

Running the Race

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Date: 03 March 2024

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- [0 : 00] Let's begin the worship of God by singing to his praise from Psalm number 34. Psalm 34 is singing Psalms on page number 40.
- Psalm 34 on page 40 and singing at verse 1. At all times I will bless the Lord and praise him with my voice.
- Because I glory in the Lord, let troubled souls rejoice. From verse 1 to the verse marked 9 to God's praise. At all times I will bless the Lord and praise him with my voice.
- Because I glory in the Lord, let troubled souls rejoice.
- Together let us praise the Lord and exalt his name with me.
- [1 : 26] I saw the Lord and his answer came.
- From fear he set me free. They look to him and line with joy.
- They are not put to shame. The sowering man cried to the Lord.
- From him dear violence came. The angel of the Lord's heart.
- And that heart did not leave. He almost to fear.
- [2 : 40] And don't let him be set his people free.
- Come, taste and see the Lord. The Lord is good. Who thou send him is blessed.
- O fear the Lord. You saints with me. You will not be oppressed.
- Let's join together in prayer. Almighty and most gracious God. We are thankful for the encouragement of your word.
- Lord, we are thankful that when people cry to you, that an answer comes to them. And we rejoice in you as the God who so often comes face to face with us to help us to realize our need.
- [4 : 01] To lead us into situations where we recognize that the way out of them is beyond ourselves. And persuading us that we need the help that comes from you alone.
- And that in that very moment that you are drawing near to us with your love and with your compassion. To bring us to learn new lessons.
- To discover new things about you. And to come into your presence and to find joy in you. And having your light shining upon us. We gather to worship your name together this evening.
- And we pray that our time of worship would be such a moment. Help us, O Lord God, so that we would never lose sight of the great need that we have.
- And help us to see every moment of worship. Every time that we come face to face with you in your word. Help us to see these moments as opportunities in life.
- [5 : 05] When God is intervening in our lives. And coming in to speak to us. And coming in to arrest our thinking, our way of living.
- And arrest us in our sometimes wandering away from you.

And that we meet with us in life's way. And enables us to see your open heart in the very presence of your son. And enables us to sense and to feel in our hearts your loving embrace.

By coming to believe in his name. And we pray that you will so draw near to us tonight. That all of us would know the warmth of your love.

The magnitude offered. The depths, the length, the breadth and the height offered. And come to know the love of Christ which indeed does pass knowledge.

[6 : 26] We are thankful to you for the display of your love and the death of your son. We are thankful to you for the privilege of gathering with your people here today.

Of remembering the death of our Lord. And doing so in such a way that we are able with your help. To focus on the person of the Lord Jesus.

And to do so as you bring him before us in your word. And to be able to find joy in you and in him. Not only because your salvation comes to us in this world.

But because your salvation includes deliverance from this world at last. To enter into the glory into which your son has entered. And where he dwells with you.

At your throne at your right hand. In this moment in time. We rejoice in you oh Lord our God. And his purpose in coming into this world. Was not only to secure our salvation.

[7 : 31] But to lead us into glory to be with him. And we pray that you will bless all of our hearts together this evening. That we may know where we are going. That we may discover a lostness of so we are.

And that we would come to see your light shining on the paths of your truth. So that we may be enabled to walk in these paths. And journey on along life's way.

And do so as those who trust in you. Who learn that Jesus Christ is the way and the truth and the life. And that all those who put their trust in him.

Will be brought safely through this world. In all of its dangers. In all of its troubles. In all of its toils and snares. And will be brought at last in to the eternal everlasting kingdom of God.

We pray for your blessing to be upon your word. Not only amongst ourselves here. But across our island communities today. Even across the nation which we live. We ask you oh Lord our God.

[8 : 36] To bless us with the power of your spirit. Along with your word. So that we may at last rediscover. The preciousness of your word. The light that it is in your darkness.

The wisdom that it brings into every situation in life. And in the midst of the chaos and the confusion around us in society. That we would know you as the great God.

Who stands in our midst and who stands with us. Who comes to speak to hearts and minds. To turn us around and to acknowledge you as our God. And to have you as the one who walks with us in life's way.

Who provides solutions to our problems. Who provides answers and ways out of corners and difficulties. Into which we bring ourselves because of our forgetfulness of you.

We pray you to rescue and to deliver us from such a kind of life. Such a kind of living. And such a kind of society. And turn us to look to you.

[9 : 39] And to rejoice in your light. And to see in the passion of your son. And not only the relevance of the salvation of which. He speaks and which he is in his passion and in his work.

But also recognizing our need of him. That he is the wisdom of God. And that such wisdom is exactly what we need passionately. What we need as communities.

What we need as islands. What we need as a nation. And indeed what this world needs. We are thankful that in your purposes. It is your purpose to save this world for yourself.

That the day will come. When your glory will cover the whole earth. And that in that day. The day of the return of your son. Then you will have accomplished all of your work.

And all that we see around us. As we see it will be changed and transformed. And in that day there will be. A new heavens. And a new earth.

[10 : 38] In which righteousness will dwell. And we give thanks to you for that. And for that hope. And we pray that hope would shine into. Every dark corner of this world. This evening.

Bringing hope. Where there is hopelessness. Bringing light where there is darkness. And where there is crushing. And sorrow. And pain. And destruction. And loss of life.

In the midst of conflict. And in the midst of the power of evil working in this world. That there may be a sense of the hope of the gospel. And of the horizon of your coming glory.

And to me all who need you tonight. Since not only that you have promised to come. But that you are indeed with them in the need. To rescue and to deliver them. Even from their pain and from their sorrow.

At this time. We commit to you once more. This congregation. This community. We give thanks to you for them. We give thanks to you for the evidence of your work.

[11 : 37] Among them. And we give thanks to you for the privilege of spending these days with them. We give thanks to you for every encouragement that is theirs and ours in the gospel. And we pray that you will continue to bless your servant here.

As he serves you in the gospel. In all of his work. In his study. In his home. In his family. In every aspect of serving you in this community. May he be blessed by you.

And led by you day by day. And given wisdom and grace and strength. To have the right words. And to walk in the right paths. And to be in the right place. In your ordering.

For the furtherance of your kingdom. And for the glory of your name. And for the eternal well-being. Of those who belong to this community. And all its homes. And all its families.

We pray for your blessing to be upon all whom we love everywhere. As their needs are known to you. And that they will come all to. Put their trust in you. Have faith in you. And to walk with you.

[12 : 36] And we commit to you. Your word. As we come to sharing together this evening. We pray that you will bless us. In our singing of it. In our reading from it. And also in our hearing. And in our study of it together.

We pray you to come. And to speak peace to our hearts. And to keep from us. Anything that would distract us. In our time of worship. And to give us that stillness.

Of mind and heart. Which is important to have. In your presence. So we may truly appreciate. That we are in your presence. Hear your voice and your word. And rejoice in it.

So hear us. And continue to watch over us. And bless us we pray. We pray these things for Jesus sake. Amen. I'm going to turn to praise God in Psalm 69.

In the Scottish Psalter. It's on page 308. Psalm 69 at verse 29. Page 308.

[13 : 38] Psalm 69 at verse 29. But now become exceeding poor. And sorrowful am I.

But by thy salvation. O my God. Let me be set on high. And we're singing from verse 29. To the verse mark 34. To God's praise. God's praise. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. But now become exceeding. True. And sorrowful am I.

By thy salvation. We shall. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. O my God, let me be set on high.

[14 : 38] The name of God I with the song was cheerful, he will praise.

And I am giving thanks to him, his name shall I be.

This to the Lord a sacrifice, more gracious that shall prove than the lockbox of any peace that hath both arm and him.

When this the humble man shall see, it joy to them shall give.

O all ye that do seek the Lord, your heart shall ever live.

[16 : 24] For God the poor, his chant will not his prisoners contem.

Let heaven and earth and cease in praise, and all that good in them.

Let's turn now to read the word of God together, and to do so from the New Testament, the epistle to Hebrews and chapter number 12.

Hebrews chapter 12, and reading from the beginning. Hebrews 12, and verse 1.

Let us hear the word of God. Amen. And therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[18 : 05] Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

And how you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons. My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons, for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and who respected them.

Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time, as it seemed best to them. But he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

[19 : 13] For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled, that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

Amen and so on. This is God's word. We trust that he will bless to us our reading of it. Amen. Now I turn to praise God from Psalm 16 and sing Psalms at verse number 7.

It's on page 17 of the Psalm book. Psalm 16 at verse number 7. I praise the Lord, my God, whose counsel guides my choice, and even to the night, in the night my heart, recalls instructions voice.

[20 : 47] From verse 7 to the end of the Psalm, to God's praise. Amen. I praise the Lord, my God, whose counsel guides my choice, and even in the night my heart, because in such as wise.

before me constantly, I set the Lord alone, because he is at my right hand, I'll not be overthrown.

Therefore, my heart is down, my help will joy, and I will sing.

My heart will sing, my heart will sing, my heart will rest secure, and hope and wither in.

For you will not allow, my soul in debt to stay, nor will you fear you falling on, you see the tombs decay, you are made more to me, the love of life divine, this shall I know, that you'll write, and joy come you, this will shine.

[23 : 39] Let's turn together now to the letter to Hebrews, and chapter 12, and we can read at the beginning of the chapter. Hebrews 12, and at verse 1.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, it is also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and it has run with endurance, the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.

And so on. Now we can remind ourselves that the writer of this letter is writing out of pastoral concern for those who are to hear the letter and to read the letter.

And when we read the New Testament letters, we recognize something of the depths of that pastoral concern. And when we come to study the word of God together, we want to remind ourselves that all that God says to us comes out of his pastoral concern.

We read with regard to the apostle Paul when he was writing to the church in Thessalonica, that he came to them as those who were like a nursing mother caring for their children.

[25 : 03] Pastoral concern. And that pastoral concern runs deep throughout the whole of the Bible. The Lord himself is our shepherd.

He is our pastor who is concerned for us. And that concern reaches the important issues of our lives. And when we read this letter, we see what these issues are.

The importance of paying careful attention to the word of God. The importance of not being confused about what Jesus has done. And the importance of realizing the distinction between religion and Christianity.

And very much of this letter was written because people were very religious, but they were not practicing or exercising faith.

And I want to bear that in mind this evening as we reflect on this passage before us. Religion is not Christianity. We can be very religious and have no faith in Jesus Christ for our salvation.

[26 : 12] And when we read the letter, we see the way in which the writer, first of all, moves from looking at the work of the Lord Jesus as he is the Son of God, as he is the High Priest who gives a sacrifice, and as he is the one now who is carrying out his ministry in heaven.

It's important for them to grasp these various periods in the life of the Lord Jesus. Where he came from, what he did when he was here, and what he is doing now.

And when I come to the second part of the letter, the writer is keen to look at the way in which faith is to be exercised by those who will hear the letter.

Of course, we want to hear about the Lord Jesus and what he has done and what God has done in him. But tonight, that's not enough for you and for me to give to us the salvation that God has promised.

We need to be able to exercise our faith in the Lord Jesus in order to be saved. And this morning and yesterday, we saw the work of the Lord Jesus under different titles given to him.

[27 : 28] We saw this morning that he is the pioneer of our salvation. We saw yesterday at the midday service that he is the High Priest of his people. And tonight, we want to look at living by faith and Jesus as the pioneer of faith.

I want to think first of all of the idea of participation. How can we join with the people of God?

Well, he wants us to be inspired. And he wants us to be inspired first of all by other people. Why would he want us to do that?

Because we read at the beginning, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. He brings us into the sense of the amphitheatre in the Roman Empire.

He gives us a picture of people running the race. And he gives us a picture of those who have finished their course. And the amphitheatre is different to the way that we see our Olympic Games stadium.

[28 : 43] And where athletic contests take place. Where we have a track that runs round and round. In this amphitheatre, there is the track. And at the end, there are those who have finished their course.

And who have been granted their medals. And who have been crowned because of what they have done. And the writer here wants them to think of the cloud of witnesses.

That are up there. At the end of the race. And they are witnesses because they are the witnesses of Jesus Christ. They confessed and professed him.

They lived by faith in him. And they have completed their course. And the cloud of witnesses includes and encompasses all those in the story of faith in the previous chapter.

From the time we start with Abel. Working down through all of these verses. To Gideon. To Barak. To Samson. To Jephthah. David. And Samuel.

[29 : 46] To all of those who went before. Who were known for having faith in God. And to what commended for that faith. Perhaps commended by those who were fellow believers with them.

But more importantly. They were commended by God. They were people. And God approved of them. And he approved of them because they finished their course.

Because they remained loyal to him. And their inspiration tonight to live by faith. Is to think of participating with them. And to see them where they are.

Because. We read at the end of the previous chapter. Apart from us. They should not be made perfect.

They will not be complete. The arena of the glory of God. And the triumph and end of the race. The gathering there will not be complete.

[30 : 46] Until those who are still in the world. Until they exercise their faith. And finish it in the way that those who have gone before have done. And tonight we can be inspired together.

With the faith of all of these people. We can be inspired by how they triumphed. How they overcame enemies. How they struggled through wars and famines.

And how they came out triumphant. Because they put their trust in God. And Abraham despite the circumstances around him. He believed God.

And he went on to triumph. Because he believed in God. And God fulfilled his promise to him. To him.

And I look around me tonight. And I remember. Those who sat where you are sitting. Those who were faithful to their Savior.

[31 : 48] Those who walked this earth. And who graced us with their presence. Because they loved the Lord Jesus. I can think of so many of them.

And tonight they are at the end of the race. They are looking down upon us. In the glory of God. They have been commended by God. Because of their faith.

And perhaps. For yourself. More closer to home. You can remember. Fathers and mothers. You can remember aunties and uncles.

You can remember grandfathers and grandparents. And they finished their course. And they should be your inspiration. To exchange your religion for the faith that is found at the center of Christianity.

And to put your trust in the Lord Jesus. And to go forward in the same way that they did. Because without you.

[32 : 52] The Bible tells us. They will not be complete. Or perfect. Stop and think. Stop and think of what the Bible says.

Stop and think about what your life's experience tells you. You are not short of the evidence. You are not short of the evidence. And if you are to take note of it.

It's compelling. It's compelling from the Bible. And it's reinforced by those who walked with us and went before us. And who are no longer here.

And because of their inspiration. We are to run the race set before us with endurance.

We are to take up the baton. We are to run the race in this amphitheater. And in this amphitheater. There would be five contests in the pentathlon.

[33 : 59] But there would be a foot race. And it was the only athletic contest that went over an extended period. And that's what the writer here is looking at.

He is not looking at a sprint. So easy to sprint in the faith. We start off and we sprint. And in the first stages of our journey of faith.

It's so easy. But this journey of faith is this long foot race. It's long distance.

It requires commitment. It requires endurance. It requires energy. It requires you to be fully exerted.

It requires you to be rigid in all that you do. So that you may continue to run in the race. It is absolutely necessary for you to do so. Otherwise you will achieve nothing.

[35 : 00] And you will fall and you will falter. You will never reach the end. It's the race that is set before us. We know what it looks like when there's an athletic contest.

We see that the lane set before us. There's a clear path. You cannot go this way. You cannot go that way. There's the finishing line. You stick to your own lane. You run the race.

And so it is in the life of faith. The race that is set before us.

It is God's plan for salvation. It is not multiple choice. We're not to be consumers when it comes to faith.

We are coming to engage with God. And to embrace the singular way that he sets before us in his word. For us to walk by faith.

[36 : 05] And so enter into the glory. Into which Jesus has entered. And into which the people of God has entered before us. We have to do the will of God.

In chapter 10 of this letter itself. Jesus delighted to do the will of God. He walked in the paths. He knew the boundaries.

He walked in the way. And there is an image in the Old Testament. And perhaps tonight it's for you. And it's in the prophecy of Isaiah.

And there are people walking. And they are left like flagstaffs on a hill. There's been so much devastation around them. And God is waiting to be gracious to them.

And they are ignoring God. And then as they journey along. Your ears will hear a word behind you.

[37 : 07] Saying, this is the way. Walk in it. When you turn to the right or turn to the left. There's the voice behind you saying, this is the way.

Walk in it. And perhaps that's what God is saying to you tonight. He's putting his hand on your shoulder. And you're walking your own way.

And you think your way is the right way. You're persuaded. You're steadfast in what direction you're taking. And tonight God is saying to you.

That you are to run this race. That he sets before you. In his word. And doing so in accordance with his command. And with his prompting.

And that's how God works. He comes to prompt us. We have read later on in the chapter.

[38 : 06] Of God's fatherly discipline. The way that God comes. And he intervenes. I don't know how he disciplines you. I don't know how he speaks into your life. But I know for sure.

Because of what God says. That he will say things to you. That he will do things in your life. That he will awaken you in certain situations. And he's doing that. Putting his hand on your shoulder.

Discipline you. So that you will turn around to him. And hear his voice. And give obedience to his command. This is the way.

Walk in it. And to do that running of the race. And to do so with endurance.

The picture of endurance is. Overloading somebody with a burden. And overloading them in such a way. That they crumble underneath that burden.

[39 : 07] And it's remarkable that God is wanting them. And God is wanting you and I. To run the race with endurance. With a sense of burden resting upon us.

That humanly speaking we cannot move because of it. Nevertheless. God requires that we do run. He requires that we run the race.

And that we do it with endurance. And what you will find remarkably is. That the heavier the burden.

The more faith is exercised. And the faster that the child of God will go. Along this journey. And running this race. That the very thing that you imagine.

Is to hinder you. It's the very thing that God loads you with. So that you can run faster. The participation. The inspiration. The inspiration. The psalmist repeatedly.

[40 : 07] Praise to God. That he may show him his ways. And your lost path make me to go. Because it is my delight. And I see at 35 once more. There is a highway there. It is the way of holiness. And the redeemed of the Lord will walk in it.

Which lane are you walking in tonight? You're running your own race. But is it this race? Is it the race of faith? Is it the race of faith? Is it the race of faith? It is the race.

And your lost path make me to go. Because it is my delight. And I see at 35 once more. There is a highway there. It is the way of holiness. And the redeemed of the Lord will walk in it. Which lane are you walking in tonight?

You're running your own race. But is it this race? Is it the race of faith? Is it within the will of God? Is it directed by God?

Is it corrected by God? Does it have within your own heart that desire? Show me your ways and your paths. I delight in them.

[41 : 06] Be inspired to participate in running this race. And running this race. Because heaven awaits to welcome you. As it welcomed those who have gone before us.

The participation. Secondly, there is preparation. We might expect, and of course we do, that whereas there is a race to be run, then there must be preparation.

Let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely.

We are to run with endurance, given the impression of our burden. But before we start running, we need to lay down much of what we carry with us.

And that's hard. Because of the kind of people we are. Because of the kind of hearts that we have. Because of the kind of people we are so centered upon ourselves.

[42 : 20] That we see all that we have so precious and important to us. We are not going to give that up easily. But God wants us to know that there is of necessity and there are things in our lives that we must lay aside.

The athlete will go and he will strip off of his clothing. And he will clothe himself in order to run the race. The heavy robes, the heavy clothing, the wrong kind of shoes.

All of these things are handicaps in coming to run the race. They are hindrances, impediments for the person who wants to win the race.

The person who is going to run seriously will ensure that everything is laid aside. Perhaps things that are quite legitimate in themselves.

Perhaps things that we can convince ourselves that we need to have them. The Bible doesn't say they are wrong. But at the same time they are wrong because if they stand in our way of following the Lord Jesus and living by faith in him, then they must go.

[43 : 40] And he says, the sin which clings so closely. There is the problem of sin.

Why are we surprised that at the center of running this race there is the problem of sin? Of rebellion against God. Of missing the mark that God has placed in our lives through his word.

Of that rebellion against the holy law of God. The sin that clings so closely to us.

It encircles us on every side. Just before I came out, I was reminding myself of watching our grandkids, the school sports and running the crazy race of the sack race.

It's great fun watching it. But it's no use if you want to get somewhere. Encircled by the sack. Struggling to walk, never mind to run.

[44 : 52] And simply falling over time after time. Because it simply doesn't allow you to move your legs and your feet and to run. That's a small illustration of the problem that the writer here sees the people having.

There is a sin that clings so closely to them. They are surrounded by it. And I'm sure that in the mind of the writers. There is a sin that clings closely. And I'm sure that in the mind of the writers. There is a sin that clings closely.

There is a sin that clings closely. And I'm sure that in the mind of the writer here.

There are two ways of understanding the problem of sin that wraps it together.

That wraps itself around us. There is the obvious sin against God. And that separates us from God. But we also see in chapter 3 that he speaks of the danger of falling into the sinful heart.

- [46 : 13] And the unbelief of the sinful heart. What is he referring to? He is referring to those who had begun to run the race of faith.
- But they were considering quitting. Because it was too tough for them. And they were in danger of allowing the unbelief of their hearts.
- Swamp their faith. Rob them of the inspiration of the love of God in Christ Jesus. And simply turn away from following him and from being disciples.
- And perhaps tonight that's where you might find yourself. We would be kidding if I were saying that the life of faith was simple and easy.
- It's not Jesus speaks about the way in which we have to take up our cross and follow him. Deny ourselves. It's not a life for the faint hearted.
- [47 : 18] But it is a life of commitment. But it is a life of commitment. Where we need to be ready to suffer for our faith in the Lord. And to deny ourselves in all of these ways. So that we may run.
- And run effectively. If I'm an athlete. I'm going to get the advice of the sports scientist.
- I want to know how the healthy human body works in exercise. I also want the psychologist.
- Who's going to help me reach the optimum level of mental health. For my health and well-being. I'm going to ask for the advice of the experts who can provide me.
- To enhance my performance. To make sure that I'm not ordinary. That I can win the race and be above everyone else.
- [48 : 20] And tonight you and I. That's what we need to be doing. And the sports scientist of the way of salvation is God the Holy Spirit.
- The psychologist is the word of God in the hand of the Holy Spirit. He will ensure that we will be healthy to run.
- He will ensure that we will reach the optimum level of our fitness to run this race. He will ensure that we will be ruthless in our determination to rid our lives of anything that may stand in our way.
- Because we know as the athlete knows and as the athlete will learn from time to time. That banned substances lead to disqualification.
- And leads to be excluded from further participation. The preparation. The preparation. The preparation.
- [49 : 37] God requires your heart to be serious about running this race. God requires you to be ruthless in the things that you know stand in your way.
- And no matter how good these things are in your own eyes. God wants you to be ruthless in removing every impediment.
- The things that trap you. And to do so. So that you may run freely. And join in this race. Inspired by those who have gone before.
- And in the preparation. And in the preparation. The inspiration doesn't end with those who live the life of faith in this world.
- The inspiration is ultimately the person of Jesus Christ himself. Looking to Jesus. Looking to Jesus.
- [50 : 41] The founder and perfecter of our faith. That's where faith has its attention.
- That's the spectacle as we saw this morning. That's the passion. The focus. Looking to Jesus. Looking away from everything else. And from everyone else.

No matter how great an inspiration they are. Looking above them. And seeing in the passion of Jesus. That there is our inspiration.

Because he is the founder and the pioneer of our faith. The founder and the perfecter of our faith.

He is the founder as the one who goes ahead of everyone else. He is the first passion.

[51 : 42] He is the one who makes the breakthrough as we saw this morning. He goes to where no one else has gone before. He overcomes boundaries. And he reaches that area that no one has reached before.

And he goes there as a person who is leading other people to go there. He is the pioneer. He is the builder of the city.

He is the hero of the city. Because he has founded it and he has given it its name. He is the founder of our faith. And that is what Jesus has done.

He lived by faith. Same faith as yours and mine. He lived by faith in God. And he brought faith into the arena of the presence of God.

By living his life in perfection and in conformity to the whole will of God. Delighting to do so until he enters in to where faith brings us at last into the very presence of God.

[52 : 54] And that makes him also the perfecter of our faith. And it is perfecter in the sense of goal and destination.

What is the purpose of faith? What goal does God have in faith? What does it tell us? And the telos is that Jesus has gone to glory because of his faith.

And the ultimate destination where all the witnesses are found is the glory into which Jesus has entered.

As the unique son of God who exercised faith in the same way as you and I did. And we read in chapter 5 that he was, though he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

Simply said, he was disciplined by what he suffered so that he gave obedience to God. And that is the life that he lived.

[54 : 02] And that is what brought him to where he is. He is the forerunner who has gone before us because he was prepared to suffer. And because every way in which God spoke into his life, it was discipline.

It was disciplining him. And that disciplining him bore the fruit of bringing his faith into the arena of the glory of God.

The preparation. The preparation. Are we ready to be prepared? Are we ready to leave where we are and what we are?

Are we ready to say to a life without Jesus, to say goodbye to that life? Are we ready even to say to a life of solid religion?

That leaves me still unsaved. Are we ready to say to that life of solid religion? I want to leave you behind. I want to leave you behind. Because much as you have brought good to me, it has kept me from the real goodness of God.

[55 : 16] And tonight, you need to leave all of that behind. And to emerge from that shell and from that cloak and from that cover.

And to look to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of faith. The participation, the preparation.

And finally, the paradigm. Yes, we're looking to Jesus. And we're doing so because he is the founder and perfecter.

But also because he is the perfect paradigm. He is the person we need to follow. Who, for the joy set before him.

Endured the cross, despising the shame. And is seated at the right hand of the throne room of God. For the joy set before him.

[56 : 26] We are to run the race that is set before us. And he ran that race for the joy set before him. And tonight, we want to see, as we close, that the joy that was set before him is the joy that is set before us.

And because he has gone before us. We are to follow him and to look at his example. And to see the way in which the grace and the joy that comes from the grace of God.

Was what was the fuel through which he gave obedience to God. And was inspired every step of the way to live his life in devotion to God.

And this morning we saw something of that glory. That the Lord Jesus was for a little while, the Son of God was made for a little while lower than the angels.

Yet he was crowned with glory and with honor. For the joy set before him. What was that joy?

[57 : 38] It was the joy of finishing the work that God had given to him. It was the joy of being crowned by God in glory and honor. It was the joy of being rewarded for all that he had done.

It was the joy of having the church that he purchased with his own blood. For the joy that was set before him.

He endured the cross. We refer to the burden that is laid upon us that seems so impossible for us to bear.

That we have to endure in order to persevere. But he endured what you and I will never endure. He endured the cross of our sin.

Of the guilt of our sin. And of the wrath of God. He endured all of that. Despising the shame. He counted the shame as nothing. Because of the joy that was set before him.

[58 : 44] And to you and I tonight. Should recognize. And should look beyond where we are. Beyond the horizon of life in this world.

And to think of that glorious horizon. In the presence of God's throne room. And to be like God's servant Paul.

Who was forgetting what was behind him. And who was pressing on to the goal of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.

And at the very center of the way in which Jesus lived his life. And endured for the joy that was set before him.

There was this absolute dependence upon God. And time after time we read about the way in which Jesus went apart. And he prayed to God.

[59 : 49] And he thanked God that God always heard him. But that for the benefit of those around him. In John 11. He spoke out loudly. And in this letter itself.

In chapter number 5. In the days of his humanity. Of his flesh. He was the one who offered a prayer.

With loud cries and tears. To whom was able to save him from death. And was heard because of his reverence.

Have you ever prayed like that? Because if you have faith.

And you're participating in this race. And you're determined to finish this race to the glory of God. You will pray.

[60 : 46] You will have tears. You will cry. And you will know that you cannot do it by yourself. But through that prayer in the presence of God.

The God whom you fear. And whom you love. And whom you have faith. Will hear. And will answer. And will lead you on.

And he will continue to have his hand upon your shoulder. He will continue to lead you in the right direction. And he will enable you.

As the psalmist was able to do so. In Psalm number 16. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

And his heart was glad. Because all of these things were going to be his. And tonight that's where faith brings us.

[61 : 46] And that's the direction of our faith. And that's where we need to look as we part from one another. That over this communion weekend.

We experience the presence of God. We learn something more of what God says to us about his salvation. And we learned and relearned.

The key lesson. And the key simple lesson. But at the center of it. Is always Jesus. Whether it is a reconciliation. A redemption.

Whatever it is. Jesus is at the center. And so tonight let's be inspired by those who have gone before us. Inspired by Jesus himself. Let's make sure.

That no matter how painful it is. That we leave aside. What stops us from living a life of faith in Jesus. And let's go on with joy.

[62 : 44] And with expectation of glory. And with the expectation that one day. In the words of verse 13 of chapter 2. That one day Jesus will stand in glory.

And will say with regard to his church. In the presence of God's throne. Behold me. And the children. God has given me.

Will you be there? Will you complete the gathering? Without us. They cannot be perfect. Let's ensure. That we are on the way.

And journeying. To be with them. May God bless his word to us. Let us pray. Most gracious God. We recognize the great need that we have.

Of your help and of your grace. We know that it is your Holy Spirit that gives life. We know also that your Holy Spirit is the one who gives strength.

[63 : 41] And who gives understanding of your word. And we pray tonight for the power of your Holy Spirit. In our hearts and in our lives. To be with us along life's way.

And to enable us together. To walk on your paths. To hear your voice. Until at last we hear your call. And your summons. To leave this world behind.

And to enter in. To your glory. And there to be. Forever more with you. So bless your word to us together tonight. Having mercy upon us we pray. For we ask these things for Jesus' sake.

Amen. The Holy Psalm is Psalm number 73 in the Scottish Psalter. It's a Psalm that describes much of what we're discussing together this evening.

After the Psalmist being tempted because of the way in which the ungodly world was prospering. He comes to understand at last what is really important. And we're going to sing in verse 23 on page 316.

[64 : 49] Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

From verse 23 to verse 26 to God's praise. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee.

O Lord, I am with thee. The guilty old, like my life has, and stills apportees thee.

Thou wilt thy counsel while I live, wilt me conduct and guide, and to thy glory afterward, receive me to abide.

Who have I in the heavens? I am with thee.

[66 : 38] But ye, O Lord, alone, and in the earth, whom I decide, besides thee that is none.

My flesh and heart doth faith and fear, that God doth faith me never.

Out of my heart, God is the strength and portion forever.

Just a thank you again. Also the session will be closed with benediction. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.