

The Life of Jesus

The Perfecter of Faith

In the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews the importance is impressed upon us of ***“looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of (our) faith”*** (Heb. 12:2). Now the simple name Jesus is of very infrequent occurrence in the epistles, and wherever it is found it places emphasis upon the manhood of the Saviour, reminding us especially of His perfect pathway as a man amongst men. So while in our passage in Hebrews we are pointed off to the risen Christ, He is seen in glory as the One who ran the race of faith upon earth, and who has now reached the goal.

The Greek word for “author” is *“archegos”* (from *“arche”*, beginning, and *“ago”*, to lead or bring), and signifies ‘one who takes a lead in, or provides the first occasion of, anything’ (W.E. Vine). The A.V. takes the second meaning in our passage, but a far better sense is obtained if we take the first meaning, and render the word “leader”, particularly when we remember the figure of the race. The writer has in chapter 11 brought before us many worthies of faith

for our encouragement and example, but this expression reminds us that there is One who has outstripped all others in the path of faith, and that One is “Jesus”. While we may benefit from considering the faith of men and women of God, either of past ages (Heb. ch. 11) or of our own (Heb. 13:7), we must ever remember that the finest example of faith, the one which eclipses all others, is Jesus.

The noun “finisher” is *“teleiotes”* in Greek, and is more happily rendered as “perfecter”. Its relation to *“telos”* (end) indicates that this supreme Example of faith has not only outstripped all others: He has reached the goal. In Him faith has found not merely its finest exponent, but a perfect exponent. It is this feature of Christ which lifts Him in His manhood immeasurably above all other men, that He is not only “greater” and “better”, but perfect. While it is well nigh impossible for us to realise the full import of this wonderful fact, nonetheless we cannot but recognise that Scripture spells it out, as a fact, in no uncertain way. Not only is Jesus the leader in the path of faith, He is the perfecter. His life is the brightest expression of faith ever seen upon earth, and more, it is the perfect expression of faith, so that no brighter is possible. Every aspect of faith was seen in Him in fullest measure, and the path of faith was trodden by Him to its uttermost end, so that He is now seen in glory crowned with faith’s fullest reward. He is the only One whom we can emulate unreservedly, and whom we can follow implicitly, knowing that if we do we can be led nowhere else but to faith’s perfect goal. There is no failure, in attitude or in practice, in Him which may mislead us or turn us out of the course of faith. He may be followed absolutely and in perfect safety.

As this point we might ask, what is faith? In its broadest sense faith is the sum total of right relationships between the creature and the Creator, between man and God, so that failure in faith is the very essence of sin (Rom. 14:23), the root of sin being

unbelief. Faith’s simplest form of belief or credence is expressed in practice in three different, though related attitudes, namely dependence, obedience, and confidence. And although Christ was not a creature, in entering manhood He took the creature’s place and assumed a servants form as a man. This word “form” (e.g. Phil. 2:7) indicates far more than outward appearance, it includes the assumption of every relationship belonging to the place taken. So it was that Christ was found in the pathway of faith, being found in the path of dependence, obedience and confidence. Moreover, since He is the Leader and Perfecter of faith. His dependence upon God, His obedience to God, and His confidence in God were not only greater than all others, they were absolutely perfect, so that He is the perfect Exemplar of these essential aspects of faith, man’s right attitude towards his God.

When Satan assailed Him in the wilderness, he sought to seduce Him from the path of faith in these three realms. In the Gospel according to Luke, the Gospel of the Perfect Man, we are reminded how that firstly the tempter came to move Him from the position of absolute dependence upon God which became Him as a man. He said, **“If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread”** (Luke 4:3). Now the hungry One was the Son of God: and He could have turned the stone into bread, as His mighty miracles later displayed, but His powers were all at His Father’s disposal, to be used according to the Father’s will, that the works done by Him might be the works of the Father in Him. He would not, could not, move independently of His Father (John 5:19), not even to meet His pressing need. The one great prerequisite for any action was a word from God. The perfect Man finds refuge in faith’s sure resource, the word of God (“it is written”), and reminds the lawless one of that attitude of heart which rightly belongs to every creature, and is more important even than the meeting of life’s most urgent need, namely dependence upon God. Christ

never used His Godhood powers to relieve His manhood needs, but only to accomplish the Father’s will, at the Father’s word. He would not take one step, however obvious the circumstances might seem to make it, without clear divine prompting.

This dependence of the perfect Man of faith is often brought to our notice in Luke’s record, as we find Him frequently in prayer. “The prayer of faith” is the right attitude of every man towards God, and is the expression of dependence upon Him. In John 11:41,42 there is a statement relative to the prayers of the Lord Jesus Christ which sets Him apart from all other men. He says, **“Father, ... I knew that Thou hearest Me always”**. What immense significance is in that word “always”! We are considering One whose prayers were unfailingly in line with the will of God, and so invariably acceptable to God. His dependence was absolute and abiding, and His communion was unbroken. Isaiah Ch. 50 reminds us of the perfect “Disciple” waiting upon His God, and receiving “morning by morning” His instructions for the day. The result of that “wakened ear” was that Satan failed entirely in his effort to come between this man and His God, to sever that vital link of true dependence.

But now he attempts to seduce the tempted Man from the obedience of faith. He points to something of **“the joy set before Him”**, but suggests a way to attain it much easier, and much less costly than the path of faith. Let Him but offer allegiance to Satan, and he promises the Kingdoms of the world as the reward. But Jesus had given His allegiance to another Master, the only One worthy of it, and replies, **“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt Thou serve”**. In incarnation He **“took upon Him the form of a [bond] servant, and was made in the likeness of men”** (Phil. 2:7). As a man He set Himself to serve the creature’s only true Master, God, and would not deviate one hair’s-breadth from the path of absolute obedience to Him. **“Though He were (a) Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which**

He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). He could say, **"I do always those things that please Him"** (John 8:29). Note that word again, "always". Here was a man that was never, in one single particular, disobedient to God. His obedience was complete and constant. He **"became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"** (Phil. 2:8). This **"obedience of One"** (Rom. 5:19) was the crowning act of a whole life of obedience, and His offering was the perfect burnt-offering "of the herd", every part of which ascended as a "sweet savour of rest" to God.

Referring again to Isaiah Ch. 50 we find that the One who sought **"morning by morning"** to learn the will of God, declared, **"I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. 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"** (vs. 5,6). However costly the path of obedience might be for Him, He would tread no other road. The right road was the only road for Him, for Satan's seeming "short-cuts" held no attractions for the perfect Man of faith. Again the Tempter assails Him, and this time to seduce Him from the path of the confidence of faith. He urges Him to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, but **"Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"**. He could happily rest in the assurance of God's protection, and needed no self-chosen demonstration of it to give Him confidence.

If God had spoken on the matter, as even Satan allowed, that was enough for faith. To trust God is one thing, to tempt Him is quite another. To experience God's deliverance in the path of His will is to prove God; to expose ourselves presumptuously to danger or need without divine authority is no demonstration of faith; it is unbelieving folly. Faith is not blindly believing that God will do anything I wish to imagine He will do, but humbly trusting Him to be as good as His word in those circumstances to which His promise relates. In Psalm 16 these delightful words foretell the confidence of Christ in God, **"I**

have set the LORD always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore My heart is glad, and My glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in Hades: neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption..." (vs. 8-10). Note again the word, **"always"**. Unfailing confidence in God set His eye upon God at all times, and enabled Him to remain unmoved, even in the experience of entering the domain of death. In life this trust in God was the source of His joy, and in death it was the spring of His hope. His flesh could "rest" ('tabernacle', Acts 2:26, i.e. take up temporary lodging) in the grave in the hope that He would not be abandoned to the regions of the dead, but would be shown **"the path of life"** in resurrection in God's own time (Acts 2:31). His faith, His trust, was sufficient to uphold Him in man's most solemn experience, the crisis of death. Even His bitterest enemies bore Him this testimony, **"He trusted in God"** (Matt. 27:43). Not even death could "move" Him, or take His eye off His God.

The One of Isaiah 50 declares, **"The Lord GOD will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face as a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed"**. And His counsel to him that faces trial is this, **"Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God"**, (v10) according to His own example. See e.g. Psa. 22:9,10; Heb. 2:13.

Only one Man ever trod this earth, never in anything taking one step outside the path of faith. "Sinless" is a negative word, and we delight to proclaim rather His positive virtue. He was perfect. Jesus is the Leader and Perfecter of faith. He is unique in that He was **"always"** dependent upon God, **"always"** obedient to God, **"always"** trusting in God. Let us **"consider Him"** in this respect, not only to recognise a fact which is fundamental to the gospel of our salvation, His perfect manhood, but also that we might be moved by His incomparable example to firstly receive Him as our Saviour and Lord and then to follow in the same path of dependence, obedience and confidence.