

Focus!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 September 2013

Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 0 0] Now I want to continue to challenge our own congregation particularly and if and your visiting with us also encourage you in your prayers but as We come together doing this series. I see this very much as a Covenant together that we're doing this together. We're walking through this book together and You're very much part of that and you will be over the coming weeks and what I want To happen is that we together are dependent on God's spirit to take this Beautiful book of the Bible which exalts Jesus Christ and go on that journey together We all take responsibility for that that would all parade up today as we come into church that we are Spiritually prepared to see what will God tell what will God say to us from his word today as you will draw out From the preaching and also that you will be dependent and I will be dependent and each of us will be dependent on the Holy Spirit to Bring us to that point where we have a higher view of Jesus Christ and a more worshipful

Attitude as a result not just in here, but in our lives altogether. I really pray that that will be the case and today There's kind of two phrases that I would like you to take away if you don't remember anything of the finer detail of the sermon could it be that you take away these two Phrases with you and that they will Trigger for you some of the other truth of scripture and the two phrases that I want us to consider from this chapter today is be focused spiritually and also be vigilant So be focused spiritually and be vigilant and that is the Framework and that I would like to look at this chapter Under this framework so be focused and obviously that is The case as we introduce ourselves to this very this chapter chapter 3 Therefore holy brothers brothers and sisters the family of God who share in the heavenly calling fix your thoughts on Jesus

Okay, so that that's that's the beginning That's the first phrase that I want you to take away is to be focused Who is it were to be focused on well, you know who don't you?

It's already become very clear and very evident that the beginning of this book of Hebrews is focusing on the Supremacy and the glory of Jesus Christ. So Unashamedly that's the focus and I can't ask you to focus on anyone else or on anything else That's the focus of this book and will continue to be and the writer and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit is Building a stronger and stronger case For fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ and that is the challenge for us in our lives Remember that this is written to Jewish Christians Remember that they had some kind of issue with and they were struggling in their faith things were difficult for them They were persecuted Jesus in their eyes wasn't all he'd been cracked up to be So they were thinking of drifting back towards more judaistic principles and away from Jesus Christ They were they'd made Jesus Christ smaller. They were shrinking him down and they were almost as we saw earlier

They were almost putting him on a par with angels. So because angels were very important to the Jewish To Judean Judaism and so there was some very significant angels and it was almost they were putting Jesus on a par with angels and Previously we looked at what the Bible said about that but here we also find that The Holy Spirit wants to remind them that Jesus is much much greater than Moses as well She Moses was a great hero of the faith Tremendous hero of the faith to the Old Testament people a significant and important a Character in the Old Testament story and absolutely right also But right away there the Holy Spirit and God wants us to remember that Moses is nothing like Jesus Christ Verse 40 says for every house is built by someone but God is the builder of everything Moses was a faithful and as a servant in all of God's house Testifying what would be said in the future. So Moses as a servant

[4 : 29] Moses a great servant is a great leader, but he's a servant and he's a servant in God's house and God's house is significant but the builder of God's house has got himself and That is who Jesus is and if you see that the writer just uses God and Jesus interchangeably Jesus was found greater it found worthy of greater honor than Moses and For every house is built by someone but God is the builder of everything And so he's simply saying that Jesus is God Jesus is the builder. He's building actually on what he's being said Previously and he uses God and Jesus interchangeably in this passage and The God again There's some buzzwords when you go through a book you find there's quite often buzzwords Kind of words that are used a lot and here's another one. God is the builder of everything. We've seen that before everything All things all things everything

So he's reminding us that Jesus Christ is sovereign even though we can't see it We discussed that and Wednesday night of the city groups, but he's sovereign. He's supreme. He's over all things He is the one who is not just a little bit in charge Not just a little bit in control, but he is the builder of everything so everything that encompasses All of us here today encompasses the world and the universe in which we live and in many ways what what God is wanting us to be reminded of is where the focus of our life is the focus What we fix it so you've come in here this morning? We're all different. We're all unique and We may all have there may be as many different folk I as There is people here What on what are we reliant what is the focus of our life Spiritually even what's the focus of it? Is it just been part of a good church? Do you want to be part of a good church?

And there's a lot of trouble with that Because when it just lets you down What do you do? Where do you go if you're relying on a good church or a good minister?

He's even more likely to let you down or is that a Christian Celebrities at Tim Keller or the Spurgeon or Martin Luther Heroes of the faith are they who we focus our Christian lives or do we look for the latest book or the latest Christian thinking or the latest internet sensation on which to focus our attention spiritually We're reminded here that they that we that the church We're all servants if Moses one of the greatest of all people in the history of salvation There's a servant then so are we and if Moses made mistakes, which he did We far more will make mistakes as well the Christian celebrities And when's the night I also to go we spoke a lot and this happens again and again and again as we speak a lot about hurt and about the hurt that we get from churches and How that can derail our faith?

Because our church our community our gospel experience is negative isn't good And so we can adrift away because of that and we isolate ourselves from that Now there is never an excuse for bad church experience. There's never a justification for it But if that is what our focus is on Then we will always be let down and we will always struggle because he says fix your eyes on Jesus Christ Not on the church not on the community not on what you get on a Sunday Primarily, but on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ ultimately Bad churches and our drifting from them will always be a spiritual excuse Ultimately, it may have justifiable reason, but it will be it will never satisfy because We have to fix our eyes not on people not on a church But on Jesus Christ and I'm gonna balance that out later on so you have to listen because I'm gonna balance it later on

[8 : 48] It doesn't mean that we regard the church as insignificant remember that so Focus our eyes on Jesus Christ the apostle and high priest whom we confess How do we do that?

How do we do that? Well, we use our minds fix your thoughts on Jesus Christ fix your thoughts on Jesus Christ. I'm really into thinking again. I Don't know about personally probably not, but I like the idea of thinking thinking is really good and We're living in a time and a generation where everything is screaming at us to not think don't think be distracted Have a screen Constantly be online always be in touch with people always be entertained so many visual distractions so many societal distractions and and here we're encouraged to To to be thinking it's a massive area to think about scripture to stop to rediscover silence Can we rediscover that peaceful silence that enables our mind to delve into?

The person of Jesus Christ think about what the Bible says. Do you struggle with the Old Testament? You struggle with it as the word of God is a God authority Then you look at verse 7 of this chapter says so as the Holy Spirit says and it quotes a Sam from the Old Testament so the the author of Hebrews under the inspiration of the spirit has no problem with Identifying all of the Old Testament for example as being from the Holy Spirit even though it was written by David So we think about these things and it changes the way that we we think about the Bible. We need to dig We need to feed our souls and feed find silence We have to do mental workouts. I don't like sometimes the I Recognize there's more to it, but sometimes that the passivity of church But everyone seems to be sitting back Relaxing and the ministers can pull in his head out at the front

But I do think that we're all involved even though some some for some it's more Physically passive than others because we need to be thinking about God and what is his word is we need to work out It's not all going to be for us mental sound bites in the kingdom We can't always just have a sweet phrase to trip through our day with we do need to work and think and Fix our eyes on Jesus. It doesn't come naturally It doesn't come naturally to the oldest Christian here. Let alone the youngest one. It's something that we battle with and we need to fix Deliberately our attention on in order to do so fix our mind our thoughts on Jesus That's how we fix as our Jesus is central by by thinking about him, but also by confessing him We recognize he is the one that we are to Confess in our lives the apostle and high priest whom we confess

So we speak about that's how we fix our eyes on Jesus. We confess him When people ask you about your Christianity, what do you say? I? Go to a church. Oh I believe a certain type of theology. I have a moral standard Or do we confess Jesus Christ?

[12 : 34] Fix our eyes on Jesus. He is the one we confess. It's not Anything other than a person with all the theology, of course that goes behind that But the person of Jesus Christ these apostles the only place in the whole Bible is described in the apostle here the sent one the high priest the one who is our Representative the focus of our Christianity is the is Jesus Christ now here some people as well that speak say our we've moved into different territory now because Jesus is ascended we should call him the Lord Jesus Christ and give him his is rightful ascended title Well the writer to the Hebrews has no problem calling him just Jesus Just Jesus our thoughts on Jesus the apostle and high priest of our faith, of course He's our Lord of course he's the Lord Jesus Christ, but we can use these terms interchangeably Fix an eyes on this one this person can we do that?

Confess him when people ask us can we confess that it is Jesus who is the one who's transformed our lives and Sure invite them along to the community because we're the body of Christ But it's to Jesus that we are introducing them And we focus on eyes and I'm also by living a certain kind of life therefore holy brothers holy Family members brothers and sisters this was probably written to the leaders of the church so it's called brothers But it was to be given to all who were believers Holy set apart Now Ross who's my youngest son just moved into primary seven and primary seven in In Gillespie's they wear a different sweatshirt Sets them apart different color different design Because they're primary seven they're big They're the top of the school and it gives them a sense of I'm different and a sense of responsibility I'm primary seven now. I don't act like a primary one act like a primary seven. I'm gonna be in a big school soon

So it sets them apart what they wear It's recently a wedding up in Fetter Cairn and the bridesmaids all came now bridesmaids usually wear different clothes But these bridesmaids really wore different ones. They were green and yellow and red and like jungle colors Beautiful it was and they were all stunning, but they were set apart from the moment you saw them You knew that they were bridesmaids set apart for a specific task that they had to do on the day and they did it beautifully They didn't blend in Primary seven kids don't blend in you can see them a long way away and we are called to be holy which simply means as Christians set apart We're called we're Christ's and we're to be known as Christ. We spend so much of our time blending in Trying to be the same as everybody else and he sees we fix an idea on Jesus because we're called to be like Jesus We're covered in the robe of his righteousness And we are called not just to blend in

Now we're not called just to be weird and different for the sake of it We're called to be like Jesus with all our own individual characters and there's such a variety of characters here You're not all to look the same or blend in the same way or say the same things But with your own unique characters you are to be like Jesus Christ holy Set apart sin. It's an underused word today But we are to be set up for fix we need to fix our eyes upon Jesus so The question for you and for me today is who Who is the focus of our Christian lives? Are you dependent on your church fix?

Or your church connections and as soon as that goes then or as soon as something happens that you don't like then bang it goes Or is it on Jesus Christ? on Jesus Christ That's the first thing I want to say the first Focus be focused the first point my second point is be vigilant because that's what this chapter is also about in verse 12 Holy Spirit says say to it brothers that none of you has a sinful unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God so here is this call this Clarion call to be vigilant This chapter is undoubtedly a chapter that holds warnings for us We must we must be alert to the warnings of scripture Because God knows our hearts better than we know ourselves and I think the warning of this section about being vigilant And can I really ask for your attention here?

[17:23] Is the danger of finishing badly? It's easy to make a good start spiritually It's easy in the first fling of youth as it were to make a good start But this is a warning against finishing badly The whole chapter and we sung about it in Sam 95 as well is about the point back to the Israelites who started so well in following God and being redeemed out of Egypt slavery the followed God, but it's the story of continued and relentless unbelief That they didn't believe that they didn't carry on that they didn't go down the road of faith and trust but that they dug their heels in and were Moving towards a real bad finish. In fact, it was a terrible finish. They didn't get into the promised land because of their hard sinful hearts of unbelief and this is a chapter and a warning about turning away And I don't know the condition of your heart today spiritually

I don't know if you've never turned to him in the first place, but I'm convinced there may be someone here today Who is thinking about turning away and this isn't just someone and this isn't just something that's about I'm struggling I'm just gonna take a break for a while. I'm not talking about that. You know the word for turning away. He does apostasy It's making a really deliberate Move away. It's a strong word. It's it's going against God deliberately and clearly Having an unbelieving heart And it's it's going to point towards the importance of the foundation you have Because what becomes clear from the Old Testament Story is that they didn't have the right foundation Whatever they were focusing their eyes on it wasn't on God. It was maybe on the promised land or maybe it was on Freedom from slavery or maybe it was from the miracles that they could see and all that was great But it wasn't fixing their eyes on their God and their Redeemer and their foundation was wrong and the parable of the source all about that

Isn't it as well? We can know a lot about Jesus and we can we can even have a I kind of kind of confession of them and I'm gonna go on and speak about that in chapter 6 a really difficult chapter a while but We're not founded on Jesus Christ It might seem like it, but we're not so the foundation is very important And so we need to examine ourselves towards Jesus again fiction your eyes on him And so this chapter is very much about personal responsibility Personal responsibility, okay So in a lot of it he's saying here, you know, don't be like Those in the Old Testament you guard this is your heart You stop going astray you look out for your sinful and Unbelieving heart and so basically what the Holy Spirit saying this is not God's fault It's not God's fault that you don't believe Unbelief is not neutral apostasy is not neutral If what you are in your character is not neutral he's saying you have responsibility to make

Your calling an election sure your responsibility to recognize that you need to fix your eyes on Jesus Unbelief is culpable. Lots of people will say to me. I would love to believe that I can't You know what they would say they'll say that I'd love to believe but I can't believe I know it's good for you But it simply isn't for me. I said well, I can't you know I can't I can't change its spots. We can't do anything about what we are even if some people saying well I don't know if I'm the elect and if I am then that's fine. God will come and get me at some point I'll know and I'll believe and it'll all happen to me and This there's a denial of personal responsibility I can't help what I am I can't help what I do I can't help what I am She's simply not good enough It's not good enough before God because none of it will stand on that day before him I Heard an atheist argument this last week where it was a ludicrous argument at one level

But nonetheless it was an argument they said the worst thing about Christians is they did their denial of taking responsibility for themselves They take all their moral responsibility from a book Because they can make up their own mind about what's right and wrong now Give me five minutes with that guy But nonetheless maybe it's because he's seen that from Christians Christians who are not taking personal responsibility and are hiding behind a book It's not a book is it?

[22 : 14] relationship with the living God Yes, we're enslaved. Yes, God is sovereign. Yes, we can't save ourselves But we are responsible for our heart to come to Christ to focus on Christ to believe on Christ and to stay with Christ with his help if We are drifting if we're agnostic today if you're waiting for God to zap you Then you're culpable You're guilty before him You're responsible for your soul and salvation is being offered stop blaming God Stop blaming other people. That's what we do. We've done it from the very beginning Eve did it from the very beginning and Adam did it from the beginning they blamed each other and the devil Everyone else but themselves and we've always been doing it. We blame the church. We blame the minister We blame the Bible we blame God we blame our circumstances. We blame our hearts we blame all kinds of things and

The Holy Spirit is saying stop blaming others do your business with God be vigilant Come to God fictionize on Jesus Christ Be vigilant and I'm just gonna finish by asking the question how and this is what I'm coming back to the beginning and As I said I would about the church How are we vigilant?

What's what does if you think God had one word here or one? Way of encouraging us to be vigilant to fictionize on Jesus. What do you think it would be?

Well, the great thing is this is a challenge Drifting and against unbelief. What's the antidote he gives here?

And it's a brilliant paradoxical reality he says you have personal responsibility But it's in the context of being in a community of believers He says what does he say?

[24 : 29] Encouragement that's what we do You know see to it brothers verse two none of you has sinful unbelieving heart, but encourage one another daily Isn't that brilliant?

Because we can all fix our eyes on Jesus. We can all be vigilant because we can all be Encouragers of one another It's a it's a kind of fusion thing here isn't there there's personal responsibility and there's community some of the guys here and girls I think in the summer did tough mudder Okay, that's a good example tough mother. You've got a start as a team You've got to go through mud and you've got to be electrocuted and you've got to run 12 miles And you've got to walk over walls and it's a in a salt course But you do as a team you start as a team and you finish as a team, but you've got to do it all yourself as well So there's this kind of dual thing going on you're encouraging the other you know you don't you know There's not one some superstar that goes and tries to finish his first in the team No one likes a big shot like that You wait and you encourage the person who's lasting He's doing great keep it going and And that's what the Christian life is that interested in the spiritual giant that that gallops off into the sunset

Without any issues or problems or hassles we stop and encourage one another in our vigilance. It's so simple, but it's so profound It so balances our self-obsession and also our Ridiculous perversion of scripture that allows us to think that only Jesus can help us in our pursuit of holiness and The church is just a hindrance Generally that's an excuse for spiritual pride and self-righteousness We need one another because that's God's model and that's God's pattern The Trinity is a divine society of perfect glorious encouragement and we are to reflect that in our Congregational life which is to be one of encouraging one another that's how we can be vigilant That's how we can fix our eyes on Jesus by encouraging one another Help one another in the faith

Spend time with one another pray with one another live for one another Twice in this chapter at the beginning and at the end. We're told that we are sharing in a heavenly calling verse 1 says we share in a heavenly calling and at the end we're told in verse 14 that we are those who share in Christ See that emphasis of sharing of being together in the Christian life It's not that you go up to your fellow Christians say oh come on buck up Stop sinning stop being rubbish in the Christian faith or finding fault or being judgmental. That's not what's meant by it the antidote to unbelief is being together spiritually encouraging one another that Our experience is normally opposite isn't it when we're struggling with unbelief. What do we tend to do?

We tend to come away from the fellowship we tend to recoil from fellowship and from Christian company and Very often we'll find it easy to blame Christian company for where we are spiritually So is it the church's fault that I've backslidden?

[28 : 01] Now it might be part of it, but ultimately we need to work through that hurt seek forgiveness and Find in that forgiveness. There's a deepening of our relationship together. That's what we need most encouragement You know who's going to be great in the Kingdom in the last great day who's going to be great Is it going to be the Christian celebrities? It's going to be the great leaders. No, I don't think so I think in heaven the great people in the kingdom will be the encouragers the ordinary people the little ladies and the old and young men who take time and young women and old women who take time to see their own Fragility and the fragility of others who empathize who take other Christians aside and Point them to Jesus who sacrifice who will text someone on a rubbish morning and say I'm thinking about you praying for you today Keep it going. He'll have a word in their ear Who'll smile and say that's the great people they will be the great people in the kingdom and the whole idea here as well as of them I

Think of preaching as well as been encouraging and challenging and lifting is that the idea of the encouragement here is the kind of idea of Commander inspiring and rallying his troops because the odds are very difficult and and great. Yeah, will you fight?

What? 2010 no we will run and live. Oh Yeah fight and you may die Run and you will live at least for a while and dying in your beds many years from now Would you be willing to trade all the days for this day to from this day to that for one chance?

Just one chance to come back here as young men and tell our enemies that they may take our lives But they will never take our freedom That's a good quote isn't it that's exactly the kind of encouragement that's been spoken of We have to be spiritual brave hearts towards one another Okay, it's the first and last time you'll ever hear me quoting Mel Gibson from the foot Okay, but remember that that's the kind of thing that is being spoken of here And that's what we need. We love that don't we not because it rubs out ego, but because we're broken And because we're struggling and we don't need anyone to tell us how rubbish we are as Christians because we know that We need to be told That Jesus Christ is the one that we fix our eyes on And he's the one that is not ashamed to call us brothers That's what's important and we do it and I finish with this daily So he says encourage one another daily. It's not just once a year. We'll have a day of encouragement

It's not like that. It's going to be that we do it daily. You know, that's the struggle. That's the battle. That's the reality for us Keep your short account with God. Don't just go to God once a month Fixing your eyes on him and getting your account keep your account short speak with him get it right today This is all about today often speaks about here in this passage today if you hear his voice don't harm your heart You're not a Christian today. Don't wait for tomorrow Oh tomorrow isn't promised. It never is don't think that you have a plan of becoming a Christian sometime later in your life when You're near the grave and you've done all the things you want to do Because you're not guaranteed that today is the only day that we're guaranteed and that is the context in which we live our lives If you're burdened first if you dream about someone tonight that you haven't dreamed about for ages phone them tomorrow Phone them and say I'm thinking about you Pray and do it daily Walk with people come into their lives spend time with them

[31 : 55] Be with other people God doesn't give us a complex manual For living the Christian life. It's a very simple way He says fictionize on Jesus and be vigilant And help everyone else be vigilant when you spend time together Don't make Jesus the unwelcome guest in your conversation fictionizing him So you see the significance of personal responsibility and also Community Biblical community. It's simply not an option to bail out We have with all our failings and faults and misery to To be together The solitary Christian life fosters unbelief I say that as a guarantee if you are unable to be in Christian community because it's either too broken or too full of error

Or just too much hassle Then and say you will feed unbelief In your heart because we all need encouragement And may it be that we do that here and I want us to do it more and more because if we do that We will be part of an amazing family here And I don't mean that will be great and it will take any attention to ourselves or anything like that And I'm not saying we'll not make it. We'll make hundreds of mistakes But it will be amazing to be part of this community if we are encouragers Encouragers towards Jesus Christ. That means looking around. It means seeing the people who are struggling It means empathizing. It means not just being with your own crew. It means not just socializing. It means looking out for others With all our failure And I think then the city will be turned upside down if we have Christians who follow this Holy spirit in junction to be Fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ and being vigilant in so doing may that be the case in our lives

Amen I'd like to pray just at this point and pray god will apply that to our own lives to our own circumstances and if you need to Repent and think of things And apply that to your own life. Then I hope you'll do that in these short moments. I would also like to pray for Lachy and CJ who were with us for the last two years and who's induction some of the congregation in Europe on Friday And you know, they've got a great chance. A great day and was able to bring greetings from the congregation here And but they've got a great challenge and today will be a great day for them There'll be lots of people there lots of visitors, but then next Sunday they'll all have gone and the harsh reality of living A million miles really from I was going to say humanity And from civilized it. No, it's not It's such a hard place to get to and Once you're there, there's lots of people who need Christ and pray for them because it will be a battle And they will be opposed and yet we believe very strongly. God is as

As placed them there. So I'd like to pray for them also today. Let's put our heads in prayer Father god, we ask and pray that you would take your your word And that you would apply it to our hearts where we need it We thank you that you water our hearts At the point of the deepest drought that you don't Have each truth is not equally significant or important for each of us But that there are things that we need all of us from your word and we pray I pray particularly for any who might be here today who was hoping for a quiet hour of Maybe even boredom Who has no interest in Jesus Christ And who has no thought of his lordship or of his responsibility or her responsibility And who think that were they to die today, they would be able to make their excuses towards him May you take them with the hands of love that you have And Point them

To the finished work of Jesus Christ that is the only answer To our need And bless us all This young and old alike We pray for those of us who are getting older that we would remember the danger of not finishing well And the importance of fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ And those who are younger Particularly in the faith that they would make sure their foundations are good and strong In him and that they would not simply rely on friends or on Sunday or on anything else But that they would build a relationship with the living God In their young lives Which will be, will stand them in good stead and will enable them to finish strongly and persevere in the kingdom Pray for Lachy and CJ and Isabella and their unborn child today We remember them as they begin their work with all the excitement and Novelty of the work that they're engaged in We pray that in discouragements he will fix his own life In discouragements he will fix his eyes on Jesus

[37 : 15] That the community will be an encourager, an encouraging community And that they would be encouragers And Lord all of us can do that We don't need any special gifts We don't need any special insight Any special biblical knowledge Any training Any length of time in the kingdom we can owe Be encouragers What a glorious responsibility May that be ours this day May that help us as we sing together As we respond to your truth And praise and adoration May we do so from our hearts All office was awesome Congratulations