

“LOOK EVER TO JESUS”

Gary McDade

The beautiful refrain in the familiar song “Yield Not to Temptation,” written by Horatio R. Palmer in 1868, urges worshipers to “look ever to Jesus.” The inspired writer of Hebrews recommended the same pursuit when he said, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed 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” (Hebrews 12:1-2, emphasis added).

While the whole song is uplifting and edifying, the second verse is deserving of special attention and implementation today and here’s why: We have now a cultural phenomenon in which taking the name of God in vain is not only commonplace but threadbare. The phrase being referenced (and pardon me, but I don’t want anyone to miss the point here) is “Oh, My God!” The Bible has always said, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). People have always wanted to bring the name of God into the conversation to add credibility to their pronouncements. Jesus commented along this line when He said, “But I say unto you, Swear not at all...But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:34 and 37).

Verse 2 of “Yield Not to Temptation” shares good advice when it says, “Shun evil companions, Bad language disdain, *God’s name hold in reverence, Nor take it in vain*; be thoughtful and earnest, Kindhearted and true, Look ever to Jesus: He’ll carry you through.” We probably ought to sing this song every time the church meets!

Old Testament scholar, C.F. Keil, weighed in on this discussion in his *Commentary on the Old Testament* (vol. 1, p. 398), regarding the Hebrew word included in the phrase, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Jehovah thy God in vain,” and wrote: “The word prohibits all employment of the name of God for vain and unworthy objects, and includes not only false swearing, which is condemned in Lev. 19:12 as a profanation of the name of Jehovah, but trivial swearing in the ordinary intercourse of life, and every use of the name of God in the service of untruth and lying, for imprecation, witchcraft, or conjuring; whereas the true employment of the name of God is confined to ‘invocation, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving,’ which proceeds from a pure, believing heart. The natural heart is very liable to transgress this command, and therefore it is solemnly enforced by the threat, ‘for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless’ (leave him unpunished), etc.”