

Looking Unto Jesus

Isaac Ambrose

*Free*editorial 

"I determined not to know anything among you, (said Paul), except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." He resolved himself, before he preached among the Corinthians, that this should be the only point of knowledge that he would profess himself to have skill in; and that in the course of his ministry he would labor to bring them to. This he made the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of his knowledge; "yea, doubtless, (says he), and I count all things but loss for the excellency of knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Eph. 3:18, Phil. 3:8.

In this knowledge of Christ, there is an excellency above all other knowledge in the world; there is nothing more pleasing and comfortable, more animating and enlivening, more ravishing and soul contenting; only Christ is the sun and center of all divine revealed truths, we can preach nothing else as the object of our faith, as the necessary element of your soul's salvation, which does not some way or other, either meet in Christ, or refer to Christ; only Christ is the whole of man's happiness, the Sun to enlighten him, the Physician to heal him, the Wall of fire to defend him, the Friend to comfort him, the Pearl to enrich him, the Ark to support him, the Rock to sustain him under the heaviest pressures, "As a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Isa. 32:2.

Only Christ is that ladder between earth and heaven, the Mediator between God and man, a mystery, which the angels of heaven desire to pry, and peep, and look into. 1 Pet. 1:12. Here is a blessed subject indeed; who would not be glad to pry into it, to be acquainted with it? "This is life eternal, to know God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent." John 17:3. Come then, let us look; on this Sun of righteousness: we cannot receive harm but good by such a look; indeed by looking long on the natural sun, we may have our eyes dazzled, and our faces blackened; but by looking unto Jesus Christ, we shall have our eyes clearer, and our faces fairer; if "the light of the eye rejoice the heart." Prov. 15:30, how much more, when we have such a blessed object to look upon? As Christ is more excellent than all the world, so this sight transcends all other sights; it is the epitome of a Christian's happiness, the quintessence of evangelical duties, "Looking unto Jesus."

In the text we have the act and object. The act in the original is very emphatical, (aphorontes eis), the English does not fully express it; it signifies an averting or drawing off the eye from one object to another; there are two expressions (apo and eis); the one signifies a turning off the eye from all other objects; the other is a fixing of the eye upon one object. So it is both a looking off and a looking on. On what must we look? This is the object, a "looking unto Jesus"; a title that denotes His mercy and bounty, as Christ denotes his office and function. I shall not be so curious as to inquire why Jesus, and not Christ is nominated; I suppose the person is aimed at, which implies them both; only this may be observed, that Jesus is the purest gospel-name: Jesus was not the dialect of the Old Testament; the first place that ever we read of this title as given to Christ, is in Matt. 1:21 - "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Some observe that this name Jesus was given Him twice; once till death, Matt. 1:21, and afterwards for ever, Phil. 2:10.

The first was a note of His entering into covenant with God, to fulfill the law for us, and to die for our sins; the second was to honor a person, who for His humility was more exalted than any person ever has been, or shall be. First, Jesus was the humble name of His deserving grace; now Jesus is the exalted name of His transcendent glory: at first the Jews did crucify Jesus and His name; and the Apostles did then distrust, whether Jesus was the true Jesus: but now God has raised Him from the dead, and "has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." Phil 2:9,10. My meaning is not to insist on this name, in contradiction to other names of Christ; He is often called Christ, and Lord and Mediator, and Son of God, and Emmanuel; why? Jesus is all these, Jesus is Christ, as He is the anointed of God; and Jesus is the Lord, as He has dominion over all the world; and Jesus is Mediator, as He is the reconciler of God and man; and Jesus is the Son of God, as He was eternally begotten before all worlds; and Jesus is Emmanuel, as He was incarnate, and so God with us. Only because Jesus signifies Savior, and this name was given Him upon that very account, "for He shall save His people from their sins," I shall make this my design to look at Jesus more especially as carrying on the great work of our salvation from first to last. This, indeed, is the glad tidings, the gospel, the gospel privilege, and our gospel-duty, "Looking unto Jesus".

But first, we must look off all other things, the note is this, we must take our mind off every thing which might divert us in our Christian race from "looking unto Jesus". (Aphorontes), the first word, or first piece of a word in my text, speaks to us this, hands off, or eyes off from anything that stands in the way of Jesus Christ. This was the Lord's charge to Lot, "Look not behind thee." Gen. 19:17. He was to renounce and detest the lewdness of Sodom and must not even look towards it. "At that day shall a man look to His Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel, and he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands." Isa. 17:7,8. This was the fruit of God's chastisement on Israel, that he should not give a look to the altars, lest they diverted, or draw his eyes from his Maker. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" said Paul, 2 Cor. 4:18. A Christian's aim is beyond visible things. Oh when a soul comes to know what an eternal God is, and what an eternal Jesus is, and what an

eternal crown is; when it knows that great design of Christ to save poor souls and to communicate Himself eternally to such poor creatures, this takes off the edge of its desires as to visible temporal things; Oh what are they in comparison?

The preferring of the world before Christ Himself. This is the height of covetousness, and the height of adultery; what, to make the members of Christ the members of an harlot? Those admiring thoughts are Christ's, those pains are Christ's, that love is Christ's, that time, that care, that earnestness is Christ's; they are all Christ's and will you give that which is Christ's unto the world? And prefer the world before Christ with His own? What, live as professed prostitutes, that prefer every one before their husbands? How will this expose you to the scorn of men and angels? At the last day they will come pointing and say, "This is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches; he is the Gadareen that loved his swine more than Christ Jesus, 'Love not the world,'" said John, 1 John 2:15. Christ is never precious in a man's apprehension, so long as the world seems glorious to him. As we begin to relish sweetness in Christ, the world begins to be bitter to us. The more sweetness we taste in the one, the more bitterness we taste in the other.

But why must we look off every thing that diverts our "looking unto Jesus"? Because we cannot look fixedly on Christ, and such things together, and at once; the eye cannot look upwards and downwards at once in a direct line; we cannot seriously mind heaven and earth in one thought, "No man can serve two masters," Matt. 6:24. Because, while we look on these things, we cannot see the beauty that is in Christ. Indeed beauty is the attraction of the soul, the soul must see a beauty in that which it is desiring; but our wishing looks on other things make Christ vile and contemptible in our eyes.

It is according to the very law of marriage, "Therefore shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife," Gen. 2:24. The Lord Christ marries Himself to the souls of His saints; "I will betroth thee unto Me forever; I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and mercies:" Hos. 2:19. And for this cause the soul must forsake all, and cleave unto Christ, as married wives do, we must leave all for our Husband the Lord Jesus; "Hearken, Oh daughter and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thy own people, and thy father's house," Psa. 45:10.

Christ is a jealous Christ. Now, jealousy is a passion in the soul, that will not endure any sharing in the object beloved: the woman that hath a jealous husband, must leave all her old companions: if she cast any amorous looks or glances after them, the husband will be jealous, and He will be jealous. Christians! Our God "is a jealous God," Exo. 20:5. Our Christ is a jealous Christ; He cannot endure that we should look on any other things, so as to lust after them.

Go forth, Oh you daughters of Zion, lay aside all private and earthly affections, and look upon the Glory of CHRIST. If we will behold the great King, Jesus Christ, in His most excellent Glory (a sight able to satisfy the eye, and to ravish the heart) we must come out of our doors, we must come out of ourselves, otherwise we cannot see His GLORY. We are in ourselves shut up in a dark dungeon, and therefore we are called upon to come forth into the clear light of faith, and with the eyes of faith to behold, in daily meditation, the Glory of Christ Jesus.

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