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Looking Unto Jesus

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Hebrews 12:2 αφορωντες εις τον της πιστεως αρχηγον και τελειωτην ιησουν ος αντι της προκειμενης αυτω χαρας υπεμεινεν σταυρον αισχυνης καταφρονησας εν δεξια τε του θρονου του θεου εκαθισεν

Hebrews 12:1-3 is a study on the believer's race of faith in this life and our looking to Christ. Now we know what we are to be doing, looking, and we know who we are to be looking at, the Lord Jesus, but what are we to be looking to him for? When we were unsaved, we looked to Jesus as our Savior for forgiveness and eternal salvation. But now, as believers, we are to look to him once again, but not for our salvation, which we already have, but something else.

In verse three he tells us to consider Christ, what he went through on the cross, his relationship to the Father, his meekness, his submission to the Father's will, and something else that is brought out as the focus of the passage and that is the faith of Christ! *“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”*

A. Running The Race. v.1

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,” Hebrews 12:1 τοιγαρουν και ημεις τοσουτον εχοντες περικειμενον ημιν νεφος μαρτυρων ογκον αποθεμενοι παντα και την ευπεριστατον αμαρτιαν δι υπομονης τρεχωμεν τον προκειμενον ημιν αγωνα

The word wherefore, *toigarmoun*, is used because it is emphatic and formal. It brings our attention back to chapter eleven and all the believers in the OT who lived by faith. It tells us about all those men and women who accomplished such extraordinary things and endured such difficult times and situations and how they victoriously prevailed over all of them by their faith.

It says that we are compassed about, or surrounded, by them, *perikeimai*. *Perikeimai* would be used of a man with a crowd of people standing around him. It refers to them as a cloud, *nepfos*, of people. Now *nepfos* could be used of a literal cloud in the skies, or it could be used of a crowd of people that is so vast that they cannot be numbered, a vast multitude.

Now what we have here is the metaphor of the Greek games where you have the stadium, the crowd, a statue of Zeus at the finish line, and the contestants who are brought in each to compete in their own field. And that's the picture that we have here of believers in Christ brought into the arena of the angelic conflict, each of us running our race in our own area assigned to us.

These OT witnesses in context are not referred to as spectators, *theatai*, though, but as witnesses, *martures*. A spectator was one who merely watched the contestants in the field from the stands. While a witness was one who had personally run in the games and after he finished his race he went up into the stands to watch the other contestants.

You still see this today in Track and Field, where, because the competition can go on for a long period of time, one will have an event in one or more areas, he'll go down to compete, and then after he is finished he goes back up into the stands to watch the others in the competition.

What this tells us is that these OT believers were not mere spectators of NT believers running the race of faith, but that they had run the race of faith themselves in their day and were personal witnesses of the adequacy, supremacy and victory of faith in the Word of God in this life! **They are giving their personal testimony that faith worked for them in the OT and it'll work for us in the NT!**

They had run the course set before them in their day by faith, (the plan of God for their lives), and saw the results of that faith. And because of their faith in the promises of God they were victorious over life, death, circumstances, the world system and the devil. So now they are *passing the baton* down to us urging us to fight the good fight of faith, urging us to run by faith the course set before us.

Now the writer tells us to, “*let us lay aside every weight*”, *apothemenoi*, which is the aoist middle participle of *apotithemi*. This deals with the divesting ourselves of the people and things that weigh us down, hold us back, distract or hinder us from running the race of faith in the Word of God.

We need to see what is involved in the analogy first, so we can see how it applies to the Christian life. Games were very much a part of the ancient world with all cultures taking part in them. A variety of events were found in them, such as, running, boxing, wrestling, discus, javelin, etc.. But we'll be looking at running.

When the event of running came up the runners were brought out into the arena, Before them lay an oval track, surrounding them in the stadium were literally thousands of people, and at the end of the track was the finish line and a statue of Zeus. Now they had already spent years in training and months in determined training before the race. They knew that they had to run at their peak efficiency, for they all wanted to win the coveted price of the wreath, which would be awarded them at the feet of Zeus when they crossed the finish line.

All eyes were upon them now, having stripped themselves of anything that would weigh them down, even their clothes. And it's not just about the weight, it's about having the legs and body free of anything that would entangle them, or distract them mentally.

To throw off is *apotithemi* and was the word used for taking one's clothes off and setting them aside. The word *onkos* was used of anything that you might have on your person that would weigh you down. What this refers to is anything in this life that are not necessarily sinful in themselves, but weigh us down, distract us, or hinder us, as we run our race of faith! Now as to what they are, each believer will find out as he is running his or her race of faith!

Now to many people of the world life is a “rat race”. They run like hamsters all their lives and the end of life they go down to the depths of Hell. But to the people of God it's a “faith race”! But our race is not a sprint, you may need to sprint when you're getting close to the finish line, but it's a long distance race. In fact, it's length and duration encompasses our life here on earth! So we will need to run it with patience, with endurance and with faith. How long it will be? We don't know. Where it will take us in this life? We don't know either. All we know is that is that as long as we are here on earth we will be running this race and that the Father is the One who has established the course that he wants us to run in, and that each believer's course will be different from the another believer.

“And the sin which doth so easily beset us” is *kai ten euperistaton hamartian*. Found only in this passage *euperistatos* had the idea of something wrapped around the midsection like a skirt, or kilt, or a bath towel after getting out of the shower. The trouble with that is you can't run a foot race, for either, if it is long enough, it could catch your feet as you run, or if it was shorter, it would hinder the legs.

Possibly one could hike it up and hold it with your hands so you could run, but in a competitive foot race one needs his hands and arms free to assist his running. So in a foot race one had to remove all apparels of clothing to not only lighten the load, remove any hindrances, but also to keep his feet from tripping up in the garments.

So if one was going to compete in the games it was mandatory that he removed his outer garment. Now anything else, such as rings, jewelry, loin cloth, etc., were optional. But it was to their advantage to remove everything so as to remove any weight, distractions, hindrances and wind drag.

The outer garment for us is the flesh nature and its propensity to sin. And how we remove the flesh nature is through the confession of sin to God, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* 1 John 1:9 This, and the filling of the Holy Spirit, are mandatory if we are going to run in the race of faith.

But our problem is not with just the sin nature, but a particular sin, or sins, that always seems to “trip us up”. It can be one or more sins out of the emotions complex, or one or more sins out of the lust complex, it could be garbage in the soul, verbal sins, or physical sins. It could be our pride, our fears, or worries, or gossiping about others, or operating on one or more of our lusts, etc..

All of us have our problems with certain sins in our lives that keep on coming back to plague us. Now we need to recognize that, and having recognized that, then we can apply the doctrinal solution of putting off the sin nature through confessing the sin, recovering the filling of the Holy Spirit, and then go back to operating in the new nature. For when we put off the sin nature, then we will be handling our besetting sin at the same time. And to *lay aside every weight* tells us that we are to do this, so we can run the race of faith.

One of the first things that Christians need to learning living the spiritual life is that we all have the problem of sin resident in these fleshly bodies. It's true that we have new natures, which were created in us at the moment we believed on Christ, but the sin nature was not eradicated at salvation, and so we are always going to have a problem with it until physical death.

The next thing we need to learn is that each one of us has a propensity to sin, either in the general area of lasciviousness, or in the area of legalism, one toward immorality, the other toward moralism. Now beyond that, each of us have our own particular weaknesses toward sinning in certain areas. Some are worry warts and worry about everything in life, others don't. Some get angry at everything and react instantly to that which irritates them. While others never express their anger, but push it down inside. Some lust after money, while others lust after power. Some speak kindly outwardly, but resent inwardly.

So by recognizing that, the believer can learn to see himself in action as to what he has a weakness for, what his or her besetting sins are and avoid them, or at least recognize them as they start to surface and head them off at the pass. And again, whatever they may be, they are still all a part of the sin nature and can be avoided by living in the filling of the Holy Spirit and the new nature.

“*And let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*” δι υπομονης τρεχουμεν τον προκειμενον ημιν αγωνα. The word for *run*, *trechomen*, is the present active subjunctive of *trecho*, which is a cohortative subjunctive where the writer puts himself in with the other Christians exhorting all of us, himself included, to run the race and run it with with patience (endurance). The present tense indicates that this is to be a continuing concept of running in our lives, to live by faith, and the active voice brings out the emphasis on the concept that it's our volitional responsibility to do so.

The word *trecho* meant to run in a race. *Agona* was the particular event that one ran in, in this case a long distance race. And *prokeimai* was the course that had been appointed or selected for us, where it went to, the type of ground that one had to cover, and the distance involved.

The type of race that all Christians are running is a long distance marathon and the reason why is that it covers our entire lifetime. Now our lifetime may be a short one after salvation, or it may be a long one, but either way it is a long distance concept. It's like running a five mile marathon, or ten mile, twenty miles or more. One never knows for sure how long they are going to live after salvation, but one does know that it will be generally a long distance concept.

And the reason why we know that is because of the use of the word *hupomone*, which they have translated as *patience* here. *Hupomone* actually has the idea of endurance, of standing up under the most grueling and demanding concepts. But because it is used with the idea of a race, where the idea is to keep moving forward to cross the finish line, it then takes on the idea of perseverance! And because the race is long, demanding and hard at times, the ideas of conditioning and endurance are needed.

Agona looked at the particular field that the athlete had entered into, discus, javelin, wrestling, or in this case running. But the race could be sprints of varying distances or long distance. In the sprints the runner would go all out as fast as he can. But in long distance he had to pace himself so he can last the entire race, although he probably will sprint toward the finish line at the end.

Prokeimai looks at that which has been appointed for us by the Father; the course that has been assigned by God for us to run. This takes in the idea of where we are to run our race, the topography of that area, the difficulty involved, and the things that we will encounter along the way. God places each one of us in the areas that he wants us to live in, gives us the spiritual gifts that he wants us to exercise, and the various types of circumstances and trials that we will encounter along the way. Things that are unique to us in our race of faith. **And he wouldn't put us in them, if he didn't know that we could handle them by faith and his grace!**

In the long distance marathon all the runners started together and ran a lap around the track to the cheers of the crowd, then they ran out the gates to the course that had been predetermined for them. Now that the cheers of the crowd had subsided behind them they were all alone as they ran. Over hills, across creeks and streams, through the woods and brush, watching for rocks that could twist an ankle, looking out for snakes along the path, they ran their race with endurance. At the end of the race they once again entered the stadium and lapped the track to the cheers of the crowd as they then sprinted toward victory at the finish line.

It's like God saves us, trains us, and now, no longer as children, we go out into life to run by faith in the particular course chosen by Him just for us, a life with all its difficulties and hardships, and we run this race by faith in full view of all those who have gone before us. And as we come back into the stadium the witnesses see us sprinting toward the end and are cheering us on!

B. Looking Unto Jesus. v.2

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Hebrews 12:2 αφορωντες εις τον της πιστεως αρχηγον και τελειωτην ιησουν ος αντι της προκειμενης αυτω χαρας υπεμεινεν σταυρον αισχυνης καταφρονησας εν δεξια τε του θρονου του θεου εκαθισεν

Literally translated we have, “*Looking unto the author and perfecter of **the faith**, Jesus.*” As was mentioned in the intro we know who we are to be looking to, the Lord Jesus, but what are we to be looking to him for? It can't be salvation, for the writer is addressing believers in Christ who have already *looked* to Christ for salvation. So what it's talking about is looking to Christ for some reason **after** salvation.

The word for look is the present active participle of *aphorao*. *Aphorao* is a combination of two words, *apo* – from, and *horao* – to look. It has two ideas found in it. One, to look away from something, and two, to look toward something else. What this tells us is that we are to be looking to Christ, but in order to look to Christ we must turn our gaze, our attention, away from everything else that we are presently looking at so we can look to him!

Eis is used here as the accusative of direct object so we have, “*Looking **unto** the author and perfecter of the faith, Jesus.*” And this is directed at all believers in Christ. And we must keep in perspective that this is a race **and in a race there are all sorts of things going on**. There is the difficulty of the course itself, there are the obstacles and problems along the way, the pitfalls one has to watch out for, there are the other runners on the track, there are those who have fallen along the way, those who take a different path, there are the cheers of the crowd, the bystanders and well-wishers along the way, and there are those who try to distract you and those who try to trip you up.

What this tells us is that we are going to have to focus 100% on our race of faith, not on what we are going through, or how hard it is, or the ground covered, or what we have lost along the way, or those who have fallen along the way, or the ones who peeled off, or having to run through the gauntlet of negativity from those that are trying to get us to quit. We have to focus on Jesus Christ! But there's something particular about him that we are to be looking to him for, something about him, what he went through and how he did it.

When the runner would come out on the field the herald would blow the trumpet and his name would be announced to the crowd. This was it. It had all come down to this. This is what he had been training so hard for all his life. Now his concentration could be only on one thing – winning the race! He could not look at the vast crowd in the stands, nor for the familiar faces of loved ones or friends, nor at the other runners in the race. Even the ground beneath his feet would be a blur as he raced to cross the finish line. There was only one thing that he fixed his gaze on, only one thing that he thought about and that was the statue of Zeus waiting for him at the finish line.

But for the Christian, we are to look to Jesus Christ. But to do this, we must turn our eyes, our attention, our focus in life, away from the things of this life, away from the world, away from the pull of the flesh nature, away from the demands of family and friends, away from material possessions, money, success, fame, glory, career advancement and all the other things that we occupy our minds and life with so we can turn our gaze upon Christ! In fact, we have to turn our minds away from everything in this life so we can run the race of faith in the Word of God!

Now as to concerning what we are to be looking to Jesus for we find that in this passage and it's his faith. "*The author and finisher of our faith*". What we're going to discover is that **Christ instituted a new type of faith for the people of God to live by here on earth**. It's not the idea of originating the concept of faith, for we have had that ever since the beginning of man here on earth. (Actually the concept of faith has been existing since eternity past.)

God's people have always had to live by faith. We have found at least fourteen kinds of faith used in the OT depending on what the context is and so forth. Christ did not originate the concept of faith, but he did originate a new kind of faith that he lived by and what we now are to live by and that is **faith in God as one's Father!**

The type of faith that Christ had toward God was the kind of faith that completely **trusted** in Him as his Father. And we can look at this type of faith that Christ had in God, (and it is the same kind of faith that we are to have), from six aspects: **Faith in the Father's plan; faith in the Father's promises, faith in the Father's provisions, faith in the Father's power; faith in the Father's protection and faith in the process!**

Now it tells us that we are to be *looking unto Jesus*, and with the present active participle, it tells us that this is to be a way of life for us. But looking unto Jesus also entails us looking at how he ran his race while here on earth! He ran his race, that is, he lived his life by faith. Christ lived his life by faith in the Father's plan for his life, the Father's promises, the Father's provisions for his life, the Father's power, the Father's protection and the process the Father used in unfolding his will for Christ's life.

Jesus Christ *ran his race* and sat down at the right hand of the Father. Christ died for our sins, his body was placed in the tomb, his soul went down into Hades, after three days and three nights his soul was raised up out of Hades, where he thereupon received a resurrection body, and then after forty days he ascended into heaven, where he was then seated at the right hand of God the Father.

In the old days, when the runner came around the track and crossed the finish line, he was awarded a wreath that was placed on his head, a wreath usually woven out of ivy. (Ivy was the plant that was associated with Nimrod). When Christ ran his race of faith and victoriously crossed the finish line, instead of having a wreath of ivy placed on his head, a wreath of cruel thorns was placed on him. Thorns symbolizing the curse of sin.

Now it says that Jesus is the Author of the faith, not our faith, but the faith. And the word that is used is *archegos*. Now *archegos* was used in a variety of ways. It was used for a chief of a tribe, the prince of a nation, the founder of a school, the king of a kingdom, the originator of a concept, the hero and founder of a city, an author, a political or military leader of a people, the head of a clan and a trailblazer.

Some of these concepts we're already familiar with, such as, a chief of a tribe, a prince of a nation, a king of a kingdom, an author, but we need to look more closely at the others. As a **Founder** of a city it had the idea that an individual built a city to be populated by his own people, and that he is going to bring his people into that city. And thus as its founder he is also its **Hero**. As a **Trailblazer** it had the idea that someone had come from another place to gather a people for himself. After finishing his work, he went back to the home that he had come from, but blazed a trail so that the rest could follow him back to his country. And as a **Founder** of a school, or an **Originator** of an idea, it tells us that someone had originated an idea or a concept, lived by it himself, and brought it to perfection or completion. And that he also perfected the concept in those who were in his school or followed his ideas.

Now although all these ideas apply to Christ, the one that stands out the most is the idea of an **originator of an idea or concept** because of how it is connected with the word, *teleiotes*, the word for perfector or finisher, which has the idea of bringing something to completion or perfecting the concept. The *Archegos* was the one who began a project and brought it to completion; the one who originated a concept and perfected it. What this tells us is that Christ originated the concept of **the faith**, faith in the Father, and brought it to absolute perfection.

Now it was not that faith began in the New Testament, for we see it all the way throughout the Old Testament in the people of God. But we see Christ implementing a new kind of faith for the NT people of God, where our faith now takes on the tone and nature of trusting God as one would trust a father. In the OT we have a relationship of God with his people as being one of a king and his subjects, or one as a covenant partner, but in the NT we have one where our relationship with God is one of a child and his/her father. And as such our spiritual dynamic is trusting in Him as one would with their father.

The passages says that Jesus is the author and perfector of the faith. This tells us that he not only originated this kind of faith, and participated in it himself, but also brought it to perfection. He did so by living by this concept of faith himself, trusting in the Father's plan, promises, power, provisions, protection and the process the Father used, throughout his life here on earth, even unto his most horrible death on the cross! And he's telling us that it works because the Father backs his Word!

And, as the perfector of this faith in the Father in us, he's telling us that he trusted in the Father's plan, promises, power, protection, provisions and the process his entire life all the way up to his death on the cross and he's saying that trusting in God the Father works!! And so, because he implemented this faith and brought it to perfection in his own life's experience, Christ alone is qualified to bring every believer in Christ to the place where we perfectly trust the Father as he did. **If the people of God have to live by faith, then it is fitting that their Prince did! And vice versa!!**

“The faith”, *tes pisteos*, brings our attention to a unique kind of faith that God's people are to live by, which is that kind of faith that trusts in God as one would their father. One spouse believing the other spouse would be a category of faith all by itself. Another would be the faith that two friends that trust each other might have. Another would be the kind of faith exercised by covenant partners. Another would be the trust that exists between comrades in arms. Another would be where God told someone he would do something. And even in that, some in the OT wanted him to back it up with a covenant! In the nation of Israel there was a faith that existed by the people of Israel toward *Yahweh*, but that was a faith based upon *Yahweh* as their God and King!

Faith exercised in the context of different relationships. I trust him because he's my buddy. I trust her because she's my wife. I trust him because my friend entered into a blood covenant with me and all that entails. I trust God because, well, he's God! But now Christ originated a new category of faith and a new perspective concerning faith, where we trust God as our Father bringing in all the concepts that are entailed in that relationship.

Jesus Christ was the first of a new species of humanity, the prototype after which all other believers would be patterned. He was the Chief of a Tribe; the Prince of a Nation; the Founder of a School; the King of a Kingdom; the Head of the Church; the Originator of a concept, thus instituting the concept of living by faith in the Father. He participated in it himself, and brought it to completion and perfection. Thus paving the way that he himself has established for us to follow, as members of this elite body of new humanity. Christ lived by faith in the Father as his people are to live.

We see references to the faith of Jesus Christ. “*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*” Galatians 2:16 Where, *dia pisteos Iesou Christou*, δια πιστεως ιησου χριστου, should be translated with the subjective genitive, the faith of Jesus Christ, as we have here. ειδοτες οτι ου δικαιουται ανθρωπος εξ εργαων νομου εαν μη δια πιστεως ιησου χριστου και ημεις εις χριστον ιησουν επιστευσαμεν ινα δικαιωθωμεν εκ πιστεως χριστου και ουκ εξ εργαων νομου διοτι ου δικαιωθησεται εξ εργαων νομου πασα σαρξ

Much is taught in Christianity, as it should be, about faith in Jesus Christ. But not too much is taught about the faith of Jesus Christ! About the fact that Jesus Christ lived by faith, that he lived by faith in the Father's plan, the Father's promises, the Father's provisions, the Father's protection, the Father's power and the process the Father used to accomplish his will. Galatians 2:16 has two references to the faith of Jesus Christ using the subjective genitive.

Galatians 2:20 is an often quoted passage, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*” χριστω συνεσταυρωμαι ζω δε ουκετι εγω ζη δε εν εμοι χριστος ο δε νυν ζω εν σαρκι εν πιστει ζω τη του υιου του θεου του αγαπησαντος με και παραδοντος εαυτον υπερ εμου What Paul is saying is that the life that he presently lives in the flesh, as a born again believer in Christ, he now lives **because of the faith of the Son of God!**

We see an interesting and pivotal matter going on in Hebrews 5:7-9 with Christ's suffering on the cross and the matter of him being perfected or completed. “*Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;*” ος εν ταις ημεραις της σαρκος αυτου δεησεις τε και ικετηριας προς τον δυναμενον σωζειν αυτον εκ θανατου μετα κραυγης ισχυρας και δακρυων προσενεγκας και εισακουσθεις απο της ευλαβειας καιπερ ων υιος εμαθεν αφ ων επαθεν την υπακοην και τελειωθεις εγενετο τοις υπακουουσιν αυτω πασιν αιτιος σωτηριας αιωνιου.

When we talk about obedience the concepts of hearing, faith and submission to authority come into play. The very first thing we need to note is that Christ was **never** disobedient to the Father. So that's not what was going on here. Christ always believed the Father; Christ always trusted the Father; and Christ always obeyed the Father's will in all things.

But we need to understand a little about how faith works. Faith starts out as a very small kernel or seed. And as small and fragile as it may be it is still faith. But faith can and is to grow stronger and stronger, more and more, to the place it is absolutely completed where there is no doubt at all! God puts us into one situation where he wants us to trust him, and it may be something small by many people's standards, but a crisis to us, but through faith in his Word we end up trusting Him. Then he takes us into a completely different and more difficult situation and wants us to trust him in that! It becomes a trial of sorts, but we end up, (some time later), finally trusting him and pass the test. And this dynamic is repeated over and over in our lives, but what is actually happening is that our faith is being completed along the way and in the process. The goal of God in all this is to get our faith all the way to the place of absolute completion where we completely trust him in life. The final thing that Christ went through that completed his faith and trust in the Father was what he suffered on the cross. Continued