

Consider Him

by K.P. Yohannan

The sermon emphasizes the importance of fixing our eyes on Jesus and considering Him in order to find the strength to endure difficult circumstances and pursue a deeper relationship with Him.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:17

Topics: "Endurance in Faith", "Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the importance of fixing our eyes on Jesus to avoid losing heart amidst life's challenges. He illustrates how early Christians endured severe persecution by remembering Jesus, drawing strength from their faith in Him rather than their circumstances. The sermon highlights that true endurance comes from a personal relationship with Christ, as seen in the lives of Stephen, Paul, and the psalmist who found hope and clarity by considering the Lord. Yohannan shares his own journey of rediscovering Jesus amidst ministry pressures, underscoring that our greatest need is to keep Jesus at the center of our lives. Ultimately, he encourages believers to pursue a deep, personal connection with Christ as the source of strength and hope.

Transcript

"That . . . the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling . . ." Ephesians 1:17-18

We are told in Hebrews 12:2-3 (NIV), "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." "Consider Him . . ." Those are powerful words, because at one time or another, we all grow weary. Our hearts so easily faint, and we find ourselves on that verge of giving up.

No matter how great the accomplishments in your life are, how many degrees you hold, how many books you have read or how determined you are to persist to the end, losing heart comes to us all. But there is a way to not lose heart. That is found in keeping Jesus before us, fixing our eyes on Him and considering Him. Following the Lord closely is the most precious thing in this life. And it is only in fixing our gaze on Him that we are able to endure whatever comes along. Think about the disciples who followed Jesus.

After Christ's resurrection and ascension, severe persecution arose under the Roman emperor, Nero, in A.D. 54-68. Gladiators slaughtered hundreds of believers, many were fed to hungry lions and still others were crucified. Surely these believers must have prayed for God's intervention, but the persecution and suffering were not eliminated. How, then, were they able to endure such great opposition? Certainly this persecution would have been enough to turn away even the most devoted saint.

But it didn't happen. Why? Because their eyes were fixed on Jesus. Church history tells us that in the midst of such tremendous persecution the believers would encourage one another to "remember Jesus!" When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was being stoned to death, Acts 7:55-56 (NIV) tells us that he "looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'

" It was in seeing Jesus that Stephen found the strength not only to live for His Savior, but to die for Him as well. Notice that it was not the great need to get the Gospel to all people that gave Stephen the fortitude to continue even when persecuted. It was not the depravity of the lost that kept the disciples enduring until the end. It was only because of Jesus. The good work you are doing or the fruit you are seeing can never be enough to keep you going. Only in seeing Him will you find the strength to endure all things to the end.

Hundreds of times, by different reporters, presidents and prime ministers from all over the world, Mother Teresa was asked the same question: "What makes you do what you are doing? How do you keep going?" Never was her answer, "There are so many lepers in India. There are so many poor people in India. The suffering and needs are so great." No. Her answer was always the same. She would simply reply, "Because of Jesus." And this is how I want to encourage you also. In everything, at all times, look to Jesus.

Come to Him and remember Him. I can say this to you because I have learned from my own experiences how easy it is to wander. How easy it is to get so caught up in all that happens in life, becoming sidetracked and losing our focus. But our hope and our life are in seeing Jesus. He Is Our Rock A sure guarantee to become discouraged and fail is to consider the circumstances you face. It was Peter whom Christ called to come and walk to Him on the water. And, considering Christ, Peter stepped out of the boat and onto the water--and began walking!

But it is when he started to look around and see the raging waves that he began to sink. He simply could not accept that what he was doing was reasonable. And when he considered his circumstances, he began to sink. This tells us that our circumstances, whatever they may be--friends or relatives rejecting or opposing you, health failing, business in trouble, people whom you trusted and looked up to no longer walking with God, the list can go on and on--can cause us to lose heart.

Remember Paul? Anyone reading the book of 2 Corinthians, even superficially, will be stunned by the persecution, difficulties and suffering Paul encountered in his life: In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness--besides the other things, what comes upon me daily . . . (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

Humanly speaking, it is difficult to grasp or comprehend how a man could go on with this kind of intense suffering. Not only did he face this suffering from outsiders, but also from people who were very close to him, he experienced such rejection and loneliness. In the time of difficulties, most of his friends ran away (see 2 Timothy 4:10). How on earth did Paul survive? The answer is given in 2 Corinthians 4:1--"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart."

That simply means the thing that kept Paul going, in spite of all the difficulties, was his constant consideration of the Lord Jesus Christ--for it was He who went before him, the one who was with him and the one who had called him. The very first thing Christ told Paul were the things that he must suffer for His sake (see Acts 9:16), and Paul never forgot that. What kept John, Christ's beloved disciple, from despair when he was exiled and all alone in a forgotten land on the island of Patmos?

We read in the first chapter of the book of Revelation about John's "Christ encounter." In the midst of feeling forsaken and with every reason to be discouraged, we find John looking to Christ--and what a remarkable encounter he had! We have the choice to deliberately think about the Lord in the moments our hearts begin to become overwhelmed with the circumstances of life. It is a choice we make and one that can eventually become a habit. In every situation, every day, in all things, let us consider Christ, who He is and His promises for us.

For "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). He never changes. He who was able to keep Paul and John until the end is able to keep you as well. The only one whom we can draw strength from and depend on for all that we need is Jesus. Our Answer Matthew 24:12 says, "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." This means that the discouragement we face and the way things go wrong all around us can become reasons for us to lose our attention and our affection toward Christ.

And that becomes the reason for our downfall. In reading Psalm 73, it's almost as if you've opened the personal diary of a man struggling with this very issue. It speaks of how, when he looked around and saw the prosperity of the wicked, he almost lost his faith. He even came to the verge of denying God and walking away. But then, toward the end of the psalm, we read that when he came before the Lord and considered the Lord, he understood all things as they are. He cries out in the end, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but You?

And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You" (Psalm 73:25). The psalmist is essentially saying, "No longer do I desire the easy life of the wicked, their wealth or their seeming happiness. The only thing I desire on this earth is You, O Lord." He looked to the heavens not to see what God could give him to make his life a little nicer. He looked to the heavens because he realized the Lord is the only one who matters. The most important thing and the only thing is to pursue the Lord Himself and gaze upon Him.

Jesus is the answer for everything in this life. This makes me think back to when I was in seminary 25 years ago. The blessings were many, and I am grateful for the godly professors I learned from. Those years were spent researching and gaining knowledge of the Scriptures. I studied Greek and Hebrew, philosophy and history, ancient culture and missions. It's an honest thing to say I was a very bright, very good student. But somehow, at the end of all my learning, spiritually I was dying.

I lost Jesus. I studied, researched and learned all about Him, but somehow I lost Him. It was at this same time, toward the end of my senior year, that I began pastoring a small church and preaching four times a week! That is not an exaggeration to prove my point. You may not hear this from other preachers, but

honestly, I was losing Jesus even in the midst of much ministry. Sure, here and there I saw Him. Here and there I embraced Him. Here and there I wept before Him. But it was not a consistent thing.

And I grew weary, wanting to give up the ministry the Lord gave me. But I look back now and thank God for the few months of that "dark night" of my soul. It was during that time that I began to pursue and embrace the Lord again. I began living again and each day loving Him. He was no longer distant and far off, but near and continually before my eyes. I realized then, and still do today, that I have only one need. That need is Jesus. That truth affects my relationships with the people around me as well.

There is nothing that draws me close to someone except that he or she loves Jesus. It used to be that there were a thousand criteria I looked for in a person before I could accept them. I had my measuring scale upon which I weighed everyone. But now there is only one thing that matters: Does he or she love Jesus? No longer does it concern me if they use a different translation of the Bible. No longer does it matter if they subscribe to the doctrinal fine points that I believe.

It doesn't matter if they are conservative or liberal in this or that. It is no longer an issue of dress or speech or anything else. It is only an issue of Jesus. The older I get, the more and more I learn that there is nothing more important than Jesus Himself.

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