

## 2118 - LOOKING to JESUS - Heb 12.1-3

PRELIMS. The gospel is **not only** for unbelievers - it is for **believers** it is the answer for **everyone** in all situations and conditions! When an unbeliever **sins**, he needs to **repent** and come to Christ! Right? When a believer sins - what? He needs to **repent** and come to Christ again. There is a **continual** coming to X for believers

This Writer is writing to Jews who **have already come** to Christ. There is no question but he is writing believers in Christ. They **share in Christ** [3:14] and he calls them **holy brothers** and **beloved** [6:9]. And he has **encouraged** them to **draw near** (again) *with a true heart...sprinkled clean* by the blood of Christ in *the new and living way that He opened for us* [10:22]. The whole Bible teaches this. The Apostle **Peter** expects his readers to be **continually coming** to Christ *if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. (unto whom coming AV) As you come to Him* [present middle participle, 1P2:4]

In fact this Writer has already reminded his readers of God's Throne of Grace *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need* [4:16] Isn't Christ the One who bestows grace to us! Wasn't this the **problem** with **Esau**! He found **no place to repent!**[17]. He did not know about the throne of **grace**! He knew of **no place** where there is **free grace**. **APP** Don't **you** come regularly for grace?

You see the **gospel** is **not** reforming our prayer life or becoming more sincere in our efforts at religious duties, or having more and longer 'quiet times'! The gospel is **not** about **doing** things - it is about **receiving** the **grace** of God through Christ and to restore us again in favour with God again! The Throne of grace is the place where we **receive grace** - the gospel is **coming** to Christ in confession and **receiving** His pardon! Thus *how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?*[2:3] - a salvation **still ongoing!**

This whole Book is about Jewish **believers** who are still **falling short!** He has several severe **warnings** for them. If they **remain** unrepentant *there no longer remains a sacrifice* for their sins [10:26] +*Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God* [3:12]+*let us fear*

*lest any of you should seem to have **failed** to reach it (My rest) [4:1]. And of course **rest** is what these readers are **longing** for - so that you may **not grow weary** or **fainthearted** [3b] They are getting weary and tired. They are under **pressure** for they have *not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood* [4] There are more struggles to come!*

And so, how does the Writer get them to endure? How does he encourage them? Does he tell them to **try harder** to do the right things? No, they are doing the right things. Does he tell them to **examine** their **attitudes** and **motives** in their good works? No, he doesn't. Does he offer them a **list** of **rules and principles** for **self-improvement**, or a **build yourself up programme**? **Not at all!**

You see, so many of our TV Evangelists do little more than offer a list of 'do's and 'don't's in order to gain **fulfilment** and a **more enjoyable life**! Many evangelists **address** and **cater for** those who are **looking** for a **happier life**, a '**feel better**' programme and a '**feel more confident**' personality. They think that is what people want! And they are right!! That is what people **and Xns** do want !

And the trouble is that too many sermons (which I have preached too) are, when analysed, no more than a programme to make us **feel better** about ourselves! But the **gospel** my friends is **not** about you/I feeling good about ourselves - the gospel is about **receiving grace** for the **forgiveness** of our sins and receiving **strength** to worship God in **all things**. It is about **changing** our relationship with God from being sinners, to being sinners **saved by grace living for Him!**

Learn this: Jesus Christ **has accomplished** all that you/I need **to do!** You will **never feel good** about your keeping of God's law - or about your **motives** or **sincerity** - because you are totally unable to keep God's law fully and properly! You will **always fail**. Xnity is **not** for **perfectionists!** The **gospel** is an **announcement** that Jesus has kept all that **for you!** So you **ought** to be absolutely **delighted** and **relieved** - and **revived** so you can serve God as best you can.

When we fall short of what God asks of us, we **feel guilty because** we are concerned about our feelings, and too often we swim in a sea of **narcissism!** Ie, we are **full of ourselves** and look **inward** and at how we **compare** with other people! We are truly **self-centred!** It

was the same with the people in the Book of Hebrews addressed! So what does the Writer do here? The Writer in recognising their weakness tells them they **lost sight** of Jesus Christ *the founder and perfecter* of their *faith* [2] Their eyes 'slipped' off the very One who saved them! They are **not** like their heroes in chapter 11 who focussed their faith, not on themselves but on God in Christ. So he points them to **Christ - looking to Jesus.... Consider Him** [2,3]! That is why he began his letter **focussing** immediately on X!

By the way, many of these self-help programmes **are good** - but you can do them without Jesus! **Many people can stop drinking**, become more **disciplined**, perform more **good works** and improve their marriage - without God or Jesus Christ! Non-Xns can do many wonderful things! What we believers need to do, is to do it **for** and **because** of Jesus Christ. To give **glory to Him** in doing things! Feeling better may be a side effect - but the main reason is to please Him who saved us. After stating that *we walk by faith and not by sight*, Paul says *whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him* [2C5:9] Our Writer just said *that Enoch had pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please Him* [11:5,6]

The **most common** thing which causes Xns to **backslide** and to **lose sight** of Jesus, is **problems/difficulties/sufferings** in the way! Xns, as well as unbelievers, **do wonder why** problems/pains arise at the most inconvenient of times! But coping with suffering **is** the Xn path. We have been **chosen** to go along that road. If the Perfect Son of God, the Holy One who fully pleased God, was **subject** to suffering and difficulties, **why** are we **amazed** that problems come our way?

Friends, as Xns, we should **rejoice** when suffering comes. Enduring suffering makes you **stronger/better!** *Count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness* [Jam 1:3] *Blessed are you* when you are **reviled/persecuted**... *Rejoice and be glad* [Mat 5:11]. Problems, difficulties, struggles are an **opportunity** to demonstrate your **faith** and **love** to Christ! Problems and how we handle them, are an opportunity for you and I to **shine bright** for the Lord!

*Looking to Jesus* and considering Him! - whatever suffering we may

have, considering Jesus helps us get things into **perspective**. He has been through everything we will be asked to go through. He knows all about suffering. Our suffering is **nothing** like what He's endured.

Yet His **joy** in suffering **for us**, **enabled** Him to keep persevering! **Imagine!** JC **deriving joy from** suffering for us **unworthy** sinners! Isaiah foresaw that *out of the anguish of His soul He shall see and be **satisfied*** [Isa 53:11] (How could anyone 'foresee' such a thing except by inspiration!). Surely that should **affect** and '**move**' us to **exult** in Him! It is a **sin** to be **numb/dead/unmoved** by real/true emotional events! Paul speaks about those who are **past feeling** [Eph 4:19 AV - callous=ESV] He says it is *due to their **hardness of heart*** and the **ignorance that is in them!** Ie, ignorance of the **love** of God and the love of Christ. Such people are **darkened in their understanding** because they were **alienated from the life of God** [Eph 4:17cf].  
\*There were people **looking** at Jesus on the Cross **without any feeling** of sympathy for Him! They thought He deserved that punishment. So they threw **insults** at Him. They called Him 'names'!

But the picture the Writer wants you/I also to have of Jesus is to **contemplate** Him *seated at the **right hand** of the throne of God* - the right hand of **authority** and power and **victory**. He wants us to have the view that Stephen had when he was stoned and *gazed up into heaven and saw the **glory of God** and Jesus **standing at the right hand** of God* [Acts 7:55]. That is where Jesus is this morning!

Although the Ephesians were converted, Paul **prayed** specifically about their knowledge and **understanding of Jesus Christ**. *I bow my knees before the Father...that **you**...may...comprehend...what is the **breadth, length, height and depth** of Christ's love* [Eph 3:18]. Our view of Christ **now** in **NT times** is important. He is **reigning** - and will continue to reign there until all His enemies are made His footstool. \*Friends, a lot of people this morning are excited and **hopeful!** They are excited about the things their new hero has told them. They are excited about **Jeremy Corbyn** and what he has **promised**. He indeed has had a a wonderful victory. We wish him well. But his promises are small even if fulfilled to the letter **compared** to the promises of X! For He is at in the place of **power seated at the right hand of the throne of God** - the place of **grace!**