

Christians are on a journey; they have a course mapped out for them. They have their eyes on Jesus who is the finisher of their faith. To map this path, Jesus endured the cross and is now seated at the right hand of God. When Christians compare their experience with his, they will not be discouraged. In their struggle, Christians at times may falter and need the Lord's discipline. God treats Christians as sons. His discipline is perfect as compared to that of human fathers. Christians are expected to serve God with reverence and awe. So in Chapter 12 we see Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith and a loving disciplinarian.

Jesus, Author and Finisher of Our Faith

(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.

The Christian life is often compared to an athletic contest by Paul, so it is here. In this verse the Christian life is referred to as a race. This race is not a short dash but instead a distant marathon. And in this race we have supporters on the sideline cheering us on. They are called a great cloud of witnesses. **Witness** does not mean spectator. It means one who bears testimony to something. They had born witness to living the godly life and were intended to be an example for Christians today. It has reference to those heroes of faith referred to in chapter eleven. Those who had endured.

As a Christian runs the Christian race, he must keep his eye on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of the Christian's faith. **Author** means Jesus is the originator of the faith. The Christian's faith is built upon Jesus. He is the Savior of the Christian. **Finisher** means one who completes. He is the finisher. Jesus not only begins, but he carries through to the end. Therefore, the Christian remains faithful if he keeps his eyes on Jesus. Listen to how Paul describes this race toward the end of his life. *2 Timothy 4:7-8 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*
(8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at

that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. Here Jesus, the finisher mention here in Hebrews, is issuing the winner's crown, a crown of righteousness.

But this race is going to require some conditioning. I remember when I was in high school and participating in athletics; there were some things the coach would not let us eat or drink. No sweets and no soft-drinks because they both would put on excessive weight and caused you to be short winded. In this spiritual race, there is some conditioning. We are to ***let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.*** Remove the sinful temptation that you face. Verse 2 speaks of Jesus' sacrifice for us so that we can have the opportunity to run this spiritual race. Romans 12:1 speaks of a sacrifice that we are expected to make – it is called a living sacrifice. **Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.** So let us lay aside those things that will hold us back and keep us from finishing the race. **To lay aside every weight** includes potting off anything which hinders the Christian life. Any sin or sinful behavior that besets us must be put off, and when you think about it, that is any sin. The race of life must be run with perseverance. One must keep at it and not give up. Paul would put it this way: ***1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.***

This running the race with patience entails steadfastness. That's the thought behind verse 3. ***For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*** When one grows weary of the trials and tribulations of the Christian life, he should look to Jesus for inspiration. Jesus endured the hostility and insults of wicked men without complaining. His example will help Christians today to overcome as they know that Christ suffered worse than they are suffering and that he understands what Christians are suffering.

Verse 2 speaks of the cross. The cross was a terrible death and also a terrible shame. The cross was reserved for the worst of criminals. Jesus willingly this endured suffering and shame looking forward to the joy that would be his after it was all over. This teaching helps Christians today to endure the trials and tribulations of life knowing there is a joy set

before them also. Jesus' joy was the sitting **at the right hand of the throne of God**. This is the place of highest honor. Jesus sat down at the right hand of God after his ascension into heaven and he continues to sit there. Christ suffered much and was put to death. It seems from v4 that these Hebrew Christians may have suffered, but none of them had been put to death for their faith. While Christians at other places had been put to death for their faith in Christ; it seems that the Hebrew readers had not. So we see Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith.

Now to the second characteristic which is a disciplinarian. The writer begins with reference to Proverbs 3:11-12 which tells them to put their suffering in the proper perspective. Concerning hardships we have seen thus far in this chapter: (1) The saints before them suffered (verse 1); (2) Jesus suffered (verses 2-3); (3) Suffering is sometimes discipline and training of the Lord to make Christians what he wants them to be. The end of vs 3 informs the Christian that he must not grow weary or murmur, "*Why is this happening to us?*" Rather they should ask, "*What is God trying to teach us?*" **Chastening** means correction and discipline which is necessary to help children grow to be what the parents want them to be. Therefore, he quotes this passage to show that the Christian should view hardships as the discipline of God for their good and spiritual growth.

Proverbs 3:11-12 shows the purpose of hardship from the divine viewpoint. Discipline is not because Christians have sinned or that God is angry with them. Discipline is evidence of God's love for his children. God will not withhold any discipline that is necessary to mold and make his saints into what he wants them to be, however severe. No Christians ought to expect to go to heaven without passing through the furnace of affliction. ***2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.***

Verse 6 enlightens us that Lord chastened only those that he loves. We are like his children – his sons. In fact vs 7 says ***(7) If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.*** God disciplines Christians according to their needs in order that they will grow spiritually. The trials which come upon Christians are for their training. The trials are not sent in

anger, but in fatherly love. Just as a physical father disciplines his child (Proverbs 13:24), so God disciplines his children. If Christians are not chastened, they are treated as illegitimate children who receive no education or training and suffer for it. The suffering of the Christian is clear proof of son ship.

(9) Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? Physical fathers discipline their children and they are loved. It is better to be given perfect discipline by the heavenly Father who loves his children with a perfect love, and respond by loving and obeying him. **Father of spirits** is unique. The **fathers of our flesh** and refers to physical fathers while **The Father of our spirits** is the spiritual Father, or heavenly Father and v11 tells us that he disciplines us for our profit that we might be partakers of his holiness. If we are going to win the race and be partakers of his holiness, then we have to cast aside all weights that are against us and if we don't then we can expect discipline. If our athletic coach caught us going against the rules, there was discipline – usually lots of running.

Earthly parents correct their children according to their best judgment and then leave them on their own (a few days – v10). However, God disciplines his children according to his infinite wisdom all the days of their lives in order that they might grow to be holy, and partake of his holiness.

(11) Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Getting into shape to compete in an athletic event is grievous; not much fun; but winning the championship makes it worthwhile. V11 gives us the same principle in the race of life. At the time one is going through chastening (or hardship), it is painful, not joyous. However the chastening which God inflicts upon his children results in righteousness and peace. God wants his children to grow into righteous persons. Suffering is the price Christians pay to be holy.

This thought is meant to be an encouragement for those who are weary and discouraged to take courage and keep going. The reason is the conclusion of this paragraph. God will be with them and help them. Even the severest hardships, God can turn to their good. ***Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.***

The message is that there is victory in Jesus – the author and finisher of our faith.

Are you in Christ?