

# Looking to Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] to turn your thoughts to the passage we read in Hebrews chapter 12. And the words that we have at verse 2, Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.

Yesterday we were thinking about running the race. And we understand all of us perfectly well. That being a believer in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, it is running a race. There are many obstacles, there are many ups and downs, there are many trials, there are many times of testing. We are running the race. And we are encouraged to run the race with perseverance. That race that God has put out for each one of us.

It is all the Christian race. But your race may be so different as the race upon which someone else runs. But it is still the Christian race.

[ 1 : 14 ] And I mentioned yesterday that maybe there are times when we think to ourselves, even in our prayer, we say, Lord, this part of the race is tough.

It's a struggle. And maybe that's how you feel this morning as we meet together. I don't know what you're going through, only the Lord knows that.

He knows the struggle. But he is encouraging us to look to the Saviour, the one who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.

And if you remember, there were two points that I left with you yesterday. When you think of the chapter we read in chapter 11 and then part of chapter 12, the first part is those who have gone to heaven.

They have stopped running. When you think of it, they have finished their race. The race that God had put out for them.

[ 2 : 29 ] They finished that race. They may have had many struggles. They may have had many ups and downs. But they finished that race. And God regarded them when he welcomed them into his presence.

Well done, good and faithful servant. So they have finished their race. And they are forever with the Lord, experiencing all the blessings that he has in store for them.

A blessed time those who have gone to heaven, they have stopped running. But then, secondly, those who are going to heaven, we are still running.

We are the people that are being referred to. Let us run. We are the people. We belong to the Lord. He has placed us on this race.

race. We are running the race. And as we are running the race, we are reminded that there is that progress that we have to make.

[ 3 : 45 ] And there are so, there is lots, you could say, of preparation, not beforehand, but as we are running, where we set aside anything that would hinder us so that we run more and more to the praise and to the glory of God.

And the last point that I mentioned yesterday was the person to whom we look. And that's what I want us to think about today.

Those who are going to heaven, the person to whom we look. And there are three main, there are three things, two main things that I want us to think about at this time.

first of all, what he anticipated. Who for the joy that was set before him. Now there are those who would say, where was the joy in going to the cross?

What was the joy in going to the cross? Jesus knew all that was going to befall him, beset him, as he made his way to the cross.

[ 4 : 59 ] Where was the joy? What was the joy in going to the cross? There are a number of things that I want us to think about. And I'm sure when you read sermons on this particular verse or if you

look at commentaries then they all come up with similar ideas.

The joy he anticipated to have a people given him by the father. That was part of the joy that was before him.

That is what he anticipated to have a people given him by the father. In John chapter 17 verse 6 we are reminded I have revealed you to those whom you gave me.

whom you gave me out of the world. You gave them to me. I pray for them those you have given me. Think of that.

You have been given to him. God in his wonderful wisdom has given you to him.

[ 6 : 19 ] And that is part of the joy that was before the savior to have that people given him by the father. But also to have a people giving themselves for the sake of the gospel.

In chapter 11 we are reminded especially from verse 36 some faced jeers flogging while others were chained and put in prison.

They were stoned they were sawn in two they were put to death by the sword they went about in sheep skins and goat skins destitute persecuted and mistreated the world was not worthy of them. A people willing to give of themselves for the sake of the gospel that was part of the joy. You might be sitting here today and you're thinking well I'm glad that I don't fit into what is recorded there but you know that there are so many and what is recorded here has happened to them stoned put to death by the sword and so on there are many Christians today and they are persecuted because of the stand that they take for the gospel they are giving themselves for the sake of the gospel and you know there are times we think to ourselves I could never go through that I could never endure that but remember if you had to like lots of these people in other lands then the Lord would give you the grace and the courage it wouldn't be easy but you would know this that he would be alongside you helping you in your need but then thirdly the joy that was before him was to have a people growing in love for him and for others that is what Jesus prayed and when he sees his people growing more and more day by day in love for him and in love for others then you can understand the joy that was set before him that is what he anticipated that we would grow in love for him do you pray that lord strengthen my love for you do we ask that day by day we would have that greater love for him what about all the rest of

[ 9 : 25 ] God's people those with whom we sit today at the table lord help me to love each one more oh it's true that there may be those for whom we have a particular affection but we are reminded that we are to love all the people of God when the Mau Mau uprising began in Congo the leaders of Mau Mau looked around and said we need something to bind us together and they said what about the Christians what is it that seems to bind them more and more together and they said it's love love for each other and love that they have for their God and they said we will do the very opposite we will bind ourselves by fear where we have a fear of each other that's not within the Christian realm that's not what binds us together it is the love of the gospel of our Lord and Savior but also the joy that he anticipated the joy that was set before him to have a people gathering together as we are today gathering together in fellowship with him and with one another what a tremendous thought that is that men and women born again by God's spirit meet together they gather together in fellowship that was part of the joy and there is something wonderful when we meet in fellowship I'm sure you can remember maybe it's still going on maybe not to the same extent when we met in homes and when we had that fellowship the one with the other where we sang

God's praises where we read and meditated on his word where a number would call on God in prayer where someone would give a word of testimony having a people gathering together in fellowship I don't know what it's like here on this island but that is something that we miss or that's missing in the Isle of Sky we don't have that fellowship that we used to have and surely that is a prayer that once again all the people of God would be desiring to gather together in fellowship but then I believe also the joy that was set before him to have a people glorified with him in glory glorified with him

Romans chapter 8 verse 17 if we are children then we are heirs heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory that was part of the joy that he would have a people glorified with him those whom the father gave him those for whom he was going to die those for whom he died that they would be with him in the glory and where the people of God would see him face to face that's what Jesus anticipated but the second thing that I want us to notice is what he accepted he endured the cross despising the shame a

number of things about that the first is this when you read these words you see how demanding going to the cross was he endured the cross it was very demanding

I want you to think about this very carefully he endured far more than anyone else even those referred to in chapter 11 even although we may have gone through some awful trying desperate experiences he endured far more than any of those he endured far more than any of us he endured the cross and all that led up to the cross and what happened on the cross he endured that and that's what we think about when we gather together he endured that he accepted that he knew what was going to happen and he willingly went to the cross in order to fulfill that now there are a number of ways that

[ 15 : 08 ] I want us to look at this he endured the cross what Jesus knew he knew he would experience the attacks of the enemy now when we speak about what Jesus knew it's true what he knew from the Old Testament it is true by what was impressed upon him by the spirit of God and Jesus knew that he would experience the attacks of the enemy remember when Jesus was in the wilderness we are told that after the temptation that's in Luke chapter 4 verse 13 that Satan departed from him till an opportune time when was that that night in the garden those moments leading up to

Calvary that hanging on the cross a more opportune time and you can imagine the devil saying to him this is not going to work all your people are going to leave you you can imagine the devil saying you're not going to have the strength you won't manage to go through this and even the devil would be quoting the words of the psalmist even your father is going to forsake you the attacks of the enemy and Jesus knew that he was going to experience these attacks Satan was not going to give up and I want to pause there for a moment because I think there's a lesson for us there you see you may not be so conscious say today of the attacks of the enemy but there could be as he sees that opportune time a time of illness a time of difficulty it could be anything and

Satan sees that as that opportune time and he comes and he begins to tempt you and to put awful thoughts into your mind and into your heart he grasps the opportunity and that's why we are reminded so often we are to watch we are to pray we are to be on our guard for the approach and for the attack of the enemy but a second thing that Jesus knew that he would endure was this the anger and the abuse of the crowd and I'm sure when Jesus would hear the crowd shouting out away with him crucify him and then he would hear the words we don't want this man to rule over us he would say yes that is what was going to happen and you know when the sentence of death was passed on him as somebody said it was a free for all it was a free for all

Matthew 26 verse 67 tells us they spat on him in other words they spat on his face we are told that they struck him with their fists others slapped him Jesus knew that he was going to suffer such an attack and such an abuse they spat on him they struck him they slapped him and in Isaiah 52 verse 14 we are reminded his appearance was so marred beyond human recognition because of the abuse of the crowd now what does it mean it's not that he was disfigured more than others but it meant this that his disfigurement he knew after his disfigurement or because of his disfigurement he didn't look like a man it meant that he looked no longer like a man it was marred beyond human recognition that is what he endured and then the very interesting thing is this and this is the way it is put he gave his back to the smiters he turned and he gave his back to them and what we are told is his face his body was battered it was bruised and you know after all of that someone in this crowd had the audacity to say who struck you when there were many hands that struck him and yet they're asking who struck you and this kind of mocking this kind of jeering but you know there were many hands raised against him as he was making his way to the cross but think of this there was one hand that smote him more severely than any other it pleased the

Lord to bruise him so that leads on to a third thing he knew what he would experience that he would experience the attacks of the enemy that he would experience the anger and the abuse of the crowd but also that he would experience the agony of the cross he knew to a degree what man would do he knew what God was going to do and I want to sum it up in a number of ways the first thing you see is this awful cruelty in other words the violence that he experienced he was aware of that the way Peter puts it as this you took him and with cruel hands you crucified him in other words were you there when they crucified my

[ 22 : 26 ] Lord were you there when they nailed him to the tree you see there was that awful cruelty meted out to him but in all of that we have to remember this he was not taken against his will he went to the cross for his people he went willingly because he was free to do what he wanted to do

and because he had the authority from his father I laid down my life of myself I laid down and I have power I have authority to take it again I'm sure you've heard this if Jesus had been taken against his will then his dying on Calvary would have no benefit for any of us if he had been taken against his will if he went and to use a common phrase if he went screaming and so on to the cross it would have no benefit for us but he went willingly and theologians speak about this act of free volition where he went willingly to the cross for the sake of his people but there is something else that

I want us to notice in connection with that and that is all along from the beginning of his trial but all along but especially from the beginning of his trial he knew the kind of death that awaited him and it is very interesting that with Judas Judas Iscariot Jesus takes the initiative and he turns to Judas and he says what you're about to do go and do it quickly in other words he was taking the initiative again another phrase that is often used he was supremely active that means it can't be said that he couldn't do anything to save himself he could have called 10,000 angels he was in control of the whole situation remember how often he said my time has not yet come and later on when he realized that that time was approaching he knew all along you know when you think of it legally death had no right on him and we know that

Jesus didn't cling to life he allowed himself to come under the power of death he surrendered totally not just to death but to the kind of death that he was going to die somebody said Christ in his sinless human nature recoiled from the prospect of death and shrank from it with horror but yet he went willingly for his people and when he was ready to lay down his life for his people then he did so he knew the awful cruelty but all the time he was in control and there's one other thing that I want you to think about just now the confidence that he had complete confidence never once did Christ doubt the reason for the cross never once did he falter in his obedience to his heavenly father and especially to the death of the cross and when we think of his dying on the cross yes we say out of love for us that's true but first and foremost it was out of love to his father and then love to us that caused him to die on the cross it pleased the Lord to bruise him somebody else put it like this he felt both the heart of man's injustice and the weight of God's justice as he bore the full curse of sin he was bruised with the load of sin he was the sin bearer standing in the sinner's place and I believe that through his life he had this ever deepening awareness of the sin of his people and he went to the cross and he willingly took that sin think of it he took all the punishment that was due to you for that sin he took all your guilt on his own body something I'm going to say and you might at the beginning disagree with it God never punishes his people God never punishes his people and it's not just that he took their punishment that was due to them for all their sin it's not just that he took that in his own body but there is something else to remember it doesn't mean that

[ 28 : 45 ] God's people are perfect it doesn't mean that we don't go astray it doesn't mean that the Lord doesn't deal with us when we sin but that dealing it's not punishment it's chastisement and read again the chapter we read this morning because there you are reminded of those who are being disciplined and we are being disciplined by the Lord it's not punishment it's discipline and surely that is a mark that we belong to him that he disciplines us or there are many marks when he reached out to where you were and he drew you to himself but also when he disciplines us and he reminds us as many as I love I rebuke he chastens and then he goes on to say when this happens be ready be zealous to repent and the

Lord deals with us that's a mark that we belong to him and he says to us be quick to repent and so on so he took our punishment all that was due to him he took it in his own body on the tree but not only was his experience at the cross very demanding we are told despising the shame the word that I want to use is the word demeaning how demeaning it was for him to go to the cross you see when you think of all the people round about especially the scribes and the Pharisees and those that were put up by the scribes and Pharisees they denied his authority they denied his deity they denied his sonship how demeaning and you know when he was casting out devils the accusation that they brought that he did it by the power of the devil how demeaning and that that's what I believe what it means despising the shame how they tried to scorn and cast shame on him you know it's not just what they denied it's what they despised his priestly office his kingship his claim to be a savior and even on the cross one of the thieves that were crucified with him if you are the

Christ come down from the cross save yourself and us you know they weren't prepared to accept his message there were so many that were blessed by him healed by him in a physical way but so often we are told remember in the gatherings they asked him to leave they didn't want him in their country and so often there were so many like that they declined his message that message that

brought everlasting life they declined it and Jesus himself said you will not come you're not going to come that you might have life life how often did he say in similar words I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly how often did he say that and yet he could say to the others you won't come that you might have life the third thing and the last thing very briefly that I want us to think about and that is the glory to which

Jesus ascended first of all we were thinking about what Jesus was willing to well what he joyfully anticipated and then what he willingly accepted and then very briefly the glory to which he was going to ascend and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God that's where he is and the encouragement that is given to us this is and we read it and you can read it when you go back when you're weary when you're tired when things may be getting you down then you fix your eyes on him the one who endured such contradiction of sinners the one who went all the way to Calvary to die for you you think of him as I said earlier

I don't know what's going through your mind I don't know what's on your heart today but I leave this thought with you as we go on in our service continue to look to Christ you can pray that all those things that may be getting you down just now or distracting you or upsetting you Lord that they would be brought into obeying so that I can fix my eyes on Jesus and that's what we are reminded we are going to look to the one who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame let us pray pray pray me pray