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Looking Unto Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-3

"Looking Unto Jesus" by Isaac Ambrose

In our current political climate, it can be hard for us to maintain a sense of peace and joy in light of all that is going on in the world around us. Contention and division in our nation, economic, social, and moral problems in our state, and our own personal trials, temptations, and struggles can all cause much anxiety and grief. If nothing else the constant barrage of negative campaign adds is enough by itself to rob the peace and joy from our lives!

So how does a Christian maintain a life of confidence, joy, and peace in the middle of the outward and inward trials we face? The writer of Hebrews gives us the answer when he exhorts us to always be "Looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2). It is in looking to Him and considering His example that we will not grow weary or lose heart.

In our previous study we saw what Puritan pastor Thomas Watson had to teach us about what it means to love God. This this week's study we will look at another Puritan who shows us what it means to be constantly "looking unto Jesus".

Isaac Ambrose was a Puritan pastor who lived in England from 1604-1664. Like Thomas Watson, he was a minister in the Anglican Church (Church of England) who truly preached the gospel and wanted to "purify" the Anglican Church from beliefs and practices that were contrary to the Word of God. Along with Watson and many others, he was eventually removed from his ministry for being a nonconformist.

After a severe illness, Ambrose wrote a "devotional" on what God had done in his heart titled *"Looking Unto Jesus"*. In keeping with the Puritan authors, it had quite a subtitle: *"The Soul's Eyeing of Jesus as Carrying on the Great Work of Man's Salvation"*. The book was published in 1658 and became quite popular and a classic work on Christian living. In his book Ambrose goes to great lengths to describe for us what it means to "look unto Jesus". His Scripture starting place is Hebrews 12:1-3

1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 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.3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

The book of Hebrews was written to a group of Christians and professing believers who due to family and societal pressures and persecution were considering turning away from Christ and returning to the Old Testament system of priests and sacrifices. The writer reminds them that Jesus is the true and better fulfillment of all we see in the Old Testament. Throughout the book he urges them to "look

unto Jesus" as the only way of salvation. In chapter 12 we see the culmination of his message, "look unto Jesus... Consider Him... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart". This message is important to us as we may be tempted to take our eyes off Christ in the challenging times in which we live.

Ambrose challenges us with the importance and priority of "Looking unto Jesus". We are to look away from the things of the world and towards Christ. "We cannot fixedly look on pleasures and look unto Jesus at once...We cannot look upwards and downwards at the same time". When we look at worldly things we cannot see the beauty of Christ. It makes Christ seem small and contemptible in our eyes. All other things compared to Christ are not worth our look and can never satisfy our eye.

Ambrose describes nine actions that make up "looking unto Jesus".

Knowing Jesus – We must read, study, listen, and learn about Jesus. We do this by consistently hearing God's Word preached and taught in a good local church. We read and study the Bible on our own. We read books from sound authors (such as Isaac Ambrose) helping us to learn and understand the Bible better. We do all this with the goal in mind of learning and knowing better who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

Considering Jesus – Ambrose encourages us to seriously meditate, ponder, and consider an aspect of Christ until we "bring it to a profitable issue" and hold our thoughts to a spiritual subject until we "perceive success". He is urging us to meditate on a truth until it begins to truly impact our lives. In our passage in Hebrews 12 we are exhorted to ***"consider Him so that we will not grow weary or lose heart"***. The Old Testament, especially the Psalms exhorts us to meditate on God and His Word (Ps. 119:27, 97, 148;

143:5; 145:5). One writer described "considering", or meditation as "reflective thinking or contemplation on a specific subject in order to understand its meaning or significance or a plan of action". Ambrose would say we consider a particular truth about Christ until it begins to cause us to experience and pursue the further actions in his list.

Desiring Jesus - Knowing and considering Jesus will stir our affections to desire Him, to love Him, and to long to experience His life and grace in our lives. As we know and consider some great aspect of Christ, we desire to know the reality of that truth in our lives. We desire Christ Himself more. In Philippians 3 we see Paul expressing his desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. This was his great desire to experience the reality of the power of Jesus' death and resurrection in his life.

Hoping in Jesus - Knowing and considering Christ will bring great hope in our lives. If we are indeed in Christ we have hope, a certain confidence, that the desired good will come. We have hope of our salvation. We have hope of fellowship with Him. We have hope of victory over sin, trials, and persecutions in this life. We have hope of being with Christ when we die or when He returns.

Believing in Jesus - We must believe that Jesus is who He said He is; that He has done what He said He has done; and that He will fulfill the promises He made to us. We read that **"Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him"** (Hebrews 11:6).

Loving Jesus - As we learn and grow to understand better who Jesus is and all He has done for us and given us, we better learn of Jesus' great love for us and this leads to the increase of our love for Him. **"We love Him, because He first loved us"** (1 John 4:19).

Rejoicing in Jesus - The truths of all Christ is and has done will bring us great joy. Though we will not experience true joy until we are with Jesus in heaven, and our joy here on earth is mixed with cares and pain, the joy we get from looking unto Jesus is the light of our souls. "Is there not a cause for joy? Come, see, and own your blessedness. Take notice of the great things the Lord has done for you."

Calling on Jesus - Looking unto Jesus will lead us to call on Him regarding the particular truth we are considering. This contains both prayer and praise. We pray and petition Jesus to help us better understand the truths about Him. We plead for Him to help us to believe those truths and experience them in our lives. And of course, we are led to praise Him for who He is and what He has done. Paul prays that believers might be able to **"comprehend...the breadth, and length, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge"** (Ephesians 3:18-19). This is the kind of prayer to which our looking unto Jesus will lead us. We pray that Christ will help us know Him better. We pray for the Holy Spirit to help us consider and understand truths about our Savior. We plead for a greater desire for Christ and His Word. We ask God for greater faith and trust in Him. We seek for greater and deep love for Him. We request His joy even in the middle of trials and suffering. And we will pray for the Spirit to be at work conforming us to Christ and His truth.

Conforming to Jesus - As we know consider Jesus' person and work, we will conform to those truths - to trust Him. We seek to conform to His character and example as well. If we learn of Christ and consider His living, suffering, and dying for sinful people, then we conform to that truth by making sure we have repented and put our trust in Him for salvation. We also conform by contemplating the example Christ left for us as believers and how we might conform to be more like Him. Paul said believers are **"predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son"** (Romans 8:29). The Christian life is the process by which we become more and more like Jesus each and every day. This is accomplished in our lives by "looking unto Jesus".

In his "devotional" Ambrose lays out some wonderful teaching concerning various aspects of Christ's life and ministry:

Creation to His Coming	His Ascension, Session, and Mission of His Spirit
His Birth	
His Life	His Intercession
His Death	His Second Coming
His Resurrection	

He then describes how we exercise each of the nine actions as we study these various truths. As we dig into each one we come to **KNOW** more about Him and what He has done. We **CONSIDER** the meaning of these wonderful truths. This causes us to **DESIRE** Christ more and to serve Him better. We gain great **HOPE** from knowing and understanding Him. We grow in **BELIEVING** Him and His promises. We come to **LOVE** Him more as we look unto Him. We **REJOICE** in the truth of what He has done and who we are in Him. We **CALL** on Jesus to help us know Him better and apply His word to our lives and we praise Him for all He has done. And we seek to be **CONFORMING** to the truth we have learned and to be more like Him.

Isaac Ambrose has shown us as we "Look unto Jesus" we have an inexhaustible treasure of truth about our Savior that will lead us to worship and live for Him! He closes out his work with a wonderful challenge:

"O how should all hearts be taken with this Christ! Christians, turn your eyes upon the Lord; "Look, and look again unto Jesus." Shall I speak one word more to you that believe? Remember how He came out of his Father's presence for you, wept for you, bled for you, poured out his life for you, is now risen for you, gone to heaven for you, sits at God's right-hand, and rules all the world for you, makes intercession for you, and at the end of the world will come again for you, and receive you to himself, to live with him forever and ever. Surely if thus you believe, and live, your life is comfortable, and your death will be sweet; if there be any heaven upon earth, you will find it in the practice and exercise of this gospel duty, in "Looking unto Jesus."

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

Thursday, October 11

12:00 McManus Conference Room
(M252 Located near House Minority Offices)