

Looking Unto Jesus: The Author and Finisher of Our Faith

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References: Hebrews 12, Hebrews 11; 1 Corinthians 3; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 10:23; Genesis 14; Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 3:3; 2 Corinthians 3; Hebrews 7:22; Jeremiah 31; Hebrews 8:6; Acts 3:15; John 1:4; Colossians 3:4; John 14:6; Philippians 1:2; Jude 1:24; 1 Peter 1; Isaiah 52:14; Isaiah 53:5; Isaiah 50:6; Colossians 2:15

Peter Kerr: Thank you. It's great to be here. Thank you for having us here. Thank you, **Harold**, for having invited us to come. We really appreciate that. It's nice to be back in **Vancouver** and nice to be back in **16th Avenue Gospel Chapel**. So thank you for your welcome.

My messages this week and for the Easter conference are going to be based from the book of Hebrews in the New Testament. And the book of Hebrews is a very interesting book. It was probably written to a church made up of people who had been saved from out of Judaism, so converted Jews. And when you read through the book of Hebrews, there's lots of direct quotes from the Old Testament. And there's a lot of references to the Old Testament. And the letter of Hebrews assumes that the people who were reading it were very familiar with the Old Testament and with the temple and the sacrifices and all that kind of stuff.

But people who had been saved from out of the religion of Judaism came to Christ, but then were under a lot of pressure from their family and friends who wanted them to come back to their religion. And they were very unhappy with the fact that these people were now following the Lord Jesus Christ. And so they were put under a lot of pressure. In fact, they were being threatened. They were being persecuted. These Christians needed encouragement. They needed edifying to stand firm in their confidence and their courage for the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we were just, you know, in prayer there reminding ourselves that, you know, quite possibly we here in Canada are headed for a time of pressure, persecution, of difficulty. And we need encouragement and we need to encourage each other and we need to remind each other of the faithfulness and the goodness of God. And we need to stand firm in the word of God and in our confidence in who the Lord Jesus Christ is.

So when we look at the book of Hebrews, I want to suggest tonight that the author of Hebrews had two main purposes, main goals in mind. And the first one was to elevate the Lord Jesus, to exalt the Lord Jesus, and to show that the Lord Jesus was better than the Old Testament religion, that he was superior to the Old Testament sacrifices and temple and priesthood and everything else. So his goal was to lift up the Lord Jesus, to elevate the Lord Jesus. His second goal was to encourage the believers. So to elevate Jesus and to encourage the believers.

So, well, why was he so intent on elevating the Lord Jesus? How would that have been encouraging to the believers? What he wanted them to understand was Jesus was worthy of them following him and believing in him. Then what they had come to find in the Lord Jesus was so much better than what they had left behind. Yes, there was a cost involved with them breaking with Judaism and coming to Christ. But what they had found was far better than what they had left behind. And so systematically through the whole book of Hebrews, the author begins to show how the person and work of the Lord Jesus is so glorious. It's interesting. The author and speaker David Gooding said, Hebrews is ablaze with the glory of the Lord. And so everywhere you look, the Lord is presented as glorious. But it's

interesting because the book of Hebrews presents the deity of the Lord Jesus. **He is God.** It also presents his humanity. That he was truly man, but that he was a perfect man. And that's why he was qualified to be the perfect lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice, because he is God in the flesh and he is perfect man. And he is holy and pure in every way.

So elevating the Lord Jesus. The second goal is to encourage the believers by exhorting them to remain faithful to Jesus, even though they were undergoing very intense pressure and persecution, even though there were family and friends that were saying, "come back to Judaism, come back to the temple worship," even though they were under pressure, the author says, **stand firm.**

Now, I want to take us to the book of Hebrews chapter 12 and the first three verses, because I think Hebrews 12 verses 1 through 3 kind of captures these goals of the author. And these three verses kind of bring together all the different themes of the book of Hebrews into one place. So let's read that together. Hebrews chapter 12 verses 1 through 3.

[Hebrews 12:1-3 NKJV]

¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Hebrews chapter 12 comes right after the discussion in chapter 11 on the examples of faith in the Old Testament. Sometimes Hebrews 11 is called the Hall of Faith, because it talks about men and women who truly believed the Lord, who trusted the Lord, and who followed the Lord, even through hardships and trials and heartache and great difficulties. Yet they were faithful to the Lord. And so the author

reminds these believers that he's writing to, and he says, others have been down this journey. You're not the first one to go through trials. You're not the first one to be persecuted for your faith. Others have had to walk this path before you. But ultimately, the one who is the best example is the Lord Jesus himself. Look at what he endured as he was faithful to his father. So great examples in the Old Testament believers, but the Lord Jesus is the greatest example. And so look to the Lord Jesus.

One of the things he reminds them at the beginning here, he said, we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. In other words, those who have gone before, who have blazed the trail for us, who have set the example to us. And he says, we're surrounded by their testimonies. We know who they are. We can read about them in the scriptures. And so we constantly are encouraged by reading and hearing about them. But he said, think of this. How did these believers remain faithful to the Lord? Well, he says, they laid aside the weights and the sin which held them back. And he says, we need to do the same. We need to do the same. And it's a very powerful statement. **Laying aside** or casting off every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us or entangles us.

What he's saying is, look at our lives. What is it that hinders us in our spiritual progress? What bad habits do we have? What sins do we have? What wrong thoughts do we have? What patterns in our life of fear, of anxiety, these things that trip us up and stop us from truly following the Lord. He said, these are **weights**. These are weights. Some of the things may not be bad in and of themselves, but they are just things that pull us back and hold us back all the time. And he says, those things need to be laid aside. So we need to be honest and evaluate in our lives. What is it? That is this weight. What is it that is hindering us, that is tripping us up? Those things need to be **put to death**. They need to be cut off. They need to be stripped away. And we need to get rid of anything that doesn't allow us to faithfully follow the Lord Jesus and to walk with him.

Very interesting. In 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul twice mentions something in chapter 3, chapter 6, verse 12, and again in 1

Corinthians 10 and verse 23, he makes almost the same statement. And he says this:

[1 Corinthians 6:12 NKJV]

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

So he's not talking about things that are out and out sinful and bad and wicked and evil, but just things which even might be allowable. If somebody said, "well, give me a chapter and verse. why am I not allowed to do this? You know, show me where the Bible says you can't do this." Well, I can't. But you know that in your life, that thing actually causes you to stumble spiritually. It preoccupies you. It distracts you. It might be something nice. Some people like sports or hobbies. Some people just like to do fun things. Some people like to watch movies or whatever. And they might not be bad things, but they take time away from, that we could be following the Lord, that we could be reading the Bible, that we could be in prayer, that we could be witnessing. We could be living for the Lord, but we are distracted by these other things. And so Paul says they might be allowable or lawful, but they're not helpful to us. And he says, **I won't be controlled** by those things. I deal with them honestly, and I get rid of them out of my life. Again, he says the same statement in 1 Corinthians 10, 23.

[1 Corinthians 10:23 NKJV]

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.

All things are lawful, but not all things build me up in my faith. So that's the thing we have to ask ourselves to look at what do we do each week? How do we spend our money? Where do we go? How do we spend our time? What friends are we with? Are there things that we're doing that are not building up our faith, not making us

stronger in the Lord, but actually weakening us, right? And if there are those things, we need to cut them out. We need to cut them out.

So he says, lay aside every weight. Well, then he says, the things that are sins as well. And there are things which we know, they're evil, they're wrong. And we know the Bible specifically tells us they're wrong. And he says, those things need to be cut out of our lives to put to death because they entangle us. They wrap us up. They stop us from running the race of faith in life. So we need to be honest. Don't play around. Don't make excuses. Deal with those things.

The heroes of faith in the past ran with endurance the race that was set before them. And we're called to run that same race with patience, with strength, with focus, right? Instead of being distracted, he says, **look unto Jesus**. Fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus. And go for it. Don't be willing to just have a kind of a half-hearted, apathetic Christian life that just kind of floats along. He says, be zealous for the Lord. Commit yourself to the Lord. Run that race with strength, with endurance.

So the saints of the past, great examples. But Jesus is the very best example of this. And he says, look at how he endured the contradiction of sinners, the opposition of the people round about. And people who should have known better, his own people, the Jews, who should have welcomed him, who should have recognized him. But they hated him. And they crucified him. And the Lord Jesus warned. He said, if I, your teacher, have been hated by the world, they will hate you also. If they have rejected and persecuted me, they will reject and persecute you also.

But as we look at the Lord Jesus, we see that he is faithful. He did the Father's will. He was, was in every way, he wanted to do what his Father told him to do, what his Father gave him to do. And when it came right down to that last hour before the cross, as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, he said, "Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me." He knew it was coming. "Nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done." That's the example.

So when we, when we look at Hebrews here, he says, look to the Lord Jesus, center on the Lord Jesus Christ, focus on him. And that's what he does in his whole book. He elevates the Lord Jesus. It's very, very Christ-centered. And he presents Jesus as the Messiah. He presents Jesus as the King. He presents Jesus as the Son of God. He presents Jesus as deity. He presents Jesus as perfect humanity.

And the book of Hebrews does something that no other New Testament book does. You know what that is? He presents Jesus as **priest**. Nowhere else in the New Testament will you find that emphasis. Only in the book of Hebrews. It's very unique. Jesus is King, and you can read about that in the Gospels, and we know that when he went to the cross, they even put up a sign above the cross. "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." And the Jews objected. They said, "no, no, he's not our King. Don't write that he was King. Just say that he said King." Pilate said, "what I've written, I've written." Pilate asked him, "are you the King of the Jews?" And Jesus says, "it is as you said."

So you will find in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, a number of places where Jesus is mentioned as King. But Hebrews is the only one that says he's priest. A number of places in the New Testament speaks about Jesus being the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. It speaks about him. He is the propitiation for our sins. It talks about him on the cross. Many places it speaks about Jesus as our sacrifice. but only in the book of Hebrews does it say that he's our priest.

And he connects all these different themes into one and we see them in Hebrews. In the Old Testament, you couldn't be a king and a priest because the kings came from the line of Judah and the priests came from the line of Levi through Aaron. So you couldn't be a king priest. It was forbidden. But Jesus is a king priest. But he's not from the line of Aaron. He is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. And we go back into Genesis 14 and we find this man, Melchizedek, who was a king and he was a priest. Very, very unique. Only one in the whole Bible. And Jesus' priesthood is according to that order of Melchizedek. And so the writer to the Hebrews says, looking unto Jesus. Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 1, he says, **consider him**.

[Hebrews 3:1 NKJV]

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,

Look to him. Fix your eyes on him. Look carefully. Observe him. Make sure that our mind, our thoughts are occupied with the Lord Jesus. And then we read there in Hebrews 12 and verse 3, consider him.

[Hebrews 12:3 NKJV]

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Well, as the book of Hebrews considers the Lord Jesus, what do we learn? Well we learn so much. It's a wonderful book and there's so much in that book. Hebrews repeatedly teaches us that Jesus is better. He is superior. That word better is one of the key words in the whole book. Again and again, Jesus is shown to be better than the angels. He's better than Moses in the Old Testament law. He's a better leader than Joshua. Joshua led the people into Canaan, but they never took all of the land they were supposed to and they never really had rest, did they? They were always fighting wars and there was all difficulty and they were being rebellious. They never entered into a complete rest. Jesus is a better leader and he brings us into an eternal spiritual rest that is far better than Joshua has.

And then it says Jesus is better than Aaron and the priests and he's better than the high priests. In fact, he is called the **great high priest**, the high priest of all other high priests. Jesus is shown to be better than the temple. He's shown to be better than all of the Old Testament sacrifices. All of the five Levitical offerings are brought together in the work of the Lord Jesus that he accomplishes. no other offering in the Old Testament could span all of those five elements but all of them are there in the Lord Jesus.

And so the author then, after elevating Jesus in this way, says to his hearers, **don't look back**. Don't go back to your old life. Don't go back to your old way of thinking. Don't go back to your old religion. Don't go back to your old world view. Keep looking at Jesus. Keep following Jesus. Yes, I know it's hard and I know it's tough and I know it can be very painful and I know sometimes your own family can hurt you and reject you and I know it's hard when friends mock you and put you down because you're a follower of Christ. He says, but don't look back. Keep looking to Jesus and keep going forward.

It's very interesting when you read through the book of Hebrews, one of the things that we are shown is that Jesus is so much better than the angels. The Jews of that day gave a lot of attention to angels and there's a lot of mysticism and a lot of speculation about angels and so the book of Hebrews downplays that importance and it says the Lord Jesus is far better, far superior. The angels are just created beings. In fact, remember some of them rebelled and followed Lucifer, Satan and there are angels who are deceiving spirits. He said, Jesus is not a created being. He is the **creator** and he is the son of God and he is perfect. He's holy, harmless and undefiled. Stop worrying about angels and keep following Jesus.

It's wonderful in Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3. The author says:

[Hebrews 1:3 NKJV]

who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Wow. What a description of the Lord Jesus that is. It just magnifies him. It gives majesty to the Lord Jesus. It shows his deity so powerfully. And I love this line. He upholds all things by the word of his power. He created all things and he sustains all things. The reason that our universe doesn't just fragment, it's because of the power of the Lord Jesus holding everything together. He sustains it all.

And this great one, it tells us this in verse 3, the second half of verse 3, when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Who is it that died for us? It wasn't an angel. Who is it that came to die for us? It wasn't just a mere man. Who is it that came to die for us? It wasn't Moses. Who is it that came to die for us? None other than the Son of God. This is the Logos, the Word who became flesh. This is God, Emmanuel, God with us, who stepped into time and space, who took upon him the form of a man, who came as a servant. **He himself** took on this task that nobody else could accomplish. He himself purged our sins.

And we'll talk a lot more about that obviously through the conference and unpack that and open that up more because there's so many beautiful truths that are contained even in that one statement. But as the book of Hebrews goes through, it tells us in chapter 3 that Jesus is counted worthy of more glory than Moses because he says the one who built the house has more honor than the house itself. The house might be a masterpiece, might be beautiful, but the one who designed it, the architect, the builder, they get more honor than just the house, right? The creator gets more honor than the thing that was made. And so he tells us in Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 3:

[Hebrews 3:3 NKJV]

For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.

Every house is built by someone, but he who built all things is God. And Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant. Moses was a good man, a strong man, he served the Lord. But Christ was faithful as a son over his own house. Christ is the builder, Christ is the maker of all things. Moses was just a servant. The Lord Jesus is the very son of God.

And there's so much in the New Testament. I love the way that Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians chapter 3, he compares the Old Testament and the Old Covenant with the coming of Jesus and

the New Covenant. And he speaks about Moses and the law being a ministry of death. But the ministry of the Lord Jesus, which is life and light in the Spirit, is so much better. And it's just a beautiful comparison that is given there.

So Jesus is better. He is superior in every way. And again and again through the book, and we'll look at this a lot more as we go through this. One of the big emphases of the book, as I already mentioned, is that Jesus is presented as the priest, the high priest, the best of all high priests and the best of all priests. Just two verses. Hebrews 7 and verse 22. Hebrews 7, verse 22.

[Hebrews 7:22 NKJV]

by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

And this is the New Covenant that is being talked about. The New Covenant in his blood. On the last night, the Lord Jesus, as he met for the last supper with his disciples, he said, "this is my blood of the New Covenant which is shed for you." And Hebrews speaks a lot about this concept of this New Covenant in fulfillment of what Jeremiah spoke about in his prophecies in Jeremiah 31. And he talked about a coming day, future, when God would bring in a New Covenant, a glorious New Covenant, not just written on tablets of stone like Moses was, but written on the heart and on the conscience, an inward transformation, a better covenant that the Lord Jesus brought in. And then in Hebrews 8 and verse 6, Hebrews 8 and verse 6:

[Hebrews 8:6 NKJV]

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

Beautiful. Absolutely godly. And there's so much we could say about that. I just want to hurry on in our last few minutes. You'll notice in

Hebrews 12 and verse 2, it says that Jesus is the **author and finisher** of our faith. Again, very, very beautiful portrayal here of the Lord Jesus.

That word author of our faith, author can have two different ideas. The one idea is that of a pioneer, somebody who goes ahead. They blaze the trail, they set the example, they take the lead and they provide that example. Sometimes this word is translated as captain. So Jesus is the author or the captain of our faith. He is the one that we follow. So he's superior to any other example. You think even of our own life, we might know other godly men and godly women. But ultimately, we need to follow the Lord Jesus. The apostle Paul rebuked the Corinthians because they said, "oh, I follow Peter." Others said, "no, no, no, I follow Paul." Others said, "no, I follow Apollos." And they were following humans. And Paul said, "no, you mustn't do that. Don't elevate any person to that level. We need to follow Christ as our example." And the book of Hebrews says exactly the same thing. So we look to the captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus.

The word author. Second possible meaning of that word author is that of a founder. Somebody who starts something. Sometimes it can be translated as the word to cause something. He is the author of our faith and of our salvation. And of course, we know that if it wasn't for the work that the Lord Jesus had done, we couldn't be saved. We couldn't have our sins forgiven. We couldn't have everlasting life. We couldn't be children of God. It all hinged on, it depended on what the Lord Jesus came to do in his life and death and resurrection and ascension and glorification. So he is the founder of our faith. He has done everything necessary for human beings to be saved, to be forgiven, to become children of God. In Acts chapter 3, verse 15, it refers to Jesus as the author or the prince of life.

[Acts 3:15 NKJV]

and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

In other words, he is the cause. He is the fountain of life. In John's gospel, he says:

[John 1:4 NKJV]

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The book of Colossians says:

[Colossians 3:4 NKJV]

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

So he is the very foundation. He is the fountain of our life. Without him, there is no salvation. There is no life at all. Jesus said:

[John 14:6 NKJV]

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

He is the light of the world. So he's the author of our faith, author of our salvation.

He's also the **finisher** of our faith. And that's a lovely word there. It means somebody who brings something to a completion, who finishes what he starts. Now, I don't know about you, but I've started many things in my life that I never finished. I had good intentions, but things went wrong. I got sick. I was weak. I didn't have enough money. I got distracted. I didn't finish some things that I started. **Jesus always finishes what he starts.** He is the finisher of our faith. He brings it to perfection or completion. And that's what's so amazing. On the one hand, the Lord Jesus gave us the example of faith, right from birth to death, faithful all the way. Absolutely perfect in his faith. He complete. What did he say when he died on the cross?

"It is finished." It is completed. It has been perfected. He is the finisher of our salvation.

But also, once we come to Christ and we commit ourselves to him, it tells us that he holds us and nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. When a person trusts in the Lord Jesus as their Savior, we are joined to Christ. We are joined to the church, the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells us. He seals us unto day of redemption. The Holy Spirit is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance in Christ. We are justified by faith in the Lord Jesus. Nothing can pluck us from the Father's hand. And Philippians 1, verse 2 says:

[Philippians 1:2 NKJV]

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

He who has begun a good work in you will bring it to completion. That's the word, the finisher. He will finish it. So once we have given ourselves to the Lord, he holds us. The book of Jude says:

[Jude 1:24 NKJV]

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

He keeps you. 1 Peter chapter 1, he talks about us being held, guarded by the power of God unto salvation. And it's a wonderful assurance that we can have. He is the author and he is the finisher of our faith. So by his life and death and resurrection, his ascension, his glorification, Jesus established the way of salvation by grace through faith and he guaranteed the completion of our salvation.

Can you imagine how comforting that was for these Christians who got this letter in the midst of all of their difficulty and hardship? And it's comforting for us, isn't it? whatever we have to go through,

whatever trials, whatever hardships, it's comforting for us. The Lord is at work in us. It's not just us trying to live the Christian life. God himself is working in and through us by his grace. And, you know, that's amazing when sometimes we feel so weak. We can feel discouraged, don't we? Sometimes we just feel overwhelmed. It feels like the world has gone crazy. There's all these things happening and we can have fears and anxiety and we can feel like, how can I keep going?

Maybe we have children who are not following the Lord and they're breaking our heart. Maybe we have family who just don't even want anything to do with us because we are believers. Maybe we have problems in our business and all these things can come and say, how can I keep going? And then we are reminded it's not just me trying to keep going. I'm in the Lord's hands. The Holy Spirit indwells me. God has given me his promises in his word. God is with me. I can turn and look to the Lord Jesus, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of my faith and then I can be encouraged and then I can be encouraged.

For the joy set before him he endured the cross. The Lord Jesus went through more deep pain and suffering than we could ever imagine. But he endured it. He went through it. Why? For the joy set before him. Well, part of that joy was doing the Father's will. Part of the joy was us. That he was making salvation available for us. Hebrews talks about him bringing many sons to glory through his suffering. And so, as the Lord Jesus looked ahead at what he was providing in his sacrifice and the way of salvation being opened, that was his joy. And of course, his joy was returning to the Father and once again being glorified with the glory that he had with the Father. He didn't take joy in the cross and the pain but he looked past it for the joy set before him.

And that's a wonderful principle for us too. Sometimes this life doesn't make sense and sometimes it just doesn't work out nicely. We all know that. We know Christians who have prayed and they've asked the Lord, "Lord, deliver me, heal me, take this problem away." And the Lord said no. Just like Paul. He said, "take the thorn of the flesh away" and the Lord said no because my grace is sufficient for

you. And there are times that the Lord allows us to suffer and the Lord allows Christians to die in pain and the Lord allows Christians to lose their business and the Lord allows Christians to go through great heartache. And when we do, we don't find joy in that trial but we look past that trial to what's ahead and we know the best is yet to come. We have a wonderful future with the Lord forever and ever in heaven. Paul speaks about the light and momentary afflictions which are working for us a far greater weight of glory. And so we look not to the things that are seen, not to the here and now, but we look to the things that are eternal, the things that are of God and we take joy and comfort in that. who for the joy set before him.

I think when we look at the example of the Lord Jesus, it's so amazing, so wonderful, so encouraging. But you know, time has gone here but very quickly, it says he endured the cross **despising the shame**. That little statement, it literally means he looked at it and he said, it's okay. He thought lightly of it. Now, in the Garden of Gethsemane, we see him suffering, sweating great drops of blood as he faced the horror of the cross and yet he despised that shame. He was willing to go through with it. The book of Isaiah speaks about in prophecy of him, his visage was marred more than any man, his form more than the sons of men. He was despised, rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief and so on. He carried our sorrows. He was smitten by God, afflicted, stricken, wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

And this idea of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus is central to this epistle of Hebrews. It just focuses: Christ, our Lord, suffered. That was the pathway to glory. That was the pathway to victory. He despised the shame. He was willing to literally take it on himself and not shrink back. He became a curse for us on the cross. Cursed is everyone who hangs on the cross. Isaiah said again, Isaiah 50 in verse 6:

[Isaiah 50:6 NKJV]

I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

You and I try and avoid shame, don't we? Shame is a very powerful negative thing. And we don't like to be shamed. We don't like to feel ashamed. We try and avoid it as much as possible. Jesus understood he had to take the shame. He had to take our shame upon himself and he did it. And then the promise that's given, whoever trusts in the Lord will not be put to shame. He bore our shame so that we don't have to bear that. What a wonderful saviour is our saviour. How amazing when we think of him in his glory coming down to earth, humbling himself, suffering so much for us.

Then he was raised from the dead. But you know, it's not just the resurrection that was his victory. He was already victorious on the cross. When he said **it is finished**, the sacrifice, the payment for sin, the ransom was done and paid forever. Nobody can take away from it. Nobody can add to it. **It is finished**. Even before the resurrection, he already won. The scriptures tell us in Colossians that on the cross he made a public spectacle of the principalities and powers and disarmed them on the cross. Of course, the resurrection is only just a magnification of that glory and the victory of the Lord Jesus.

So, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us now lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus. Consider him looking unto Jesus, the author, the finisher of our faith. who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame.

And then what did he do? **He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high**. It is finished. You don't sit down when the job is still ongoing. When it's all completed and you can rest, you sit down. And that's what that phrase tells us about the Lord Jesus. He completely did what was necessary for your and my salvation

eternally. Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. What a saviour we have and how thankful we can be for the Lord Jesus Christ. Look to him. Just fix your eyes upon him every day. The world will crowd him. The flesh will tempt. The devil will discourage. But look to Jesus. Keep looking to Jesus. That's the best place that we can have our eyes is on the Lord Jesus. Let's pray to you.

Father, we thank you for the reminders and the challenge that we might be faithful as followers of Jesus, even in the midst of difficulty and opposition and persecution. Father, you don't spare your children from pain and difficulty and suffering. Thank you that you go with us through the fire and through the flood. Thank you for the supreme example of our Lord Jesus and his faithfulness. Help us to keep our eyes firmly fixed on him that the things of this earth might grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and his grace.

We thank you for our Savior. We thank you for our salvation. We rejoice and celebrate and worship and praise you for such a great salvation we are so privileged to be a part of. Help us then, Lord, to be faithful and help us to be bright, shining testimonies and witnesses for you that others might see that we are saved by the grace of God in Christ and that they too might be made thirsty to want to come and taste and see that the Lord is good. So, Father, thank you for this time and the encouragement of fellowship together. Part us now with your blessing, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.