

Fix your Attention on Jesus¹

April 22nd, 2014, Kichijouji Bible Study
Gotthold Beck

Hebrews

12:2 fixing our attention on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of the faith, who, in view of the joy set before him, endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[International Standard Version]

2 Corinthians

4:18 because we do not look for things that can be seen but for things that cannot be seen. For things that can be seen are temporary, but things that cannot be seen are eternal.

These two verses we just read are extremely important for believers. "Fix your attention on Jesus." Otherwise, you will absolutely regret it later. "Look up high." This exactly is the central message of the Bible. "*We do not look for things that can be seen but for things that cannot be seen. For things that can be seen are temporary, but things that cannot be seen are eternal.*" Brothers and sisters in early churches took this very attitude. Otherwise, they would have stumbled after all, which would have been unbearable for them. They would have been discouraged (in their faith). They understood clearly.

Today, I would like to discuss briefly three points: Firstly, new determination. Secondly, right perspective. And thirdly, the wonder of knowing Jesus.

We all want to live a happy and fulfilled life. There are truly wonderful and important things to discover for believers; that is to say, this world which can be seen now won't fulfill our hearts. Even if we can get whatever we want, we are still alone. Nobody is free in a true sense. All humans are arrogant and self-centered. They can only think of themselves. That is why they need to be saved and redeemed, otherwise they would never be fulfilled. The author of the Epistle to Hebrews wrote this famous verse.

Hebrews

13:8 Jesus, the Messiah, is the same yesterday and today—and forever!

It is our Lord Jesus who never changes. To have eternal life, we need to live according to his will. Then, what is his will? Jesus answered;

John

6:40 This is my Father's will: That everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life.

To believe is, according to this verse, to see. That was why John the Baptist shouted. He introduced Jesus in his shouting when he said, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" The Bible states that all humans have to be delivered to their death as punishment for their arrogance.

However, Jesus sacrificed himself for us. He died on the cross to take the punishment for our arrogance. Today, those who see this Lord Jesus with the eyes of their hearts and appreciate the salvation that Jesus has accomplished will obtain eternal life.

The Bible clearly states that faith is to look up to Jesus and those who look up to Jesus will obtain eternal life. Let us look up to Jesus and we will be saved. This is the message of the Bible.

Jesus is neither a guide to show you the right direction nor a road sign; he is the way itself. Jesus is not simply someone who redeems, but is the redemption itself. Jesus is not merely a saviour; he is himself the salvation.

What are we looking at? On what our eyes are fixed? When we look at ourselves or other people, it makes us feel inferior or servile. Contrarily, it may give us a feeling of superiority or even arrogance.

One sister once told me; "It is dreadful not to see the Lord. I know how horrible it is now to enter from the back door. I have been totally apathetic to the grace of the Lord. I have been very arrogant and wasted a lot of time. I have been looking away from the Lord all this time." Another sister said that when her eyes are taken away from the Lord, she needs the help of a tranquilizer. Instead of looking at ourselves, other people or around us, we ought to look up to Jesus alone. It is the secret to living a fulfilled life.

That is why the attitude described in Hebrews 12:2 is truly important;

Hebrews

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¹ 『イエスから目を離さないで』、2014年4月22日、吉祥寺学び会、ゴットホルド・ベック

We need to take this attitude, which is unimaginably important.

However, what is required is not just to take this attitude, but to remain in it all the time. I guess that all our problems arise not from our innate nature, but from our selfishness, our arrogance or pursuit of self-interest. Anyone can pursue their own interest. It is so easy to become unfaithful. But brothers and sisters who desire to live for Jesus will sacrifice themselves spontaneously.

They have nothing to lose by that, instead they gain so much. Those who only think about themselves and pursue their own delight or pleasure would never get true satisfaction. They won't even be able to move forward. When brothers and sisters desire to understand Jesus better and to be used by Jesus, they are truly blessed.

Such brothers and sisters who are prepared to place highest priority on Jesus alone instead of their own thoughts, feelings or desires, will be richly blessed. They will eventually be transformed into the image of the Lord. Ephesians, 5:25 describes the standard of love we have to follow;

Ephesians

5:25 Husbands, love your wives as the Messiah loved the church and gave himself for it,

This is the perfect devotion for others, particularly for your life partner, and is the perfect form of self-denial. These things are what separate our life from that of other people. True love is to wish for the happiness of others instead of your own happiness. I suppose that our daily life is like a training ground for our self-denial, which is provided by the Lord.

The confession of King David should be our confession too. It is a wonderful desire and confession.

Psalms

40:5 Lord, my God, You have done great things: marvelous works and your thoughts toward us. There is no one who compares to you! I will try to recite your actions, even though there are too many to number.

“Fixing your attention on Jesus.” In the original language, this verse implies to “look away from all other things and look at Jesus alone.”

Instead of looking back to your past, instead of being consumed by issues surrounding us, instead of being absorbed by your own concerns, instead of being

distressed by troubles before your eyes and instead of looking at yourself, why don't you look at Jesus alone?

We should reaffirm our determination not to tear ourselves away from Jesus, shouldn't we? That is to say, we should want to look up to Jesus alone. We have to choose from looking at things that can be seen and things that cannot be seen. We cannot look at both of them. Jesus once clearly stated in his sermon on the mount;

Matthew

6:24 No one can serve two masters, because either he will hate one and love the other, or be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and riches!

So, clearly stated Jesus. James too has written about the same thing in very harsh words. These words were written to believers;

James

4:4 You adulterers! Don't you know that friendship with the world means hostility with God? So whoever wants to be a friend of this world is an enemy of God.

Let us look up to the Lord Jesus. The Bible illuminates Jesus in magnificent forms. So today, I would like to discuss briefly about looking up to Jesus, illuminating him from seven different aspects.

Firstly, let us look at the life Jesus lived in this world. What made Jesus special was his inclination to humble himself. It was only Jesus who could say sincerely, “I am meek and humble in spirit.” In the life of those who were recreated by Jesus, meekness and humility is revealed spontaneously. It is the meekness and humility that no natural man innately has.

As the second aspect, we look up to Jesus as the one who was crucified. Jesus shed his blood on the cross and sacrificed his own life. For this very reason, we can confess today filled with joy; “Jesus, you bore all my sins. Otherwise, I would have given in to despair.”

To look up to Jesus rightly means to be captivated by Jesus alone and place no importance on anything else. Such people are compelled to confess, “I have been crucified with the Messiah. I no longer live, but the Messiah lives in me.”

Thirdly, we are allowed to look up to Jesus as the one who was resurrected. Our Lord came back to life. He is alive today. The devil was defeated. Satan has no right to demand from us anymore. And, as the ones who were brought back to life with the Lord, we are allowed

to walk on the new path. We are also permitted to seek things in heaven. All things that can be seen, are transient and change with time or are material and worldly will not truly satisfy our hearts and bring nothing meaningful.

Fourthly, we are allowed to look up to Jesus as the one who is high and lifted up where he is crowned with glory and honor. Jesus is the head of the church, which is his body. At the same time, he is our highest priest and mediator. Jesus never stops caring about each one of us. He lives for us and he is there on behalf of us. As the ones who are high and lifted up with him, we will prevail against all things.

Otherwise, we would have been crushed under heavy burdens. Those who look up to Jesus are allowed to open their wings and soar to the sky like eagles. They are allowed to live high and lifted up. Such people will never grow weary but will keep running.

Fifthly, we are allowed to look at our Lord Jesus as the one who will be coming back. Our Lord will come soon. Jesus will come back much earlier than we expect. The most certain fact is the Advent of Jesus. Jesus surely is alive and will come again. Jesus is actually walking toward us now. If we are told that Jesus will definitely arrive tonight at 12 o'clock, what kind of reaction would we show?

Sixthly, we are allowed to look up to Jesus as the righteous judge. Today, as we look around us, we see injustices everywhere. However, our Lord will come to establish righteousness. On the one hands, all brothers and sisters who loved the Lord and sincerely devoted themselves to his services no matter how trivial they were, will be richly rewarded. On the other hand, the wrath of the lamb will be poured onto those who kept their minds closed and refused to repent.

Seventhly, we are allowed to look up to Jesus as the Lord Almighty to whom every knee will bow. Soon, every tongue will confess that our Lord Jesus is the Lord of the Lords, the king of the kings. The Lord has promised, "See, I am making all things new! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."

We will be transformed while we are looking at Jesus. Instead of looking at yourself, other people or around you, you ought to look up to nobody but Jesus. It is the secret to living a life of victory. It is the foundation for a fulfilled life.

I think there are two kinds of people. The first kind unknowingly take some specific attitude, which makes them go through some difficult experience while they don't know. It is an attitude like this; I look at myself

alone. I rely on my own wisdom and strength, still I feel so unstable inside—I do not stand firm. Hence, my heart doesn't know joy, my whole being is in agony, and my body knows no peace.

The other kind of people make a clear decision to deny themselves and take the same attitude David took when he said; "I have set the Lord before me continually; because he stands at my right hand, I will stand firm. Therefore, my heart is glad, my whole being rejoices, and my body will dwell securely."

Those who look up to Jesus will be saved and granted an eternal life. Those who look up to the Lord will be willing to abandon everything. And all those who look up to Jesus will remain in his words. They will be connected with Jesus and bear fruit for him. Those who look up to Jesus are able to live a fulfilled life.

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