

Looking Unto Jesus

Today we will go through some aspects around Hebrews 12:1-2. We are familiar with these verses; however, we will just refresh ourselves. The topic is Looking unto Jesus. The subtitles are Heavenly Vision; Run the Spiritual Race; the Goal to Win Christ; Be as a Good Soldier of Christ; Being Temperate in All Things; A Little Exhortation; and We See the Joy Set Before Him and Us.

Let us have a word of prayer before we start.

Dear Lord, we praise You. We thank You for uniting us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through His sacrifice, He has reconciled us with our Heavenly Father. Jesus died for us while we were yet sinners. Thank You, Lord, for Your sacrifice; and we bring to Your gracious throne the words You have given unto us today. May You sanctify the words and help us to understand. Speak to us, and we seek Your Holy Spirit to guide us and lead us. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Heavenly Vision

In Hebrews 12:1-2, we read, “Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We see a great cloud of witnesses that has already passed before us. Our forerunner is our Lord Jesus Christ. Most of them finished their race, and we are in that race, continuing our life of faith in Christ Jesus. So, we will consider what we need to do as believers while continuing this race. First and foremost, we need to look unto Jesus. We must fix our eyes on Christ Jesus and continue our faith life in this world.

To continue this race, we need to have a heavenly vision, which is important in any believer's life. Without vision, we cannot continue the race. This is very important. In any aspect of our Christian life, we should have a vision. Without vision there is no mission to continue. We have that zeal inside to continue the race. Our hope is our Lord Jesus Christ. Without vision, people perish. As born-again Christians, we are raised from the dead along with Christ Jesus. According to Colossians 3:1, we are to “seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God.” Because our life is hidden in Him, seek the things that are above.

We see in the Old Testament the difference between Abraham and Lot. Their visions were different. When Abraham saw the lands, he was not seeing the lands on this earth; he was seeing heaven. His vision was of the city where God was the builder and architect; he was seeing that city. He told Lot to go first to select the lands, whatever he wanted, wherever he wanted. In Genesis 13:10, we see, “And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan.” Lot also lifted his eyes, but he was not able to see the city

of God. Abraham was able to see the city of God. Abraham thought, “this place is temporary. Where we are living now is not the permanent place. Our destination is in heaven.” That is the difference. Lot was unable to see; I can say that he lacked that vision of heaven. Lot saw that place as it looked like a garden of the Lord, and it was very pleasing to his eyes. He chose Sodom and Gomorrah, the city which was going to be destroyed by the Lord.

Citizen of Heaven

As a believer, seek the things that are above, which are permanent. We belong to the city of Heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven, whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Philippians 3:20, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” To become a citizen of any country, we must be born in that country. Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and witnesses in the waters of baptism, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, belongs to heaven. They are the citizens of heaven; and their names are written in the Book of Life in heaven, the Book of the Lamb. These are very important things. They are simple, but they are very important. We have that assurance now: we are citizens of heaven; and our names are written in the Book of Life, the Book of the Lamb. For this, we do not have to pay anything. Nowadays, countries offer citizenship for a price. It is free to enter heaven. This is the gift of God.

As citizens of heaven, we must represent our citizenship. When we think of the Olympic Games, people from different countries participate. Each country, when they participate, represents their country; they carry the banner of their country and walk before they start playing the games. They are from different countries and show forth the culture and tradition of their country. We are from heaven, so we must represent that we are from heaven. We are citizens of heaven, and we must follow the rules of heaven, not the rules of this earth. We must show forth the taste of heaven to others and invest our time, energy, and resources in heaven and not on this earth. These are the qualities of a citizen of heaven. We must also seek God first. First, seek the kingdom of God, and then all things will be added unto you. These are the things we, as citizens of heaven, must follow: seek the things that are above. It is all about our Lord Jesus Christ.

Run the Spiritual Race

Anyone who wants to run the race must throw off all the weights they carry and make themselves free before they run. We are running the race of faith. To run freely, we must cast off anything that slows us down—every weight and the sin that clings so closely. Weights will distract us and bring us down, discouraging us from running the race. On the other hand, sin also entangles us around our legs, tripping us just when we need to press forward.

While we are running, we lay aside all these weights and sin. We run with patience, fixing our eyes on our Lord Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. We know that this is a long race, a marathon race; and we need more patience to run this race,

until we complete this race. The Christian life truly is a marathon, not a sprint. It is a long, often lonely race where the crowd thins out, the cheers fade; and even those who once encouraged you may step away for a while; but the race continues, and so must we.

In our college days, we used to have long races. As soon as the race starts, people start saying that this will take one hour or two hours to complete. They can do something else and then come back to see the results or the winners in the end of the race. So, they go for a coffee break. They cannot wait for so long, while the race goes on. While we run this race, this is a spiritual race—not looking to the crowd, not even to the coach; but to Christ, who never left the course. He ran it all the way to the cross and beyond.

We must follow our Lord Jesus Christ. There are no shortcuts to completing this race; no fast track, no express lanes. It takes time for us to complete the Christian life. We need patience, that is very important. We know Jacob cheated. He lied to Isaac and took the blessing of his brother Esau. That was a shortcut to getting the blessings from his father. He went through the shortcut, and he received the blessing. However, there was no peace in him. He was in exile, filled with fear and years of wrestling with the consequences of his acts. We see this in Genesis chapter 27. He realized that he did not receive the true blessing until he met the Lord in Peniel in Genesis chapter 32.

He clung to God and said, “I will not let You go until You bless me.” You can see the cry of his transformed heart. Jacob's journey reminds us that true blessing comes not by manipulation but by surrender. It is not taken; it is received. Often it is in the wrestling, the waiting, and the breaking, that we finally meet the Blessor Himself. We need to wait to receive the blessing of the Lord.

On the other hand, we see Moses, the leader, the man of God. Moses' life is also an example of God's timing over human ambition. He wanted to save the Hebrew people, his nation. When he was less than 40 years old, he killed an Egyptian. But then he was afraid and ran to the wilderness. There are no shortcuts in the Christian journey. The wilderness taught him humility, patience, and dependence on God. After he met the Lord there, he said, “I cannot be a leader. I cannot speak. I cannot talk. How can I lead the nation of Israel?” Leadership in the kingdom is not about charisma or credentials; it is all about character refined by time and trial. The Christian life takes time. It is not instant that we can complete our race.

Our Goal is to Win Christ

As believers, there should be a goal. The goal is to win Christ in our lives. It is always about winning Christ. (Philippians 3:8) When we hear about a goal, we see that just as every runner fixes their eyes on the finish line, we as believers to set our hearts on winning Christ. What is meant by winning Christ? To become rich in Christ, to be filled with His presence, clothed in His righteousness, and overflowing with the joy of communication with Him.

I think in one week we are going to have our Christian family conference, right? What do we do there? We worship our Lord, we praise Him, and we sing songs about Him. What are we doing? We are getting rich in Christ; we talk about Him and we pray about Him. In this process, we are getting rich or winning Christ. True riches are found not in gold but in His grace.

When we hear about a goal, we think of a soccer game. Winning Christ may seem easy, but we may encounter some hindrances, obstacles, and temptations. Just as a soccer player keeps their eyes on the goal, and tries to put the ball into a goal, a believer is called to pursue Christ with unwavering focus and spiritual endurance. Scoring a goal in soccer is not easy because the opposing team is constantly resisting, blocking, and trying to wear you down. Just like a skilled striker does not give up after one blocked shot, the believer presses on, eyes fixed on Christ, the true prize. We face many hurdles. We must overcome those hurdles to press on and focus on winning Christ. This is the goal of a believer.

In this process, we will face temptations. But God is faithful. He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. He will also provide a way to escape from that temptation. Temptations come from our own desires, and the evil one exploits that situation and tries to tempt a believer. If we think of temptation as a brick, the evil one throws bricks at us. Each brick represents a temptation. Whenever we receive that brick, we need to learn to pass it on to our Lord. What does He do with that brick? He will make a big mansion for us. Christ is a master builder. By handing the brick over to the builder, we trust Him to use it for a greater purpose. He calmly constructs a radiant mansion in the background. See how trials, when we surrender to Him, become part of our eternal purpose. Trials and temptations are part of our eternal purpose that will be useful in our next life.

Be as a Good Soldier of Christ

To overcome these temptations, we need to bring our bodies into subjection. Consider the border security forces and armed forces. Even when they are not at war, they are not at the border, and they are not fighting any enemy; even when they are on vacation, they always exercise. They never stop physical exercise because they are preparing for the next war or fighting the enemy. They are ready at any time.

Just as armed forces maintain daily physical training even during leave, to stay mission-ready, believers are called to spiritual discipline to remain steadfast in faith. Soldiers do not wait for battle to train, they prepare daily. Likewise, believers cannot wait for trials to build spiritual strength. We must be prepared to face trials and temptations. We should not wait for temptation to come to us. What we need to do is be watchful and pray. We must meditate on the Word of God daily.

All these spiritual drills will help us to overcome the temptations and trials when they come. Paul goes one step further; he says, "I die daily," giving a death blow to the body every day. Paul's daily death was not just about physical danger; it was a conscious

surrender of ego, comfort, and sin so that Christ's life could shine through him. The death is like a seed that must break open to bear much fruit. It is a daily process.

If we know the source of temptation and where it comes from, then it is easier to handle or overcome the temptation. We need to understand that temptation is not from God. If someone throws a stick at us and it hurts us, whom do we confront? We want to fight with the stick that hit us? or the person who threw it at us? Obviously, we confront the person who threw the stick at us.

Temptation comes from evil one. We are not confronting the temptation itself, but rather the source from which it is coming. When we recognize the source, we can respond not with panic but with prayerful resistance, just as Jesus did in the wilderness. Even though we are in the flesh, we are not fighting with the flesh. Our enemy is in heavenly places, and he is using the situation to exploit us and give us this temptation.

As a good soldier, when temptation comes, we do not just need to react. We must stand ready and sharpen our discernment to recognize the schemes of the enemy by putting on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18), the spiritual armor of God, and be a good soldier of Christ Jesus to overcome these trials and temptations.

Being Temperate in All Things

In I Corinthians 9:25 we see, "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." Athletes exercise temperance. They need to be temperate in all things because they are aiming for a prize. For the believer, that prize is not a fading trophy; it is Christ Himself, the incorruptible. Our prize is winning Christ. Spiritually, we also need to be temperate in all things. Temperance is choosing what strengthens the Spirit over what merely satisfies the flesh.

Temperance in Eating

Temperance in eating, overindulgence, can dull our alertness both mentally and spiritually; making us sluggish in prayer, slow to obey, and inattentive to the Spirit's prompting. This is also an important thing we need to focus on.

One brother said that a little food that is not necessary for the body can make us sleepy. A little extra food that is not needed for the body can make us lazy. That is one type of sin. One student came to a pastor and asked, "Pastor, how can I stop eating sweets?" The pastor replied, "You come and ask me again next month."

After one month, the student came back to the pastor and asked the same question. The pastor replied, "Now you can stop eating sweets." The student asked, "Pastor, you could have said the same thing that day. Why did you wait for one month?" The pastor said, "I also have that desire to eat sweets. First, I learned to stop it. Now I am saying to you, you do it." I hope you understand.

Before giving advice, he chose to walk the path himself. That is the essence of Christlike mentorship—not just telling but showing.

Adorn in Modest Apparel

In I Peter 3:3-4, we are reminded that true beauty is not in outward adornment but in the hidden man of the heart; a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price. True beauty is inside, not outside. The meekness and quiet spirit are the ornaments; we can call meekness an ornament inside our heart. That is very important.

How does this meekness come? It comes through suffering. Meekness is forged in the fire of trials. Jesus also learned obedience by the things which He suffered, Hebrews 5:8. What do we mean by suffering? It is the cross. The cross represents suffering. Without the cross, there is no meekness, no humility; there is no resurrection and life.

In I Peter 5:10, he says, “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Before perfection, suffering comes first. We want to become perfect. Without suffering, we cannot become perfect. Suffering is the cross. We must bear our own cross in our lives to become perfect. Sometimes, suffering is a gift from God. It is the grace of God that He gives to a believer.

How many want this gift of God? Suffering. Do we like suffering? No. Without suffering, there is no perfection.

Temperate in Sleep

Proverbs 20:13 says, “Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty.” Sleep for a little while, sleep on this side, that side, a long time. There is a spiritual thief when believers sleep. When believers sleep, spiritual thieves come and steal our precious things. Sleep robs us of time and the readiness to labor for the expansion of the kingdom of God. We cannot work when we sleep. It robs our time to work for the kingdom of God.

People think that if we sleep for long hours, we will look fresh. One brother said, “I have never seen anyone who slept for a long time become rich.” So, whoever wants to become rich must be temperate in sleep.

We are talking about spiritual richness, winning Christ, work for the Lord. To become rich in Christ, we must be temperate in sleep.

Temperance in Words

Ecclesiastes 5:2 says, “For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore, let thy words be few.” We must practice temperance in our words. When we hold our words as thoughts, we reign over our words. Before we say something or speak something, those words are in the form of thoughts in our mind. If the words are still in our thoughts, in our mind, we are like kings of our words. We are the rulers of our words.

When we speak those thoughts, we become servants to our words. Then what happens? The word starts ruling us. When we say something, we are bound to do that. When we put our words on paper, we write something, then we become slaves to those words. That is why we must be mindful of what we are saying.

People start talking on the phone for long hours. Even believers talk for long hours. Initially, they talk in a godly way; but as they go on, they slowly drift away from the godly way and talk about different worldly things. They talk and talk, and then after one or two hours, they have almost lost their faith. It is like a boat without an anchor. It is on the shore, and what happens after one day or two days? It will drift away from the shore, and somewhere else you will find it—a lost ship.

God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore, let thy words be few.

A Little Exhortation

We have a little exhortation on these things. The Lord Jesus Christ said only one thing, Luke 17:32, “Remember Lot's wife.” What happened when God told Lot's family to leave Sodom and Gomorrah? Lot's wife turned back and saw the city (Genesis 19:26). What happened? Her race was stopped. She could not continue her race.

Jesus Christ said one thing: “Remember Lot's wife.” Jesus did not elaborate because the lesson is clear: do not look back. Spiritual progress can be undone by a single act of the heart.

The Joy Set Before Him and Us

Jesus endured the cross not merely out of duty, but for the joy set before Him, the joy of returning to His Father. One day we have that hope to see our Lord face to face. The joy of completing the redemptive work and receiving the glory and crowns that awaited Him at the right hand of God. Jesus becomes both our example and our forerunner.

We have this joy in us today, receiving the eternal rewards, the crowns:

- The crown of righteousness, 2 Timothy 4:8
- The incorruptible crown, 1 Corinthians 9:25
- The crown of life, James 1:12, Revelation 2:10
- The crown of glory, 1 Peter 5:4 and
- The crown of rejoicing, 1 Thessalonians 2:19

So let us run this race looking unto Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith. May the Lord bless this word.

<i>Looking Unto Jesus</i>	1
Heavenly Vision	1
Citizen of Heaven	2
Run the Spiritual Race	2
Our Goal is to Win Christ	3
Be as a Good Soldier of Christ	4
Being Temperate in All Things	5
Temperance in Eating	5
Adorn in Modest Apparel	6
Temperate in Sleep	6
Temperance in Words	6
A Little Exhortation	7
The Joy Set Before Him and Us	7

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