

Title: "Looking Unto Jesus"

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-3

Speaker: Vic Redding

Event: New Year's Eve Service

Date: December 31, 2014

Hebrews 12:1-3 *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us 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, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

In Hebrews 12:1 the writer of the book is referring to the "Hall of Faith" members that were previously mentioned in Hebrews 11 such as Moses, Rahab, Jacob, Joseph, etc. The writer was telling them that Christ is so much greater than all of those people put together.

Even in the midst of all of the negativity in the news and our surroundings, there is hope. "Looking Unto Jesus" isn't just a slogan to try to live by. It's a supreme calling that Christ has put into our lives.

There are three things to notice when looking at these verses – especially verse two:

1. **Our Focus:** *"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."* He is the beginning, the middle, and the end of our faith. The word looking shares the same Greek root as the word "fix". Translated roughly, the phrase "looking unto Jesus" means "fix your eyes upon Jesus". Many times we fix our eyes upon everyone else around us and what they are doing wrong than what we ourselves are doing wrong. What does it mean to fix our eyes on Jesus?
 - a. **It requires a holy habit in our desire.** We must have a passion for Him. Passion will be the thing that drives us daily to serve Him.
 - b. **It requires a continuous action.** James said that faith without works is dead. Our faith alone isn't enough – we must put those words and beliefs into actions so that we can show others. Our faith should be an *active* faith.
2. **Our Example:** *"who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame..."* Christ didn't enjoy the time spent and shame gained while he hung on the cross. He did however *endure* it. Christ said that if we were going to follow him, we must pick up our cross daily (Luke 9:23 *"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."*). We must endure the things of this life in order to reach our eternal reward.
 - a. **Are we willing to follow Him?** When things get tough are we strong enough in our faith to follow Him? When you are confronted with your beliefs do you cave under pressure and go with the flow, or do you stand up and vocalize things that are right? In John 17:15 it says *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."*
 - b. **Are we willing to endure the difficulties?** Christ looked beyond the death he would suffer through and focused on the eternal life he would spend with his father. It was worth it. We've all heard the phrase "no pain, no gain" – it means that in order to get the feeling of satisfaction or fulfilment, sacrifices are in order. Just because bad times are coming and we might be in them, it doesn't mean that we can't still find joy in life.
3. **Our Hope:** *"and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* In the Old Testament, priests didn't sit down and do their work. They were constantly moving. They had bells on their robes that had to be ringing. They couldn't

Title: "Looking Unto Jesus"

sit down because they had work to do. Jesus was able to sit down at the right hand of the father because his work **was** finished. He completed it on the cross.

There are three truths to see in conclusion of this message:

1. The only way to win the race is to keep our eyes on Jesus.
2. When hard times come don't start by looking with your circumstances. First, look to Jesus – then your circumstances. You'll never find a solution to a problem by simply focusing on the problem. Our vision needs to shift.
3. When you feel like giving up read Romans 8. Look at the situation from God's eyes. If you are a Child of God tonight, you are a winner. The author T.E. Marsh wrote the following:
 - In Christ there is full acceptance; therefore do not doubt Him.
 - In Christ there is peace; therefore trust Him.
 - In Christ there is life; therefore abide in Him.
 - In Christ there is blessing; therefore delight in Him.
 - In Christ there is light; therefore follow Him.
 - In Christ there is power, therefore wait on Him.
 - In Christ there is all truth; therefore learn from Him.
 - In Christ there is grace; therefore receive from Him.
 - In Christ there is joy; therefore rejoice in Him.
 - In Christ there is unlimited wealth; therefore depend on Him.
 - In Christ there is strength; therefore lean on Him.