

The Finisher of Our Faith

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This week my wife is restoring an old dresser. The process involves stripping away the old paint or varnish, scrubbing it with steel wool, and sanding it with sandpaper. Once cleaned and smoothed a coat of stain will be applied followed by several coats of polyurethane to protect it. I purposely avoided using one word in this description; **refinishing**. This is the term that is usually used to describe repairing furniture and it is applied to what Jesus has done for our faith. He finished it.

Heb 12:1 *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, 2 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. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

The Greek word from which "finisher" is translated is teleiotes (tel-i-o-tace'). It is defined as "a completer, i.e. consummator." Jesus began and ended the race He was assigned. The word "author" is also translated "captain" and "prince" in Scriptures. It means a chief leader. Jesus led the way in faithfulness and completed His course.

A form of the Greek word for finisher is found in Heb.6:1. *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

To successfully finish our walk of faith we must be faithful until death. Faith ends when we enter Heaven. We dare not stop short of this goal. We must not become *wearied* or discouraged to the degree of quitting. To finish our course as Paul did (2 Tim. 4:7) we need to *look to Jesus* and have *patience*.

In our text we find that Jesus endured *contradiction*. He was the most innocent who was killed by the guilty. He came from glory to embrace humiliation. He was tortured and crucified without having committed a crime. How did He do it? He had the power to destroy all of His adversaries, but He did not exercise it.

Jesus saw the *joy before Him*. He saw the end of the road. If He continued to glorify God He could save our souls, please His Father, and be glorified Himself. The reward far outweighed the sacrifice.

We often fail to run our race so successfully. For one thing, we do not want to **lay down the sin** which entangles us. We like the pleasures of sin even though they only last a season (Heb. 11:25). We try to run to Heaven with an armful of evil in our embrace. How many Christians will not release covetousness, adultery, alcohol, or immodesty from their lives? How many try to find some way to justify their sins instead of unloading them through repentance. This is one of the foundational principles of Christianity. We read in Heb. 6:1-2 that *repentance from dead works* is a starting block in our faith. We must solidify these works before we can move on to *perfection*.

A second problem we have is that we take our **eyes off Jesus**. Like Peter walking on the water in Matthew 14, we look at the boisterous environment around us and stop focusing on our Lord. We see the hypocrites in the church. We see the

denominations grow numerically. We see the riches of the world and the vain glory to be found in worldly endeavors. As we see the things around us we become weary in well doing and are not interested in finishing our course (Gal 6:10).

A third problem is we **do not surround ourselves** with the people who would cheer us on to victory. The Old Testament heroes are watching our run. They completed their trek and now they await our successful arrival at the finish line. But instead of assembling with the saints to partake of the Lord's Supper some are sitting at a bar consuming pretzels and beer. Instead of contributing to the church they are buying immodest clothing to wear when they go out with worldly friends. Instead of studying the Bible some members are meeting with a book club to discuss the tawdry love affair they read about in the latest best seller. The evil companions are corrupting our good morals and we do not even notice it (1 Cor. 15:33). The people who could provoke us unto love and good works are shut out of our lives (Heb. 10:24).

Jesus saw the value of pleasing God. Do we? Is the Bible just another book to us? Is the church an inconvenience? Are the spiritual goals of life subservient to the prizes or wealth and popularity? Is God only called upon when we want something from Him and never is He approached for thanks and worship?

It is not a good start that gets us into Heaven. The Israelites came out of Egypt as great victors, but they backed down when the opportunity came to enter the Promise Land. Their good start ended in a wasteful wilderness with death. Their faith failed before it was finished. Will we finish our faith?

I have seen a number of "tough guy" movies where the leader of the soldiers or the team says, "*Let's finish this!*" It is not enough to come close, to have some success, or to score some points. We are not looking for a good showing but a complete victory. We need to finish the task before us just like Jesus did.