

Looking Away From All Else

May 29, 2014

Psalm 43:1–5

1 Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!

2 For you are the God in whom I take refuge; *why have you rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*

WHEN OUR GAZE IS OFF JESUS:

- oppression turns into discouragement
- discouragement turns into despair
- despair turns into bitterness
- bitterness turns into resentment (*paranoia*)
- resentment turns into accusation

3 Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!

4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

WHEN WE FIX OUR GAZE UPON JESUS:

- the impossible becomes possible
- weakness turns into strength
- fear turns into faith
- depression turns into joy
- oppression turns into victory
- trial turns into blessing
- bondage (*addiction*) turns into freedom
- lust turns into purity
- death becomes life

Hebrews 12:1–3

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

2 **LOOKING (two Greek words - to look away from all else) TO JESUS, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

3 **Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.**

- **if the joy Jesus gazed upon enabled Him to endure the torture of the cross, what will you be able to endure if you fix your gaze upon Jesus?**
- **fixing our eyes upon Jesus, looking away from all else, is our ONLY protection and safety from growing weary and faint-hearted**

AW Tozer, "The Pursuit of God", Chapter 7, The Gaze of the Soul

"Believing, then, is directing the heart's attention to Jesus. It is lifting the mind to 'behold the Lamb of God,' and never ceasing that beholding for the rest of our lives. At first this may be difficult, but it becomes easier as we look steadily at His wondrous Person, quietly and without strain. Distractions may hinder, but once the heart is committed to Him, after each brief excursion away from Him the attention will return again and rest upon Him like a wandering bird coming back to its window.

I would emphasize this one committal, this one great volitional act which establishes the heart's intention to gaze forever upon Jesus. God takes this intention for our choice and makes what allowances He must for the thousand distractions which beset us in this evil world. He knows that we have set the direction of our hearts toward Jesus, and we can know it too, and comfort ourselves with the knowledge that a habit of soul is forming which will become after a while a sort of spiritual reflex requiring no more conscious effort on our part.

Faith is the least self-regarding of the virtues. It is by its very nature scarcely conscious of its own existence. Like the eye which sees everything in front of it and never sees itself, faith is occupied with the Object upon which it rests and pays no attention to itself at all. While we are looking at God we do not see ourselves--blessed riddance. The man who has struggled to purify himself and has had nothing but repeated failures will experience real relief when he stops tinkering with his soul and looks away to the perfect One. While he looks at Christ the very things he has so long been trying to do will be getting done within him. It will be God working in him to will and to do.

Faith is not in itself a meritorious act; the merit is in the One toward Whom it is directed. Faith is a redirecting of our sight, a getting out of the focus of our own vision and getting God into focus. Sin has twisted our vision inward and made it self-regarding. Unbelief has put self where God should be, and is perilously close to the sin of Lucifer who said, 'I will set my throne above the throne of God.' Faith looks out instead of in and the whole life falls into line.

All this may seem too simple. But we have no apology to make. To those who would seek to climb into heaven after help or descend into hell God says, 'The word is nigh thee, even in the word of faith.' The word induces us to lift up our eyes unto the Lord and the blessed work of faith begins.

When we lift our inward eyes to gaze upon God we are sure to meet friendly eyes gazing back at us, for it is written that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout all the earth. The sweet language of experience is 'Thou God seest me.' When the eyes of the soul looking out meet the eyes of God looking in, heaven has begun right here on this earth."