

# Faith And Our Focus On Jesus Christ

Every Christian should be well aware of Satan's evil intentions, he hates God the Father and Jesus Christ and any faith we have in them.

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27** [NIV] *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*

Satan wants every Christian to lose this race in life and the eternal crown that we will receive at the end.

**This Christian race is in no sense a competition between believers.**

**As the last part of the scripture shows, it is a race against our own human nature and its weaknesses, which Satan will use to try to cause us to fail, he is the common enemy of all Christians.**

**Revelation 12:11** [NIV] *“They [Christians – verse 10] overcame him [Satan – verse 9] by the blood of the Lamb, [the sacrifice of our Saviour Jesus Christ] and by the word of their testimony [1 Peter 3:15; Matthew 5:13-16] and did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”*

This is the overcoming that all the seven churches in Revelation are told to do to receive their reward, **[Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; Revelation 3:5, 12, 21]**.

**Hebrews 12:1-4** [NIV] *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”*

The Holy Spirit has recorded in God's Word, the Christian Bible, many examples of men and women of great faith in the Creator God and His power to give them victory over the influence of Satan and their own human nature.

The greatest of these is Jesus Christ the Son of Man and our Saviour.

This is why the writer of Hebrews tells us to *“fix our eyes on Jesus,”* for He is *“the author and perfecter of our faith.”*

**Hebrews 12:5-11** [NIV] *“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*

We are reminded that the perfecting of our faith will involve painful discipline.

**Hebrews 5:7-10** [NIV] *“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”*

**Jesus Christ as God was perfect, but as the human Son of Man, He was made perfect by the discipline of suffering.**

In describing the Christian life as runners in a race, the Holy Spirit provides us with a strong warning as well as loving encouragement, for there is always the danger of losing the race and not gaining the eternal crown.

How do we make sure we do win this race?

We have just read what is the key to winning, *“let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”*

For only Jesus Christ is our pacesetter and victorious example, we keep Jesus Christ in full view regardless of what others may be doing all around us.

This is excellent counsel, because as human beings we are shown by God’s Word, the Christian Bible, that we are **not** sufficient in ourselves.

**John 15:1-5** [NIV] *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.**”*

Not only do we look to Jesus, we are totally dependent on Him for any mature *“fruit”* [**Galatians 5:22-23**] that may be developed in our lives.

**Matthew 16:24-27** [NIV] *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, **he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.’”*

As disciples of Jesus Christ we are invited to follow His example to endure the shame and humility of sacrificing our own lives on our own cross.

**What is meant by these words of Jesus Christ?**

**Let the scriptures expand on this statement.**

**John 12:24-26** [NIV] *“I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.”*

We have to hate this life that is governed by this world’s society and the values it places on life.

**Romans 6:1-10** [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried*

*with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.”*

We die to sin when our old life, that was **not** focussed on Jesus Christ, was crucified on our own personal cross.

**Galatians 2:20-21** [NIV] *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”*

**Our old life was crucified but as Jesus Christ is alive we too are still living by faith in Jesus Christ.**

**Romans 12:1-2** [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

It is out of gratitude for what Jesus Christ has done for us that we could never do for ourselves that we become like Jesus Christ the Son of Man, a living sacrifice.

The reason for this is in **verse 2** that we can be re-educated by the Holy Spirit.

**Too many churches have made the cross an object instead of a subject.**

**They have made the cross external instead of internal.**

**They have made the cross institutional instead of experiential.**

**Genesis 1:26-27** [NIV] *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

God’s love and concern are for people, He loves human beings made in His image, [Hebrew means “shadow” **not** real thing] and wants them to become in His “likeness” [Hebrews means character].

Note at the original physical creation **only** “image” was created as “likeness,” character takes time and a relationship with the One whose character we desire to share.

**Galatians 6:14** [NIV] *“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*

The world’s society is full of enticements.

Daily we are confronted with subtle cultural pressure and overt propaganda. The only way to escape these destructive influences is, with God’s help, to crucify our interest in them, just as Paul did.

**Philippians 4:11-13** [NIV] *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have*

*plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*

Paul had learnt to be content in his lifestyle, and he was able to do this through the strength he received by his relationship with his Saviour Jesus Christ.

**Philippians 3:10-14** [NIV] *“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.”*

Paul was content with the physical comforts that he had, but **not** with his spiritual growth and maturity.

Again we see that Paul’s focus was on Jesus Christ for the power and support he needed to attain the prize he sought.

The power of the resurrection to eternal life that can be his through the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Son of God that overcame death, [**1 Corinthians 15:50-56**].

Millions of people seem to be very content with life as it is in today’s society.

They do **not** want to be reminded at all that they are going to die, [**Ecclesiastes 9:5**] and that after death comes the judgement of a holy and righteous God, [**2 Corinthians 5:10**]. They would rather remain gullible and deceived than to learn the truth about life and death.

**2 Corinthians 4:4** [NIV] *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

The good news that Jesus Christ brought from the Father is that physical death does **not** have to be the end of our existence, this is what Satan does **not** want humans to know.

Satan has kept most people so busy, seeking to support this life in the poorer nations, or so well entertained with the things that are amusing and fun, in the richer nations, that neither have time or even desire to focus on Jesus Christ and have faith in what He has done for all humanity.

The many godly people who have lived for Jesus Christ through the centuries allowed the cross to kill off their self-confidence, their self-love, their self-will, their self-pity and their self-righteousness.

I feel that they were faithful in keeping Jesus Christ in full view all the time, looking away from themselves and following Him all the way, even to death.

**Luke 14:25-27** [NIV] *“Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.’”*

Jesus Christ never said that being a disciple of His would be easy, but a life totally focussed on Him and dedicated to any work He may give them to do.

They looked beyond the passing attractions of this world to see a far better future.

They took the promises of God at face value.

**Galatians 3:6-9** [NIV] *“Consider Abraham: ‘He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”*

Abraham was aware of the gospel message and so had faith in what the Creator God told him, that all nations would be blessed by faith in One of his descendants, Jesus Christ.

They looked forward to a new world.

**Hebrews 11:8-10** [NIV] *“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”*

This new Jerusalem was the ruling city of the “*new heavens and new earth,*” [**Revelation 21:1-2**].

**Only through faith in and focus on Jesus Christ can this new world be our world in the future.**