

Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus

by Reuben Walter

To fix our eyes on Jesus, we must focus on what takes our eyes away from Him, such as distractions and hindrances, and seek to understand and apply His teachings in our lives.

Duration: 52:38

Topics: "Jesus"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the hindrances that can distract us from our progress in the Christian walk. He uses the story of Peter walking on water to illustrate how we can be easily distracted by external circumstances. The preacher emphasizes the importance of focusing on what Christ wants from us each day and the virtues we should cultivate in our lives. He also highlights the need to overcome fear and unbelief in order to enter into the fullness of the Christian life.

Transcript

Brothers and sisters, young people, may the peace and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be here with us again this morning. As we all know, we gather to be in His presence. Not that we're not in His presence all week long, but when we gather to worship Him, it has more significance.

When we gather to worship Him, we get an opportunity to hear what He has to say to us. We get an opportunity to examine His Word, all else aside, all our work, all our other thoughts, everything else that may be on our mind that may be hindering our worship, everything that's business and whatever else it may be, put that off to the side and focus only on Him, our great God, our Savior, His unspeakable love to us, His forgiveness, His mercy. We speak and consider the works that He's doing, the lives He's influencing and changing.

This is a time of reflection, time to consider, consider our great God, who He is and what He has already done for us. It's a time to lay aside everything that is a hindrance and focus on that risen Lord. We will never be able to reach the depth and the fullness of His love.

We'll never be able to enter fully in to what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, but that should be our desire. Paul said, I press towards that mark. And brothers and sisters, that's what Christianity is all about, pressing.

It's not a one time thing, saved, and then close the chapter. Now I'm going to heaven. It's a pressing, it's a moving forward.

It's a going from faith to faith, from glory to glory. That is the Christian life. That is why we gather to worship.

That is why we do what we do. That our insignificant lives, seemingly insignificant, for who are we in the midst of six billion, three hundred million people? There's not even a drop in the bucket, if we think about it. Very small, tiny congregation, seeking God's face.

What I've learned over the years, numbers don't mean anything to God. He wants individuals. And His eyes are roaming this world constantly, looking for men and women and young people that have set their hopes on Him.

And have fixed their gaze on Him. Fixed their eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. All through history, He has been, He has the heart-wrenching call for people.

He has a desire and a longing to manifest His glory in them. He is determined to use us. And if He's not going to use us, He will find the people.

If we think back, all the way back from Abraham. He just selected a man out of nowhere and started building His former nation. So the way He can manifest Himself to the world, He had to do it through a people.

He had to do it, He had to first build a nation. And then He can manifest His will, His heart and His glory to them. And it's the same in the New Covenant.

He has to find the people first. And then He can do it. So before we get to our word, I'd like to set our head in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we appear before You this morning trembling. And what You have to say to us. At the same time, we want to feel encouraged and blessed by Your great love for us.

Lead us today, Lord, and guide us. Let Your word penetrate our hearts, our minds. Let Your word have His way, Father.

I pray, Father, that You would open up Your precious word to us. For You said, My words are spirit and they are life. Heavenly Father, that is the life we desire with all our hearts and soul and mind.

We don't desire a lot of knowledge. We want the life that You have promised in Your word. And Lord, as we speak of Your word today, be with us.

Anoint us, Lord, with Your Holy Spirit. Guide us and lead us. We depend on You and we trust You.

And by faith, we go forward. Thank You, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brothers and sisters, it should be a joy to speak of His word. And it is. I like to speak of His word.

I always get something out of it. And I want to know more of it. We desire what He has to say.

We desire the beautiful passages in there that comfort us, that encourage us, that strike us. But I am the kind of person, I like to see down-to-earth Christianity. I like to know what all this means for me tomorrow.

What it means to me when I face my brothers and sisters. What it means to me when I'm doing just the regular, menial, everyday things in life. I want to know what it means.

That connection between knowing so much of God's word and desiring to know His will. And the actual application in everyday life is a link that not many Christians find. It's a link that is, I call it, missing.

And that's one of the reasons God has not been able to manifest His glory, His purpose, to the children of men throughout history. He's done it in measure. Anabaptist revivals.

There's been revivals in this country. There's been revivals in America. All very short-lived.

All not lasting past the first generation. Brothers and sisters, we want that word to take on flesh and blood. That spirit and that life is to take on flesh.

And that's me and you. And my topic this morning is fixing our eyes on Jesus. As I was pondering this message.

As I was pondering this word. It became clear to me, more and more, that there's no recipe of how to fix our eyes on Jesus. There's no certain formula that we can give you here.

And now I've got my eyes on Jesus. And everything's okay. So as I was pondering this, it became clearer and clearer to me that what this passage means, fixing our eyes on Jesus.

Is we should be focusing on what actually takes our eyes away from Jesus. What distracts us. And what hinders us.

There's basically two reasons. Two causes for us to take our eyes off Jesus. They may sound similar.

But they are distractions and hindrances. Two things. They can both be like a distraction.

Something that causes us to take our eyes away. A hindrance is something that is standing in our path and prevents progress. So a distraction and a hindrance are two different things.

To fix our eyes on Jesus is a very beautiful word. There's many scriptures that can encourage us there. But like I said, I want to focus on what distracts us.

And what hinders us today. So let's turn this morning first to Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 3. Hebrews chapter 3. We'll start at verse 1. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who has built the house has more honor than the house. It seems like Paul is speaking here to the Israelites. And it is indeed a chapter to the Hebrews.

And what he's saying here, consider Jesus. Yes, Moses was faithful in his house. Moses was faithful in all that he did.

But now it's time to look away from Moses and look to Jesus. See, Moses represents the Old Covenant. Moses represents the law.

Moses represents the external, outward holiness. And he says here, Moses was faithful in all his house. That was back then.

That was important for the people of God back then. That is how I manifested myself to them. That is how I showed them my heart and my will.

But I still didn't give them a solution. I still didn't do anything about it. I just told them through Moses, my servant, how holy I am and how blameless we are to all in this world.

But I did not give you any equipment to do it. I did not give you any tools to live holy. For this man is counted worthy of more glory than Moses.

So he's saying to them, let's now look past Moses and look to Christ. Look to Him, the author and finisher of our faith. All true history, men and women of God have lifted up something.

All true history. We can go back and we can read if we're interested of how faithful lovers of Jesus found themselves after not too long a period of time lifting up something else other than Jesus Christ. And I'd like to discuss some of them with you.

Let's turn to John 12, verse 32. John 12, verse 32. Here Jesus was in the last hours of His life and He was speaking to His disciples.

He was preparing them for what was coming. And He said, And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. The next verse says, and He said, this He said signifying what death He should die.

Which is absolutely true. But I'd like to look at this verse in a different light today. Signifying what death He would die.

Through His death He will reconcile us to God. But I would like to look at lifting up Christ, the resurrected Christ. The one who is able to draw all men to Himself.

To Nicodemus, I think Jesus said, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up. The people, Moses lifted up that serpent and the people received atonement. They received, they were not able to do anything else except look at it and the serpents and the snakes or the bites that they had or whatever was there was cured.

That's what Jesus did on the cross for us. He cured us of our diseases, spiritual diseases. He wiped away our past.

He took away our reproach. He took away our sin, nailed it on the cross, abolished death. But the life of Christ, the risen Christ, are we lifting Him up in everyday life? Are we lifting Him up and glorifying Him now? Not lifting Him up as on the cross, but lifting Him up as a risen Christ, as a glorified King of kings and Lord of lords.

Let's talk a little bit about some of the distractions that take our eyes off Jesus, put our eyes on something else. Some of the hindrances that not so much stop our progress, hinder our progress, but take our eyes off Him. And let's turn to Matthew 14.

Matthew 14, we'll start at verse 24. This was after Jesus had preached to the disciples here and to the multitude and sent them away. And He also sent His disciples away across the Sea of Galilee.

And verse 24, But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit.

And they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer. It is I. Be not afraid.

And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him.

And He said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? There are several pictures that we can look at in this passage here, brothers and sisters. The first one is, when the sea was contrary, for the storms of life take our eyes of Jesus. And the sea was contrary to the disciples here, and the very source, the very answers to their needs, they were actually afraid of Him.

Jesus was the answer on that stormy sea. And they were afraid of Him. They were afraid of the source.

Sometimes that happens to Christians as well. Where God is putting us in a situation, where a storm in life, and the very thing we're afraid of, the very thing that seems to be the problem, is actually the solution. I don't know if all of you can relate to that, but further down, while Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was walking on the water.

Water can here be typified as, water is troubles, water is storms in life. And while Peter focused his eyes on the Lord, the water meant nothing. He could walk on top of it.

While Peter was looking to Jesus, it didn't matter that his feet were on water. It didn't matter that there was a storm blowing. He could walk on it.

Nothing could move him. But as soon as he looked on the waves, as soon as we look away at something that distracts us, our struggles, our troubles, our unanswered questions, our defeat, as soon as we look away, guess what happens? More defeat. More trouble.

More misery. And we begin to sink deeper into that mire that we were sinking into. If we had not considered it to begin with, we would have walked on top of the water, just like Peter.

Nothing could have stopped him. See, when God told, when Jesus told Peter to get out and come, Peter just said it out of impulse, because we know that's how Peter was. But he just blindly believed it and stepped out into the water and he was able to walk.

What does he want from us? He wants us to take steps when it seems impossible. Steps of obedience. Peter said, Come, Peter came.

Doesn't matter if there's water under our feet. Doesn't matter if there's storms around us. Come, he says.

And while we fix our gaze on him, it doesn't matter what's under our feet. He will make sure that there will be solid ground under there. We make our own mire.

We make our own... We sink into the depths of our own making. We bring a lot of it on ourselves by not looking to Jesus. Instead of looking to our circle.

Instead of looking to him, we look to our circumstances. We look to our troubles. We look to our... We turn inward.

And I'm not saying turning inward is bad. It's actually good that we do. But it should not hinder our walk with him.

It should not make us so disgusted or defeated. So mistrusting our Savior. It should not do that to us.

Yes, looking inward is going to make us see filth. It's going to make us see how much not like Christ we are. It's going to make us see lots of things.

But if we focus on that, we're going to sink. And we're going to sink deep. We need to fix our... Look at and see ourselves and then run to Jesus.

He is the solution. He is the solution. This is one thing that takes our eyes off Christ.

As you all know in the parable of the four soils, another thing made a people, made one of the soil lose out and that was the cares of this life. Cares of this life, materialism. That hinders our walk.

It doesn't stand in our way. Remember that. It is something on the side that distracts us.

Paul said, they that have this world, use this world as not abusing it. For the fashion of this world passes away. Almost everything that the world has, God's people can use it.

But if it's distracting us, if it's taking away our time, if it's taking away our energy to spend our money on it, then we are becoming materialistic. Our eyes are away from Him and they are on to something else. And from my own experience, I can tell you that that is one thing that really robs you of the peace that you can have in Christ Jesus.

It robs you not only of the peace that we have in Him, it robs me of conviction. And I start, for myself, I know you just exist. The life that He has promised in His word, the life that He says He can give us, He just can't give it to us.

And we want it. And He says, Well, if you want it, go for it. But you can't have this and me.

It's one or the other. And so we come to the realization that this is not, this will not draw us to Him. It doesn't help us out.

Yes, we can use it. But we have to be very careful how we use it. We have to be conscious of our time, of our energy, of our resources.

And that doesn't only work as individuals, that works as a whole as well. Our focus is supposed to be on Him, whether as an individual or as a group. Jesus said, I can take care of your finances.

Focus on Me. Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and His righteousness, and everything else shall be added unto us. Another thing that distracts us is the news.

World events, economy, stuff that actually must happen. We must, I mean, it's not wrong to know it, but it should not make us worse for worse any way we look at it. What comes, comes, because it says in Matthew 24, I'm going to read it for you, Matthew 24, verse 4. Yes, talk about that.

In verse 4 it says, And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars.

See that ye be not troubled. For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. I don't think there's anything wrong with knowing about it.

But if we trouble ourselves over it, if we start focusing on it, wanting to know every little detail, I think it's a distraction. I think it takes our eyes off what's really important. Our eyes off the things that matter.

He says there will be nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines. There's going to be a collapse of the economy.

There shall be pestilences and earthquakes in many different places. All this must come to pass. It has to.

We've got no choice. Because there's a curse in this world. And therefore, unless people are in Christ, evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse.

So these are some of the things that can distract us. We can even be distracted with the things that are good. You ever thought of that one? We can be distracted with good things.

We can be distracted by prophecies. We can be distracted by end time prophecies or whatever else you call it. Not that they're not important.

They're very important. But they should not be our focus. It's good to know it.

Everything in the scripture is like a giant puzzle. And they all fit together. All of them together.

No one puzzle is everything. No one piece tells the whole story. Our aim should be what does Christ want from me today and tomorrow.

Let's turn to a Hebrew, no, not Hebrew, 2nd Peter. 2nd Peter chapter 1. 2nd Peter chapter 1 verse 5. He says, And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unthankful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, it says here, and to knowledge temperance. I think we can also be distracted by wanting to know a lot of Bible knowledge. We can be distracted by that.

He says, To knowledge add temperance. Knowledge in itself, if it doesn't bring understanding, I think it's probably a distraction that will end up a hindrance. Always, always, when we study God's Word, when we are seeking His will, or wanting to know more about Him, we must constantly ask, now what does that

mean to me? How does it apply to my life? How does it apply to me relating to my brother or sister? How does it apply to my walk? How I use my resources? How does it apply to how I use my time? And the list goes on and on.

Knowledge is good, but it needs to lead to temperance, and then temperance builds on that, patience, godliness. This is a step, this is a process. Running up, going up a ladder, each different rung of the ladder is a new virtue in the Christian walk.

And we never get to a ladder, we never get to the next rung, unless we're on this rung. There's always another one after that one. And when we are on a certain rung, on every one of them we can get distracted.

On every single one of them. So what hinders us? If there's things that, I mean, we could talk a lot more about it, but what are the things that hinder us from entering in? You all remember the story in Israel? One year after they left Egypt, they were ready to enter in. What stopped them? I've thought about this.

Was it unbelief? No. Yes, the Bible says they couldn't enter in because of unbelief. But they didn't enter in because of fear.

There were giants in the land. They said in Numbers 13, we were like grasshoppers in their sight. And here's a lesson for us, brothers and sisters.

The Israelites were a cloud of people, 600,000 men, and the influence of 10. Now let's stop and think. If 10, oh, there's 12 going on.

And 10 came back with a bad report. They all came back with a good report of the land. But 10 of them were full of fear because they saw giants.

Were there giants in the land? Yes, there were. The Bible clearly writes that there were still giants in Canaan. Huge men, nine cubits tall.

Speaks of one whose bed was nine cubits long. There were giants there. That's not the problem.

There will always be giants in our path. There's always something that wants to hinder our progress. But Joshua and Caleb remembered how God had led them out of Egypt.

He remembered how he had led them in the wilderness those 40 years, or no, that one year. And he was not afraid. But the other 10 stirred up an entire congregation.

This is a great lesson for us. Don't you believe that your negative influence has no effect on others. It can cause others to take their eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ.

We're only human. If our attitudes are wrong, if our attitudes are, if we're fearful, if we look at the dark side of everything, guess what's going to happen to those who constantly hear us. We're going to become dark sided.

There's no other way. It has to happen. He says, a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Let's take a lesson out of this. It can cause us to take our eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ. The same thing happened with Israel.

The whole army was standing and one man stood up, Goliath. Stood up. Yeah, he was big.

He was menacing. He defied the armies. Whenever he came out of the camp, I just read it the other day, whenever Goliath got up and walked out of their camp, the Israelites ran for fear.

Why? Do we see? That's the way the devil still does it today. That's one of his biggest tools to hinder us from progressing in a Christian walk. That's fear.

And it's just a bluff. It's just a big front. One big guy.

What happened after David's looting? The Philistines ran. They just made a U-turn and they got out of there as fast as they possibly could. Just had to get rid of one man.

And it didn't take a man with big ambitions and strong character. It just took somebody, some little lad who had a little faith that God could do what he said he would do. Let's not be held back by fear.

Let's not be driven to discourage others by fear. Let's stand and face the giants square on. It takes faith, brothers and sisters.

It does. And it's not easy. But the Lord said, I will be with you.

Step out on the water like Peter. Take them five stones like David. Believe.

And like Joshua and Caleb. No problem. We're going to devour them like bread.

That's what I call confidence. But there are giants in our path. There are.

The reason I speak of giants is because they've been in my path many times. They're there. Every progress we make, something's going to come up that wants to stop us from progressing.

What's it going to bring? Oh, that's going to bring chaos. I could go into a lot of details here. Another one that really hinders our progress, brothers and sisters, and this one is one of the hardest ones for me to speak on.

It will be one of the hardest ones, but it's nevertheless a very true one. And it's the doctrines and teachings of other believers. We may think that's no big deal, but nothing can throw a monkey wrench into our walk with Jesus Christ as this one.

If we turn to Galatians, we can see a picture unfolding there. Turn to Galatians, chapter 6. I'll read several passages here out of Galatians. As we know, in the Old Testament, circumcision was a commandment in the Old Covenant, and it was meant to be held forever.

He said to Abram, it's an everlasting commandment. It's an everlasting thing that you want to observe, an everlasting covenant or a law that you keep circumcision. And for the New Covenant people to see that it meant spiritual, I believe that was an incredible enlightenment.

The apostles could see that this meant the spiritual work inside the human heart. For Israel to see this as something spiritual was nothing short of a miracle of God because it was an external covenant, it was commanded and they had to keep it. And here Paul started a church in Galatia and it didn't take long and Jews were causing them trouble.

Said you must observe circumcision. It also happened in Acts where they went back to Jerusalem council once and had a long long discussion over it. Many words and finally came to the realization no, that's not to be pushed on other believers.

If the Jews want to keep it fine great but once they push it on other believers that's when it became a major problem. If we look at verse 12 here Galatians 6 verse 12 As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh they constrain you to be circumcised only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law but desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh.

Can we see a connection here? The Jews wanted them to be those Gentiles to observe this law so that they could glory in them. Now you're one of us. And they made a lot of problems for them.

They made a lot of trouble for those Galatians. Back in chapter 5 Paul says you were doing well. Galatians 5 1 Galatians 5 1 Galatians 5 1 There's nothing wrong.

If the Jews observed circumcision that was okay. But once they started pushing their circumcision onto other believers that's when the problem arose. And we could go on and I could go on here and list a dozen and more things.

But God's people are doing that to others. It's always Jesus plus with a plus sign behind Jesus. And Paul said, No.

None of that stuff. He said, I am crucified with Christ and I desire nothing that can be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which comes by faith in the Son of God. That's the righteousness we need.

Not some teaching, not some doctrine. You know the Seventh-day Adventists have the Sabbath. That Sabbath is so highly esteemed that they begin judging others on the basis of it.

What happens then? If Christians want to keep the Sabbath on Saturday, that's fine with me. Let them do it. But don't judge others on the basis of it.

There's more. There's the modes of baptism that separate believers. How they baptize.

And they think this is the one and only way. This is the only way to be baptized. What does it do? It drives a wedge between God's people and doesn't bring them to Christ.

It's a hindrance. I believe it's a hindrance on the path to Christ. For those believers, especially the young in faith, they need to be led to Christ.

The young in faith don't need a whole pile of doctrines rained down their throats to try and make them into according to someone's view of Christianity. That's not what young believers need. They need Christ.

They need to be shown how He loves them. And the new birth experience. And then giving their lives to Him.

We can put so much emphasis on it. I mean, just look at where we come from. Community of goods.

For the Hutterite people, that is the stronghold. Judging other people on the basis of it. That's wrong.

We can't judge other people on the basis of that. It's not Jesus plus. If loving Christ and loving my fellow man and wanting to serve Him leads me to community, praise God.

But we're not to rain it down on other people's throat. There's others who do all kinds of stuff. The gifts of the Spirit.

The manifestations of the Spirit. Tongues. So much is going on.

Jesus plus. Unless you have this, you're not a Christian. That's all designed by the Even One to drive a wedge between God's people.

And brothers and sisters, young people, look to Jesus. Don't look to those other stuff. These are all pieces of the puzzle.

A puzzle has many pieces. Not just one or two. Whenever I see Christians emphasizing one puzzle, one piece of the puzzle, I know there's a problem there.

And a bigger one too. We gotta emphasize the whole picture. The Christian life has many aspects.

Many sided aspects. If we focus on one, I'm gonna quote the words of another preacher. If we emphasize one part of the Christian life, for example, baptismal, tongues, community of goods or something, circumcision, the Sabbath, the family, dress codes.

If we emphasize one of them, it's like having one of our fingers 12 inches long. What does that do? I believe you'd be a nuisance wherever you go. They're all necessary.

And you know what happens when this happens? God's people react to those teachings. And actually some of them throw them out. Like there's been cases where church authority has been overemphasized.

And some people react towards it and want no authority. Cut the finger completely off. Would that be the answer? No, that's not the answer.

The answer is put everything in proper perspective. Everything has its place. And the puzzle has many pieces.

Not for us to emphasize one over the other, but to seek out the whole will of the Father, not just some of His will. He says in verse 4 of chapter 5, Christ has become of no effect unto you. Whosoever of you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace.

Brothers, that's a verse that struck my heart 15 years ago. Let's look to Jesus. Look to Christ.

Not look to one aspect of Christianity. All of it, the whole has many pieces. It says in Ephesians, the many-sided aspects of the love of Christ.

That's what we are to focus on. The many-sided aspects. Let's look to that.

And Christ is going to lead us and give us life. He will say, He promised never to leave us or forsake us. All these parts that I mentioned here, they're all good and right and necessary.

If you see a whole puzzle and one is missing, you definitely want to put in that one piece. They all have their place. We need them all.

But let's not just take this and forget about the rest. That's my point. That would be a hindrance for other believers to finding the true rest in Jesus Christ.

And God forbid that we should be instruments that do that. We want to lead you to the source. And that source is Christ.

Nothing else is going to matter.

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