

“Author and Finisher”

Summary

This sermon unpacks Hebrews 12's description of Jesus as both 'author and finisher' of our faith, challenging us to move beyond starting strong spiritually only to fade as the year progresses. The central revelation is profound: God has been working a 'weight of Glory' into us through every trial, affliction, and pressure we've endured. These aren't random hardships but divine sculpting conforming us to Jesus' image. The imagery of scales tipping captures this beautifully—we're not waiting for God to externally intervene, but rather to recognize that He's already placed His glory within us. When we 'show up' with what He's worked in us, doors open, mountains become plains, and impossible situations yield. This isn't about our strength but about carrying His presence with 'cheerful endurance,' seeing with spiritual eyes rather than natural ones, and trusting that the same Jesus who began the good work will complete it. We're being prepared as His bride, spotless and ready, empowered not by might or power but by His Spirit.

Small Group Discussion Guide – Author and Finisher

"What Manner of Man Is This? Author and Finisher"

Opening Prayer & Ice Breaker

Ice Breaker Question: Share one New Year's goal or resolution you've made in the past that you started strong but struggled to finish. What happened?

Key Scripture References

- **Mark 4:41** - "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"
- **1 John 3:2** - "When he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is"
- **Romans 8:28-29** - All things work together for good—to conform us to the image of Christ
- **Hebrews 12:1-3** - Looking unto Jesus, author and finisher of our faith
- **Philippians 1:6** - He who began a good work will complete it

Key Takeaways

1. Jesus is Both Author AND Finisher

God doesn't just start things in our lives—He completes them. We tend to start strong but fade; Jesus empowers us to finish what we begin.

2. The Purpose of Trials: Conforming to Christ's Image

Everything we go through is working together to make us more like Jesus, preparing us to be His bride forever—unhindered in our relationship with Him.

3. Patient Endurance with Cheerfulness

The Greek word for "patient endurance" (hupomene) begins with "cheerful." We're called to endure with joy because of what's being worked in us.

4. The Weight of Glory

Our trials aren't working something external—they're working a "weight of Glory" INSIDE us. God isn't coming to tip the scales externally; He's placed His weight IN us.

5. Show Up

Like automatic doors that open when you approach, closed doors in our lives will open when we show up carrying the weight of Glory God has worked in us.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. Pastor Rob mentioned that we often look at life through different lenses. What lens have you typically used to interpret difficult circumstances? How does the lens of "conforming to Christ's image" change your perspective?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is both the "Author and Finisher" of our faith? How does this apply to specific areas of your life right now?
3. Discuss the story of the large pastor who couldn't find a chair to hold his weight. How does this relate to God's glory finding a place to rest in our lives?

Personal Reflection

4. The sermon mentioned "staying under" (humble yourself under the mighty hand of God) when we want to bail. Share a time when you wanted to quit but stayed—what was the result?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. Paul calls afflictions "light" and "momentary." What current situation in your life feels heavy and permanent? How can looking at "unseen things" change your perspective?
6. Pastor Rob said, "The moment when I most want to bail is usually when God's doing his deepest work." Can you identify a time when this was true in your life?

Application & Action

7. What "closed door" or giant have you been avoiding rather than walking toward? What would it look like to "show up" with the weight of Glory God has worked in you?
8. Zechariah 4:6 says "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit." What are you currently trying to accomplish in your own strength that needs to shift to dependence on God's Spirit?
9. The sermon emphasized "cheerful endurance." What practical steps can help you maintain joy while going through difficult circumstances?

Going Deeper

10. Read Psalm 139:5 - "You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me." The Hebrew suggests being "trapped" by God. How does understanding that God sometimes traps us to mold us change how you view feeling "stuck"?
11. Pastor Rob mentioned that God sometimes "expedites the consequence of our choice" out of mercy (like the prodigal son's famine). Have you experienced this? How was it actually merciful?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: The "Show Up" Challenge

- Identify one closed door or difficult situation you've been avoiding
- Commit to walking toward it this week in faith
- Journal about what happens when you "show up" carrying God's presence

Option 2: The Lens Shift Exercise

- When facing a trial this week, pause and ask: "How is this conforming me to Christ's image?"
- Write down three ways this difficulty might be working "a weight of Glory" in you
- Share your insights with an accountability partner

Option 3: Cheerful Endurance Practice

- Choose one ongoing difficulty in your life
- Each day, find one reason to be cheerful about what God is doing through it
- Practice thanking God for the "weight of Glory" being worked in you

Option 4: Spiritual Eyes Exercise

- Read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 each morning this week
- Practice looking at circumstances with "spiritual eyes" instead of natural eyes
- Ask God to show you the eternal perspective on your temporary situations

Fasting & Prayer Season Preparation

As mentioned in the sermon, the church is entering a season of fasting and prayer. Discuss as a group:

1. What is God asking you to focus on during this season?
2. How can this group support each other in fasting and prayer?
3. What specific area of your life needs God's "weight" to tip the scales?

Closing Reflection

Read together: Hebrews 12:1-2

"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, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith..."

Closing Questions:

- What "weight" (burden, not glory) do you need to lay aside?
- What specific aspect of Jesus as "author and finisher" do you need to focus on this week?

Prayer Focus

Pray for each other:

- That we would see Jesus more clearly and become like Him
- For cheerful endurance in our specific trials
- That God would help us "show up" where He's calling us
- For the weight of His Glory to increase in our lives
- For grace to finish what God has started in us

Group Prayer Requests: [Leave space for members to share specific needs]

For Next Week

- Continue reflecting on "What Manner of Man Is This?"
 - Practice looking at one difficult situation through the lens of "conforming to Christ's image"
 - Come prepared to share how you "showed up" this week
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Additional Resources

- Re-listen to the sermon and take notes on what stands out to you personally
 - Read Romans 8:28-29 in multiple translations
 - Study the life of Paul and how he endured afflictions with joy
 - Memorize Hebrews 12:2 this week
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Remember: God isn't just starting something in you—He's finishing it. The weight of Glory is already being worked in you. Now it's time to show up and let that weight tip the scales in your favor!

Main Points – Author and Finisher

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores the nature of Jesus as both the author and finisher of our faith, emphasizing that God is conforming believers into Jesus' image through life's trials and afflictions. Pastor Rob challenges the congregation to view their circumstances through a spiritual lens, recognizing that God uses every difficulty to work His glory into them. Rather than waiting for external intervention, believers are called to "show up" in 2026, carrying the weight of Glory that has been worked into them through past endurance. The message emphasizes that patient, cheerful endurance through trials builds spiritual capacity and prepares believers to be Jesus' bride. The sermon calls for a shift from passive waiting to active participation in God's purposes, trusting that the weight of His glory within believers will cause doors to open and scales of justice to tip in their favor.

Key Points:

- Jesus is both author and finisher of our faith, and as we gaze at Him, we become like Him
- God's ultimate goal is conforming believers into Christ's image to be His bride forever
- All circumstances work together for good, defined as conforming us to Christ's likeness
- Patient endurance means staying under God's hand even when we want to escape difficult situations
- Light afflictions work an eternal weight of glory within believers that has actual consequence
- Believers must look with spiritual eyes at eternal realities rather than temporary circumstances
- God has worked His weight of Glory into believers through past trials, preparing them for this season
- The call for 2026 is to "show up" rather than wait for external deliverance
- The weight of glory within believers will cause closed doors to open and tip scales of favor
- Finishing what we start comes from gazing at Jesus and the joy set before us

Scripture Reference:

- Mark 4:41 - "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"
- 1 John 3:2 - "When he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is"
- Romans 8:28-29 - All things work together for good for those called according to His purpose, to be conformed to the image of His Son
- Hebrews 12:1-3 - Run with patient endurance, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith
- 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 - Light affliction works an eternal weight of glory while we look at things unseen
- Ephesians 5 - Christ washing His bride to present her without spot or wrinkle
- Psalm 139 - God has beset us behind and before and laid His hand upon us
- Philippians 1:6 - He who began a good work will complete it
- Zechariah 4:6-10 - Not by might nor power, but by My Spirit; grace, grace to it

Discussion Questions – Author and Finisher

In what areas of your life have you been a strong starter but struggled to finish, and how might viewing Jesus as both Author and Finisher change your approach to those situations?

How does understanding that God uses trials and afflictions to conform us to Christ's image change the way you view your current challenges?

What does it mean practically to 'stay under' God's hand during difficult seasons rather than trying to escape or fix things in your own strength?

How can we cultivate the ability to look at life through spiritual eyes rather than natural eyes, especially when circumstances appear overwhelming?

The sermon says that God has worked a 'weight of Glory' into us through our past trials. What weight of Glory might you be carrying that you have underestimated or despised?

How does the concept of becoming a suitable bride for Jesus differ from viewing salvation merely as fire insurance or a ticket to heaven?

What would it look like for you to 'show up' with the weight of Glory God has placed in you rather than waiting for God to externally open doors for you?

In what ways have you been looking for God to bail you out of situations that He might actually be using to shape and mature you?

How does the joy set before Jesus that empowered Him to endure the cross apply to your ability to endure with cheerfulness through your own trials?

Are there closed doors or mountains in your life that might open or become plains if you would simply show up carrying the weight of Glory God has already worked into you?

Scriptures – Author and Finisher

Explicitly Mentioned References:

1. **Mark 4:41** - "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"
2. **1 John 3:2** - "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is."
3. **Romans 8:28-29** - "We know that for those who love God, all things are working together for good. For those who are called according to His purpose...to be conformed to the image of his son."
4. **Ephesians 5** (general reference) - Jesus washing us with the water of His word that we might be without spot
5. **Hebrews 12:1-3** - "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, looking unto Jesus, author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross..."
6. **Psalms 139** - David's psalm about God knowing his down sitting and uprising; "You have beset me behind and before, and you've laid your hand upon me."
7. **1 Peter 5:6** (alluded to) - "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt you in due time."
8. **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** - "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."
9. **Hebrews 11:27** (alluded to) - Moses endured by seeing him who is invisible
10. **Revelation 3:20** (alluded to) - Jesus stands at the door and knocks
11. **Philippians 1:6** - "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."
12. **Zechariah 4:6-10** - "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain..."
13. **Romans 8:18** (alluded to) - "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us."

Devotional – Author and Finisher

Day 1: The Author and Finisher of Our Faith

Reading: Hebrews 12:1-3

Devotional: Jesus is both the Author and Finisher of your faith. He doesn't just start the work in you—He completes it. This year, you may have started strong with resolutions and commitments, only to feel your strength wane as months passed. Take heart: your spiritual transformation doesn't depend on your ability to finish, but on His. Jesus endured the cross by fixing His eyes on the joy set before Him—a bride taken from His side, a people who would love Him voluntarily. When you look at Him, you receive grace to endure. Your weakness becomes the canvas for His strength. He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it.

Day 2: Conformed to His Image

Reading: Romans 8:28-29

Devotional: Everything in your life is working together for one divine purpose: to conform you to the image of Christ. This isn't about becoming a mini-god doing your own thing—it's about becoming a suitable partner for Jesus, your heavenly Bridegroom, so you can enjoy Him and He can enjoy you without hindrance for eternity. The trials you've endured, the pressures you've felt, the circumstances that seemed to trap you—God has used them all. Like a potter's hand upon clay, His hand has been upon you, shaping and molding. When you feel stuck, unable to move forward or backward, recognize that God's hand is working most deeply in those moments. Trust His process.

Day 3: Patient Endurance with Joy

Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Devotional: Paul calls our afflictions "light" and "momentary," though they rarely feel that way. The secret to patient endurance isn't gritting your teeth and surviving—it's cheerful endurance that comes from seeing with spiritual eyes. Your natural eyes see closed doors, impossible situations, and overwhelming obstacles. But your spiritual eyes, awakened when you were born again, see eternal realities. This light affliction is working in you "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory." God isn't asking you to pretend the struggle isn't real; He's inviting you to zoom out and see the bigger picture. The weight of His Glory being formed in you far outweighs any temporary hardship.

Day 4: Staying Under His Hand

Reading: Psalm 139:1-12

Devotional: David declares that God has "beset me behind and before" and "laid Your hand upon me." In the original Hebrew, this language is military—you're trapped, squeezed, unable to move. Yet in this very place of constraint, God's hand rests upon you. Many want to escape these pressure points, but God says, "Stay under. Stay behind. Don't get ahead of Me." It's in the place you least want to be that God does His deepest work. Moses endured by seeing Him who is invisible. When you want to bail, when the pressure feels unbearable, remember: God is conforming you to the image of His Son. Humble yourself under His mighty hand, and He will exalt you in due time.

Day 5: Showing Up with God's Weight

Reading: Zechariah 4:6-10

Devotional: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord. God has worked something in you through every trial you've endured—a weight of Glory. The scales of justice and favor are about to tip, not because God externally intervenes with His big hand, but because He's placed His weight inside you. What you're waiting for God to do externally, He's already accomplished internally. The door that appears closed will open when you show up carrying His presence. Don't despise the day of small things. The hands that laid the foundation will complete it. This year, stop waiting for external circumstances to change and start walking in the authority of what God has already worked within you. Show up in faith, mercy, forgiveness, and justice. The weight you carry makes the difference.

Closing Prayer for the Week: Father, thank You for being both the Author and Finisher of my faith. Help me see with spiritual eyes the eternal weight of glory You're working in me through every circumstance. Give me cheerful, patient endurance as I stay under Your hand. I choose to show up this year carrying the weight of Your presence, believing that what seems closed will open as I walk in faith. Conform me to the image of Christ, that I may be a suitable partner for Jesus forever. In His name, Amen.