

“Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of Our Faith....” (Heb. 12:2a)

(10th Anniversary of Diocese of Doko)

By

Rt. Rev. Uriah Kolo, Bishop of Doko Diocese

Introduction.

How quickly time flies like a fallen leaf! It seems like yesterday when we were inaugurated as a Dioceses on the 18th July, 2009 by Primate Peter Jasper Akinola. Today is a wonderful time of celebration of the goodness of our God. He has natured our Dioceses for ten good years. We have chosen a theme “Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith....” (Heb. 12.2a) to commemorate this 10th anniversary of our Diocese.

This theme was chosen to mark, celebrate, thank Jesus and rejoice in His presence as the Lord has been our helper for the past ten years. When we look back and see what the Lord has done for us, we have nothing but to say, “thank you Lord!” The fact that we are still alive is enough for us to celebrate life. Many who started with us in this Diocese have answered the call of God to join the Church Triumphant.

This theme has been in our hearts in response to the challenges, uncertainties apprehensions of the political, economic, social, and religious crises we have found ourselves in Nigeria. A country where human life is no longer sacred, because of the decision of those who think that they have the political right to kill, maim, rape, kidnap and abduct others. And nothing will happen to these evil doers, for they think themselves to be above the law.

We consider the theme so as to encourage one another in the Christian faith, to continue to look to Jesus daily as the Author and Finisher of our faith. More than before, Christians are being relegated to the mud in promotion, appointment, election, employment, admission into schools and other spheres of life. This theme, taken from the book of Hebrews, we believe will serve as an encouragement to Christians to keep looking unto Jesus, who is always there for us as the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

The background of the book of Hebrews:

The author of the letter to Hebrews is unknown, there have been many conjectures and suggestions in New Testament theology in Apostle Paul or someone else who is very versed in the knowledge of the Old Testament. It was probably written in Rome C.A.D. 68 to Jewish Christians with the theme: “The superiority of Christ” (Heb. 1:4, 2:3) and our synod theme of today “the Author and Finisher of our Faith”. Jesus Christ is the author; He is the finisher.

Definition to terms:

“Looking”

“Author”

“Finisher”

“Faith”.

What is Looking?

“Looking”, here means “fixing one’s eyes trustingly;” We need to constantly focus on Christ instead of our circumstances. Just as the race runner concentrate on the finish or touch line, we should concentrate on Jesus, the goal and the objective of our faith.

Who is Author?

Christ is the author of life, the beginning of life and the giver of life. Christ is the beginning and the end “He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Last”. (Rev 1:8, 11, 21:6).

Who is Finisher/Perfecter?

Christ has done everything necessary for our salvation and for us to endure in our faith. He is our perfect example and role model, for He focused on the joy that was set before Him. His attention was not on the agonies of the cross, but on the crown, not on the suffering, but on the reward. Jesus Christ is our supreme everlasting example.

His Participation:

The Author and Perfecter:

Believers who have trusted God and endured in their faith are great examples for us. We have seen this in the Great Hall of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven. And we see in the example of believers all around us. Believers who really live for Christ. But as great as these examples are, there is one supreme example of faith, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. We may and should look at the example of other believers, but we should always fix our eyes on Jesus. The word “look” means to “fix eyes upon” Jesus. It also means to “fix your mind upon” Jesus. You as a Christian running is to focus your eyes and mind upon Jesus Christ. Why? Because Jesus Christ Himself ran the race of faith, when He was on earth. He shows us exactly how to run it.

What does it mean that Jesus is the author of our faith?

An author is an originator or creator. He authored, began, originated, created, and gave birth to the Christian faith. It means, He controls our faith, steers it as a captain steers a ship. He is the great leader and president of our faith. He trusted in God His Father. He is the purchaser of the spirit of faith, the publisher of the rule of faith. The efficient cause of the grace of faith, and in all respects the author of our faith.

What does it mean that Jesus is the perfecter/finisher of our faith?

This means bringing something to conclusion. Jesus Christ is the fulfiller and the fulfillment of all Scripture promises and prophecies. He is the perfecter of the Canon of Scripture. He is the finisher of grace, and of the work of faith with power in the souls of His people. Jesus Christ is the judge and reward of our faith. He determines who they

are that reach the mark, endure to the end, and from Him, and in Him, they have the prize, the crown of life.

Jesus Christ perfected, completed, and consummated our faith. He ran to the finish line. Jesus Christ set a supreme example to us to be perfectly sinless and righteous, always obeying God in everything. He ran the race of faith, utter obedience and trust in God. He created, authored and completed the Christian race for all believers. He is the blazing example of faith in God of utter dependence, obedience, and righteousness –for the believer. (Heb. 3:1; 1Peter 2:21).

Jesus Christ is the sustenance of our daily walk and finisher of our spiritual journey. If Christ is not the finisher and perfecter of your faith through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, then you are not born again, neither are you a true follower of Christ. You are on your own. (Phil 1:6, Eph. 1:1-14) Jesus is the Author who finished His work. He did not abandon it midway despite the tricks of the devil and human discouragement. He received the crown and so also if you endure to the end, you shall be saved. (Matt 24:13). Jesus helps us endure many trials until our final day.

How did Jesus do it?

Jesus never lost sight of where He was headed. He put up with anything along the way, the cross, the shame, the scorn and many other obstacles. And He is now there in the place of honour, right alongside of God. (Acts 7:55-56, Rms. 8:34, Eph. 1:20, Col 3:1, Heb. 1:3)

His inspiration and joy.

What was the Joy set before Him? It is the glorious day of redemption. Christ our Lord was being stirred to come to the world to author salvation for mankind. It was to be by the Joy that lay before Him. Christ as our supreme example should stir and motivate us for the Joy that lies before us. The Joy that is set before us should take precedence over everything else, as Jesus our perfect example has done.

Christ under unparalleled suffering.

That was the Joy that was set before Him. Jesus had something in view under all His suffering, which was pleasant to Him. He rejoiced to see that by His sufferings. He should make satisfaction to the injured justice of God and give security to His honour and government. That He should make peace between God and man, that He should seal the covenant of grace and be the Mediator of it. That he should open a way of salvation to the worst of sinners, and that He should effectually save those whom the father had given Him. This was the Joy that was set before him. (Rom 14:17)

Jesus endured the cross.

Jesus Christ endured the contradictions of the sinner and bore the opposition that man raised against Him by word and action. He endured the evil deeds of sinners with great patience. He endured their contradictions against His words, preaching authority, His person as the Godman.

He endured the cross and all the sufferings that He encountered in the world. He took up His cross and He was nailed to it. He endured the painful, ignominious, and accursed death by which He was numbered with the transgressors. Yet all these he endured with absolute patience and resolution. He was not distracted for a minute.

Scorning the shame of the cross.

He ignored and despised the shame of the cross in order to finish the race of perfect obedience to God. All the reproaches that were cast upon Him, both in His life and at His death, He despised. Jesus was infinitely above them. He knows His innocence and despised the ignorance and malice of His despisers. He was nailed to the cross, naked on the rugged cross.

Jesus the supreme example of receiving a reward:

He has been exalted to the right hand of the throne of God. His disciples witnessed His ascension and several believers have seen Him in visions and dreams since then. (Luke 22:69, Acts 7:1ff). Christ as the Mediator is exalted to a station of the highest honour, greatest power and influence. He is at the right hand of the father, and is making intercession for us.

Application/Implication of the theme.

What is our duty with respect to this Jesus? We must look unto Him, that is, we must set Him continually before us as our perfect example and our great encouragement. We must look to Him for direction, assistance, and acceptance in all our sufferings. As a Christian, family, church, things will not get better unless we look to Jesus as our perfect example. And your life, family and church will experience the touch of God for favour, joy and peace.

Our nation, in political, economic, social and religious spheres needs to look to Jesus, if we must move our country to the next level. To continue to look away from Him will spell doom to our country. Jesus is the answer to our political, social, economic and religious problems. If we want to transform Nigeria, we must consider Him, meditate upon Him and reason with ourselves from His case to our own. We must analogize as the word is; compare Christ's sufferings and ours, and we shall find that as His sufferings far exceeded ours in the nature and measure, of them, so His patience far excels ours, and is a perfect pattern for us to imitate. This will prevent our weariness and fainting under trials and afflictions of long continuance. For if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him eternally. (2Tim 2:12)

The Hindrances.

Danger of Sin:

It is imperative to know that "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1Jh 3:4). Sin is lawlessness, rebellion against God, disobedience to God. We are to lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us. We could sin against God in thought,

word and deed, and by omission or commission. The lust of the eyes, lust of the body and pride of life are the areas the devil is attacking us to sin against God. You must drop, lay aside, throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily besets you to enable you to run the Christian race and finish it. The question is, what is that sin that so easily beats you?

Lack of endurance:

Jesus Christ our perfect example endured the cross and won. He resurrected on the third day. The word “endurance” means, “Fortitude,” “steadfastness”, “constancy”. It could be sickness, disease, loss of a dear one, delayed marriage, delayed childbirth, no admission to a new school, unemployment, promotion, business collapsing, and poverty. Look unto Jesus and endure the race to finish and God will surprise you with a reward of heaven with a crown. (Rm 12:12, Heb. 10:36, James 1:2-4, James 5:7). So shall be your portion in Jesus name. Amen.

Not looking onto Jesus:

This implies a definite looking away from others and directing one’s gaze towards Jesus. We should focus on Jesus. Fix your eyes on the most perfect example of Jesus Christ. The solution is in deepening your attention, fixing, focusing, looking to Jesus Christ your perfect example, the author and finisher of your faith.

Greed and the love of money

In Mathew 26:14-16, we see Judas Iscariot typifying greed. Judas Iscariot stands as a great warning to every man, including the strongest believer. Judas Iscariot was one of the original twelve apostles chosen by Christ. He was a man with so much potential that he was chosen to serve with God’s very own Son during His earthly ministry. He rejected his call and went to the chief priest, with the gnawing sin of greed and the love of money, deceit and intrigue. Judas Iscariot later felt remorse, but to the priest not to God. He fell into utter despair and hanged himself. What a tragic end! Looking away from Jesus can spell a disastrous end to the victim.

Nevertheless, and despite all the opportunities, Judas’s life was a terrible tragedy. He turned his eyes away from Jesus Christ. Judas did not give his life and heart to Christ. The end of Judas Iscariot was a great disaster and a warning to all of us. (1Cor 10:12)

Conclusion:

Our dear people of God, there is no alternative to Jesus Christ. This is clearly stated to us in His word: “Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me” (1John14:6). Looking away from Jesus will not help you. The way to God is through Jesus Christ. Jesus did not only point the way to God but also personally takes you to the Father. Jesus Christ is the life, the life giver, He possesses the life and He is the source of life.

Let arise from this Synod, go and continue to look to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith. He has not disappointed us for one day in these past ten years.

The past heroes of faith in our Diocese are enough testimony for us to be encouraged to keep looking onto Jesus as our perfect example.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Eph. 3:20-21)

Saturday 20th July, 2019

Rt. Rev. Uriah Kolo, Bishop of Doko Diocese
Diocese of Doko, Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion
Niger State, Nigeria

(Note: The message is excerpts from Bishop Charge delivered at the 10th Anniversary of Doko Dioceses)