

Hebrews 12:2 (Theodore Monod) 122383

Looking Unto Jesus, Looking Unto Jesus (12:2)

"Looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2)

Only three words, but in those three words is the whole secret of life.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

in the Scriptures, to learn there what He is, what He has done, what He gives, what He desires; to find in His character our pattern, in His teachings our instruction, in His precepts our law, in His promises our support, in His person and in His work a full satisfaction provided for every need of our souls.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

Crucified, to find in His shed blood our ransom, our pardon, our peace.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

Risen, to find in Him the righteousness which alone makes us righteous, and permits us, all unworthy as we are, to draw near with boldness, in His Name, to Him Who is His Father and our Father, His God and our God.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

Glorified, to find in Him our Heavenly Advocate completing by His intercession the work inspired by His loving-kindness for our salvation (1 John 2:1); Who even now is appearing for us before the face of God (Heb. 9:24), the kingly Priest, the spotless Victim, continually bearing the iniquity of our holy things (Ex. 28:38).

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

revealed by the Holy Spirit, to find in constant communion with Him the cleansing of our sin-stained hearts, the illumination of our darkened spirits, the transformation of our rebel wills; enabled by Him to triumph over all attacks of the world and of the evil one, resisting their violence by Jesus our Strength, and overcoming their subtlety by Jesus our Wisdom; upheld by the sympathy of Jesus, Who was spared no temptation, and by the help of Jesus, Who yielded to no temptation.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

Who gives repentance as well as forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31) because He gives us the grace to recognize, to deplore, to confess, and to forsake our transgressions.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

to receive from Him the task and the cross for each day, with the grace which is sufficient to carry the cross and to accomplish the task; the grace that enables us to be patient with His patience, active with His activity, loving with His love; never asking "What am I able for?" but rather: "What is He not able for?" and waiting for His strength which is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

to go forth from ourselves and to forget ourselves; so that our darkness may flee away before the brightness of His face; so that our joys may be holy, and our sorrow restrained; that He may cast us down, and that He may raise us up; that He may afflict us, and that He may comfort us; that He may despoil us, and that He may enrich us; that He may teach us to pray, and that He may answer our prayers; that while leaving us in the world, He may separate us from it, our life being hidden with Him in God, and our behavior bearing witness to Him before men.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

Who, having returned to the Father's house, is engaged in preparing a place there for us; so that this joyful prospect may make us live in hope, and prepare us to die in peace, when the day shall come for us to meet this last enemy, whom He has overcome for us, whom we shall overcome through Him—so that what was once the king of terrors is today the harbinger of eternal happiness.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

Whose certain return, at an uncertain time, is from age to age the expectation and the hope of the faithful Church, who is encouraged in her patience, watchfulness and joy by the thought that the Savior is at hand (Phil. 4:4, 5; 1 Thess. 5:23).

"LOOKING UNTO JESUS

the Author and the Finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2): that is to say, He Who is its pattern and its source, even as He is its object; and Who from the first step even to the last, marches at the head of the believers; so that by Him our faith may be inspired, encouraged, sustained, and led on to its supreme consummation.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

and at nothing else, as our text expresses it in one untranslatable word (aphoroontes), which at the same time directs us to fix our gaze upon Him, and to turn it away from everything else.

UNTO JESUS

and not at ourselves, our thoughts, our reasonings, our imaginings, our inclinations, our wishes, our plans.

UNTO JESUS

and not at the world, its customs, its example, its rules, its judgments;—

UNTO JESUS

and not at Satan, though he seek to terrify us by his fury, or to entice us by his flatteries. —Oh! from how many useless questions we would save ourselves, from how many disturbing scruples, from how much loss of time, dangerous dallying with evil, waste of energy, empty dreams, bitter disappointments, sorrowful struggles, and distressing falls, by looking steadily unto Jesus, and by following Him wherever He may lead us. Then we shall be too much occupied with not losing sight of the path which He marks out for us, to waste even a glance on those in which He does not think it suitable to lead us.

UNTO JESUS

and not at our creeds, no matter how evangelical they may be. The faith which saves, which sanctifies, and which comforts, is not giving assent to the doctrine of salvation; it is being united to the person of the Savior. "It is not enough", said Adolphe Monod, "to know about Jesus Christ; it is necessary to have Jesus Christ." To this one may add that no one truly knows Him, if he does not first possess Him. According to the profound saying of the beloved disciple, it is in the Life there is Light, and it is in Jesus there is Life (John 1:4).

UNTO JESUS

and not at our meditations and our prayers, our pious conversations and our profitable reading, the holy meetings that we attend, nor even to our taking part in the supper of the Lord. Let us faithfully use all these means of grace, but without confusing them with grace itself; and without turning our gaze away from Him Who alone makes them effectual, when, by their means, He reveals Himself to us.

UNTO JESUS

and not to our position in the Christian Church, to the family to which we belong, to our baptism, to the education which we have received, to the doctrine which we profess, to the opinion which others have formed of our piety, or to the opinion which we have formed of it ourselves. Some of those who have prophesied in the Name of the Lord Jesus will one day hear Him say: "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:22, 23); but He will confess before His Father and before His angels even the most humble of those who have looked unto Him.

UNTO JESUS

and not to our brethren, not even to the best among them and the best beloved. In following a man we run the risk of losing our way; in following Jesus we are sure of never losing our way. Besides, in putting a man between Jesus and ourselves, it will come to pass that insensibly the man will increase and Jesus will decrease; soon we no longer know how to find Jesus when we cannot find the man, and if he fails us, all fails. On the contrary, if Jesus is kept between us and our closest friend, our attachment to the person will be at the same time less enthralling and more deep; less passionate and more tender; less necessary, and more useful; an instrument of rich blessing in the hands of God when He is pleased to make use of him; and whose absence will be a further blessing, when it may please God to dispense with him, to draw us even nearer to the only Friend who can be separated from us by "neither death nor life" (Rom. 8:38-39).

UNTO JESUS

and not at His enemies or at our own. In place of hating them and fearing them, we shall then know how to love them and to overcome them.

UNTO JESUS

and not at the obstacles which meet us in our path. As soon as we stop to consider them, they amaze us, they confuse us, they overwhelm us, incapable as we are of understanding either the reason why they are permitted, or the means by which we may overcome them. The apostle began to sink as soon as he turned to look at the waves tossed by the storm; it was while he was looking at Jesus that he walked on the waters as on a rock. The more difficult our task, the more terrifying our temptations, the more essential it is that we look only at Jesus.

UNTO JESUS

and not at our troubles, to count up their number, to reckon their weight, to find perhaps a certain strange satisfaction in tasting their bitterness. Apart from Jesus trouble does not sanctify, it hardens or it crushes. It produces not patience, but rebellion; not sympathy, but selfishness; not hope (Rom. 5:3, 4) but despair. It is only under the shadow of the cross that we can appreciate the true weight of our own cross, and accept it each day from His hand, to carry it with love, with gratitude, with joy; and find in it for ourselves and for others a source of blessings.

UNTO JESUS

and not at the dearest, the most legitimate of our earthly joys, lest we be so engrossed in them that they deprive us of the sight of the very One Who gives them to us. If we are looking at Him first of all, then it is from Him we receive these good things, made a thousand times more precious because we possess them as gifts from His loving hand, which we entrust to His keeping, to enjoy them in communion with Him, and to use them for His glory.

UNTO JESUS

and not at the instruments, whatever they may be which He employs to form the path which He has appointed for us. Looking beyond man, beyond circumstances, beyond the thousand causes so rightly called secondary, let us ascend as far as the first cause—His will. Let us ascend even to the source of this very will,—His love. Then our gratitude, without being less lively towards those who do us good, will not stop at them; then in the testing day, under the most unexpected blow, the most inexplicable, the most overwhelming, we can say with the Psalmist: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it." (Psa. 39:9) And in the silence of our dumb sorrow the heavenly voice will gently reply: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." (John: 13:7).

UNTO JESUS

and not at the interests of our cause, of our party, of our church—still less at our personal interests. The single object of our life is the glory of God; if we do not make it the supreme goal of our efforts, we must deprive ourselves of His help, for His grace is only at the service of His glory. If, on the contrary, it is His glory that we seek above all, we can always count on His grace.

UNTO JESUS

and not at the sincerity of our intentions, and at the strength of our resolutions. Alas! how often the most excellent intentions have only prepared the way for the most humiliating falls. Let us stay ourselves, not on our intentions, but on His love; not on our resolutions, but on His promise.

UNTO JESUS

and not at our strength.

Our strength is good only to glorify ourselves; to glorify God one must have the strength of God.

UNTO JESUS

and not at our weakness. By lamenting our weakness have we ever become more strong? Let us look to Jesus, and His strength will communicate itself to our hearts; His praise will break forth from our lips.

UNTO JESUS

and not at our sins, neither at the source from which they come (Matt. 15:19) nor the chastisement which they deserve. Let us look at ourselves, only to recognize how much need we have of looking to Him; and looking to Him, certainly not as if we were sinless, but on the contrary, because we are sinners, measuring the very greatness of the offense by the greatness of the sacrifice which has atoned for it and of the grace which pardons it. "For one look that we turn on ourselves", said an eminent servant of God (McCheyne), "let us turn ten upon Jesus." "If it is very sure," said Vinet, "that one will not lose sight of his wretched state by looking at Jesus Christ crucified—because this wretched state is, as it were, graven upon the cross—it is also very sure that in looking at one's wretchedness one can lose sight of Jesus Christ; because the cross is not naturally graven upon the image of one's wretchedness." And he adds, "Look at yourselves, but only in the presence of the cross, only through Jesus Christ." Looking at the sin only gives death; looking at Jesus gives life. That which healed the Israelite in the wilderness was not considering his wounds, but raising his eyes to the serpent of brass. (Num. 21:9).

UNTO JESUS

and not (do we need to say it?) at our pretense of righteousness. Ill above all who are ill is he who believes himself in health; blind above the blind is he who thinks that he sees (John 9:41). If it is dangerous to look long at our wretchedness, which is, alas! too real. It is much more dangerous to rest complacently on imaginary merits.

UNTO JESUS

and not at the law.

The law gives commands, and gives no strength to carry them out; the law always condemns, and never pardons. If we put ourselves back under the law, we take ourselves away from grace. In so far as we make our obedience the means of our salvation, we lose our peace, our joy, our strength; for we have forgotten that Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth (Rom. 10:4). As soon as the law has constrained us to seek in Him our only Savior, then also to Him only belongs the right to command our obedience — an obedience which includes nothing less than our whole heart, and our most secret thoughts, but which has ceased from being an iron yoke, and an insupportable burden, to become an easy yoke and a light burden (Matt. 11:30). An obedience which He makes as delightful as it is binding, an obedience which He inspires, at the same time as He requires it, and which in very truth, is less a consequence of our salvation than it is a part of this very salvation — and, like all the rest, a free gift.

UNTO JESUS

and not at what we are doing for Him. Too much occupied with our work, we can forget our Master—it is possible to have the hands full and the heart empty. When occupied with our Master, we cannot forget our work; if the heart is filled with His love, how can the hands fail to be active in His service?

UNTO JESUS

and not to the apparent success of our efforts. The apparent success is not the measure of the real success; and besides. God has not told us to succeed, but to work; it is of our work that He requires an account, and not of our success. Why then concern ourselves with it? It is for us to scatter the seed, for God to gather the fruit; if not today, then it will be tomorrow; if He does not employ us to gather it, then He will employ others. Even when success is granted to us, it is always dangerous to fix our attention on it: on the one hand we are tempted to take some of the credit of it to ourselves; on the other hand we thus accustom ourselves to abate our zeal when we cease to perceive its result, that is to say, at the very time when we should redouble our energy. To look at the success is to walk by sight; to look at Jesus, and to persevere in following Him and serving Him, in spite of all discouragements, is to walk by faith.

UNTO JESUS

and not to the spiritual gifts which we have already received, or which we are now receiving from Him. As to yesterday's grace, it has passed with yesterday's work; we can no longer make use of it; we should no longer linger over it. As to today's grace, given for today's work, it is entrusted to us, not to be looked at, but to be used. We are not to gloat over it as a treasure, counting up our riches, but to spend it immediately, and remain poor, "Looking unto Jesus."

UNTO JESUS

and not at the amount of sorrow that our sins make us experience, or the amount of humiliation which they produce in us. If only we are humiliated by them enough to make us no longer complacent with ourselves; if only we are troubled by them enough to make us look to Jesus, so that He may deliver us from them, that is all that He asks from us; and it is also this look which more than anything else will make our tears spring and our pride fall. And when it is given to us as to Peter, to weep bitterly (Luke 22:62), Oh! then may our tear-dimmed eyes remain more than ever directed unto Jesus; for even our repentance will become a snare to us, if we think to blot out in some measure by our tears those sins which nothing can blot out, except the blood of the Lamb of God.

UNTO JESUS

and not at the brightness of our joy, the strength of our assurance, or the warmth of our love. Otherwise, when for a little time this love seems to have grown cold, this assurance to have vanished, this joy to have failed us—either as the result of our own faithlessness, or for the trial of our faith— immediately, having lost our feelings, we think that we have lost our strength, and we allow ourselves to fall into an abyss of sorrow, even into cowardly idleness, or perhaps sinful complaints. Ah! rather let us remember that if the feelings with their sweetness, are absent, the faith with its strength remains with us. To be able always to be "abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58) let us look steadily, not at our ever changeable hearts, but at Jesus; Who is always the same.

UNTO JESUS

and not at the heights of holiness to which we have attained. If no one may believe himself a child of God so long as he still finds stains in his heart, and stumbling in his life, who could taste the joy of salvation? But this joy is not bought with a price. Holiness is the fruit, not the root of our redemption. It is the work of Jesus Christ for us which reconciles us unto God; it is the work of the Holy Spirit in us which renews us in His likeness. The shortcomings of a faith which is true, but not yet fully established, and bearing but little fruit, in no way lessens the fullness of the perfect work of the Savior, nor the certainty of His unchanging promise, guaranteeing life eternal unto whomsoever trusts in Him. And so to rest in the Redeemer is the true way to obey Him; and it is only when enjoying the peace of forgiveness that the soul is strong for the conflict. If there are any who abuse this blessed truth by giving themselves over unscrupulously to spiritual idleness, imagining that they can let the faith which they think they have take the place of the holiness which they have not, they should remember this solemn warning of the Apostle Paul, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24) and that of the Apostle John, "He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4) and that of the Lord Jesus Himself, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire".

(Matt. 7:19).

UNTO JESUS

and not at our defeats or victories. If we look at our defeats we shall be cast down; if we look at our victories we shall be puffed up. And neither will help us to fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). Like all our blessings, the victory, with the faith which wins it, is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:57) and to Him is all the glory.

UNTO JESUS

and not at our doubts.

The more we look at them the larger they appear, until they can swallow up all our faith, our strength, and our joy. But if we look away from them to our Lord Jesus, Who is the Truth (John 14:6) the doubts will scatter in the light of His presence like clouds before the sun.

UNTO JESUS

and not at our faith.

The last device of the adversary, when he cannot make us look elsewhere, is to turn our eyes from our Savior to our faith, and thus to discourage us if it is weak, to fill us with pride if it is strong: and either way to weaken us. For power does not come from the faith, but from the Savior by faith. It is not looking at our look, it is "looking unto Jesus."

UNTO JESUS

and it is from Him and in Him that we learn to know, not only without danger, but for the wellbeing of our souls, what it is good for us to know about the world and about ourselves, our sorrows and our dangers, our resources and our victories: seeing everything in its true light, because it is He Who shows them to us, and that only at the time and in the proportion in which this knowledge will produce in us the fruits of humility and wisdom, gratitude and courage, watchfulness and prayer. All that it is desirable for us to know, the Lord Jesus will teach us; all that we do not learn from Him, it is better for us not to know.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

as long as we remain on the earth—unto Jesus from moment to moment, without allowing ourselves to be distracted by memories of a past which we should leave behind us, nor by occupation with a future of which we know nothing.

UNTO JESUS NOW,

if we have never looked unto Him,

UNTO JESUS AFRESH,

if we have ceased doing so,

UNTO JESUS ONLY,

UNTO JESUS STILL,

UNTO JESUS ALWAYS, with a gaze more and more constant, more and more confident, "changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). and thus awaiting the hour when He will call us to pass from earth to Heaven, and from time to eternity,

"HENCEFORTH—

(Theodore Monod, 1874)

Look unto Me,

and be ye saved,

all the ends of the earth;

for I am God,

and there is none else.

Isaiah 45:22

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