

The Finisher of Our Faith

by A.B. Simpson

Christ is the Author and Finisher of our faith, inspiring us to trust in Him and giving us the strength to persevere through trials and suffering.

Scripture: Psalm 37:5, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 17:20, Romans 10:17, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 12:2, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:7

Topics: "Faith", "Perseverance"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes that Jesus is both the Author and Finisher of our faith, illustrating how Christ serves as the ultimate example of faith through His life, trials, and triumphs. He explains that Jesus not only inspires our faith through His words and works but also actively sustains and educates it through our trials. Simpson encourages believers to look to Jesus for strength and guidance, reminding them that faith is a journey where we must run with patience, keeping our eyes fixed on Him. He concludes by urging the congregation to live out their faith practically in their daily lives, reflecting the love and teachings of Christ.

Transcript

"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" (Heb. 12:2).

The Epistle to the Hebrews is the working out of three magnificent thoughts. First, Jesus Christ our great Apostle, coming from God to us. Second, Jesus Christ our great High Priest, going back from us to God. Third, Jesus Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith and the Captain of our salvation, taking us back with Him to God. It is the last of these thoughts that the writer is now expounding. He has already explained the nature and province of faith, and given us four groups of examples from the Old Testament, and now he brings the series to a lofty climax by introducing the Lord Jesus Christ as the crowning witness of faith both as an example of its power and as its Author and Finisher in the hearts and lives of His people.

I. CHRIST IS THE PATTERN OF OUR FAITH

The expression in this verse has been translated more literally in some versions "the Prince Leader," or "Forerunner" of our faith. Christ was Himself a great believer. In the earliest glimpse which we have of the life of His boyhood we find Him studying the Word of God and asking questions as well as answering them. It was through the Scriptures of truth that He reached the profound conviction which enabled Him to

say: "I must be about my Father's business."

Later the Holy Spirit brought to Him the more direct and personal witness of His divine Sonship when at His baptism in the Jordan the voice of the Father proclaimed: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In His first temptation in the wilderness it was His faith that was directly assailed. "If thou be the Son of God," said the tempter; as much as to say, "You, the Son of God, and in this deserted and desolate condition? It cannot be! It is some great delusion. You are mistaken."

But Christ held steadfastly to His faith, and trusting in His Father's care, rejected the tempter's prescription and met him with the sword of the Spirit, "It is written." All through His life we find Him expressing the most complete and constant dependence upon His Father for His life, strength, and even His very messages. "I can do nothing of myself," He says. "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." "He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone." "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." This is the language of faith in its deepest essence, the very element of trust and dependence.

Then in the crisis hours of His life it was faith that sustained Him. In this very epistle we find the writer quoting from the Old Testament and applying to Him the language of trust and confidence in God, "And again, I will put my trust in him" (Heb. 2: 13, quoted from Ps. 18: 2). Again in Isaiah 50: 6-9, we have a fine exhibition of His faith in the hour of trial. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?" But the finest exhibition of our Savior's faith in the hour of trial is in the 22nd Psalm, the inspired Psalm and portraiture of our Redeemer's last sufferings. "My God, my God," he cries, "why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me?" But still in that dark and dreadful hour when even His Father's face was averted, He continued to trust. The very taunt of His enemies is "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." And so He cries: "Thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. . . . Be not far from me; for trouble is near." And soon His cry of agony is changed to a song, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him." "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard."

Again in His ministry the secret of His power was faith in God. When the disciples wondered at the withering of the fig tree He simply answered, "Have faith in [the faith of] God," as much as to say, "This is the work of faith and if you will have the same faith which I have exercised, you, too, may accomplish the same works." It was in this spirit of faith that He stood at Lazarus' grave and cried, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always"; and then the grave was opened and the dead came forth obedient to the power of faith. It is delightful to think of our blessed Redeemer as fighting the good fight of faith just like us. For while He was the Son of God and is forevermore the equal of the Father, yet we never should forget that during His earthly life He voluntarily suspended the exercise of His independent rights and powers, and placed Himself in the same attitude of dependence upon God and trust in God as He requires of us, His disciples.

II. CHRIST THE AUTHOR OF OUR FAITH

Here the parallel between Him and all others ends. Abel and Abraham are patterns, but each had to live for himself and they cannot share with us their faith. But Christ, having traversed all the pathway of life and won the crown of victory, comes back to take us with Him up the ascent of faith till we reach the throne. There are three ways in which Christ is the Author of our faith.

1. By His words. He has given to us the precious promises which are the foundation of faith. How much His own personal words have contributed to the faith of His disciples! There is something in the utterances of the Lord Jesus which in their very manner and terms are peculiarly fitted to inspire confidence. Take that single promise, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." How could language be more explicit, simple and encouraging to a timorous and troubled heart? There is no possibility of evading its sweet and reassuring force.

It wakens in us its own response and makes it so easy for us to come. Or take again the words: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." It seems as if a fond and tender face were looking into ours and saying, "Won't you trust Me?" and everything within us answers back, "Lord, I will believe in Thee."

2. His work. Back of His gracious words is the finished work of redemption which has made them possible and guaranteed their fulfillment. The promise of forgiveness means infinitely more when we know that behind it is the precious blood that has atoned for our sins and opened the way for our acceptance with the Father. The promise of answered prayer has tenfold meaning when we realize that behind it is His own name in which we may come, and His intercession for us at the Father's right hand, so that all His words are guaranteed to us by His glorious redeeming work. He has given us the standing and the rights of faith. He has clothed us with His own righteousness, and placed at our credit His infinite merits, and so faith has its firm foundation not only in the words, but also in the greater works which have guaranteed His exceeding great and precious promises.

3. But Christ is the Author of faith in a more direct sense, inasmuch as He inspires our faith and by the Holy Ghost puts in us the spirit of trust and confidence. For our faith is just as much the work of Christ as our holiness, our love, or any of the graces of Christian life. When He comes to abide within us He simply imparts to us His own nature and spirit, and puts into our heart the very same sentiments of trust toward His Father which He Himself ever cherished. There is nothing so delightful as this consciousness of the very life and heart of Christ within us, the trust that springs spontaneously within our breast, the prayer that prays itself, and the song that sings its joyous triumph even when all around is dark and strange. God help us to understand this deepest secret of the Lord and to be able to say in a literal sense, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

III. CHRIST THE FINISHER OF OUR FAITH

There is nothing more touching in the life of the Master than the incident in which He tells Peter of the great temptation that is coming to Him. "Simon," He says, "behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

The difference between Simon and Judas was not in the intensity of their sorrow, but in the fact that Simon's faith failed not. At the last moment there was just one cord left that held him and brought Him back to His Lord, -- his confidence in Christ. This was really one of Christ's own heartstrings. It was the prayer that kept the faith of Peter. And so He keeps us. Again and again in the darkest hour of life all else had failed us, but the heart could still trust. Christ was keeping our faith.

But not only does He keep it, He educates it. He lets the trial come to strengthen it and establish it. He puts its into situations where we must have more faith or be overwhelmed, and He gives us the faith in the hour of need and leads us on from strength to strength and grace to grace. Just as the eagle teaches her young to fly by hurling them from their downy nest; and compelling them to strike out with their own feeble pinions and learn to soar upon the pathless air, so Christ puts us into impossible situations that He may prove to us that "all things are possible to him that believeth," and that with God nothing is impossible. Sometimes in this process He even hides from us His face, as once the Father's was hidden from Him, and teaches us to trust where we cannot trace, and walk with Him in the dark. Thus by various means He is preparing us for some future day when by faith we may perhaps be able like Him to create a world and prove the full meaning of His own mighty Word, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Be not discouraged, tried and suffering child of God, "though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

IV. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH

"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus."

1. Let us look to Him as our Example, and as He endured the cross, despising the shame for the joy set before Him, so let us look over every seeming trial, and in view of the glorious reversion by and by, let us rise above our trials and triumph over all their pain and shame.

2. Let us look to Him as the guarantee of our victory. He has overcome. He has sat down upon the right hand of the throne of God. His trials are over forever. His triumph has begun. And as surely as He has overcome, so shall we. Not for Himself did He enter in, but for us. He passed through the gates of suffering and death that He might record our names on yonder thrones and hold possession for us until we come. So let us look to the glorious end, and count nothing too dear if we may finish our course with joy and sit down with Him on His throne.

3. Let us keep looking to Him for help as we run the race, for He is there for the very purpose of helping us. His one business is to uphold and succor us and see us through. Every moment, every breath, we may be in communication with Him and drawing strength and help from above.

A little newsboy was complaining of his discouragements, and a Christian friend was trying to tell him how to bring them to Jesus. But the little fellow could not easily comprehend the mystery of prayer. Putting his finger on the boy's forehead the gentleman said, "What do you do in there?" "I think," said the little fellow, "Well, now," said the other, "God can look down and see your thought. Suppose therefore that you just think a little wish or prayer every time you are in difficulty; God will look down and read it, and it will become a telegram to heaven and bring you an answer." The next time the gentleman met his little friend he hardly knew him, he looked so bright. "Oh," said he, as quickly as they met, "It's all right since I began sending them sky telegrams. Everything is different, and I sell twice as many papers as I used to." So let us keep looking unto Jesus, and when too tired or busy to formulate a prayer, let us think it, and the Holy Ghost will flash it to heaven.

4. Looking brings life. There is in the eye a strange power to bring the object into contact with us. Looking at the sun the sun comes into my brain. The photographic plate exposed to the camera receives the very impress of the object before it. Attached to a telescope a photographic plate will absorb in the course of a

night the whole circle of the heavens exposed to view, and in the morning the finest stars will have written their impress on that sensitive surface. So also the microscope will reveal minute worlds the human eye never saw. This is the secret of the strange power of hypnotism which through a look lets one mind control another. So as we look at Christ yonder He becomes a living act in our consciousness and in our heart, and just as the dying Hebrew gazing on the brazen serpent felt life and power flowing through all his being, so looking unto Jesus we are healed, we are comforted, we are filled with His life and power, and we become partakers of His very nature and being.

5. But the expression means not only looking, but looking off, or looking away. It has an obverse and negative side.

(a) We are to look away from others, from their failures, yes, and even their attractions, if they distract us from Him.

(b) We are to look away from ourselves undiscouraged by our shortcomings, expecting nothing from self, and moment by moment looking away from our work and our best to Him.

(c) We are to look away from the world's attractions and illusions to Him. He is the only power that can break the spell of earth's enchantments. I have seen a child from whose careless hands no power could wrest the razor which it held without danger of its wounding itself to death, drop it instantly when some counter-attraction was held before it, and the little hands reached out for the beautiful picture, or the more attractive candy.

(d) Let us look away from our trials to Him. There is power in care and sorrow to mesmerize the soul until everything else is absorbed in one corroding sense of vexation and discouragement. We must look away from all this. Christ will not give you strength to carry your cares. You must drop them and look on the brighter side. There is always a bright side, and as happy Nancy said: "It is allus sunshine where Jesus is." "You see, Massa," she said to her troubled master, "when I sees the dark cloud coming and 'pears like it were jes' crushin' down on me, I jes' whisks 'roun' on the other side and I finds Jesus there, and then all is bright an' cl'ar. The bright side is allus where Jesus is." But the dark side has a strange fascination for some minds. Like the astronomer who had spent a day watching one of the sun spots, and when his friend called and remarked what a beautiful sunshiny day it had been, he looked up surprised and answered, "I thought it was rather dark today, but now you mention it, the sun does seem very bright." The poor fellow had been watching a speck all day and it had eclipsed the sun. Let us look away from all this into the eternal light of His unchanging love and our sun will no more go down, but God will be our everlasting light and the days of our mourning shall be ended.

Finally, let us not only look, but run, for there is an intensely practical side of faith. Let us run while we look and let us look while we run. Let us take our inspirations and exaltations with us, and live them out in the quiet plod of daily duty, and become better workmen, better businessmen, better husbands, wives, and children because we are living in heaven while our feet are still treading the pathways of earth.

"I suppose John is your best weaver," said a clergyman to the foreman of a factory, where one of his people was employed, a man who was always talking about his religion. "Well, no," said the foreman, "John is a good fellow, but he has yet to learn that while it is all right to talk about religion in its place, yet in the workshop a man's religion should come at his fingers and not at his mouth."

So let our lips and lives express

The holy Gospel we profess;
So let our works and actions shine
To prove the doctrine all divine.

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