

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 12 June 2022. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## Looking unto Jesus

### Hebrews 12:2-3

When I was eight years old, I learned, in history class, about a famous American named **Daniel Boone**. Daniel Boone was a fur trader who lived in North Carolina in the early 1700's; and the thing for which he is famous is his blazing of the "**Wilderness Road.**" You see, up until Daniel Boone's day, no white settlers had travelled from the East Coast into the fertile land of Kentucky, because it was very difficult to travel over the Appalachian Mountains. What people didn't know was that there was a long series of valleys called the Cumberland Gap, which stretched through Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky. In 1769, Daniel Boone led a small group of settlers through this valley; and very soon, loads of people were travelling to Kentucky by way of this trail.

However, there was another man whom I learned about in my history class, right alongside Daniel Boone; and his name was **John Finley**. Who was John Finley? He was the one who led *Daniel Boone* through the Cumberland Gap! You see, John Finley had been in Kentucky 18 years *before* Boone went there. Finley had been taken captive by the Shawnee Indians in the 1740's, while he was fur-trading in Ohio; and the Shawnees had taken him across the Ohio River, and down into Kentucky. While he was among the Shawnees, he heard some of them talk about a long valley that went all the way through the Appalachians into this area of Kentucky; and he took careful note of what he'd heard. The Shawnees eventually released Finley, and he went back to the East Coast; but he never forgot about the Cumberland Gap. Years later, in 1769, Finley told his friend, Daniel Boone, about this valley; and on May 1, 1769, Finley led Boone, and a few others, to the Cumberland Gap, and then into Kentucky. To this day, Kentuckians say that "Without John Finley, there would be no Kentucky, or Daniel Boone." Finley "blazed the trail" before Boone; and Boone then led others down that same trail.

Now, what's the point in this story? The point is this: just as John Finley was the "trail-blazer" who led Daniel Boone to the Bluegrass region of Kentucky, so Jesus Christ is *our* "Trail-blazer," who leads us to Glory. If there had been no Jesus of Nazareth, there would have been no Apostle Peter, or Apostle Paul, or Apostle John; and there certainly would be no Heaven for us. Jesus Christ is the One who ran the race before us; and He has opened the portal to Heaven. There are many godly "witnesses" who have gone before us (people like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Daniel, John the Baptist, Paul, and all the other Apostles); but *none* of these men and women could have made it to Glory if *the Lord Jesus Christ* hadn't blazed the way to Heaven through His sinless life, His death on the cross for our sins, and His resurrection from the grave. He is the "**faithful and true Witness.**" He is the One upon whom our eyes must be fixed as we run the race of the Christian life. He isn't merely *at* the Judge's seat, to hand out the rewards: He *is* the Reward. He is the whole reason that we run the race!

This morning, we will be focusing on **Hebrews 12:2-3**. In these verses, Paul tells us *why* we must "look unto Jesus" as we run our Christian race. Folks, these verses are *extremely* important. In fact, these verses are the "climax" of this whole book of **Hebrews**. The whole point of this letter is summed up in these two verses. Remember, Paul wrote this letter to Jewish people who professed faith in Christ; but

among these professing Hebrew Christians, there were some who had never *truly* placed their faith in Christ. They had “added Jesus on” to their lives; but they had never stopped trusting in their own keeping of the Law to get them to Heaven. Their hope was not truly in Jesus Christ; and as the result, when persecution came along, they *turned away* from their profession of Christ, and went back to Judaism. Several times in this letter, Paul warned those who were not truly saved to repent and believe on Jesus, while they still had the chance; but to those who were truly saved, Paul exhorted them to be patient, and to remember who Jesus really is. He reminded them that Jesus is **the Messiah**; that He is **God in human flesh**; that He is **the Saviour**; and that He is **the High Priest of our profession**. If we aren’t running the race for *Him*, then what else, or whom else, do we have to run for? There is none else. Jesus is it! He is salvation! He is the Author and Finisher of our faith!

If you *know about* Christ, yet have never truly believed on Him in your heart, I pray that you will see your need of Him today, and come to Him for salvation. If you are saved, yet you are growing faint and weary in your Christian race, it is my prayer that you will be strengthened in your faith today. The title of this message is *Looking unto Jesus*.

### Read Hebrews 12:2-3.

In these verses, we see three reasons why we must look to Jesus. First, we must look unto Jesus....

#### I. Because He is the “Author and Finisher of our faith.”

(Read verse 2 again.) Paul calls Jesus the “*author and finisher of our faith*.” That is a very powerful name, packed with meaning; and we need to look closely at every part of it.

First, let’s talk about the word “faith.” Paul says that Jesus is the Author and Finisher of “*the faith*.” (“The faith” is the literal wording here.) Now, what does “*the faith*” mean, exactly? Well, when the Apostles spoke about “the faith,” they were talking about *the whole body of revealed truth*. “The faith” is *everything* that God has revealed to us in His Word.

Now, stop and think about that. Think about everything that God has revealed to us in His Word, from **Genesis** to **Revelation**; and then realise that *Jesus* is the Author of all of it! Though the 66 books of the Bible were written by men, *Christ* is the real Author of those books. The human authors were like “masters of assemblies”; but Christ is the “one shepherd” who gave His words to them. Christ put *His* words (not just the general ideas, but the very words) into the minds of his prophets, and moved them to write them down.

With this in mind, let’s take a look at the word “*author*.” The Greek word for “*author*” is *archegon*; and *archegon* is based on the word *arche*, which means “beginning, origin, or source.” We see this word in **John 1:1**, where we are told that “*En arche*” (“*in the beginning*”) **was the Word**.” (“The Word,” of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ!) The word *arche* is also used in **Revelation 3:14**, where Jesus is called “*he arche*,” or, “**the beginning of the creation of God**.” This word *arche* shows us that Jesus is the *Source* of all created things. Everything that was ever created came forth from Him.

Now, if *arche* mean “beginning,” then what does *archegon* mean? It means “beginner, or originator”—or, as the KJV puts it, “*author*.” Every created thing in this universe came forth from Jesus Christ; and likewise, every *truth* that God has revealed to us came forth from Jesus Christ. (That is why He is called “the Word”!) Jesus gave us every word of Scripture; and He

Himself *fulfilled* His Word by becoming the Saviour of mankind. The whole Bible—both Old and New Testaments—points to the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and return of Jesus Christ to earth, to finish God’s plan for humanity! Jesus *revealed* all this truth to us; and He *carried out* these truths by coming to earth, dying for our sins, rising from the grave, and ascending back to Heaven to be our Advocate.

Now, not only is Jesus the “Author” of our faith; He is also the “Finisher” of our faith. What does this mean? Well, the word “Finisher” comes from the Greek word *teleiotes*; and *teleiotes* is based on the word *telos*. The word *telos* means “end”; but *teleiotes* means “ender.” Really, these words “end” and “ender” mean the same thing. In **Romans 10:4**, we read that Jesus is the *telos*, or “***end of the law.***” This means that everything that was written in the Old Testament Law came to completion in the Person of Jesus Christ. All those bloody animal sacrifices in the Old Testament pointed to *Him*. The sacrifices were a giant object lesson, to show us that in the future, God’s Son would become the perfect Sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Likewise, the word *teleiotes*—“ender, or finisher”—shows us that Jesus *completed* everything in which we must place our faith.

Now, if Jesus be the Beginner and the Completer of everything in which we must place our faith, then where does that leave *us*? Is there any room in there for *our* good works? Can we *add* anything to our salvation? Does Jesus get the “salvation ball” rolling, but then expect us to do our part to get the ball the rest of the way to the goal? No! Two thousand years ago, Jesus did *everything* that is needed to save your soul, and to *keep* you saved for eternity! His work of salvation is accomplished. He is now seated in Heaven, where He is imparting an *eternal* salvation to everyone who will simply receive it by faith. He has already completed salvation: our part is simply to receive it. This means that if you are trusting partially *in your own* efforts to make it to Heaven, then you are not saved. You are lost, and without Christ. You must place your faith in the “Author and Finisher of the faith,” the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Read Romans 4:3-5.**

**Read Ephesians 4:4-5.**

In the **Romans 4** passage, Paul is reminding Christians of how a person is saved. When you stop trusting in your own good works, and place your faith in what *Christ* did for you, Christ’s righteousness is placed on your account; and on this basis, God accepts you. The Christian life begins when you place your faith in the Gospel. The Gospel message is part of that “***one faith***” that Paul talked about in **Ephesians 4**.

However, “the faith” includes much more than the Gospel message: it includes *every* truth that God has revealed to us in Scripture. Unfortunately, many Christians today think of “the faith” as the *Gospel* message, but not much else. Because they want to get along with everyone, they aren’t willing to stand for *all* the truths of God’s Word.

For example, when it comes to the Bible’s teaching concerning separation from worldly things, many modern Christians consider the matter to be unimportant. “After all,” they say, “separation is a subjective matter. Everyone has his own preference of dress, movies, music, and entertainment; and we don’t want to be judgmental.”

When it comes to the Bible's teaching concerning the wickedness of drinking alcohol, many Christians are not willing to talk about it. They say, "We don't want to offend Christians who think that it's O.K. to drink wine socially. We don't want to drive away potential church members by saying, '*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging*'; so let's keep quiet about it."

When it comes to the Bible's teaching concerning divorce, many Christians are not willing to talk about that. They say, "That's way too divisive, and it makes people uncomfortable. After all, we all make mistakes."

When it comes to the Bible's teaching concerning "the church," few Christians today (especially pastors) are willing to talk about it in much detail. Many Christians have heard, and have eagerly accepted the idea, that there is a "universal church" made up of all believers everywhere: thus, many pastors don't want to rock the boat by insisting that the church is a local, visible assembly, and that every Christian is *commanded* to join himself to a local church by way of believer's baptism. Being baptised and joining a church requires commitment; and many Christians, for one reason or another, are not willing to make that commitment. Besides, lots of people have had "bad experiences" with a church; and many pastors are not willing to risk losing people by pushing the issue. So, they simply remain silent about it.

When it comes to the Bible's teaching concerning the biblical roles of husband and wife, there is a *great* reluctance to "contend for the faith" today. Talking about this matter might step on a *lot* of toes. After all, things are changing. People don't like to hear that the husband is "the head" of the wife, and that he has the spiritual responsibility to lead his family. Thus, many Christians cower into the corner, and keep mum about the issue.

When it comes to Bible versions, many Christians today consider it a non-issue. Jesus said, "*Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*" In other words, Jesus promised that *not even the smallest consonant or vowel* of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures will ever be lost. Clearly, He has kept that promise. The Masoretic Hebrew Text of the Old Testament, and the Received Greek Text of the New Testament, have been preserved with astounding accuracy; and the King James Version that we hold in our hands has been faithfully translated from those texts. Nearly 5,500 Greek manuscripts from the first century to the 14<sup>th</sup> century are still known to exist to this day; and they agree with each other *to the letter*. Yet, many Christians consider themselves too wise to believe that *every single* word and letter could be preserved intact through the centuries. Many Christians have heard Bible scholars say that "It doesn't really matter whether *every* word has been preserved, because we still have the 'main message.'" Most modern versions of the Bible are a whopping 7% shorter than our King James Bible, because they have been translated from the corrupted Alexandrian and Sinaiticus texts, which omitted *thousands* of words and phrases, and even whole verses. So many words have been left out of the Alexandrian and Sinaiticus texts, that if we were to put all the omitted words together, it would be equivalent to the books of **1 and 2 Peter!** Yet, many Christians are not willing to "contend for the faith" when it comes to the matter of Jesus' promise to *preserve* His words. They boldly proclaim that God *inspired the* words of Scripture (as well they should); but they

are not willing to say that God has also perfectly *preserved* His words for us. Why? Because they don't want to "make waves." "Let's just keep 'the main thing the main thing,'" they say.

Do you see what it means to "contend for *the faith*"? As we run the Christian race, we must receive, believe, and submit to *every* truth that God has revealed in His Word--*and defend it!* Did Jesus tell the disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe *the Gospel, and some of the more important things* that I have commanded you"? No! He said, "**Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.**" God wants us to contend for *all* the truths that He has delivered to us in His Word.

### **Read Jude 3.**

In **Colossians 2:8**, Paul gave a warning to the Christians in the church of Colossi. He said, "***Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.***" Are there philosophies and traditions of men that you are clinging to, Christian? Are there truths in God's Word that you haven't brought yourself to submit to? If so, throw them to the weeds, and follow Christ!

The Christian life is all about following after Christ, and obeying His Word. The Christian life is about pressing forward toward the prize of the high calling of God in *Christ Jesus*. By the way, that word *archegon* (the word that is translated as "Author"), can also be translated as "Trailblazer," or "Captain." Jesus Christ is the One who blazed the trail of faith for us, so that we might follow Him.

Even before Christ came to earth, He was "The Captain" of His people. *Christ* was One who appeared to Joshua, announced Himself as "the Captain of the LORD's hosts," received worship from Him, and assured Joshua that He would be with the children of Israel as they began the conquest of Canaan. *Christ* is the One who led the children of Israel through the desert for 40 years. In **1 Corinthians 10**, Paul says that the children of Israel "***did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.***" However, Christ could never be our "Trailblazer" in the fullest sense until He came down to our world, and took on human flesh. Through the sinless, perfect life that Christ lived here on earth, He showed us what a life lived by faith truly looks like. In all things, Jesus submitted to His Father's will. Though He was the King of glory, He did not use His power for Himself. He submitted Himself to all the trials we have to go through, and made Himself dependent upon His Father. Every day, He arose early in the morning to commune with His Father. Do you desire to live that kind of life, Christian? If so, then look unto Jesus. He is the Author and Finisher of your faith!

We must look unto Jesus because He is "the Author and Finisher of our Faith." Secondly, we must look unto Jesus...

## **II. Because He is the perfect Example of submission to the Father's will.**

**(Read Hebrews 12:2 again.)** It's hard for us to imagine this; but Christ was actually filled with *joy* as He went to the cross. Why? Did He get some kind of unnatural pleasure from

undergoing physical pain and humiliation? Of course not! In the garden, Jesus had prayed, ***“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”*** Jesus was in such extreme anguish at the thought of going to the cross, that His capillary blood vessels burst, and mixed with His sweat. No, my friends, Jesus did not have a strange “fetish” for pain.

So, why *was* Jesus filled with joy as He went to the cross? Simply this: He was filled with joy at the thought of doing His Father’s will. He was also filled with joy at the thought of purchasing our salvation, so that *we* could experience the joy of eternal life.

**Read Isaiah 53:10-11.**

As Jesus hung on the cross, the Father was ***“pleased”*** and ***“satisfied”*** with His Son’s sacrifice: and Jesus was pleased, too. Why? Because as God, He was able to look down through the centuries, and ***“see his seed”***—those who would become the sons and daughters of God because of His sacrifice. He knew that it was ***“the pleasure of the LORD”*** for us to be saved; and He knew that this work would ***“prosper”*** in His hand, because of what He was suffering on that cross. Therefore, He ***“despised,”*** or disregarded, the shame that He was undergoing at that moment. He thought little of His reproach and humiliation, because He knew that through His sacrificial death for us, He would conquer death, and win an eternal victory for all who would place their faith in Him. He knew that His spiritual children would have *their* joy fulfilled because of what He was doing on their behalf.

**Read John 17:13.**

As Jesus prayed for His disciples on the way to Gethsemane, *their joy* was what was on His mind. He loved His disciples dearly; and even though He knew that He would soon suffer terrible pain, His mind was on *them*. Do you see why Jesus was able to pray, ***“Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt”***? Jesus was able to say these words, and mean them, because He didn’t have the least thought of Himself. He thought only of obeying His Father, and of bringing joy to His creation. He despised the shame. He thought absolutely nothing of it. His only joy was to do His Father’s will, and to pour out Himself in love for mankind.

Perhaps you’re thinking, “Pastor, these are really uplifting thoughts; but there’s no way that I can possibly follow Jesus’ example. There’s no way I could obey God with perfect submission, or love that perfectly.” If this be what you’re thinking, you are absolutely right. We who are saved still have a sin nature; and it will be with us as long as we are in this mortal body. However, we also have a *new* nature; and as long as we submit to Jesus, and die to self daily, we *can* obey God, and do His will in a way that is truly pleasing to Him.

**Read Galatians 2:20.**

Christian, are *you* filled with joy at the thought of obeying the Father’s will? Do you rejoice in the fact that you are ***“crucified with Christ”***? Are you taking up your cross daily—not with grumbling, but with submission to God, and death to self? Is it your highest joy to give your life in thankful service to Him? Perhaps you are growing weary in your Christian race, because you are constantly being snubbed, mocked, and opposed by people all around you. If so, take heart. Jesus knows exactly what you are going through, because He went through it,

Himself; and He will give you the grace that you need. **(Read Hebrews 12:3 again.)** Jesus said, ***“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”***

We must keep our eyes on Jesus because He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. We must keep our eyes on Jesus because He is the perfect example of submission. Finally, we must keep our eyes on Jesus...

### III. Because He is the Mark toward which we press.

**(Read Hebrews 12:2 again.)** If you know Christ as your Saviour, it should do something deep in your soul to hear those words, ***“and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”!*** The fact that Christ is *seated* at the right hand of God means that *it is finished!* The priests of the Old Testament were continually standing in the Temple, because the sacrifices that they performed could never actually take away sin; but when Jesus offered Himself as the perfect offering for our sin, it was *done*, once and for all! Christ is now risen from the grave, and is sitting on the throne in the heavenly Holy of Holies. His toil for our salvation is done.

Everything that is needed for your salvation is finished and accomplished. This means that if you are saved, every grace that you need to run the Christian race is available at the throne of grace. All the spiritual riches that you need in this life are included in the salvation package! The resurrection of your body is guaranteed by Christ’s death and resurrection, as well. The fact that Christ is *seated* on the throne is the proof that the resurrection is a done deal, even though it hasn’t actually happened yet. Christ is merely awaiting the moment when He will rise from His throne, descend in the clouds of Heaven, and shout the words, ***“Come up hither!”*** Only His saints will hear His voice on that day; and they will instantly receive immortal bodies, and will be caught up to meet Him in the air. The unsaved that are left behind will enter into the terrible seven-year Tribulation period here on earth; but God’s people will be filled with indescribable joy, as their eyes behold the righteous King for whom they have waited all their lives! The race will finally be done, in the fullest sense of the word; and God’s people will appear before the judgment seat, to receive their rewards.

Jesus is our Hope. He is the Anchor of our soul. If you are saved, you are tied to this Anchor; and since He is seated on the throne of God, *you* are therefore firmly anchored to the throne of God. You *will* make it to the golden shore; and when you arrive there, the worst pains and sorrows of this life will look *nothing*. So run with confidence! Lay aside the weights. Run with endurance. Above all, keep looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith!

**Conclusion:** As we close this morning’s message, I would ask, “Are you ‘in the faith’?” Have you truly placed your faith in Jesus Christ to save you? If you are trusting partly in your own goodness to save you, or to keep you saved, then you do not really understand salvation; and you do not know Christ. You must, in simple faith, ask *Christ* to save you. In your heart this morning, won’t you admit that you are a sinner, that you can’t save yourself, and ask Him to forgive your sins, and come into your heart?

If you are saved already, I would ask, “Are you keeping your eyes on Jesus?” No *thing* of this world, and no *person* other than Jesus, is worthy of your gaze. *I* am not the one to whom you must look. If you look

to *me*, or to anyone else, you will be disappointed; but if you keep your eyes on Christ, you will find the strength that you need to run the race. Keep looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith!