

Why I am “fixed” on Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-4

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Introduction

I have a confession to make: I think I probably have OCD (“obsessive compulsive disorder”). Maybe you had already noticed; after you get to know me a bit, it’s hard to ignore. But then, all of us have a certain brokenness inside due to our preference for “our own way.” Even as Christians, we often just settle for “sin management” – i.e., keeping our sin at bay at least enough that it doesn’t make me look bad – instead of really letting the Gospel heal us. We’re all about public image because of our idolatry. In fact, our race has been plagued by countless neuroses and psychoses down through the centuries, ever since the first murder (fratricide!). And these false perceptions of reality wreak havoc on our mental and emotional health, on our relationships, on every stitch in the fabric of human society; they reveal our helplessness in resolving the human dilemma as it overwhelms us in every corner of our world. So it has no easy remedy – it only has the cross of Jesus. His solution was so radical because He’s not interested in focusing on symptoms, surface issues; they’re just the evidence of something deeper that’s wrong with us. He wants to go to the root of our problem, which is dealt with only at the cross – but not just in Jesus’ dying, but in our learning to die with Him. This is not a secondary matter, but the heart of Christian discipleship, the very essence of Christianity (Gal. 2:20, Lk. 9:23). Anything less than this is just human morals, religiosity, trying to learn the “art” of sin management – that’s not what Christ has called us to! It’s not satisfying, and it provides no relief, no real joy.

Biblical basis

This is what makes it so essential that we as Christians learn the deep lesson of Heb. 12: **“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith,”** so that we can come to make Him our true reference point in everything, to recognize the meaning of our salvation in terms of His ownership and rule over our lives, and to understand this as our real message to the rest of the world. So I’ve made my choice: I have decided to “fixate” on Jesus, because He’s the **healthiest obsession** you can have, the only One who can protect you from unhealthy obsessions (which we tend to be experts at)! Obsess on His Word, paying close attention to the Bible’s built-in guidelines for interpretation, together with the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Exegesis

“Therefore, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses set around us, let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily entangles, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of the faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” (Hebrews 12:1-4)

1) We should begin by noticing words that are repeated in this passage:

- a) What is “set” around us and “set” before us, just as something important was “set” before Jesus?
- b) What should characterize the way we run our “race” that also characterized the way Jesus confronted His suffering? This word’s root meaning is “to remain under” [a burden].
- c) The word for “race” (v. 1) and the expression “struggle against” (v. 4) are based on the same Greek root *agona*. So what connection can you make between the two?

2) Next we look for two words that emphasize where our focus should be for the running of this race:

- a) “fixing our eyes” (v. 2), reflecting a Greek word that literally means “looking away from all else,” in other words, “fixating on one thing”;
- b) “consider” (v. 3), from a term that means to reckon or calculate, to meditate, reasoning carefully.

3) Finally we take note of two words that describe the One who is the focus of our attention (v. 2):

- a) Author of our faith, meaning the founder and pioneer who gave the original impulse to belief in the true God and the spiritual perspective of life that grows out of that faith;
- b) Perfecter of our faith, meaning the finisher, that is, the one who completed the task of living out that faith to its ultimate consequences; He’s the Alpha and Omega of all things.

Explanation: Why am I “fixed on” Jesus? Why am I fixated on Him?

1) **Because life is so beautiful**, intense, precious, fleeting. Today is our middle son’s 36th birthday, which makes me terribly nostalgic. Our family is so important to us that we could easily become fixated on our family members and their needs. But the same is true of nature: I absolutely love forests, trees, mountains, flowers, sunsets; they too could become my obsession. Another beautiful area of life is music, be it choral or instrumental; classical, contemporary, jazz, folk – there’s no end to the variations! And we don’t even have time to talk about all the fantastic foods in the world, or the different kinds of recreation, entertainment, and sports, all of which can bring on loads of dopamine and adrenalin rush. Is all this amazing beauty and enjoyment the fruit of some random accident? Psalm 14:1 reminds us that *“the fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”* That means, according to biblical logic, that all this beauty and order had to come from some beautiful and powerful source, namely, our Creator! Yet the postmodern simpleton says, “Oh, it just happened by

chance” – which the Bible calls foolishness. Even statistics are against it! But the enjoyment of all this beauty is so intense that I could get carried away by any of it and make it the idol of my heart! So how do we avoid becoming “hooked” on all these delightful distractions? The psalmist was very aware of this danger when he prayed, **“Let me know how fleeting my life is!”** (Ps. 39:4). It’s like a circus ride that goes around too fast – I need something or someone to hold onto! Heb. 12 says it’s Jesus; He’s the fixed reference point that I need, the One to fix your eyes on, the Star to navigate by, the trustworthy Divine Human to fixate on.

2) Because life is so painful, tragic, fragile, overwhelming! There is so much injustice, violence, conflict, and anger in our world! But Mk. 7:21-23 says that the origin of these things is inside me and you, and we desperately need to recognize it and put them away (**“lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles”**). And most of us haven’t yet persevered to the point of shedding blood in our attempt to grow in the faith. Fixing my eyes on Jesus helps me not be frozen by fear and anxiety! Remember the psalmist’s declaration of faith: **“The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”** (Ps. 27:1). So I’m fixed on Jesus because **life hurts so much!** The suffering around us is enough to make us want to build walls of protection on every side! And that’s exactly what we humans do – from gated communities to locks and double locks and security on everything, especially our online accounts! We don’t want to get hurt because we’ve experienced enough hurt already! But we should notice the challenges faced by the saints of old in Heb. 11:35-38 – just look at their suffering! And my pain is nothing compared to that of others, for example, in the Ukraine, Pakistan, Nigeria, Afghanistan, North Korea, etc. Jesus helps me not to fixate on the pain ... but to press on toward the goal (Php. 3:14).

3) Because Jesus fixed my heart ... Oh, it’s still in process, still broken, always will be in this life. But it works, pumps blood and life everywhere I need it; it’s under repair ... so that I can persevere, run with **endurance** the race set before me! You see, Jesus’ heart was broken too, but He persevered through all our brokenness: Mk. 3 – Jesus’ heart was broken over the Pharisees’ lack of mercy; they had no compassion for the man with the withered hand in the synagogue. Mk. 4 – during the storm on the Sea of Galilee, His heart was broken over the disciples’ lack of faith; they didn’t really trust Him to take care of them, they hadn’t thought deeply enough about who He was; yet they had the Son of God in the boat with them! Mk. 6 – He was broken over the unbelief in His hometown, and the multitudes like sheep without a Shepherd, wandering around vulnerable, being devoured by wolves. Mk. 10:21 – broken over the rich young ruler’s fixation on riches (his security blanket). Lk 19:41 – broken over Jerusalem’s hardness of heart. Lk. 22 – at Gethsemane, sweating in prayer over humanity’s inhumanity. Lk. 23 – at Calvary, bleeding to death for humanity’s sake, suffocating under the blows of our hatred. But He stayed focused on **“the joy set before Him”**, and on His mission: He fixed my heart by incarnating divine forgiveness, mercy, and truth; so He endured all that hostility, “stayed under the burden,” and completed the task. What you focus on will determine the kind of finish you make.

4) Because Jesus overcame the opposition and offers us His victory. **“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself!”** Don’t get confused and think that at the cross it was God who was hostile against Jesus. On the contrary, it was humanity expressing all our worst against God! This God in the flesh was *letting humanity kill Him* rather than give us what we deserved right then and there. He let us express all our

rebellion, rejection, and rage in His face. What a battle was raging there at the cross, which means there's also a battle going on *for your heart!* But Jesus was winning the battle ... by giving Himself in love for us, by forgiving all the cruelty and anger we poured out on Him, by accepting all that pain and sorrow into Himself. When John 3:16 says God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, it means He put His Son into the hands of sinners (Mk. 14:41). And what did we do with Him? We poured out on Him everything that was broken in our hearts ("hurt people hurt people!"). That's what humans have been doing ever since Cain killed Abel – but God says if you've done it unto one of the least of these, you've done it unto me! But Jesus won the battle over all those wretched thoughts and feelings we humans are prone to; He established the rule of truth and grace in human flesh, even as we sought to destroy Him! That was the very moment of "kingdom come," which He now offers to us! He didn't give us what we deserved, but what we longed for. And the bigger He looms on my horizon, thanks to the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures that bear witness to Him, the more fixated I become on the Author and Finisher of this faith.

Are your eyes fixed on Jesus? Is your heart fixating on Him?