

Looking to Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. First, I just want to say thank you again to the Kingdom Life Church! for your part that you play in allowing that conference to take place, Reformed Believers! Conference that we had this weekend, specifically to Pastor Moss. Your spirit is such a big part of that effort, and I do appreciate your friendship and fellowship over the years, your commitment to God's Word and to God's people. So it's an honor to be here with my lovely wife for over 45 years now, and our dear friend and brother, Sam Darling. But it's just great to be here, and we're honored to be a part of this conference, and to also happy anniversary to Kingdom Life Church, 35 years together. We pray that God would continue to use and bless that work. I want to, we'll go ahead and get straight to our passage. We'll be looking at Hebrews chapter 12, and we'll look at verses 1 and 2.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. May God richly bless the reading and the hearing of his holy word. Now, it's generally, I should say, agreed that the book of Hebrews was written to a group of Jewish converts that were living outside of Palestine.

Now, when I say Jewish converts, we mean those who were brought up in the rudiments of the Mosaic and Levitical laws, and they were looking for a Messiah that was to come. Those who were, when at the birth and earthly ministry of Jesus, they rejected the idea of Jesus as the Messiah, but still remain faithful, as they understood it, to the Mosaic law and the Old Testament scriptures. So these, those who were Jewish converts, were those who had come under the conviction that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

Now, it seems that this particular group of Jewish converts lived outside of Palestine. And if chapter 13, verse 24 is any indication where the writer sends greetings from the brothers in Italy, it seems as if this congregation of, or this group of Jewish converts were likely from Italy, if not Rome itself.

The occasion for the letter seems to be persecutions that were experienced by these Jewish saints, causing some to fall away from their faith in Christ. But they weren't just falling away.

[3 : 39] It seems as if they were, they were those who fell away, were seeming, were attempting to return to the rudiments of Judaism as established by the Mosaic law. In other words, they weren't just saying, okay, I'm no longer a believer. But they were rejecting Christ or Jesus as the Christ, and were attempting to return to the forms and rituals of the Levitical laws as a means of worshiping God, and therefore finding, finding salvation in Him, apart from Jesus Christ. Now, the rationale seems to have been, especially for those who left, the rationale seems to be that along the lines that coming to faith in the Messiah was supposed to bring an end to suffering and persecution, because one of the images of the Messiah, which is problematic even at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, the assumption was that when the promised anointed one would come, He would vanquish all of their enemies, and He would inaugurate a life of peace and prosperity for all of those who look to Him by faith. So the rationale seems to have been that the very fact that they had come to faith in Christ or had professed faith in Christ and were now experiencing persecution must mean that Jesus was not the Messiah.

They aren't the only ones in that type of thinking. In fact, this idea of a victorious Messiah that would end all persecution and all suffering was really behind the cries of Hosanna when Jesus entered into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. They were crying out, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, because their expectation and assumption was that if Jesus indeed was the Messiah, then he would overthrow the rule and reign of the Roman Empire. And so when he does not come to overthrow the Roman Empire, a few days later, when Pilate presents them with the choice of Jesus or Barabbas, they choose Barabbas.

And when he says, what should I do with Jesus, this Jesus, they say, crucify him. So this idea that the coming of the Messiah means the end of all troubles was not just, it's not just a new, a new fangled thing, which we would call over-realized eschatology, but it's even present in the first century.

So therefore, many of those who had these converted Jews, who had come to saving, well, what they called saving faith in Jesus, when they experienced persecution, the rationale seems to have been that Jesus, if they were suffering persecution, then they were wrong, and Jesus was not the Messiah.

So therefore, they were still suffering, and because they were suffering, they assumed that their suffering must mean that they were either wrong about Jesus, they were wrong about Jesus, and in addition to that, perhaps, perhaps, perhaps God is causing them to suffer because they have leaned or looked to a wrong Savior.

[7 : 33] And so therefore, they returned to the Mosaic law, and they were seeking to, again, pacify, assuage, or satisfy the wrath of God through these animal sacrifices, and were waiting still for a Messiah who was yet to come.

Now, the reason for the letter itself, it's not just those who had left, but the reason for the letter of the book of Hebrews itself, is that those, among those who had remained, they too, seems to have been a little wishy-washy.

In other words, not in terms of maybe this is the wrong thing, but maybe some of them were wondering if they too should return to the ceremonial laws.

Because if, again, if Jesus was not the Messiah, then maybe they were being persecuted because God was punishing them for having rejected him by professing faith in Jesus.

So that, all of that is sort of as the backdrop to what the writer is addressing here in his address to these believers. Now, the main point of the letter is that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

[9 : 01] And as the Messiah, that meant to return to the rituals and ceremonies of the law and reject Jesus as the Messiah is to be without hope.

That's really at the core of what the writer is saying, that if you are, it's equivalent to Christmas morning. If you buy your children all of these gifts and then you leave the room, you package them and you wrap them, and then you leave the room and you come back and all of the toys, the gifts that were in the wrappings, all of the gifts are thrown in the corner and they're playing with the wrapping.

That's what it's equivalent to, that they have rejected the substance because that's what Jesus is. If they are returning to the blood of bulls and goats and heifers, thinking that this would assuage the wrath of God, then they are rejecting the real substance of what those sacrifices pointed to.

And so therefore, the writer, his main point is that there is to return, to go back to these sacrifices and rituals without faith in Christ is to go back to something that is empty.

And it's for this reason that the writer throughout this letter, the theme that is recurring is that of boldness and confidence. In other words, he encourages them to remain steadfast and to have boldness in approaching God through faith in Christ, which we see especially in chapter 4.

[10 : 49] But in the other passages, his emphasis is having confidence, confidence to approach God through the person and work of Christ. Now, this is really set forth in chapter 10, where he says that we can go into the holy of holies through the veil, which is the flesh of Christ, where he is therefore pointing to the sacrifice body of Christ as the means by which we have access to God.

And so therefore, the writer, for this reason, he's making the point that God's wrath has been placated by what has been accomplished in Christ.

And to reject Christ or Jesus and to go back to the rituals of the law is to really be without hope. But also, what is at the core of it, and what we want to focus on this morning, is that this idea that, well, the tendency, which is not only for them, but Christians throughout the ages, is to determine what God's disposition is towards us by external circumstances.

In other words, that's what they were attempting to do. So the rationale of those who had fallen away is they looked at their external existential suffering and suggested that if I'm suffering, then God must not be satisfied.

And likewise, so here's what the writer is doing. He's showing them that we, rather than determining God's disposition towards us by evaluating our external circumstances, understanding God's disposition towards us through Christ contextualizes our suffering.

[12 : 42] In other words, it's not, it's an erroneous thought to think that if God, if I'm suffering, then God must be displeased.

Okay? And therefore, if I'm doing well, God must be satisfied and pleased. But what the writer is emphasizing, as we'll see here, is that God's disposition towards us is based on our union with Christ.

And if we are in Christ, and if we are in Christ, and we do suffer, and this is the difficulty, we see this, especially I know in the States with word faith theology and prosperity theology, the idea is if I'm doing well externally, that in itself is evidence of God's pleasure.

If I'm suffering, if I'm suffering, if I'm sick, if I am even physically or financially challenged, then that itself is evidence of God's displeasure.

And there is no more erroneous brand of theology than such a thought. So therefore, the writer makes it very clear that we do not reason from our existential circumstances what God's disposition is towards us.

[14 : 08] But knowing Christ is what contextualizes whatever our external circumstances might be. Therefore, it is possible that by virtue of our faith in Christ, we still have trials.

We still have, we still will experience perhaps persecutions. And we still may have difficulties. But the writer is making it clear that if we understand who we are in Christ, then we still are the people of God in spite of what we experience in our existential circumstances.

All of which is really summarized in verses 5 through 11, because in chapter 12, verses 5 through 11, what the writer does is he takes all of the sufferings that might be experienced in this life and he puts it in the category of the discipline of the Lord.

And brothers and sisters, there is a difference between the judgment of the Lord and the discipline of the Lord. The Apostle Paul makes this same distinction when he writes to the Corinthian church and he warns them about their misuse of the season of the Lord's Supper.

And he tells them that for this reason, because they are receiving the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, that maybe, he says, for this reason, maybe some of you are weak, sick, and even die among you.

[15 : 37] But then he says, so we should, we should therefore judge ourselves so that we are not judged. But then he says this, when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord.

We're not, and we, because we have been, what we experience is never God's punitive judgment. Okay, and it's important for Christians to realize that.

And I think that is really sort of at the core of what the writer addresses here. And so that's why he says in verses 5 through 11, he contextualizes their suffering.

He's not saying that, oh no, just keep a stiff upper lip. He's not saying that God is displeased with you. He says, no, the suffering that you are experiencing, whatever it is, the suffering that you are experiencing, put it under the category of the discipline of the Lord, and the end of which God is using, he's disciplining you as a loving father towards a child, the end of which is to produce righteousness.

Now, that being the case, what I want to do is look at five things in relation to what he says in these two verses. There are five things, and the first thing to note is the exhortation that he gives to these servants of the Lord, those who have recognized, and perhaps if their faith is a genuine faith, they have reason from the types and shadows of the Mosaic law to see Jesus as the substance, the center, and the fulfillment, and the exhortation that he gives is, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

[17 : 26] That's the exhortation. Run with endurance the race that is set before us. Now, while obviously what he's doing in that verse is he is using the term race, and some would offer possibly an obstacle course, but what he is doing is using the idea of a race as a metaphor for the life of faith.

He's saying that the life of faith, in essence, is like a race. It's not the only place where we see the life of faith used with different metaphors. In some places it's called, it's like an athletic competition.

Some would say a boxing match or whatever, but he's using it as a metaphor. Now, with all metaphors, as it relates to the things of faith, there are points of continuity and points of discontinuity.

In other words, there are things that correspond. In other words, when we say a race, having many years ago, having run races, I know that there's a competition, competition, and the idea is that if you want to compete in a race, you must be fit.

So there is continuity, and the idea here is that those who are in Christ, if we are to run the race of faith, then especially with endurance, you don't just get up one day and say, oh, I'm going to compete in this race.

[18 : 53] You train for it. You train for the endurance. So there is points of continuity where you can say this is like that, but there are also points of discontinuity, and there's a huge discontinuity that we always need to be mindful of, especially when we speak of the Christian life as a competition.

Here's the point of discontinuity. In a race, you don't know who's going to win until the race is over. You have ideas, and people make bets on who they think will win, but you don't know who's going to, you don't step to the starting line knowing you hope that you win, but you don't know that you will win until you cross the finish line.

That's the discontinuity. We're not running a race to see if we win. You see, we are running a race with the idea that it's already been won.

We'll flesh that out later in our fifth and final point as we look to Jesus, but I do think it's important what the writer is saying here.

Endure. And the idea of endurance presupposes some things that need to be endured. And when you say endure, put up with, you know, whatever, last.

[20 : 18] And so he is assuming the exhortation is to not just run the race, but be prepared to endure.

Endure, put up with, and engage with. But the idea is not that so that you can win, and it's important for Christians to realize this, because we grow faint.

We grow weary. And sometimes when we grow weary, and the idea is, yeah, but the finish line is yet to come. I just hope I finish. And that's what the whole point of the book of Hebrews is for us to look past our current race to the finish line, which has already been accomplished by someone else.

But here's the second thing. The exhortation to run with endurance comes with the encouragement of others who have trusted in the promise, the promise of God, in spite of difficult existential circumstances.

So the promise, again, the exhortation is to run with endurance. But he gives us this encouragement that we have others who have also run the race without having experienced the end with the confidence of the end.

[21 : 55] Let's go back to verse 1. Now, this is one that some of my favorite theologians have kind of, I think, not given us the most out of this verse, because it says, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.

And I think sometimes we lean too much into the idea of being surrounded that here's the way that I've heard this presented. It's as if you are running a race in a stadium that's filled with all of these witnesses.

Okay? As if these witnesses are encouraging you. Okay? And that's not really what the writer is doing. He makes the idea because the very fact that he calls them witnesses means they're more than spectators.

See, we can't confuse a witness with a spectator. And spectators, again, like I said, I ran track in high school in a year or so in college, and there would be people in the stands, and there would be people that were encouraging you to go on, but they weren't witnessing.

They were just encouraging. Now, there is encouragement that comes from these witnesses. The witnesses that he's addressing or alluding to are those who are mentioned in chapter 11.

[23 : 14] That's where he leads us. In fact, in chapter 11, he talks about, and I've said this before, we often call it the hall of fame of faith. Please get rid of that language because there's no hall of fame of faith.

It's only losers who have been given the gift of eternal life in Jesus. So it's not some, the hall of fame is for those who excel above others.

So what we see are those who were sinners, saved by grace, trusting the faith of God or the promise of God by faith, believing those promises.

So here's what they witness to, because what he's talking about is enduring, racing, running the race with endurance. And the endurance is moving forward in spite of circumstances.

And what he gives us is a whole list of people. He goes from those who are known to those who are unknown. And his whole point is not that they exceeded in life or excelled in life.

[24 : 21] In fact, I love the way that he speaks of some in verse 37 of chapter 11. Some were, or in fact, going back, I'm sorry, to verse 36, others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment.

And his whole point, here's what they testify to. They would rather suffer physically because of what they have trusted in God, knowing that even if they lose their lives, they have not lost their soul.

You see, we get a sample of this with the Hebrew boys. And they said, look, you know, we're not going to bow down. You can do whatever you want to do. But even if we, you can throw us in the furnace, we're still not going to bow.

And so it wasn't so much that they knew that God would not allow them to burn. They said, he might preserve us, but even if he doesn't. See, that's, that's, that's the witness they were enduring.

Now, again, let's contrast this with those who are being addressed because some in this church had fallen away because their interpretation of the persecution they were enduring is that the persecution must be evidence that we're serving the wrong Messiah or that Jesus is not the Messiah.

[25 : 46] But the writer of the, of, of Hebrews says, no, some people actually lost their lives. Some were flogged. Some lost their lives. They were stoned.

They were sawn in two. You're talking about persecution? They were sawn in two. Goes on to say this.

They were sawn in two. They were killed with the sword. They went, they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, but yet they held to the promise of God.

Brothers and sisters, what the writer of Hebrews is saying is that the experience of this wide range of witnesses, they're not cheering on from the stands.

We are surrounded with the testimony of those who believed God and it was credited to them as righteousness even at the expense of physical comforts or discomforts and even the loss of life.

[26 : 56] But then notice the way he ends chapter 11. And these all, though commended through their faith. Now I would, I wonder what modern prosperity people would say about that verse.

That these people possessed genuine faith and still lost their lives. These people had genuine faith, exercised genuine faith, and were still sawn in two.

Because what we would do is look at your garage and see what kind of car you drive and determine what kind of faith you have. Or we would look at a person who says, oh, well I'm sick.

Well if you had enough faith then you could cast away the sickness. And yet he says these people, they threw these things, they even though they commended their faith, they did not receive, he says, what was promised.

They were waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. And he says, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they also should not be made perfect.

[28 : 12] Brothers and sisters, the point that the writer is making about those, the witnesses that surround us. He's basically writing to these suffering converted Jews that persecution is not unfamiliar to the people of promise.

This is not a new thing. Just because you're being persecuted does not mean you don't have genuine saving faith. So the exhortation, the exhortation is to run with endurance the race that is set before you.

And the encouragement that he gives is that there are others witnessing to the fact that you can't reason from your external circumstances what your position is with God.

The issue is do you believe the promises of God regardless of what you feel, regardless of what happens to you, and regardless of what you might be prone to think.

But here's the third thing that stands out to me. this exhortation comes with a humbling yet a liberating reminder.

[29 : 30] Notice what he says here. He says, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely to us.

So here's the liberating part. we have the capacity to lay aside sin.

That's liberating. That sin no longer has dominion over us. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I'm not saying that we will get on this side of heaven that we will always be free from sin, that we will never sin again.

That's not what I'm saying. What I am saying is that part of our being in Christ is a consciousness of sin and an ability, even if it's inconsistent, to lay aside sin.

That's subtle, but it speaks powerfully to these people. In fact, the writer of Hebrews has made the point throughout that if you return to the animal sacrifices as an end to themselves, if you think this is what will give you a right standing before God, then you have a problem, because here's the problem, the blood of bulls and goats and heifers could never take away sin.

[30 : 56] So, therefore, if you offer these sacrifices thinking they will remove sin, they won't. But then here's what he says about Jesus, that he has entered in and he has taken away sin forever and he has perfected those who are being sanctified.

So, brothers and sisters, as we run this race, it is liberating to know that you really do have the ability to stop being what you were.

You might be inconsistent, but you don't have to gossip. You can put it away. You can lay it aside. You can lay aside your lust. You can lay aside your greed.

You have the ability to put it off. And notice what it says about these sins. He says, the sins and weights that, and we'll come to the other part of it, but these are sins and weights that weigh us down.

Now, speaking of training and for endurance and track, one of the forms of training, when you're preparing for the race, it was not uncommon, or it is not uncommon, for runners to put weights on.

[32 : 18] Or, back in the day, we would run and have tire inner tubes. We would put on a harness and pull a weight.

And the idea of that weight, pulling it, is that as you run against that resistance, it makes it easier for you to run and strengthens your stride. But you don't, here's what you don't do.

You don't show up to the track meet with a harness and a tire to you. You don't put, you don't run on the day of the race, you don't run with weights tied around your ankles.

You take them off. Because having run with something heavy, it enables you to run faster. But now, here's what the writer is saying.

Here's the liberating thing is, brothers and sisters, God, by virtue of him indwelling you by his Holy Spirit, enables you to see sin that you didn't see before.

[33 : 24] And he empowers you to put it off. That's what God says in Ezekiel 36, I will put my spirit in you and cause you to walk according to my rules.

Paul says in Philippians, it is God who is at work in you, causing you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. So the liberating reminder of this exhortation is that by virtue of our faith in Christ, we can actually say no to all unrighteousness, but it's also humbling.

Here's what's humbling. These sins and weights easily, that's the part, distracts us. Easily distracts us.

That's what's humbling. And brothers and sisters, we, just as much as we live in the liberation of being able to say no to unrighteousness, we should also be greatly humbled.

And no matter how much Bible knowledge you have, no matter how much love you profess in a worship service for the Lord who has saved you, it doesn't take much to get us to act like we've never even heard Him.

[34 : 50] It's, I don't, I'm not trying to play Holy Spirit, but I noticed that as we drive through the streets here of Nassau, you guys have mostly roundabouts.

You don't have traffic signals. And the thing about roundabouts, which we've discovered in other places, they are kind of built on the trust system. You see, if you, with traffic lights, the red tells you to stop.

Right? It tells you to stop. And if somebody runs that light and there is an accident that occurs, there are pictures, you know, they, they, they cameras, they take pictures of what happened and you, you ran the light and you, boom, that's it.

But, but, but traffic circles, they, and, and roundabouts, they, they're kind of built on the trust system. And everybody, you can't trust, you know, because you don't know which direction they're going or whatever.

And, and so when they go in a particular direction, how many times have someone done the wrong thing at that traffic circle or that roundabout? And so for, we can be singing praises, Zion songs, and then somebody cuts us off.

[36 : 02] And we don't speak to them, we don't speak about them as a neighbor. It doesn't take much. All it takes is someone cutting in front of us, cutting us off.

All it takes is someone saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. All it takes is for our child that we brought up to know better, to bring someone home to us that we don't approve of.

All, it doesn't take much. And so the writer says that we can not only lay aside sin, liberating, but he says, he implies that it doesn't take much to distract us.

It doesn't take much to discourage us. Look at how much David knew about the love of God, but all it took was one glance.

It doesn't take much to get us and divert our attention and compromise our affection to the God that we proclaim to love.

[37 : 13] The humbling part is, brothers and sisters, we can be easily distracted. We can be easily sidetracked.

And sometimes we can open up a web and it seems like there is no end to it. So given the fact that we have this exhortation, the exhortation is that we are to run with endurance the race that is set before us.

The encouragement is that we have witnesses to the fact that we are still running the race in spite of the fact that we don't see the prize.

They don't, they didn't see the prize. They didn't see the end of it. They knew that there was a Savior coming, but yet they served God in spite of their losses. They too had terrible existential experiences.

Some were sawn, some were thrown in lion's dens, but they still held on to the promises that were made by God. The exhortation is humble or liberating because it reminds us we can indeed say no to unrighteousness, but it's humbling because it reminds us also that the greatest of us, the best of us can be easily sidetracked.

[38 : 36] But then here's the fourth thing, which is the crux of the exhortation. And here's what he says. Therefore, look unto Jesus.

Look unto Jesus, who he says is the author and finisher of our faith. Now, as we again make the bridge between these saints and those that, the witnesses, they also looked unto Jesus.

They were looking unto the promises of God. And as Paul says in 2 Corinthians, all of the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ.

So therefore, whether it's Daniel in the lion's den, Hebrew boys, whoever it is, Abraham, they looked, whoever embraced the promises of God were actually looking to Jesus.

But the difference is this. They were looking unto Jesus without the clarity of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth, they were looking to the Christ without the clarity that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ that they were, that they were, that their, their faith rested in.

[39 : 47] That all of God's promises are in Christ. In fact, Jesus is introduced to us as early as Genesis 3:15. The seed of the woman that will crush the head of the serpent is the one who is coming.

And actually, he's presented earlier than that, but that's a different discussion. But the point is, the point here is that Jesus is the substance of all of God's redeeming promises.

And they look to the, whoever looked to the promises of God's deliverance and salvation, ultimately, we're looking unto Jesus or looking to the coming of Jesus.

And here's what gives us a better vantage point. This is the point that he's making. Going back to it again to chapter 11, it says, and all these, though commended through their faith, trusting the promises of God, did not receive, they were looking to their faith, did not receive what was promised.

In other words, they did, Jesus had not yet come. Jesus is the substance of all of the promises of God, but he had not yet come. And that's why that great statement about Abraham, he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

[41 : 02] And so Jesus had not yet come, but they believed the promises of God. And the vantage point that we have is that Jesus has come.

And Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the promises of God. And so what the writer is saying, he's not pointing us in a different direction than these witnesses that he alludes to in verse 1.

What he's saying is we now, as they were looking to the promise, the promise has a face. The promise has a name. The promise has an origin.

The promise has an origin. The promise has an origin. The promise has an origin. Jesus. And so he tells us now to look unto Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth is the promised gift of God and all of the promises of God are attached to him.

Now notice what it says. Look unto Jesus who is the author or the way that it reads in the ESV. He is the founder and the perfecter of what we believe.

[42 : 12] Do you believe that God forgives sin? If you believe that God forgives sins, then everything that God promises about the forgiveness of sins is in Jesus.

So Jesus is the perfecter and finisher of our faith, which is to say he is the substance. Now notice again throughout the book of Hebrews, and we see this especially in chapter 10, the writer makes the point about the sacrifice and the sacrificial system of the Levitical priesthood.

And he talks about the sacrifices and offerings. In fact, I usually, I love reading this for our preparatory scripture for the Lord's table. In Hebrews chapter 10, beginning in verse 1, it says, for the law, since the law had but a shadow of the good things to come, could instead of the true form of these realities, it can never by the same sacrifices that are offered annually, could never take away sin or make perfect those who draw near.

Otherwise, he says, they would have ceased to have been offered. But then he puts these words into the mouth of Jesus from Psalms 40, where David says, you know, sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me.

And then he goes on, and we'll pick up in chapter 10, verse 11. It says, and every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.

[43 : 51] But when Christ had suffered once for all or for all time, a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet.

And here's the great statement. For by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Part of what the writer of Hebrews is saying is look unto Jesus. He's saying, look, I know you are surrounded. You have other testimonies, witnesses of those who have trusted the promise before it was even fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

So we have witnesses that we can't determine God's disposition towards us by our external circumstances. You can't.

You don't determine whether or not God loves you by your bank account, by your doctor's report. Here's how we know God loves us. Look unto Jesus. And what we see in Jesus is everything that God has required of us has been met by him.

[45 : 11] The full weight of divine wrath has been met by him. And so everyone who looks to Jesus by faith, regardless of what you feel like right now, regardless of what you act like right now, if your faith is in Christ, then God has pardoned you.

Now, brothers and sisters, we mentioned that that is the crux of the argument that Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. What that means is there's nothing else for you to do. There's nothing else that you need to offer.

That means there's nothing else anyone can sell you that will get you closer to God. And it's hard for us to believe. But even in the midst of our trials and our struggles, if our faith is in Jesus in a sense, you are still at this moment no closer than you will ever be because of where Jesus is.

Look unto Jesus. He is the author and the perfecter of our faith. And everyone who looks to him by faith, notice how many times throughout this book that the writer gives us access to what we don't feel like or look like we have.

In chapter 4, he says, we can now boldly go to the throne of grace, into the throne room of God because we have a high priest.

[46 : 46] In chapter 6, he says, we have a forerunner who has entered into the heavenly places. In chapter 12 or chapter 10, he goes on to say that we can go into the holiest through the veil which is his flesh.

We have confidence. Look unto Jesus. Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. But then, fifth and finally, he gives us the ultimate motivation for our endurance, running the race with endurance.

And here is the ultimate motivation. Not so that, but because of. Look at the end of verse 2. For the shame, or excuse me, begin in verses 1 and 2.

He who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and here's the phrase, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

It's, in the rap world, they call it, it's a drop mic, a mic drop. He's offered the sacrifice.

[48 : 11] Dropped the mic. Because now, he is, he's not knocking at the door seeing if he could get in. He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Why is that good news for us? That's not just showing us where we can be. He's showing us where we are. And in the eyes of the Father, what is true of the Son is true of those whose faith is in the Son.

And again, the mind-blowing reality is not that Jesus has just offered the sacrifice, the perfect sacrifice that can take away sins.

a single sacrifice. But the mind-blowing reality is what the writer says about those whose faith is in him. He has perfected forever those who look to him.

Those, for those who he has died for, he has perfected. Now, I wouldn't ask, I would ask that you would raise your hand if you feel perfect, but I don't want to do that.

[49 : 33] Because that would cause you to look to you to see if you're perfect. And I can answer it for you. In and of yourselves, you're not.

perfect. And that's why the writer tells us to look to Jesus. Because he's perfect. And those who look to him are perfected by him.

And so here's the exhortation. I know circumstances, remember, the writer is writing to those who are contemplating like those others who were part of the fellowship, but they've fallen away.

And the reason they have fallen away is because by coming to faith, they have, or once they came to faith, they started experiencing persecution. And the rationale is that if I'm being persecuted, then that means God is not pleased.

And so therefore, maybe I've, we need to go back to the basic elements of the law and gain God's favor. But he says, no, no, that's not the case.

[50 : 46] And that's why he tells him later to not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as is the custom of some. But he says, no, instead, encourage one another.

But how do we do so? By looking to Jesus. Because Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith. And what he wants us to do is to look to Jesus as he's portrayed in the sacraments.

Look to Jesus and hear him say to you, this is my body given for you. This is my blood shed for you.

Look unto Jesus as he is presented in the types and shadows of the animal sacrifices. Look unto Jesus because he is the finisher of our faith.

And apart from seeing him crucified on the cross and apart from seeing the empty grave, look unto Jesus and see him seated.

[51 : 52] And him seated at the right hand of the Father is the assurance and guarantee that where he is, we are also.

Dr. R.C. Sproul made the point that every time, every post-resurrection glimpse that we have of Jesus is him seated except one time and that's with Stephen when he was stoned.

And what he sees, he says that when Stephen was stoned, he looked and he saw Jesus standing. And you know why he stood? He stood as his advocate.

And what Stephen saw was the one whose blood, whose life had been given that he would have access to the throne room of God saw him standing as his advocate as if in a courtroom defending.

He ever lives to make intercession for you. Looking unto Jesus because he's the author and finisher of our faith.

[52 : 57] And brothers and sisters, the more we look unto Jesus, the fewer blessing lines we need to get in. When we look unto Jesus, that means there's no anointing that we need because we look unto Jesus.

When we look unto Jesus, there's nothing else that anyone else can put on us that will give us anything that we need from God because he's the author and he's the finisher of our faith.

The trials may be great, the struggles may be many, but look unto Jesus because he is all we have both now and for all eternity.

And as he is, says John, so are we in the presence of the Father both now and forever. Let us ask God's blessings.

Thanks. Gracious, holy, wise God, our Father, we come to you in the blessed name of our Savior and we thank you for the gift of your only begotten Son who has lived for the righteousness that you have required of us, who died to pay the penalty for our sins, who rose for our justification, who ascended into the heavens, who has entered as a forerunner, gaining us access to your throne of grace, where we can find mercy and grace in our time of need.

[54 : 50] Lord, as the trials of life rage around us, we pray that we would not break our gaze, but we would look unto him, be assured of your grace and your love through him, and that we would be strengthened to run the course that you've set for us, for your glory and for our good.

Thank you. Thank you for him. Thank you for your spirit that connects us to all that he is and all that he has accomplished.

Strengthen our gaze that we would look upon him without distraction. We thank you for Jesus, and it's in his name that we pray.

Amen.