

GOD'S GREAT RACE FOR ALL TIME

PART 2 THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH – JESUS

Hebrews 12:1-2 BSB **SLIDES x 2**

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles and **let us run** with endurance the race set out for us.*

²*Let us fix our eyes on **Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him** endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

I used to assume, as do many others, that this text meant Jesus was the Author and Finisher of The Race ...

But it doesn't say that .

Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our Faith

IT'S THE FAITH ASPECT THAT IS IMPORTANT HERE

So what is This Faith = *Pistis*

SLIDE A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE THE WRONG IDEA ABOUT 'FAITH'

- FAITH IS A SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE (Hebrews 11:1)
To 'believe' is a verb; 'faith' is a noun
- FAITH IS GIVEN TO US BY GRACE (Ephesians 2:8)
- FAITH ENABLES US TO BELIEVE (Romans 10:8&10)

FAITH IS A SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE THAT OPENS OUR HEARTS TO THE ETERNAL REALM ... AND BY IT OUR HEARTS BELIEVE ...

We don't get 'Faith' by believing for it, we believe because we've been given Faith.

We don't get more Faith by praying ... fasting ... confessing Scripture.

WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN OUR MEASURE OF FAITH (Romans 12:3) AND ... IT'S OUT OF THAT MEASURE OF FAITH WE ARE CALLED TO LIVE THE REST OF OUR LIVES (Romans 1:17)

So the Faith-Race we are assigned to is in the Faith Realm from Start To Finish ... not in the Material Realm.

THIS IS WHAT THE WRITER OF HEBREWS IS SAYING TO US HERE.

SLIDE Before you were even born, God The Father appointed you to run a 'Faith-Race' from Start To Finish.

AND JESUS GAVE YOU FAITH TO BEGIN TO RUN.

It's not a normal race ...

IT'S A FAITH-RACE FROM START TO FINISH.

IT'S THE SAME FAITH-RACE THAT HAS BEEN RUN IN FAITH BY EVERY GREAT HERO OF FAITH EVER SINCE ...

AND JESUS WAS THE AUTHOR & FINISHER OF THEIR FAITH AS WELL AS OURS.

Abel ... Enoch ... Noah ... Abraham ... Sarah ... Isaac ... Jacob ... Joseph ... Moses ... Joshua ... Rahab ... Gideon ... Barak ... Sampson ... David ... Samuel and all the prophets ...

Then there are Paul the apostle ... Peter ... James and John ... Philip and Steven.

Then in more modern times there are John & Charles Wesley ... Charles Spurgeon ... Martin Lloyd Jones ... Billy Graham ... etc ...

And this Scripture implies these and a myriad of others, are watching us from the grandstands as we Run in This Same Race of Faith.

1000s upon 1000s = a great cloud of witnesses

How does that make you feel?

YOU ARE ASSIGNED TO RUN IN THE SAME RACE BY FAITH.

AS A CHRISTIAN ...

You might be a talented businessperson ... a stay at home mum ... or even a pastor ...

But JESUS HAS AUTHORED YOU WITH FAITH TO RUN HIS RACE. WHICH MEANS your vision will see beyond 'the here and now' ... beyond what you do ... and beyond your lifetime to God's eternal Goal ...

I used to run an advertising agency but I knew deep in my heart it was just a means to His end and a stepping stone for a future set by God ...

AND GOD LITERALLY SHUT IT DOWN & I COULDN'T GET IT BACK! He was saying, 'That Lap has been run ... Now for the next Lap!'

SLIDE

In Philippians 3:12 Paul said, '*I press on*'

In verse 13 he says, '*I reach forward to the things that are ahead*'

And in verse 14 he says, '*I press toward the goal for the prize of The Upward call ...*'

Paul said – one of his last statements –

2 Timothy 4:7 **SLIDE**

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

NB: 'I have kept The Faith' means that Paul had kept his commitment to The Faith Call as follows ...

Acts 20:24 BSB

But I consider my life of no value to me, if only I may finish my course and complete the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus—the ministry of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

NB: You've heard the saying, 'He has lost his faith'.

People can lose their belief but NOT THEIR FAITH.

TRUE FAITH HAS BEEN AUTHORED BY JESUS & CAN NEVER BE LOST!

Jesus is the Author or Starter or Originator of Our Faith.

How can anything Jesus starts ever fail?

It cannot!

Once Jesus starts a person 'in faith' they are saved forever!

They may never move on from there and their faith race may never be completed ...

But what Jesus has imparted cannot ever be lost.

THERE ARE MANY WHO HAVE HAD FAITH AUTHORED BY JESUS WHOSE FAITH WILL NEVER BE COMPLETED.

SLIDE MANY PEOPLE GO AND SIT ON THE SIDELINES.

MANY PEOPLE WANDER AIMLESSLY.

SLIDE IF YOU'RE NOT RUNNING THE FAITH RACE SET BEFORE YOU

You will wind up walking round and round in circles ...
Coming back to the same problems again ...

HOWEVER, AS WE FOLLOW FAITH INTO THE RACE SET BEFORE US ... WE FIND WE LEAVE MANY OF OUR ISSUES BEHIND ...
They just fall away!

It's time for some of you to get into This Faith Race and Leave your issues behind.

No matter what age we are ... today should find us further than yesterday.

*Not enjoyment, and not sorrow, is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow find us farther than to-day.*
- H W Longfellow

WE ARE BOUNDED BY FAITH IN THIS RACE ... ENCOMPASSED AROUND BY FAITH ...

Romans 1:17 NKJV **SLIDE**

For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'.

Out of Faith ... Into Faith

Galatians 3:11 KJV

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

WE CANNOT CONTROL FAITH OR USE IT FOR OUR OWN ENDS.
TRUE FAITH ONLY WORKS IN THE WILL OF THE FATHER

*LET'S LOOK AT OUR TEXT & HOW IT IS WRITTEN IN GREEK –
'Looking to the Author and Perfector of (our) Faith, Jesus.'*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS IS THE AUTHOR & FINISHER OF OUR FAITH? AND WHY DO WE LOOK TO HIM?

1. HE IS OUR INSPIRATION

He has already run His race and has won ...

SLIDE *As a New Believer, I so admired Jesus. He was definitely my Hero.*

*Jesus has already run this race as a man.
He ran perfectly ... He had the best strategy and He won His race.
How inspiring to have Him as our model ...
His Life of victory and Love is truly inspiring.*

*I wrote of my father when he died ...
'But if when the nights close around us
And sorrows like shrouds dim our eyes
We remember the courage you showed us
And we make it a part of our lives
And though we lack here with our failings
We but SEE through our lack how You Won
We will rise in the morning and like you
We'll still have the strength to go on'*

HOW MUCH MORE OF OUR LORD JESUS

HOWEVER, IT IS FOLLY FOR US TO TRY AND BE LIKE HIM

We should not try and imitate Him ...

WE NEVER COULD IMITATE HIM

THIS IS A TRAP FOR YOUNG RUNNERS

IT HAS FAILURE WRITTEN ALL OVER IT ...

IT IS GREATLY DISCOURAGING ...

'To be like Jesus ... to be like Jesus ... all I ask is to be like Him ...'

IT'S A WORTHY DESIRE BUT AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK

LET JESUS BE JESUS IN YOU ...

GET IN THE PASSENGER SEAT & LET HIM DRIVE.

SO WE SEE HERE ABOUT THIS FAITH RACE THAT IT IS NOT AN
INDEPENDENT RACE ... IT'S A RELATIONSHIP RACE ...

2. HE IS OUR SUPERVISION

THE WORD 'AUTHOR' CAN ALSO BE TRANSLATED ... 'CAPTAIN',
'PRINCE' OR 'LEADER'.

So, Jesus is captain over the whole span of our faith from start to finish.

Jesus Himself is our Personal Overseer ...

He oversees our whole Journey Of Faith through life **FROM START TO FINISH.**

HE KEEPS US IN THE FAITH REALM AS WE MOVE FORWARD.

Acts 17:28 **SLIDE**

... In him we live, and move, and have our being ...

THIS IS NOW A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, THE AUTHOR & FINISHER OF FAITH.

JESUS INSTRUCTS US IN THE WAY WE ARE TO RUN IN FAITH.

JESUS SETS THE PACE AT WHICH WE SHOULD GO.

WE RUN AT THE PACE OF JESUS.

WE RUN IN THE POWER OF JESUS.

Sometimes, we can get so caught up in the race where we lose sight of Jesus Himself and our focus becomes 'The Race'...

It all becomes about 'my ministry' ... 'my church'.

SO MANY MINISTERS DO THIS ...

CHURCH GROWTH

I have attended several ministers conferences where all they talked about was 'church growth' – for days – caught up in The Race, not in Jesus.

MUSIC MINISTRIES CAN BECOME ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC.

Whereas all these can be good things ... **OUR FOCUS CANNOT BE ON THE RACE ITSELF ... BUT MUST BE ON JESUS.**

WE MUST FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR & FINISHER OF OUR FAITH.

As a younger zealous Christian, I often ran out of 'THE FAITH'.

I'd run ahead of Jesus.

I'D LEAVE HIM BEHIND ...

I'd expect Jesus to Run at My Pace.

Slowly I would start to feel weaker and weaker.

I'd start to feel the pressure of the race.

I'd start to tense up ... I'd start quoting Scriptures ... praying louder and longer ... rebuking the devil ... criticizing other believers ...

rebuking other believers ... until ...

SLIDE *EVENTUALLY MY LEGS WOULD BEGIN TO BUCKLE & I'D FALL EXHAUSTED ON THE TRACK ... discouraged ... disillusioned*

OH JESUS LETS US GO ...

And eventually He catches up and says, 'So, how are you going there in your own strength?'

SLIDE *HERE HE PICKS US UP ...*

HE HOLDS US CLOSE TO HIMSELF ...

HE IMPARTS HIS STRENGTH & COMFORT ...

I WEEP IN HIS ARMS AS PRESSURE IS RELEASED & I AM ONCE AGAIN RESTORED BACK INTO RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AND BACK INTO THE FAITH REALM.

3. HE IS OUR TRANSFORMATION

He imparts His perfection to us as we go ...

HEAR ABOUT 'JESUS OUR TRANSFORMATION' NEXT WEEK