

The Perfector of our Faith

Introduction:

Joke: A man was stranded in a house during a flood. As the water rose he moved to the second floor. Through the window he saw a man in a canoe floating by. The man told him to get in. "No," he said, "God is going to save me. I'll just wait."

The waters continued to rise and he moved to the attic. Through the attic window he saw a man in a rubber raft float by. The man told him to get on. "No," he said, "God is going to save me. I'll just wait."

The waters continued to rise and he was forced to the roof. He heard a sound and saw a helicopter hovering over him to rescue him. As he rejected the life line, he said, "God will save me. I'll just wait." - The man eventually drowned.

In heaven, he asked the Lord. "I don't understand. I put my faith in you to save me and you let me drown. What went wrong?"

The Lord responded. "My son, I sent a canoe, a raft and a helicopter. What more did you want?"

Misconceptions about God's desires for us.

He desires that we have joy rather than happiness.

Happiness is an emotion.

Joy is a state of mind.

He that we be content rather than comfortable.

Comfort is a feeling.

Contentment is a state of being.

He desires to perfect us through hardship rather than protect us from hardship.

Protection is a temporary shield that keeps us from pain.

Perfection is a permanent shaping that makes us better as we learn to respond correctly to the pain.

PASSAGE:

Hebrews 12:1-15 NKJV *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. (4) You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. (5) And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "MY SON, DO NOT DESPISE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD, NOR BE DISCOURAGED WHEN YOU ARE REBUKED BY HIM; (6) FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CHASTENS, AND SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." (7) If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? (8) But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. (9) Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? (10) For they indeed for a few days*

chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. (11) Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (12) Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, (13) and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. (14) Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: (15) looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

The Source and Shaper of our Faith

Jesus is the Author: (Greek: Archegos)

Prince – Gives authority for our faith. (I believe because HE tells me.)

Captain – Gives power for our faith. (I believe as HE empowers me.)

Pioneer – Gives direction for our faith. (I believe what He tells me.)

Compound word:

Arche – The person that commences. The first in a series of.

Ago – To lead by taking hold of and accompanying

Literally definition: Jesus brought us to the point of believing in Him and continues to lead and direct our faith in Him.

He is the source of our faith and sets the example of how we are to live by faith.

Jesus is the Perfector: (Greek: Teliotēs)

Completer

Root word: (Greek: Telioō)

To carry through to completion.

To add what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full.

To bring to the proposed goal.

***Philippians 1:6 NKJV** "...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will **complete** it until the day of Jesus Christ;"*

"Complete": To perfect or fulfill completely

***2 Corinthians 3:18 HCSB** (18) We all, with unveiled faces, are reflecting the glory of the Lord and are being **transformed into the same image** from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

His goal is to make us like Him.

This has been His goal from day one of creation and is still His goal today.

The Tools and Product of the Shaping

***James 1:2-4 NKJV** My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. (4) But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Trials are faith shaping tools:

“Trials”: (Greek: Peirasmos)

A putting to proof

Adversity, affliction, trouble

Root word: (Greek: Peirazo)

To test, scrutinize, examine

To test for the purpose of ascertaining quantity, quality, or behavior.

Trials typically come through two mediums

People

Ever wonder why Jesus chose the disciple he chose?

Peter – Hot headed Jewish fisherman

James and John – “The Sons of Thunder”

Thomas and Matthew - Tax collectors (IRS Agent equivalent. No one liked tax collectors because they worked for the Roman Government.)

Simon the Zealot – Zealots were a religious sect that took it upon themselves to make sure everyone was keeping the law.

Judas Iscariot – A man with questionable ethics at best.

These men lived in each other’s space for three years?

This is a recipe for conflict.

He knew the shaping power of being forced to love each other and get along.

***QUOTE:** “Labour mightily for a healing spirit. Away with all discriminating names whatever that may hinder the applying of balm to heal your wounds...Discord and division become no Christian. For wolves to worry the lambs is no wonder, but for one lamb to worry another, this is unnatural and monstrous.” – Thomas Brooks*

Circumstances

John 11:11-15 NKJV *These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." (12) Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." (13) However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. (14) Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. (15) And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him."*

Jesus deliberately did things that would challenge His follower’s faith.

WHY?

The perfecting of our faith produces patience.

“Produces”:

Accomplishes

Brings about

“Patience”: (Greek: Hupomone)

Endurance

Constancy

James 1:4 NKJV But let patience have its perfect work, **that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

“**Perfect**”: same word used in Hebrews 12:2

Eugene Peterson puts it this way:

James 1:2-4 MSG Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. (3) You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. (4) So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

The power of God at work in our life through faith can make His peace constant in the midst of life's turmoil.

Hebrews 13:5-6 NKJV Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU." (6) So we may boldly say: "THE LORD IS MY HELPER; I WILL NOT FEAR. WHAT CAN MAN DO TO ME?"

A little girl misquoted **Psalm 23**: “**The Lord is my shepherd and that’s all I want.**”

They said she was wrong. I say she was right.

“God bring me to a place where I am content with just You!”

Philippians 4:11-13 NKJV (11) Not that I speak in regard to need, **for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:** (12) I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (13) I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Isaiah 26:3-4 ESV You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. (4) Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.

Submitting to God’s perfecting work means trusting and obeying:

- even when circumstances are difficult.
- even when the answers are not what you want.
- even when you don’t understand the reasons.
- even when it hurts.

Application Prayer:

**“Father, forgive me for seeking who I want You to be instead of simply seeking You.
Help me to seek Your will rather than the end of my suffering or discomfort.
Teach me to trust You without needing to understand You.
Shape me as You see fit, not as I desire to be shaped.
Line my will up with Yours and possess me fully.
In Jesus’ name, amen.”**