brought the greatest joy to Him even though it meant dying on the Cross! We are second to the Father.

Concl: What should our joy be, our greatest joy? It should be the same joy that our Lord had: pleasing the Father. That is why we need to keep "looking unto Jesus." That is what we need to see in Him. That is why we are here tonight. Our motive in obeying the Lord should be that we want to please the Lord. Our motive in serving the Lord should be that we want to please Him, to glorify Him. Our motive even in being here tonight is because the Lord wants us to remember Him, how He pleased the Father, and so we come to please our Lord and our heavenly Father, too. As great as our salvation is, our Lord's main purpose on earth was only secondarily to save us; He sought first of all to do the Father's will, and to please Him.

May we find our joy tonight in remembering our Lord because it pleases Him. What pleases Him brings joy to our hearts as it did to our Lord.