

Classic Christian Writings:

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. (Hebrews 12:2)

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 ours.

Looking Unto Jesus Glorified--to find in Him our Heavenly Advocate completing by His intercession the work inspired by His lovingkindness 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 none.

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 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 Saviour is at hand (Phil. 4:4,5; 1 Thess. 5:23).

Looking Unto Jesus The Author and the Finisher of our faith--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, *aphorizontes*, 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 on the world--its customs, its example, its rules, its judgments.

Unto Jesus and not on 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 dallings 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 Saviour. "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.

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 talking 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" (Romans 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 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) 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 toward 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 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.” “Look at yourselves,” said Vinet, “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 at our pretence of righteousness. Ill above all who are ill is he who believes himself in health. Blind above the blind 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 every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4).

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 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 Jesus and to persevere in following Him and serving Him, in spite of all discouragements, is to walk by faith.

Unto Jesus and not at the amount of sorrow that our sins make us experience, or amount of humiliation which they produce in us. If only we were 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 to 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 feeling, 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.

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 be 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 Saviour 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 Saviour by faith. It is not looking at our look, it is "looking unto Jesus."

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 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--the promised hour, the blessed hour when at last "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).