In the past couple of weeks, we’ve been reading selective texts from the book of Hebrews, which I’ve mentioned before highlights chronologically the history of the Hebrew people. It enables the readers to learn about their own faith heritage and to honour those who have paved the way for the future generation. Chapter 11 began with the definition of what Faith is, that it is the *“assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”[[1]](#footnote-1)* It encouraged its readers to endure their faith…that faith is more than a momentary action or response, but rather a life-long ambition and commitment. Undoubtedly the implication and consequence of one’s faith would have a lasting impact upon one’s future.

Our passage this week, taken from the latter part of Chapter 11, describes a series of faith heroes, some were more legendary than the others. From Abraham, to Moses to Joshua, David, Samuel or Gedeon to some of the lesser known faith heroes like Barak, Jephthath, even Rahab and Samson made the cut and received an honourable mention. All of these so called “heroes of faith” had one thing in common. They all received their calling to live out their faith with dignity and honour. Many of them not only demonstrated their faith by believing, but they followed through with their action and how they exemplified their faith to others. Many of them even gave their lives for the sake of their own faith as well. However, despite making into the Hebrews Hall of Faith, none of them were perfect. They each exhibited their own flaws and imperfections, signs of weaknesses (perhaps) through their shameful disobedience or rebellions towards God.

Some of them were prostitutes, adulterers, murderers, or worshippers of foreign gods, even though many of their vices were not mentioned here in our passage today. However, God still embraced them for who they were. Through their repentance God showered his mercy upon them and upon their descendants to come. God honoured the covenant that was made through Abraham with his children and his children’s children.

Like many of these heroes of faith, we must also recognize our own failures of the past and seek God’s mercy through our confessions. We acknowledge that OUR faith has prevailed us when we are faced with various adversities and challenges in life, even when we have failed to acknowledge God’s presence and have disappointed God from time to time.

Furthermore, as our text this morning reminded us that no one is running this journey of faith alone. Others who have also run this race before us. They have finished their race and have passed their baton unto us. We’re simply fulfilling our calling to run our portion of the race and pass that very same baton to others, who would come after us. Some of us may be called to begin a new race, to set an example, raise the standard, build up the momentum and then pass it on to others. Some of us may be called to anchor the relay and to finish the race. Undoubtedly sometimes we may stumble and fall, but that does not and should not prevent us from picking ourselves back up and continue and finish the race that we are set to run. Proverbs 27:17 reminds us that as **“*Iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”*** We all need one another in order to finish the race. We must keep on encouraging, edifying, and building one another up in the body of Christ. As Romans 15:1 also reminded us that, “***We [Those] who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please our[them]selves.”***

No one should think that he or she has all it takes or is better than the others. That’s very selfish way of thinking. The book of proverb tells us that ***“let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline****.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Although we may or may not be the one who crosses the finish line, but we know that we have completed our portion of the race and have tried our very best in finishing the race that God has assigned of us to run. It’s important that we recognize that all of us are on this journey of faith together, as we run our individual portion of the race and contribute all that we have to give.

I’m sure many of you have seen the movie “Chariots of Fire”? In that movie, which was based on the true story of an Olympic champion Eric Liddell who was born in China, as a son of a Scottish missionary to China. Eric was a gifted runner who represented Great Britain in winning a gold and a bronze medal in the 1924 Olympic in Paris. He dedicated his “supernatural” ability to God for all of his earthly achievement and glory. When he was asked by others of how he was able to run so fast, his response was simply, **“*I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.”*** According to Eric, running was not his main purpose in life…winning souls for Jesus and demonstrating his deep-rooted faith in Jesus was.

Eric discovered that his ultimate life calling was to be a missionary and an ambassador for God. Eric was not afraid to share his faith at all to others, even those who compete against him on or off the field. He saw this as God’s way of giving him an opportunity to witness his faith to others, even to his competitors. It would not be uncommon to see Eric moving from his medal podium right after the race, to the speaking podium in sharing and witnessing his faith in Christ to others. Eric was not afraid to speak up, prioritize, and demonstrate his faith with others.

Most notably he refused to compete in a few races that were scheduled on Sundays in the 1923 Paris Olympic. His refusal to race on the Christian Sabbath Day (Sunday), even if it might cost him a few more Olympic medals, but so what? His integrity and his faith are much more important than the number of medals that he brings or races that he wins. Eric believed the ultimate race that one must run in life was far more treasured than the course that God has mapped out and assigned for you. Eric used his fame and notoriety, his influence and passion for the people to demonstrate his faith and devotion for others. People would come not only to see him race and set records, but to hear and to set their own personal records straight with Eric’s sermon messages that came after the race.

In one of his sermons he spoke, “*You came to see a race today. To see someone win. It happened to be me. But I want you to do more than just watch a race. I want you to take part in it. I want to compare faith to running in a race. It's [not easy] hard. It requires concentration of will, energy of soul. You experience elation when the winner breaks the tape - especially if you've got a bet on it. But how long does that last? You go home. Maybe your dinner's burnt. Maybe you haven't got a job. So who am I to say, "Believe, have faith," in the face of life's realities?*

*I would like to give you something more permanent, but I can only point the way. I have no formula for winning the race. Everyone runs in [his or] her own way. And where does the power come from, to see the race to its end? From within.*

*Jesus said, "Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you. If with all your hearts, you truly seek me, you shall ever surely find me." If you commit yourself to the love of Christ, then that is how you run a straight race.*

**Overall,** **Eric Liddell not only demonstrated the true spirit of the Olympic, but he also demonstrated the true Spirit of God, full of integrity, humility, and grace. His lifelong ambition was to run and to persevere through the races that God has set out for us to run. Eric was not only an Olympic champion but he was also a Faith champion.** He had kept his faith and fixed his eyes upon the heavenly prize. Eric has fought the good fight, he has finished the race, he has kept the faith.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In the same way, those who came before us have also finished their race of life but their journey of faith got passed on unto us. They will be there waiting and cheering for us to come across the finish line. We must keep running this race forward and not looking back at the starting line.

What kind of race are we being called to run today? Jesus has already run the race ahead of us. He has set the pace and a benchmark for us to live with. He has already conquered and eliminated any distractions that may lead us wander off course.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The Holy Spirit has summoned us and surrounded us with a “cloud of witnesses” through our own personal faith journey and of the church. The very pew that you are sitting on right now, has been sat on by someone else before you, through the legends of their faith that gets passed on from generation to generation.

By the virtue of our baptism, we are all made part of God’s legacy of faith as we finish our portion of the race. Therefore, *let us continue to run with perseverance the race that is set out before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.[[5]](#footnote-5)* We look forward to the day when we shall once again be reunited with these legends and heroes of our faith and God’s promises towards us. May all glory and honour be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Hebrews 11:1* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Proverbs 1:5-7* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *2 Timothy 4:7* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Shelly, John C. *Feasting on the Word Year C, Volume 3,* p.356 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Hebrews 12:1-2* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)