

VIGIL



“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

~ I Peter 5:8

**Volume XXXVI No. 1
January/February 2008
Looking Unto Jesus**

“LOOKING UNTO JESUS... AS AUTHORITY”

Kerry Richardson

By what authority doest thou these things? It is a question recorded in the Bible, but it was more than just a question. The context and origination of the question made it a challenge that could not be ignored. The question, recorded in Luke 21:2, was posed to Jesus by very prominent men among the Jews – chief priests, scribes, and elders. They had witnessed Christ riding into Jerusalem on a colt amid cries of “Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Luke 19:35-40). They watched, probably in both disbelief and horror, as He would drive out those who had made the temple area a “den of thieves” (Matthew 21:12-17). Finally, with great displeasure, they observed Christ as He would teach daily in the temple area (Luke 20:47) and heal the blind and lame who would come to Him – to the overwhelming approval of the people (Matthew 21:14-16).

Actually, not everyone was supportive of the Lord. Jerusalem, the city of God, was the stronghold of religious rulers called *chief priests, scribes, and elders*. The city

was “their turf” – and the temple was the prominent center of Judaism. For some time, these groups of people had exerted their power and authority over the Jewish people – likely with a mindset of “we are the spiritual watchdogs of Israel.” Yet, although Jerusalem and the temple was “their domain,” Christ boldly exerted *His* power in the temple... amid the cries that He was indeed the Messiah. When these men came to Jesus with this question, they wanted more than answers. According to Luke 19:47, they wanted to destroy Him – and without doubt the question was intended as a tool to accomplish their goal.

As we look back into biblical history, it is indeed sad to realize that many witnessed firsthand the works and teachings of Jesus... yet, they did submit to His authority. And, like so many other things in life, history continues to repeat itself. Though Christ openly claimed authority originating from God to under gird His teachings and work (John 12:49-50), many in His day rejected that authority... and many today continue to find ways that

Christ’s authority can be overlooked, ignored, circumvented, or simply rejected. As we discuss “looking unto Jesus,” consider the nature of His authority.

First, Christ possesses *ultimate authority*. In Matthew 28:18, Christ told the apostles “all power has been given unto me in heaven and in earth.” The word that is rendered *power* in the KJV comes from the Greek word *exousia* – and it touches upon the ideas of *jurisdiction, strength, and authority* (in fact, many translations render the word as *authority*). Though some Christians may mistakenly believe that Christ’s authority solely extends to the “spiritual realm” of life, Jesus’ words in this passage dispels the myth. As the apostle Paul would write in Colossians 3:17, whatever a Christian does in words or in action should be done “in the name” (*by the authority*) of Jesus Christ. Whether at work, at school, in recreational pursuits, or in family life, the umbrella of Christ’s authority is ever over us... sanctioning our entire life with no exemptions!

EDITORIAL

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

Ronnie Hayes

The writer of Hebrews encourages us to look "...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. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Hebrews 12:2,3). Why should we look unto Jesus? Because He is the author and finisher of our faith, because he endured the cross, and because if we take our eyes off of Him, we will become weary and faint. These are three very good reasons for us to keep our eyes affixed on Christ.

Jesus is the "author and finisher" of our faith. Andrew Connally wrote in his book, *Hebrews and James*, concerning us looking unto Jesus, "...Keep your eyes on the one ahead of you. Jesus will not lead you astray. He finished His race and is the perfecter of each one of us. He is our helper and strength (Philippians 4:3)" (70). Jesus is the author (beginner, captain) of our faith and He is the finisher (ender, completer, perfecter) of our faith. Faith begins with Christ and will end with Christ. The life of Christ is both the substance and sustaining power of our faith. Why should I believe that Jesus is the Messiah? It is because He fulfills the prophecies concerning the Messiah. He was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). He was crucified for the sins of the world (Isaiah 53; Hebrews 9:27,28). He was raised from the dead (Mark 8:31; 9:10; Luke 24:22). He also proved His Son

ship by the power He exerted. He caused the lame to walk (Matthew 9:2). He healed leprosy (Luke 17:12). He raised the dead (John 11). The ultimate test of whether or not He is the Messiah is the proof of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15). How will these facts sustain our faith? Our faith is based on evidence (Hebrews 11:1). He is the example of the obedient (Hebrews 5:8,9). Our eternity depends upon our faith (Mark 16:15,16; John 8:24). How could any Christian look at Jesus the author and finisher of our faith and not have his or her faith strengthened?

Jesus was willing, because of the joy that was set before Him, to endure the cross for us. How could there be any joy in the cross? There was pain, humiliation, suffering, shame, and loneliness, but where was the joy? Burton Coffman wrote in his commentary on *Hebrews*, that the joy of Christ came, "...from the full knowledge of the joy that would flow out of his victory" (313). Winford Claiborne suggests in his book, *Christ: Prophet, Priest and King*, that "...Christ's joy had at least two facets: The joy of returning to the Father and the joy of having done the Father's will" (297). It was for Christ's joy that he was willing to endure the hardship of the cross. He was willing to die for us, to be the sacrifice that we could not be. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:27,28).

Without Christ we would have never been reconciled to God. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit

that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18,19). Jesus was willing to be our sacrifice. Why would one who is a Christian not be willing to make every sacrifice necessary to be pleasing unto the Savior? Don't turn your eyes from the cross but to it. Is this not why Christ said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32)?

Without "considering" Jesus it is easy for us to become weary and to faint. "Consider" comes from the Greek word "*analogizomai*" which means, "to consider, heed, look, mark" (Vines p. 231). Coffman writes, "*it is no casual or nonchalant notice by mortals that our Lord is entitled to receive, or that will benefit them that look unto Jesus; but it is an intense, sustained and focal attention that men should give to Jesus, never relaxing or diminishing it till they have known him in the forgiveness of sins*" (315). We can see the danger in taking our eyes off of Christ in the example of Peter. In Matthew 14, Peter requested to walk on the water to Christ (v. 29). Peter started to Christ on the water but "...when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me" (v. 30). Just as Peter, many begin with their eyes on Christ and then there is just too much to distract us and we begin to sink! There is definitely a connection between losing sight of Christ and beginning to faint. When Peter denied Christ (Matthew 26:69-74), one of his first mistakes was he "...followed him afar..." (Matthew 26:58). The irony of this is when Christians need Christ the most is usually when they lose sight of Him.

May we always remember to "look unto Jesus".

LOOKING UNTO JESUS... AS OUR SAVIOR

Dale Hubbert

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Jesus fills many roles and many voids in our lives. His attributes are many and all are equal in perfection. His gifts of grace and mercy supply spiritual blessings to all who will accept the offer that extends from heaven itself. Wise are those who can clearly see their present and future condition with and without the Christ (Ephesians 2:5).

God’s love and offer of salvation is extended to every accountable person. He will not force that love or salvation upon anyone. The accomplishments and power of humanity fall woefully short in any endeavor to sooth the sin laden soul (Isaiah 6:5). It is imperative to see that sin is man’s greatest problem and salvation is man’s greatest need (1 Timothy 4:10). Only when we look to Jesus does hope become reality.

To whom can we turn (John 6:68)? From what spring can living water flow (John 4:14)? A thorough search for the answer is of significant value. Such an inquiry will expose that we cannot save ourselves (Romans 3:10). Man has been able to invent and improve but never able to absolve the first sin. Medical technology has made incredible strides in preventing and curing disease. Yet never has sin been cured, prevented or terminated in a laboratory, by a pill, or upon the operating table of a skilled medical surgeon.

No person has ever been able to rid another of a single sin. No person has ever been able to remove one spiritual blot from his own soul apart from the blood of Jesus. Sin is terminal and fatal. It slays every victim (Romans 7:11). We alone are defenseless against the curse and

consequences of our own iniquity (Titus 2:14).

It is the pinnacle of wisdom to look unto Jesus as our Savior, friend, and Lord. He is not a choice among many as in a buffet line but is the only hope for all who fall prey to the craftiness of Satan (Ephesians 4:14). Spiritual victory for eternity can only be obtained by the grace and blood of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Jesus is capable of being our savior because he has paid the ultimate price. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). The sacrifices under the law given by Moses were offered in anticipation of Jesus – the Lamb without spot or blemish. We don’t look to the blood of bulls and goats to rescue us from spiritual tragedy (Hebrews 10:4). We look to Jesus who poured out His blood on Calvary.

Jesus is worthy of our affection. Though the depth of Jesus’ love is beyond comprehension, we are impressed beyond words with the unselfish sacrifices made upon our behalf (Hebrews 9:26). Jesus not only has the ability to mend our broken lives, he has the desire (Matthew 11:28). The humility of Jesus reveals another aspect of his great love (Isaiah 53:7-10). When we look to Jesus we see the need of the same type humility in our own lives (Matthew 18:4).

When we see Jesus we should be inspired by the worth of the sacrifice God’s son made for us. In our state of unworthiness he paved with blood the highway to the Father (Romans 5:8). No greater price has ever been paid or greater love ever shown (John 15:13). How can one ignore or trample under foot such a great expression of passion for those who forever would be unable to repay this debt (Hebrews 10:29)?

Jesus, the savior is also the best model of a servant. When we look to the Messiah as savior, his example prompts us to see the importance of serving. We are saved to serve. Jesus left heaven and was made lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:7). He washed dirty feet (John 13:5). No act of service was beneath his dignity nor should it be beneath ours.

Looking to Jesus as our savior requires us to focus on the spiritual and not upon the immediate concerns of the day. Our soul will live forever. Without salvation that soul will live in torment (Revelation 14:11). Jesus saves! He wants our abiding place to be in an eternal paradise (Revelation 2:7). Sadly it is very easy to get our eyes and attention focused on things that will be destructive rather than spiritually productive. We must initially look to Jesus as the hope of our salvation and then continue to seek God’s will as it is designed for daily living.

Looking to Jesus for salvation will make our lives the best they possibly can be (John 10:10). Such attention will point us to the best friends (Proverbs 17:17). Such attention will warn us about those things that are harmful to our lives. Looking to Jesus will keep us from succumbing to the danger of neglect and apathy (Hebrews 2:3).

We need to look to Jesus as our savior. To do so is to accept amazing grace through faithful obedience. We must turn from our sins (Acts 17:30), confess Jesus as God’s son (Acts 8:37), and receive salvation from our sins by contacting the blood of Jesus in the waters of baptism (Acts 22:16). Our lives are then characterized by a faithful walk with God with our eyes firmly fixed upon Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2).

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LOOKING UNTO JESUS... AS OUR SACRIFICE

Ashley Kizer

He stood courageously at the tomb of His beloved friend, and cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). Like a scene from a horror film, the mummy, covered and bound hand and foot, came staggering out of his four-day sleep, quickened by the power of the Son of God. Bystanders in Bethany watched as his loved ones unwrapped the graveclothes and exposed the face of our Lord's dear comrade. A miracle had taken place, and word of Jesus' power spread like wildfire.

Some of the Jews who had witnessed this scene went directly to the Pharisees and "told them what things Jesus had done" (v. 46). Upon hearing the news, these religious and political leaders posed a simple question: "What do we?" (v. 47). The consensus was in this way related by John: "If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (v. 48). So, they decided to "put him to death" (v. 53).

To their credit, the Jewish council was right in at least one of their assumptions. Not many days later, when Jesus returned to Bethany, He was met by a crowd of people who came to see Him and the one He had raised from the dead (12:9). "The Pharisees therefore said among themselves...behold, the world is gone after him" (v. 19). As He entered Jerusalem, riding on the colt of a donkey, the multitude was crying, "Hosanna: Blessed *is* the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (v. 13). How incredible it is that in only a week's time the same voices would scream with raging disgust in regard to their King, "Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him (19:15)!"

This great number of Jews had come to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. Many had come "out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves"

(11:55). However, they were also hoping that they could see Jesus, Who had also entered Jerusalem to observe this feast. Standing in the temple, they said among themselves, "What think ye, that he will not come to the feast" (v. 56)?

The Passover was a commemorative feast that reminded the Jews of the night their forefathers left Egypt and escaped the bonds of captivity (Exodus 12:14). Its centerpiece was a male lamb without blemish that the whole congregation of Israel would kill in the evening (vv. 5-6). None of its bones were to be broken and its blood held special significance, for the Lord said, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (vv. 13, 46). We must consider this background information as we consider the exclamation of John the baptizer when he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Even as He Himself ate the Passover supper with His disciples, He was preparing to be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers..." (Isaiah 53:7).

Though Jesus was eventually hated by the world, it is important to note that He was first immensely popular. Great numbers of people were coming to Him in order to behold His greatness. Some believed on Him; others did not, but all were amazed by His wisdom and power (John 12:37, 42). Greeks who had come to worship at the feast asked Phillip to take them to Jesus (v. 21). Even some of the chief rulers of the Pharisees believed on Him, though they were too afraid to admit their belief (v. 42).

Yet it is not enough for us to admire our Lord; we must have a need for the Savior, a sacrificial Lamb to atone for our sins. He stated to those who stood and listened to Him speaking, "And I, if I be lifted up

from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me" (v. 32). Even His disciples had difficulty understanding all of the implications of this saying, but it was clear to those who heard Him on that day that He was "signifying what death he should die" (v. 16, 33). This was not the first instance of this particular teaching. Earlier, He had taught Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up..." (3:14). In the temple, He told the Pharisees, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*" (8:28). Apparently, Jesus had regularly prophesied His coming death on the cross, so it is obvious that He was aware of the sacrifice He was soon to be making on our behalf. This sacrifice, He said, would draw all men unto Him because of its essentiality in regard to our salvation.

Many will look unto Jesus as a great man, a fearless leader, and an amazing individual Who has influenced the course of history. Those who are wise must understand, "...almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus is the one Sacrifice Whose blood can take away sins forever (cf. 10:11-12). After the Israelites had been bitten by venomous snakes, God provided that a serpent of brass be lifted up on a pole, "that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live" (Numbers 21:8). Many were saved because they looked upon that serpent, not because of its beauty, but because it provided a way of salvation. When we look unto Jesus, "*there is* no beauty that we should desire him," but we look upon Him as our sacrifice for sin, and "thanks *be* unto God for this unspeakable gift" (Isaiah 53:2; 2 Corinthians 9:15)!

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LOOKING UNTO JESUS... AS OUR EXAMPLE

Ben Wright

There is no doubt that we need examples in life. In fact, we learn many things by watching others. Along with that comes the responsibility of choosing the right example to follow and also knowing when an example is being set. We could end up like several dinner guests at the White House during the presidency of Calvin Coolidge. These particular guests were worried about proper table manners at the White House so they decided to follow the example of President Coolidge. Everything he did at the table they would do as well. Everything went fine through dinner. His example was followed to the hilt and there were no embarrassing episodes. However, when coffee was served things went bad. President Coolidge poured some of his coffee onto the saucer, so his guests did as well. He then mixed cream and sugar with the coffee on the saucer. His guests did as well. Then, President Coolidge put the saucer in the floor for his cat.

Each of us needs a proper example to follow in all things. Our Lord is the only One that could fit the bill as being able to be imitated in all things. Peter wrote this about Jesus: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). John had this to say: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). Jesus said, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15). These three verses, and others, provide for us the biblical command to follow the example of Jesus.

The word "example" in 1 Peter 2:21 is an interesting word when looked at in the original language. According to The Complete

Wordstudy New Testament, this word comes from two words meaning "to write under." It carries the idea of teaching to write. Literally, it is a model for imitation. When learning to write letters, many times tablets with the letters written at the top of the page are used. The student is then to imitate in writing, to the best of his ability, the letters written at the top of the page. This is the copy-book method of learning. You see, the standard is at the top of the page and you practice writing until you can imitate the standard.

In this passage, we are taught that Jesus is at the top of the page and we learn to handle suffering by looking to Him and doing our best to imitate His actions. We do this so we can follow His footprints, which is the literal meaning for "his steps." Just as the child steps in the prints of his father as he follows him through the snow, we are to walk in the steps of Jesus as we pass through the suffering and trials of this life.

The example that Jesus set in this context is not returning violence or abuse for what was given to Him. He did not act in kind, but dealt with it in silence, giving Himself over to the will of God. Jesus knew that God would do what was right and just. Such was the attitude that allowed Him to say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit..." (Luke 23:46). When it comes to facing persecution for being a follower of Christ, the Christian is to look to the example of Jesus and do as He did. Do not respond in kind, but leaving the avenging and judging up to a righteous God.

John's verse is in an interesting context as well. John told his readers that knowing God involved keeping the commandments of God (1 John 2:3). There were those in John's day who said that they had special knowledge of God that other Christians did not have. These people

were called Gnostics. Their beliefs led them to indulge in the sins of the flesh because they had a false idea about the spirit and the flesh dwelling together. These people that claimed to have special knowledge did not follow the commands of God. John tells them that if they say they are in Christ and abiding in Christ, then they will act like Christ.

How did Christ act? The answer to that is He obeyed the will of the Father. Jesus told a group of Jews "...I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). On another occasion Jesus said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

If a Christian is going to "walk, or deport oneself" (Strong's), like Jesus, then he must follow the commands of God as Jesus did. As Jesus said, our meat should be to do the will of the Father (John 4:34). His example is one of complete submission to the will of God in all things.

In John 13, we have the account of Jesus washing the apostles' feet the night before His death. Jesus was not invoking a command to wash feet but to be servants. If we are going to follow the example of Jesus we are going to be servants to others. Our Lord served others in many ways. He taught people the message of the kingdom. He healed people. Ultimately, Jesus served mankind by dying on the cross. If we are going to follow His example, nothing should be beneath us when it comes to serving others.

We should look to Jesus by following His example in suffering correctly, obeying the will of the Father and serving others. If we do this, others then can follow our example because we are following after Christ.

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LOOKING UNTO JESUS... IN OBEDIENCE

John Daniels

One cannot read much of God's Word without realizing that obedience to God's "commands" are essential if we are going to enjoy God's "blessings!" Our lesson text expresses this very well where speaking of Jesus it is said, "And having been made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). God has always desired that His people obey Him. This was true with the nation of Israel. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). Therefore, the motive of our obedience is love. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). This is where we obey God no matter what the circumstances or outcome will be.

As the New Testament church, we are dedicated to New Testament Christianity. We do this by both preaching and living the pure Word of God. In so doing we must never forget the possibility of apostasy. Apostasy defined, "an abandoning of what one believed in". In regards to New Testament Christianity, "falling away from the pure Word." The New Testament writers warned repeatedly of this danger. Jude verse 3 and 4 explains that apostasy is something that creeps in. Paul warned Timothy in his epistles to him of this possibility, (I Timothy 4:1-3; II Timothy 4:1-4).

How can we avoid drifting off into apostasy? The Israelites faced the same problem just before Joshua's death. Joshua gathered the leaders together and warned them of the dangers they faced and how to remain true to God, (Joshua 23:6-11). His plan to avoid apostasy involved several things. One of the primary safeguards was that of obedience. In

verse 6 Joshua warned, "...do all that is written in the book." God has always expected His people to strictly observe His laws. ie., Cain and Abel; Nadab and Abihu; Uzzah, King Saul and the Amalekites, etc. In Matthew 7:21, the words of Christ ring out to all humanity, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Once again, the words of Christ permeate our minds when we hear, "And why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say"(Luke 6:46)? If we are to avoid apostasy, we are to do exactly as God says. We cannot expect God's mercy and grace to substitute for our obedience. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1).

An abiding love for God becomes another safeguard to help avoid apostasy (Joshua 23:11). In this verse Israel was told to make every effort to "...love the Lord your God." If we truly love God we will forsake all other things to serve and obey Him. In verse 7 Joshua told Israel not to make mention of any gods of any nation around them. They were not to swear by them; they were not to serve them; they were not to bow unto them. In other words, God requires strict obedience!

If our intentions are to abide in Christ then our love will abide in obedience. By keeping His commands we both abide in His love and we are His friends, (John 15:10a; 15:14). This also is what governed Jesus' relationship with His Father while on Earth (John 15:10b).

Someone may ask, "Why is obedience so important?" Obedience is that which brings both God and man together. Man's separation from God was brought about by iniquity, which was disobedience or rebellion

(Isaiah 59:1-2). The only way that that condition can be nullified is by the obedience which God requires of us through Christ. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered;" (Hebrews 5:8).

A true test of the heart [mind] of man, as it respects God, is man's attitude toward his obedience to God's revealed will. Man sinned not because of ignorance (Genesis 3:1-3), but because he desired freedom from divine restraint. He desired to be independent of God. This was the pride of man's heart [mind]. The contest in Eden was between self-hood and God-hood. Accordingly, pride has been referred to as the complete anti-God state of mind. The very first step toward our salvation is to empty ourselves of human-pride. Otherwise, obedience unto Christ will never be ours.

Our obedience must result from faith. The individual has faith in Christ, and that faith leads him to do exactly as Christ commands. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). God has seen fit in every age of the world to justify men on the principle of faith, and He has always selected such acts of obedience as would adequately test each individual's faith. This has always been the difference between the obedience of human reasoning and the obedience of faith unto God.

In John 4:34 Jesus said "...My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me..." May we look unto Jesus in obedience and be as committed!

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LOOKING UNTO JESUS... FOR HUMILITY

Chuck Webster

The sloshing of the water must have startled them at first. Perhaps engrossed in the post-meal conversation, maybe it took a few seconds for the disciples to recognize what the sound was. They looked around and saw that Jesus was missing from the table. *What is He doing?* they wondered. *Why does He have that basin of water?* Perhaps Peter glanced nervously at James and John.

Then it hit them. Jesus – their Lord, their Master, their *God* – was about to wash their feet. They knew what this meant, of course. They knew that their society reserved washing someone else’s feet as an act of menial slavery – something done by Gentile slaves and women. They were certainly aware of the Jewish tradition that a Rabbi could ask his students to serve him in almost every way, except in touching his feet, of course. It would be unthinkable to ask another Jew – even a student – to touch your feet (cf. John 1:27).

And yet, here He is – Jesus, the Son of God, the Creator of the world, stooping down not only to touch, but to wash, their feet.

When He finished, He wanted to make sure they understood the significance of what He had just done: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14-15).

In a society in which politicians spend millions to make sure everyone knows who *they* are and what *they* can do, the foot-washing mentality has a hard time taking root. When athletes practice their dance moves during the week so that perhaps they can get their fifteen seconds of fame on Sunday night’s Sportscenter, a God who says we should give credit to others doesn’t get a whole lot of press. When an entire culture revolves around the “Look how high I can go!”

attitude, we don’t have much interest in a Lord who demonstrates the importance of *lowliness*.

But it’s not just *out there*, of course. It’s also *in here*. How many of our churches are free of members who are more concerned about getting their way than they are about giving their all? How many churches still struggle with members whose primary focus is on why they aren’t getting as much attention, glory, or credit as the brother on the other side of the aisle? How many Christians woke up this morning asking, “Whom can I be a slave to today? Who needs me to wash their feet?”

Yet the New Testament consistently encourages us to be humble, to be lowly, to serve. Perhaps referring specifically to the Lord’s washing feet, Paul wrote, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men” (Philippians. 2:5-7). Elsewhere Paul encouraged Christians “to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:1-2).

Many people in Jesus’ world didn’t quite get it, of course. The scribes and Pharisees wanted “the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi’” (Matthew 23:6). The Lord’s disciples missed the mark as well, often arguing over which of them was the greatest (cf. Mark 9:33ff). Some members of the early church apparently ignored the virtue of humility. One Christian, Diotrephes, loved “to be first” in the church so much that he was willing to go against an apostle of Christ (3 John 9). Other Christians allowed their “me first” attitude to threaten the church

with division. Certain disciples at Corinth bragged about who had baptized them (1 Corinthians 1:11-17) or which of them had the best spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14). The church at Philippi had members who were arguing with each other (Philippians 4:2) and needed to learn the importance of putting others before themselves (Philippians 2:2:3-4).

The first century church sounds remarkably like the twenty-first century church, doesn’t it? We often make sure others know how religious, spiritual, gifted, and hard-working we are. We sometimes fuss with other Christians over little more than matters of pride. We subconsciously value talented, educated, or wealthy people more than we do those who are not. Instead of being known in our communities as the church who serves, sometimes we become known as the church who splinters.

What is missing is the heart of a servant, the spirit of humility. If Jesus could give up the glory of heaven, robe Himself in human flesh, live the life of a pauper, embrace the spirit of a slave, and die the death of a traitor, can we follow Him closely enough to put away our pettiness and pride and become slaves?

Imagine what the church would look like if every Christian truly committed himself to serving his spiritual siblings. Imagine the kind of impact we might make on our communities if our commitment to service led us to be known as the church who cares, whose members are willing to get their hands dirty, who are outward focused.

Imagine what might happen if we took this example as seriously as we do others: “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15).

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“LOOKING UNTO JESUS... AS AUTHORITY” -- by Kerry Richardson ----- Continued from page 1

Second, Christ possesses *universal authority*. In the same passage that highlights the scope of the Lord’s authority, we also gain a sense of His sovereign authority when we read “in heaven and in earth.” In our society today, many perceive government to hold the most powerful authority in existence – executing justice and fairness on the local, state, and national level. Yet, while government is authoritative, it simply exists as an institution used by God (*and Christ*) for the purpose of executing justice upon the earth (Romans 13:4). In addition, when governmental authority stands in opposition to Christ’s authority, God demands allegiance to the Lord (Acts 4:18-20). Even in cases when people of this world recognize someone or something other than Christ as the greatest authority in existence, Philippians 2:9-11 indicates *every knee* will ultimately

acknowledge His sovereignty. No earthly organization, institution, or individual possesses greater authority – none!

Third, Christ possesses *final authority*. In the high school of my younger years, an administrator named Charles Arledge was our “final authority.” Authority of teachers and coaches, while certainly important, could not compare to a principal’s authority... and I experienced some of Mr. A’s “sentences” as a teenager growing up in Linden, AL. In a similar, yet far more awesome way, the “buck will stop” at the feet of Christ. Just prior to the hours of His arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Jesus warned people that His words would be the standard of judgment in the final day (John 12:48). In context, realizing the allegiance of some religious rulers was withheld from Jesus due to fear of the Pharisees (John 12:42), Christ clearly

underscored the timeless nature of His sovereignty!

Realizing the nature of Christ’s authority, how should our lives be affected? Maybe the best answer is provided in Acts 17:30-31, when Paul addressed individuals who were previously ignorant of God’s authority:

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

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VIGIL is published under the oversight of the elders of the Adamsville Church of Christ **Ronnie Hayes**, Editor, and **Ashley Kizer**, Associate Editor. You may go to our website www.acoc.org to read and download archived issues of *Vigil*.

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