

Title: Looking Unto Jesus

Text: Hebrews 12:1-2

7 Take your Bibles, please, and turn to the Book of Hebrews, chapter 12. Today we come to two of my favorite verses in the Bible. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1 and 2. There are notes in your bulletin. I would encourage you to use them as we study the Word of God.

(Read Hebrews 12:1-2)

Prayer

(1C) In Verses 1-4 of this chapter, the Apostle Paul is laying out for us THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST. If you read Hebrews chapter 11, you can read the "Hall of Fame" concerning men of faith. The great examples of men of faith from the O.T. Now, Paul centers in on the example of Jesus Christ.

(1D) First of all, in Vs 1, he shares with us the IMPORTANCE OF ALL THOSE O.T. EXAMPLES. *Paul* begins with the word "THEREFORE" or "WHEREFORE" if you are using the KJ. It is a word which means "on the bases of what I just said"...On the baess of all that I have said in chapter 11, now this is the main point. So, if you are understanding this passage you would look at the word "therefore" as being a summary of all that chapter 11 says. And it is really an important point. That everything Paul has said in chapter 11 is now being put upon us.

You see, it is very easy for a christian to read chapter 11, concerning the men of faith, and what they went through, and yet not identify with them. It is easy to say, "Well, I haven't been through what they went through. So, I can't identify with them." I haven't suffered as they have suffered. But, according to 12:1 this is for us. ~~And~~ And here is the point. We are no different then the saints of the O.T. We do go through what they went through. We do experience the same things. We do have the same needs. And that is the point. It is connecting with the whole concept of chapter 11.

Now, As we look at the importance of these O.T. examples, there are two things that I would have you notice from Vs 1....

(1E) First of all, dealing with the nature of their effect upon us. The Bible says that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. The nature of the effect upon us of all these O.T. saints is a "cloud of witnesses."

The word "cloud" is a word in Greek which refers to a "Mass of something". It is not just one cloud of witnesses. But a whole mass of clouds of witnesses. They are all over the place.

Now, what are they witnessing to? Some people say that this is referring to O.T. believers who are watching us from heaven. They liken it to a race which we christians are running and the sepecators in the stands are all of the O.T. saints. And they are sort of cheering us on.

Now, I don't believe you can justify that from this verse. As a matter of fact, the thing that is witnessing, all the way through chapter 11, is not "they" looking at someone. It is what "they" went through. So, the massive clouds of witnesses, for you and me to be faithful today as God wants us to be, that massive witness IS SIMPLY THE EXPERIENCES THEY WENT THROUGH.

So often we say to somebody, "if you only knew what I am going through." Well, the Bible is here to tell us that people ~~knew~~ in the past, ^{know} what we are going through in the present. And Jesus more than anyone else knows what we are going through.

One of the reasons Jesus came into the world, a subreason to be sure, but the Bible does give it as a reason, is that He might know human life by personal experience. That he might be a merciful high priest. Having been tempted in all points even as we are, yet, without sin. ^{Jesus} ~~Christ~~ knows what we are going through. And we have all this record of Hebrews 11, to tell us that people have been through it before. Don't think that your expwriences are uiquic. That your struggles are uquic to the 20th century or to your own life. Oh, No....God's Word teaches that there has been a massive cloud of witnesses, the expeereiences and sufferings of people, who have gone before us.

SOFTLY

~~Turn over to I Peter 5:9.~~ The same thing is emphasized, ~~to us in I Peter 5:9.~~ We are not the only ones suffering, we ~~are~~ not the only ones going through what we are going through. I Peter 5:9 tells ^{us} of the Devils ^{attacks} ~~attacks~~ against Christians. ^{Peter} He says: "But resist him, firm in your faith, (speaking of Satan, resist him), knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." "

The same experiences of suffering. Not only the O.T. saints have been through it. They know what you and I go through, but also, you might think that your experience of suffering and testing is different from the people that are in this same room. But, according to the Bible, ~~what whether~~ whether at this point of time or not, in your life time and mine, we are going to experience the same afflictions.

Look at I Corinthians 10:13.... In the midst of reminding us about Israel's experiences in the wilderness as summarized in this whole chapter Vs 11 says: "these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."

I don't know how you read that verse but it appears to me that all testing is common to every person. That is what the Bible says. In fact some of us ^{one} mislead to believe that just because we have not been tested in a certain area at this point in our lives, that we willn't ever be... AND THAT IS NOT THE TRUTH OF THE WORD OF GOD. We are going to be tested. The Bible teaches it. We are warned from Israel's history not to get proud and to think that you will never face testing, not to think that you can stand in every crises without God's help. The moment you believe that, at that moment you shall fall.

So, all this testing, says the Bible, is common to everyone. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. And that means the experiences of those who have suffered before us.

And that is encouraging. For I can read that others suffered and conquered by faith when they put God first.

(2E) Now, in addition to the matter of the nature of their effect upon us, it is also interesting as to the number involved. The Bible calls them a great cloud of witnesses, but it also says that they are "~~surrounded~~" or "surrounded." Literally it means that they are laying or setting all around us. There are so many of them.

put out

You know, God's people in any age are always referred to as "few." There are only a few faithful. God's little flock. But in terms of the past the point here is, even though you may seem few in your generation, remember that all those of the past are like a massive cloud and they are setting all around you, surrounding you. They have been there before and they know what we are going through.

~~Now~~ there is something ~~else~~, here, that we should never forget. We have no excuse in the hour of testing. You see, we forget that sometimes God has recorded all of this. And it is given to us to encourage us at the time we suffer and we are tested. That there are those who have gone before and we can learn from them that God will never leave ~~us~~ nor forsake us. And these examples are all around you in your hour of need. Turn to it and let their example encourage you in your time of need. They conquered by faith and so can you.

So begins at
(2D) Now, beginning in the middle of Vs 1 and going through Vs 2, let's look at the instruction we have on the bases of the fact that all of these witnesses are surrounding us. What instruction does ^{The Bible} give to us?

(1E) First of all, from Vs 1, ^{The} ~~his~~ instruction is to forsake all that would hinder you in your life.

One of the hardest things that you and I will ever have to do is to forsake that which is hindering our progress and our growth in the Christian life. It is easy to get excited about maturing and growing and being effective for God. It is not so easy to get excited about that which is hindering us and blocking our growth. But we must get rid of it and get it out of our lives. And this falls into two categories. Paul calls them

encumbrances
"weights" and "sins."

encumbrance (which is a word meaning weight)
"I am to do it"

He says, "let us lay aside every weight"...Notice, it says "I am to do it"

It is a command, meaning "I am to do it." I have a responsibility according to this verse if I am to continue my growth and progress in Jesus Christ, I have a responsibility to put from me anything that is going to hinder me.

Of course, the illustration, here, is a race. If you are sports minded, you can really identify with the illustration. Two things in this illustration (1F) One, is a weight or encombrance. This could refer either to bodily weight. Meaning: you are too heavy. Lose some weight so you can run the race better. Or, ^{This} it is referring to clothing. You don't put on hiking boots to run a 100 yard dash. You don't put on a suit of clothes to run a race. The runner stripes down to the bare necessities in order to run. He wants to get as light as he can. He doesn't put weight on himself.

Now, in the Greek this word translated "weight" has the concept of "burden." A burden is anything that weighs you back. So, what we have here, is that we are to forsake anything that hinders us...both good and bad.

And I thought...How simple this is, yet, how profound. Simple, in the sense that I see the illustration and I know that there are a lot of things in my life that really hinder me. Oh, they may not be wrong, but they stop and hinder my growth in the Lord.

But, it is, also, profound, in the sense, that it is more difficult to make a decision to get rid of these things that are hindering us. I need to get that out of my life. ~~But~~ ^{But} the thing that is standing in the way of my growth in the Lord is very difficult to get rid of. Sometimes it might be just some wrong priorities in my life. Some things that just aren't right. Maybe in terms of my responsibilities. Maybe there are some things we are doing which seem good in and of themselves, but they are not in the right order. It is kind of like the man whose job is so important to him that he has no time for God/ Or, no time for his wife and family. His job is good. But if it is out of priority, it will hinder your growth in the Lord. We are to run the race, but we are to put aside any thing that would hinder our growth and our progress in the Lord. *Now, you think of those things in your life. Then, it is your responsibility to get rid of them.*

(2F) Then, we have the word sin. Literally it is the sin which controls us. That sin which controls us needs to be put out of our life. The Bible says

we will not grow in christ

that until we face these sins which control us, it may be a pattern of lying, some pattern of gossip, not forgiving your neighbor, it could be anything. When that sin is in your life and controlling you, that ^{is} the main issue in why we can't make progress and grow spiritually in our christian life. It is the sin that is holding you down that is the problem. It may be a bad temper, a lack of patience, ^{Resentment toward another person} or whatever. But it is holding you back from growth and progress in christ. ^{Result - you have a hard time living by faith} *S., forsake all that is holding you.*

And furthermore, I find it becomes the very thing that blinds our eyes as to why God is letting suffering come into our lives. You see, chapter 11 and 12 is telling us that God is going to bring testing into our lives in order to mature us. And when we have weights, good things that are blocking our growth, and sins that are controlling us, it is blinding our eyes even to God's purposes. Thus, we are bitter, we are resentful, we don't understand suffering, we don't want it to come into our lives. We want a little peace and happiness. And we think, "If I could just get it out of my life I would be happy." When God tells us he has a marivolous purpose in suffering. And that He will produce growth through suffering. Suffering is for his purpose and for His glory. And we need to understand that.

(2E) Now, the second instruction is found in Vs 1 and that is to ~~run~~ run with endurance the race that is set before you.

Obviously this is a track meet. And it seems a little ridiculous to insult your intelligence with some of these things. But, I think it helps us to understand what Paul is talking about. It would be foolish to walk in a race...right? It would be foolish to run backwards,,right? It would be foolish to stop and talk to someone in the stands. There are all kinds of things which are quite obvious if you want to expand the illustration. But I want to deal with several specific things.

(1F) First of all, the nature of that race. Vs 1 gives us ^{Three} ~~four~~ things about the nature of ~~that~~ ^{the} race *that we are in.*

(1G) Number one, according to the Bible the race that we are in is a continual effort. The little phrase in Vs 1 which says "Let us run" is in the present tenses. "LET US BE CONTINUALLY RUNNING." Not walking..Running..

It is an effort. And there is a continual effort involved. It isn't just a one time deal. Oh, No, it is a constant thing in our lives.

and (2G) Number two, the little word "race" is the word that can also be translated "agony". The idea is of a struggle. It is a real struggle. This race that we are called to run is being described as a struggle.

2 (3G) Number ~~three~~ ^{two}, it is also ordered by the Lord. Notice what Paul says: "run a race that is set before us." Now, who is setting it before us? God is setting it before us. You are not setting it before yourself. ~~OH, NO...~~ God is setting before you ~~this struggle, this test.~~ ^{living and so on} And this little verse is telling me the whole thing is from God. The whole processes of ^{is God} testing. The experience of ^{seeing the Lord. Man that is great} ~~struggle against pressures of life. That is being set before you~~ ~~from God, himself. God has put that into your life.~~

and Why? because He is against you or He is trying to harm you?..OH, NO.. Because He is actually trying to build you. We reach maturity by the very struggles we go through. And that is why God leaves them there.

(4G) Number ~~four~~ ^{three}, it leads towards a real goal. ~~It~~ I think this is great. All that is happening in my life is leading towards a real goal. There isn't one thing in my life that isn't heading in that direction. Nothing is a waste of time or being in vain. It is all a part of God's plan. I am moving towards a goal which He will describe in Vs 2.

and Many times as a Pastor when I talk with somebody who is really going through deep waters, I am reminded of passages like 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. *Paul* says that our light affliction is but for a moment. And it is working for us a far more eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Or, Romans 8:18 which says "for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." God knows what he is doing. And what more instruction do we need? God is building our anticipation in heaven through all suffering/

It is an agony. It is a struggle. We go through it all the time with our sins and these weights which keep us from growing in the Lord. But God has placed these struggles in our life. And he is building our lives both so that we can be more effective, now. Because we share best that which we understand by experience, and, also, because he is causing us to look more toward him.

Do you know why people look towards Jesus in their hour of suffering? They are at the point of physical death and why they can't wait to go home, if they are believers? Do you know why? Why listen, God has done that in their lives. He has caused that desire to want to go home to heaven. And I think we need to understand that suffering is a part of what God does in our lives to make us long more for what Jesus has promised to us in the future. And one more remainder. You are not getting more than you can endure. There has no temptation taken you put such is common to man. For God will not tempt you above that which you are able to bear. You are not getting more than you can endure. God gives us exactly what he wants us to have. And he continues to build our lives as we grow in the Lord. And we learn the joy of peace in the midst of a storm. And it gets more exciting, no matter what the test, because you know what God is doing. And that peace that passes all understand. The peace which guards your hearts through our Lord Jesus Christ.

out

IF We are going to run the race we will need! (Helen of The race)
(2F) Secondly, ~~notice the need of~~ patience. The great need of patience.

This world goes so fast it is hard to be patient anymore. I mean: if you have to wait at a street light for more than 30 seconds, it drives you up the wall.. *ILL - Road Work* You know what I mean. [The Bible says "let us run with patience the race." [The idea is that patience is a channel through which you are able to run....DO YOU SEE THE POINT?.....My ability to *live the Christian life and serve* ~~endure the struggles of life~~

God

is through the patience that is in my life. If I can't handle it, it is because there is no patience in my life. The word "patience" means "to bear up under" Patience is bearing up under the pressure. And the Bible says that it is through that, that we are able to run the race.. *(.Fantastic.)*..A great principle to apply to your life

(3E) The third point of instruction is to fix our eyes on Jesus. Vs 2

Now, we need to forsake anything that hinders us, those weights and sins, and it is a real struggle. We need to do it with patience, but, if you don't get this, it is going to be hard for you to do anything else, it is going to be hard for you to ~~bear up under the testing, the temptations of life and you will fail, unless,~~ ^{live the christian life and see the} ~~IF YOU FAIL TO~~ **FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS.**

Vs 2 says: "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." There are two things that I would like you to see.

(1E) First, notice His relationship to our faith. According to the Bible it says that Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith. And please notice, if you are following along in the KI, that the word "OUR" is in italics.

This means that the word "our" is not in the original ^{Greek} text. The Greek text says "the Faith". It isn't our faith that is under discussion. It is "THE FAITH". What faith is all about, ^{just} which has been described in Hebrews 11.

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Jesus is the author and perfecter of ^{the} faith, itself. ~~our~~ ^{NOT} our faith. But faith, itself.

Now, what is the meaning of that? The word "author" comes from the root word meaning "source." So, the source of all faith is Jesus.

Now, this is all likened unto a foot race. Like someone who starts the race and someone who ends the race. The whole race from a christian point of view has to be run by faith. Faith in God's plan for me in this life. ~~Know/why/~~ Christ is the starter of the race and He is the finisher. The source of all faith as well as the one who complete or perfects ^{the} ~~our~~ faith is Jesus.

Now, do you know what that is talking about? THE CROSS...Jesus came into the world to die. And the last part of Vs 2 is explaining the reason. You know, my ability to have faith and faith itself receives support from the fact that Christ went to the cross and died and paid for my sins.

If Christ did not do that, then salvation would have to be on the bases of works, not faith. But since Jesus has already perfected it all, He paid for every last sin that besets us, He has perfected it completely, it is done, it is completed, therefore, salvation and the whole christian life has to be by faith. There is no way it could be ~~by~~ works. But, if Christ did not perfect it at the cross, then it would have to be by works.

You see, it is very important to understand that Jesus is the sum total of the whole thing. Half the trouble we have as believers in living the Christian life and having victory over sin, ^{and learn consistent in serving the Lord} is that we forget that the whole point is Jesus. That is the whole point. To trust Him and to believe Him. He has already perfected everything at the cross. The christian life is by faith and trust in what Jesus has already done.

We have a problem and we start trusting in ourselves. And do you know what happens when we do that? FAILURE...WIPE-OUT...NO VICTORY...DOUBT...DISBELIEF...We need to trust Jesus. At that moment of our trial or problem we need to trust Jesus. He is the author and perfecter of ^{our} faith. And it is all bases upon what He has done for us at the cross.

(2F) Now, ^{Search} Paul gives us ^{Three} ~~three~~ reasons for this. ~~Three reasons.~~ And ~~he~~ ^{Jesus} completes the whole passage and shows us ~~the example of~~ Christ. There are three reasons why we need to fix our eyes on Jesus.

(1G) one, because of His endurance on the cross. Vs 2 says: "who for the joy set before Him endured the cross."

Christ endured the cross. ^{Therefore} We are to endure the struggles, the testing, the problems of this life. ~~You see,~~ ^{Because} of His endurance of the cross, we can run the race.

You ask: "How? I don't understand?" ~~If you are already a believer,~~ ^{How} does Christ bearing up under the cross help me as a believer to bear up under my problems? ANSWER: The little phrase "WHO FOR THE JOY."

That little phrase is the key to how you can bear up under. Christ was able to bear up under the sufferings of the cross because of the joy. Meaning: in anticipation of the joy set before him He endured the ^{suffering of the} cross.

I really believe the point, here, is that the joy of what God has for us, the prospect of what God has for us in the future, ^{will} allow us to endure, ^{if} ~~how~~.

*our eyes are fixed upon Jesus
How was that joy?*

Certainly that joy involves you and me who would come to know him as saviour. The joy of eternity. Jesus had it all in his mind when he went to the cross. And he was able to bear up under, says the Bible, because of that anticipation of joy.

And this applies to us. How can we bear up under the problems of this life? Only one way. When we put our eyes on Jesus realizing that this world will pass away and the problems thereof. But, we have eternity in the presence of Jesus where there will be no sorrow, no sadness, and no tears.....
And dear friends, I think that is exciting....

(2G) Secondly, because of his expression of humility and submission to the purposes of God. Vs 2 says that not only did Jesus endure the cross, but he despised the shame.

The great God, almighty, the creator of the universe became man and died a shameful death, humiliting himself. WHY? Because he loves you. And he desires that no one should perish. Not my will, Jesus prayed in the Garden, but thine be done. This ^{whole} expression of despising the shame is an example of humility and submission to the will of God.

How are we to have victory?

How are we going to bear up under the problems of life? When we are submissive to God's will. When we don't let the struggles and problems cause us to be defeated. But when we can say: "Lord, I know this is in my life because I know that ^{you are in control of my life} ~~you have placed it there~~" then we we have joy. And until we bow our knee to Jesus, we will never have peace.

It is so hard to be submissive to God during pressure time. It is easy to say to God, "I will do anything you want me to do" when it is opportunity time. But when it is test and pressure, then to be able to say: "Lord, not my will but thine be done. Thank you that you have a reason for allowing all of this to be in my life." Then you experince the joy of the christian life. Christ has humility and submission before God.

*God mercy Lord
God, Lord! His mercy*

(30) And the third reason is because of his exaltation. The last phrase of Vs 2 says: "and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

What is the point of that? How does that help us? Well, the point is that Jesus proved that it was worth it all. Jesus isn't still in the grave. He rose ~~up~~ from the grave. He ascended up on high and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. And God, according to Philippians 2, has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

You see, we too are going to be exalted by God one day. Isn't that wonderful? It is going to be worth it all.

And when we lose sight of Jesus, that is when we have our problems. Look ~~to~~ unto Jesus because He endured the cross, knowing the joy of the future, because of his expression of humility, He despised the shame. He didn't run from his responsibility. He accepted God's will. And because of his exaltation God proved to him, ^{God to us} that it was worth it all.

And so He will do that in your life and in mine.....

Shall we close in prayer