

# (Hebrews - Part 40): Keeping Christ in Full View

by A.W. Tozer

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*We must run the race, keeping Jesus in full view, and look unto him as the author and finisher of our faith.*

**Duration:** 22:01

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:24-25, John 12:24-25, Hebrews 12:1-2

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not being deceived by the world and its distractions. He compares the world to a gullible pig that is easily fooled and led astray. The speaker highlights that while the world offers entertainment and temporary happiness, it ultimately keeps us from taking God seriously and remembering our mortality and judgment. He emphasizes that although Paul counted the world as dead, it does not mean he spurned people, but rather he loved them and focused on the eternal city of God.

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## Transcript

Wherefore, seeing we also are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Now, it says here that we Christians are to run the race, the race of which I preached twice before here. But now I want to go on a little further.

It says here that we are to run the race, keeping Jesus in full view, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Now, it is in our nature to have to look out. God made us with eyes that could not see themselves.

One man pointed out that the eye that can see itself is blind. It just sees itself and stops. But the eye was made to see through, and not to see, but to see through and by.

So we are born to look out, which teaches us that we are not sufficient in ourselves. If we were sufficient in ourselves, there would be no reason why we should look out. But our nature is such that we must look away because the world is too big and deadly, and we are too weak and unwise to deal with it.

We don't have what it takes. And if we look inside of ourselves, we can only go into a tailspin of real discouragement. We must look somewhere for assurance.

We must look to somebody worthy to be looked to. Not to some political figure or even some religious figure, but we must look to one who has made good, who has done what we would like to have done, who has won for us, who has won through for us, and has established himself the right hand of God and now is bringing a company of people with him. He is said to be here the author and finisher of our faith.

Among my private and not too secret enjoyments is kidding the translators because of their failure to get together on things chiefly, or because they know Greek and don't know English. But here I find the translators are really in a tizzy. They say, looking unto Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Another translator says, looking unto Jesus, the starter and the finisher of our faith. Another one says, looking unto Jesus, the guide and the end of our faith. Another one says, the beginner and finisher.

Another says, a leader and perfect model. Another says, the leader and example. And another says, the princely leader and perfecter.

And another says, the forerunner and finisher. Evidently they can't quite get together on what those words mean in the English. But I think by taking all of those words and putting them in the bag and shaking them up, we'll get at this, that Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the pioneer, the one who blazed the trail, the one who started the Christian faith, upon whom it rests, and who is leading it through to a successful consummation.

And this, our Lord Jesus Christ, is. And as we go along with this, I'd like to point out that the faith we mean here is not our personal faith. You won't have much trouble with your personal faith if you become really acquainted with the faith of our fathers.

We try to pump up faith when we're not informed on the faith. You see, the faith we have is our personal attitude toward and confidence in the faith which is the doctrines presented and the truth that is brought to us in our Lord Jesus. He does not say that he is the author and perfecter of my private faith, my own attitude or reaction toward or confidence in the truth.

He says he is the author and the perfecter, the author and finisher and leader and consummator of the faith of our fathers, the doctrines, the truth, that God made the heaven and the earth, that God subsists in three persons, that God spake by the prophets, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life, that to do this he must die and rise again, that he sits now at the right hand of the Father, that he is there interceding for his believing people, that he is coming back at a time known to him and to nobody else to take his people to be with him, that he is going to purify the earth and take out of it every bone and every bit of mold and every monument to iniquity, and he is going to have a new heaven and a new earth of which he is the Lord, and then when that long time has worn itself out in half the millenniums, he is going to turn all things over to the Father, and death will be put down and that enemy will be destroyed. Now, this is the faith of our fathers in brief outline, and this it is that we mean when we say Christ is the author and the finisher of our faith. And our attitude toward that and our confidence in it, in these things, that's another matter.

He helps us with that, too. But I think that if we get fully acquainted with what our faith teaches, then our personal faith will rather be an automatic thing and will spring joyously up because of its great confidence

in what it hears and sees. Now, it says here that he endured the cross, this author and finisher.

He endured the cross and despised the shame. That is, he felt the cross in two ways, physically and mentally. The physical pain of the cross is too much talked about for me to add anything now.

We all know how the nails went into his hands and his feet, and we all know how the thorns were on his brow and his back was beaten until it was bleeding. We know how thirsty he was and cried in his agony, We know that. That's the physical pain of the cross.

But we must also remember that there was the psychological or mental pain, the pain of shame and rejection, the pain of being spurned by your fellow man. This pain, when his friends turned his back on him, added to the physical pain that he had when he hung on that cross. And you know something of what our Lord endured.

So he endured the cross and he despised the shame. He endured it by suffering it out, and he endured and despised the shame of it by looking down on it as something not worthy to be mentioned when set over against the glory that was to be revealed. Now, right up to this point, all fundamentalists are agreed, all evangelicals are together on this.

And I could preach in any Bible conference anywhere and be invited back, and nobody would whisper out to another fellow behind a tree on the campground that they thought Tozer was a little bit legalistic. Up to here, everybody agrees. But now from here on, a lot of them don't agree.

They'll be smiling about it, inviting me back, hoping I'll skip this. But nevertheless, they don't agree. Here's what I mean.

That our Lord Jesus not only endured the cross and despised the shame, but he invited us to do the same thing. Look, in Matthew 16, Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

John 12, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

Galatians 6.14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me. And I unto the world, Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me. Now by such words as these, our Lord identifies us with himself. He puts the cross in our lives where it belongs, instead of on the cross where it once was.

I don't know where that wooden cross was. I once made some people very angry. They howled with anger, but they said they were grieved.

I have caught on to that now. When I get a dirty letter telling me that they're grieved over something I wrote, they mean they're mad. And I got one saying that I shouldn't have said something I did.

I said, Peter the Hermit gathered a lot of people together to try to take physical possession of an old tomb that had only been used three days and hadn't had anybody in it since. And they said that was a terrible way to talk about the tomb of Jesus. Joseph's tomb was a place to put him in the hillside there till the clock had ticked out its three days.

Then what did God care about that hole in the ground after that? What did he care about the tomb after that? We tend to want to impart to rocks and trees and springs and hills spiritual significance just as Israel did and as the pagans did before them. It's a thing God hates. It is not the hole where they laid Jesus in the tomb that is sacred, but it is the holy man who lay there three days that is sacred.

And when he came out of there, the grave had no more significance there. So it is with the cross of Jesus. They hung him on a wooden tree, simply a rough thing thrown together.

They hung him up there, and then when he had come down from there and been laid in the tomb and had risen again and was the right hand of God the Father Almighty, what did that wooden cross mean anymore in the mind of God? Nothing at all. We sing about the old rugged cross. I hope we don't mean that cross, because our Catholic friends have torn that all up into little splinters, and they have a pile of wood as big as this church scattered around all over the world that is supposed to be parts of the cross.

Anyhow, apart from that, that cross is no longer in existence, but there is a cross now. And that is the cross that you take and I take, following the Lord who took his cross. When you have taken your cross and then have won through beyond it to the resurrection, your old cross will pass away and be no more, and death will have no more dominion over you just as it has no more dominion over him.

But in the meantime, you must take your cross. And by the texts I have quoted and many others, our Lord identifies us with himself. There is an old hymn nobody sings anymore that expresses something that I am much concerned with.

Here it is. O for that flame of living fire which shone so bright in saints of old, which bade their souls to heaven aspire, calm in distress, in danger bold! Where is that Spirit, Lord, which dwelt in Abraham's breast and sealed him thine, which made Paul's heart with sorrow melt and glow with energy divine, that Spirit which from age to age proclaimed thy love and taught thy ways, brightened Isaiah's vivid page and breathed in David's hallowed lays? Where is that Spirit, Lord? Why do we have to cry in this pathetic and plaintive manner, where is that Spirit, Lord? I think it is because we differ from the saints of old in our relation to the cross. The modern gospel churches, of which we are one, have decided where to put the cross.

They have made the cross objective instead of subjective. They have made it external instead of internal. They have made it judicial instead of experiential.

And the terrible part of it is that they are so wrong because they are half right. They are right in making the cross to be objective, something that stood once on a hill with a man dying on it, just for the unjust. They are right in that it is an external cross.

They are right in that on that cross God did a judicial act that will last while the ages burn themselves out. They are half right. Where they are wrong is that they have failed to see that there is a cross for you and me, and there is a cross for every one of us.

And that cross is subjective and internal and experiential. That is, that cross is not something outside, it is something inside. That cross is that which we voluntarily take up that is hard and bitter and distasteful, that we do for Christ's sake and suffer the consequences and despise the shame.

But the great Christians, great Christians, David with his sacred lyre and Isaiah with his hallowed page, they knew something even before Christ was born of Bethlehem. In Bethlehem they knew something of the cross and what it meant to be despised for Christ's sake. They saw ahead and saw Christ's day and were glad.

But the evangelicals, and I were part of them, we say, Let the cross kill Jesus, but we'll live on and be happy and have fun. But the cross on the hill has got to become the cross in the heart. And when the cross on the hill has been transformed by the miraculous grace of the Holy Ghost into the cross in the heart, then we begin to know something of what it means.

And it will become to us the cross of power. To Paul, in the Galatian text which I read, to Paul the world was already dead. He didn't plead for it nor try to salvage anything of it.

He let it go, the whole thing go, though he loved people. Paul's love was for people. Jesus our Lord loved people.

When he said, God so loved the world, he didn't mean that God loved Hollywood and that he loved the ballpark and that he loved the things people do and enjoy doing. Some of them are all right, certainly. I throw a ball around a little in the mornings to get warmed up myself in the living room, so I'm nothing against balls, you know.

But it's just a question of the organized world with its fun. Isn't that the Lord loved? Because he knew it couldn't last, even though innocent, it couldn't last. So he loved not our organization, not our literature even, or our music.

He loved people. He loved human beings made in the image of God and fallen. He loved people.

So when I say that Christ, that Paul followed Christ in counting the world dead, I don't mean that he spurned people. Never, never. He loved people.

But he spurned the organized world. If you're foolish enough to do it, if you're a sucker enough to be taken in, the world can entertain you from right now on until the doctor says you've had it. You can't live.

You can be entertained and have fun right on the world is organized. All you have to do is pay for it. They have arranged it so we can be relatively happy in this world and never think of God.

You know that? That's what it's for, brethren. That's what it's for. The newspapers, the magazines, the radios, the television, the sports, the fun, even the concerts and music, which I happen to like.

The whole business is there in order to keep us from taking God seriously and remembering that we've got to die and come to judgment. And if you will be gullible enough to be taken in by the world, when I was a boy, we used to butcher in the fall, and it would be my job to coach the fat pigs in, shoot them well, and then my father would bleed them. And I would throw them some corn and they would come grunting in and I'd pull my rifle down on them and let them have it.

And Dad would go in and bleed them. And after that they dressed them out and we had pork. Those pigs never caught on.

They never caught on. When I threw them that grain, they never caught on. There'd been an old crow, you couldn't have fooled him.

You'd go out in the field with a gun and try to find a crow. They'd disappear, they'd dissolve into liquid or into gas. They're smart, a crow's smart, but a pig never caught on.

They shot his grandfather and they shot his father. Now they're shooting him and he never caught on. A gullible swine.

And the world has tossing you not ears of corn, but other things to keep you interested while you get old and die. Or get too old to care about it. That's the world.

And Paul said, that's all dead as far as I'm concerned. I have my eyes set on a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and I expect to live with God forever. And I expect to see the lovely, wonderful face of Jesus Christ shining in its glory.

Well, the great Christians are allowed to cross to kill their self-love and their self-confidence and their self-will and their self-righteousness and their self-pity and their self-defense and all the other self-sins. Allowed to kill these things. Keeping Jesus Christ in full view.

Looking away from ourselves and looking at him and following the way he went. And as we follow, we'll find hoots and jeers from a crowd that doesn't understand us. Stares of astonishment at friends and relatives who wonder what's happened to us.

But we'll follow the way he went. Bloodstains on the rocks. Thorns beside the way.

But we'll rise again in glorious newness of life. For if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. Much fruit.

Are you willing to be made willing to follow keeping Jesus in full view? Remember, you can never keep your courage up unless you keep Jesus in your focus. Remember, not all the pep talks and inspirational messages given you by pastors and friends over the years will ever be able to help you. The world is too big and you're too weak.

So we're going to have to look somewhere for help. And where we look, God says, is straight out of his Son. The author, the finisher, the perfecter, the leader, the princely leader of the faith once given to the saints.

God grant that we may. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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