

Running to Win

by Santosh Poonen

Santosh Poonen emphasizes the importance of prioritizing Jesus in our lives and running our spiritual race with purpose and discipline.

Duration: 50:27

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:27

Topics: "Christian Living", "Sanctification"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of running the race of life with a focus on becoming more like Jesus. It highlights the transformation God desires to bring in individuals, marriages, relationships, and churches by fixing our eyes on the goal of being conformed to the image of Christ. The speaker encourages running as if to win, pressing forward with faith and determination towards the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Transcript

I've never had the privilege of doing this. I'm going to be introducing in a second my brother, my younger brother, Santosh. And as many of you know, we have four boys in our family.

I'm the oldest of four. My name is Sanjay. I'm one of the elders of this church.

My second brother is Santosh. He's three and a half years younger than me. I'll tell you a little bit more about him in a second.

My third brother is Sandeep. He was also here at this church and now has started a church in Milpitas. And my youngest brother is Sunil.

And there'll be a test on all of our four names at the end of this. But how my mother put up with four boys is a miracle in itself. She's also here and deserves a gold medal, I'm sure, for that.

We grew up in India, and I think when we crossed the age of 18 and finally left home, our neighbors prayed a big sigh of relief because there were all kinds of cricket balls that broke their windows and lots of disputes in the field about soccer and so on and so forth. But I've said here before at this pulpit that although I'm the oldest, I've had so much to learn from my younger brothers. In the kingdom of God, the last will be first, the first will be last.

And in many cases here, I have learned from my younger brother, Santosh. He was actually the first person, and we were both roommates here in the 1990s when we moved here after college. In 1999, he told me about this church that was meeting, I think at the time in Cumberley, but a little later after at O'Brien named Abundant Life.

And we both started going here as single men. Loved the church. This was the closest we had found to what we had heard in our own home growing up.

We loved Pastor Paul's teaching and the music and the fellowship and the diversity of this church, which is very much how we grew up in. So he actually is responsible for bringing me here, okay, which I'm very, very grateful for because now for the last 15 years, this has become my church and my home. He has since then moved to Colorado.

I think his wife is also here. Is Megan here? There she is. Okay, she's in the back.

You can have her stand up. She's got four children. They're all standing back there.

They're wonderful children, and we can welcome them too in a second. But they moved to Colorado, and Santosh is co-leader of a church. And check this out, brothers and sisters.

The name of the church is River of Life Christian Fellowship Center. They've got the LCF correct, okay? I told them, if you ever want to change your name to Abundant Life Christian Fellowship Center, that's okay. We won.

They got the RLCF. So we are very, very grateful today. But I'll say there's two things about Santosh to me that has been, that I have been blessed the most.

And one is, and he'll talk about that today. I've known this man to only run in one gear, and that's fast, okay? He runs fast, and he runs passionate. But what I saw on the sports field was what I also saw in his Christian life, and that's what we're going to hear about today, how we can, what walks around.

But the other thing that to me is just as important, if you ever needed help any time of the day or night, two o'clock in the morning, he'd be one of the first to come and help you. He has made the people of God his people. So with that, let's join me in giving a warm Abundant Life welcome to my brother Santosh.

You know, one of the things that I've looked forward to about being here was hearing that, because I remember, I remember when I first started going to Abundant Life, it was in 1996. And I still remember, it was actually Ed O'Brien walking in those doors and hearing those words, and what I think of when I think of those words is Abundant Life has always been to me an example of a group of people that were excited about being together with God's people. And I believe that's true about this church, and that's why it's been used by so many, used by the Lord for so many years to touch the lives of so many.

I owe a lot to this church family. I was a committed part of this church for about 10 or 11 years until I moved to Colorado, and I think about those years often. And what the Lord did in my life through you all, and some of you maybe have weren't here at that time, but I know this, this church family, and I know you all have been through a lot of ups and downs.

I was thinking about this, you know, as I was thinking about what it means to go through ups and downs in our life. And the Lord spoke this word to me clearly just yesterday afternoon as I was thinking about ups

and downs. And this is the word he spoke to me.

I believe it's for my own life. If it, if it resonates with you, take it and make it life in your own life as well. But the Lord even the downs are ups.

Did you get that? With the Lord even the downs are ups. This is how great He is. This is how awesome He is.

We sang about that awesome God. And so what we think of as ups and downs, the Lord says, I know those times when you think you are in the valley, I will have done something through you, something in that low point in your life. Now my life, if you could see everything that I've been through, and most of it's been cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ by the grace of God, I'm thankful for that.

But you would know this, that even though I was raised in a Christian home and I was raised knowing the things of God, there were downs in my life. There were times when I was resentful towards God. There were times when I wasn't sure why He was allowing me to go through what I was going through.

I look back on those times even now in this lifetime, and I see what the Lord was able to do through that, and I'm so grateful for it. And I think how much more in eternity when we will be able to look back and see what God was able to do through those down times, through those times that I'm embarrassed of, or ashamed of, or confused about, or perplexed about. So may the Lord give us faith for that.

The other thing I wanted to tell you about is that, you know, we live in a Christendom that makes a lot of preachers. Preachers are exalted, and it is true that the Word of God says that it's good to recognize and to give honor to those who preach the Word of God. And thank you for the welcome.

It felt like being back home. But you know, when I thought about what it means to be a preacher, really I see my job as this. I'm like a waiter in a restaurant.

I'm a waiter in a restaurant that's going into the kitchen and bringing out a plate of food, and I'm placing it in front of you. And I pray, you know, if the food tastes good and you appreciate it, and you eat it and digest it, and you decide to live off of that, and you say thank you for it, I'll say give your compliments to the chef. But what I'm more interested in is getting to, you know, the chef who's in the kitchen.

Because if I'm cooking the food, you will die. Any word, any word that begins with me is death. But any word that I have brought faithfully out of the kitchen and set in front of you, you will live.

Heaven and earth will pass away, Jesus said. But my words will never pass away. The words of Jesus Christ will never pass away.

So I see myself going in and out of the kitchen, bringing plates of food and placing them in front of people. Not just here. Maybe on BART.

Now yeah, they need them there. Maybe on Caltrain. Maybe in your workplace.

Maybe in that cubicle next to you. They need plates of food. And I hope that in the little bit of time that I share God's word with you, and encourage you, and strengthen you, that you will say, this, this is my ultimate goal, is that I will get you excited about going into the kitchen and meeting the chef himself.

That you will be more taken up with who is cooking the food than even the food itself. That you will go away saying, wow, I listened to a great sermon today. And if that impresses you, that's great.

But more importantly than that, that you will go in and say, I serve a great God. And you'll walk, and you'll say, I want to go into the kitchen too. I want to know who is this God who can cook me such wonderful food, that tomorrow, or on Tuesday, or on Wednesday, when you need food, and there is no church service here at that time, you will know that he will cook you a plate of food that is for you.

Yourself. Do you believe it? I hope you will be excited about Jesus today, because that's really what it means to run to win. This is the essence.

Before I get to the end of my message or anything like that, let me tell you the end of the story. Who is it that we are running to win? It's not that I want a crown. Yes, the Bible talks about having a crown.

And I know the Lord will give me a crown, but I'll lay it right back at his feet. And I'll tell you who I want. What am I running to win, church? I'm running to win Jesus.

Because he could give me a billion dollars. He could give me a golden crown, and seat me on a throne. But if I don't have him, I have missed the most valuable thing in life.

And this is what it means to run to win. It means that we go through our lives now with that determination. I want Jesus.

I don't want ministry. I don't want to make it to the top of my company. I don't want this bigger house, or the other car, or that beautiful girl, or that handsome guy, or whatever.

I want Jesus. Because if I get him, I have everything. If I have Jesus, I have everything.

So that's my goal. I'm going in and out of the kitchen, and I'm seeking to impress people with Jesus more and more, so that they will want to go into the kitchen and get a plate of food for themselves. Let's get into the Word.

First Corinthians chapter 9 is the text of my message. One of the great examples that I have, perhaps the greatest example that I think of, after Jesus. Jesus is my greatest example.

But after Jesus, the example that has challenged me the most is the apostle Paul. Because Paul had this mentality. He was excited about getting people to be excited about Jesus.

He wasn't interested in making a name for himself. He wasn't interested in bragging about all the things he had done. He was humble.

He was broken. But he said, I will be spent in order to get people excited about Jesus. He was one who ran as if to win.

And look at what he says here. Let's begin reading in First Corinthians 9 verse 24. And like Pastor Paul would say, if you have it, say I got it.

Remember that? How many of you remember that? That's the first time I heard it was at a bar in life. And I loved it. Because he waited for us to get there.

Now you can't cheat if it's on there on the screen. Okay, First Corinthians 9 verse 24. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

I'd like to read that again. Please listen carefully. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

And I'd like to skip down to verse 27. So knowing what Paul has just said. Paul said, knowing that I am running as if to win.

What do I do? I discipline my body. And make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. I'd like to read 24 and 27 together.

Let's listen to it again. Verse 24. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

Which means, I discipline my body, and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. This is what Paul is saying. He's saying that if I finish second.

Listen to this carefully church. I believe this with all of my heart. And I'll tell you this.

The faith that I have received from these words, from the word of Christ, and from the example of Jesus, and Paul, and many others who have gone ahead of us. I believe this to be absolutely true for my own life. This is what Paul is saying.

If I finish second, I will be disqualified. Have you heard that before? If I finish second, I will be disqualified. That's exactly what he says.

This person who has preached to others, who has done miracles, who has taken up into the third heaven, and seen the heavenlies, and done. I mean, I think Paul preached to way more people than anybody that I've ever heard of. This same Paul says, it doesn't matter what God has done for me up to this point.

It doesn't matter how much he's used me up to this point. If I get to the point where I'm not running as if to win, I will be disqualified. See, those kinds of races we don't have on this earth.

If you finish and win the silver medal in the Olympics, you can come home and brag about it. But I believe we're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ in heaven, and there will be those who finish second who will be disqualified. Now, I don't know what that means.

God knows. I'm not here to say what that means in terms of eternity. Will you spend eternity in hell? Will you spend eternity in heaven? I know this.

I don't want to finish second. Because Paul says, if you finish second, you will be disqualified. Now, let me say this also.

This isn't a race between you and I. We're not competing against each other. So what does it mean then when we say, I'm running as if to win? This is what I believe it means. I'm running as if to win Jesus.

I'm running in such a way that if Jesus finishes second in my life to anything else, let's say I made it my goal to accomplish something on this earth, but I also had Jesus. So my goal was, I got to get a certain amount of money in my bank account by a certain amount of time, and I got to retire by such and such an

age. And I brought Jesus along with my goal, and he finished second.

My real goal in life was to do this, to start a company, or to do that other thing, or to get a ministry, or to become the pastor of a church, or have my name, have so many Facebook likes, or so many YouTube hits, and all this stuff. If that was my goal, and Jesus finished second in my life, I will be disqualified. So now when I run, and when I'm used by the Lord, or the Lord uses me in different ways, or in my workplace, and I work at an IT company, or I'm playing soccer, or I'm playing football, or we're doing whatever, in the midst of all of that, I'm enjoying that, I'm pouring my life into it, but the focus of my life is this, Jesus must win in my life.

Jesus must win in my life. That's the attitude that Paul had, because he goes on to say then, now who is this message for? It's not for the world. The world that rejects Jesus Christ, they don't need us.

This is a message for us who are Christians, who have accepted Jesus, but in whose life Jesus is in danger of finishing second, or third, or fourth. It's for us who are in danger, who are in need of this message. Run in such a way that Jesus will be the one who wins in your life, that he will be the only one that matters.

He says, chapter 10, he goes on to say, because, you know, whenever you see that word, because, you understand that he's going on and continuing the same thought. So he says in chapter 10, verse 1, why should you run as if to win, and why should you remember that you could be disqualified if you finish second? Because I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed under the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud, and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ. In other words, they all had Jesus.

They all had Christ in some sense. He's speaking to church folk. Nevertheless, and this is a sad word, verse 5, nevertheless, to these people who were under the cloud, who saw the miracle, who saw the waters parted, who drank from the same rock which was Christ, nevertheless, some of the saddest words in the Bible, with most of them God was not well pleased, for they were laid low in the wilderness.

So he gives us the, now he says later on, these things are written to us for an example, verse 11. This is an example for us when you read the story of the Israelites who saw the miracles, and there was a few million of them, 600,000 men, plus women and children, being led by a pillar of cloud, and a pillar of fire, seeing miracles. I mean, if we saw the kind of miracles they saw, we'd be talking about it for years.

And they saw water come out of a rock. There was bitter water, and they couldn't drink it, so they put a tree into it and it became sweet, and they could drink it. They saw food come out of heaven every day.

And if I saw food come out of heaven once, I'd write a book about it, and I'd make sure that I was on television talking about it. They saw it every day. They could brag about it.

And they had quail come down and say, eat me. That's the kind of miracles that God did for them. And yet, with most of them, God was not well pleased, and they perished in the wilderness.

Now, the reason Paul, I believe, ran as if to win, and Paul gives us this encouragement and this challenge, run as if to win, is because he saw the finish line. He says in the previous verse, in verse 26, 1 Corinthians 9, 26, therefore I run in such a way as not without aim. The reason Paul was running as if to win was because he saw the finish line very clearly.

And that's the question I have for you, my dear brothers, dear sisters, dear friends. I don't care where you've been in your life, how much you feel like God has let you down, or you've let the Lord down, or how much you have failed. I have one question that I want you to leave this room with.

Have you seen the finish line? Have you seen the finish line? Because imagine this. Imagine that we lined up a bunch, you went to the Olympics, and it's the 100 meters dash. That's one of my favorite events in the Olympics.

It's a 100 meters dash, and everybody's lined up there at the start, and the gun goes off, and then everybody runs in different directions. One guy's going this way, the other guy's going this way, she's going the other way. Somebody's running backwards, thinking that's the way I'm supposed to run.

Now, you think something's not wrong. They weren't shown where the finish line was. The sad thing, as I look at Christians today, many Christians today, and I know this is true because that was true about my own life for many years, I ran not having seen the finish line.

So I was running. Oh, my legs were moving fast, but I was running in the wrong direction. I was running after other things, running this Christian life, thinking I was doing well because I was running.

Yes, Lord, look at my life. I go to church every Sunday. I pay my tithes.

I have devotions. I'm raising a godly home. All of these things, I was running, running, running, running, running without aim, running in the wrong direction.

So the question is not whether you are running, because a lot of people are running in this world. All run, he says in verse 24, but only one receives the prize. It's the one who is running in the right direction, who has seen the finish line clearly, who will win the prize.

Run in such a way that you may win. So Paul saw his destination very clearly. What is that destination? Let me show you a verse in Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians chapter 1, so important for us to know the finish line.

And the reason this is important, because we could go through the end, to spend many years in our life running, thinking that I ran and be satisfied with the fact that I ran and never reached the finish line. And I'm thankful that the Lord opened the eyes of my heart to see that, to see what the finish line was. Ephesians 1 verse 18, I pray, this is the same Paul writing now to the church in Ephesus, writing to a group of believers who are serious about following the Lord, who call themselves Christians.

He says, this is my prayer, and I believe this is the prayer of the Holy Spirit for us as well today, for us church. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. Let me pause there for a moment.

Do you know that your heart has eyes? See, we know what the eyes of our body is. We know what the eyes of the eyes that we talk about. You can see my eyes.

I can see that you have eyes. But these eyes that I have, that we all have, are eyes of the mind. They're eyes of the body, but they're eyes that are the gateway to the mind.

So when I read something, for example, those very words that I read, or the words that I said earlier, run as if to win. When you read it, it will enter into your mind, and you can say, okay, I understand that. But it's a completely different thing when the eyes of my heart are opened.

And I know for many years the eyes of my mind were opened to read this. I knew this. I could win scripture memory contests.

I knew where different verses were, but the eyes of my heart had not been enlightened. See, the difference is what? About a foot, but it's all the difference. That makes all the difference between whether I understand with my mind, and I can say the verse, oh yeah, I know that's Ephesians 1 verse 18, and whether the eyes of my heart are opened so that it transforms my life.

This is what, in another place, Jesus calls revelation. Revelation, my dear brothers and sisters, think about this, dear friends. Revelation will make the difference in your life.

Understanding, you'll get it, and you'll be able to quote the verse, and you'll be able to recite the reference, but revelation will change your life. Revelation is when the eyes of your heart are opened, and you make it personal, and you make it practical, and you're implementing it in your life. So he says, I pray you Ephesians, or he would say you Christians here at Abundant Life, who know that Jesus Christ has saved you, and you've decided that you want to give your life to Jesus, and you want to be his, you ones who understand with your mind, I have this prayer, that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of his calling.

This is what Paul was saying, I have seen the hope, I have seen the finish line, I have seen the direction in which I'm running, I pray that you will as well, because you Christians, my fear for you is that you might run in all these other directions, without having, without running in the direction which God called you, without seeing clearly the hope of his calling, the hope of his calling. In another passage he says, let me show you this verse, in Philippians chapter 3, Philippians chapter 3 verse 12, Paul says, not that I have already obtained, now the book of Philippians, the letter to the church in Philippi, he wrote towards the end of his life, this is Paul, who ran as if to win, who later on tells Timothy in second Timothy four, I am finished, I finished the course, I've run the race, the prize is waiting for me, he says to the church in Philippi, I haven't obtained it yet, I am also running this race with you as if to win, not that I have already obtained it, or I have already become perfect, but I press on, I press on, so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold off by Jesus Christ, so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold off by Christ Jesus.

Have you thought about those words?

Listen to it carefully, that I may lay hold of that for which I was also laid hold off by Christ Jesus, I lived for many years just thinking my goal was to get to the end of my life and get to heaven, and that's why I didn't run as if to win, that's why I just went through the motions, I showed up on Sunday and if there was something to do, I did it, and if there was a certain amount of money to give, I did it, I calculated my 10% carefully and gave it to God, the calculating mentality towards God, Paul lived a completely different life, and that's why I believe he won, he won his race, and my goal, my dear brothers, dear sisters, is to run this race and win, and to encourage as many people along this journey that they too will win, to realize that it doesn't matter what you do in your

life, it doesn't matter what God calls you to do, where you work, how much money you make or don't make, who you're married to, or where you live, what church you go to, or how you feel, what your upbringing was like, none of those things are as important as this, as that you see the hope of your calling, that God laid a hold of you, listen to this carefully because this has changed my life, I look at myself when he says that I may lay hold of that for which Christ laid a hold of me, see Christ began the work, he got the ball rolling, he, I picture it like this, there I was in the gutter, in the muck, just a complete mess in my life,

and this person, this king rode by on his horse, and he could have just gone along on his way, but he stopped, something caught his eye, and you know what

that something was, that was me, in all my filth, in all my wretchedness, there in that muck, he stopped and looked at me, and he said, he took me a hold, he got a hold of me by the shoulders, looked me in the eye, and said, I want to get you out of this mess, but I'm not just going to clean you up, and then send you along your way, so that you can end up in another mess, I want you to come and live with me, I want you to come and live in my palace, I want you to be my son, I want you to be my younger brother, Jesus said to me, that's what he laid a hold of me for, do you believe that, that's, oh he's worthy of praise, give him praise, but it wasn't just that he cleaned me up and says, okay, you used to be this, you used to be that, and I, I cleaned you up, and go along on your merry way,

no, he looked me in the eye, he says, Santosh, I am laying a hold of you for a purpose, don't get to the end of your life, and just say, well thank you Lord, you cleansed all my sins, blank slate, here it is back to you, and I've made it the goal of my life for the past few years by God's grace, to comprehend fully in my heart, why Jesus stopped on that day on Calvary, when he hung on the cross, and thought of me, he says, I have a purpose for you, don't just live, it's like you heard this saying, I'm not, I don't want to die old, I want to die empty, I don't want to die old, see the world is interested in living a long life, if you live till you're 90, 95 years old, they'll be like, wow he lived a long life, he died old, I don't care if the Lord takes me home tomorrow, but I want this to

be able to be said at the end of my life, it is finished, Jesus said it about his life, he lived here on this earth for 33 and a half years, that's less than I'm living, I'm older than Jesus was when he died, but Jesus lived, he's the greatest example of that, that he said, Father I have one life to live, it is yours completely from start to finish, that's why he's our perfect example, now it wasn't just him, Paul said the same thing too, he said, it is finished, read it in 2 Timothy chapter 4, I have finished the course, my job, my goal, my hope is that I will get to the end of my life and I will be able to say as I stand before God, it is finished Father, you were able to squeeze every last bit out of my life, not just, well Lord, I was a part of a good church and I gave my money to

that orphanage over there and I did this other good thing and I gave a few gospel tracts to a few people, that's all wonderful, but is Jesus getting everything out of your life, that's what it means to run as if to win, that means in everything I'm doing, whether it is giving a tract to somebody or I'm spending some time in a homeless shelter, that's actually the ministry that I started with here in Abundant Life with Pastor Toby, is Pastor Toby here?

Oh he's okay, well I was looking forward to saying hello to him, but he is the one that introduced me to, he was the first pastor that I worked with here in ministry, we used to go to the homeless shelters and various other recovery ministries, I really enjoyed working with him, but no matter what we are doing, if it's not Jesus who's motivating me and I'm doing it because I want Jesus to win in my life, all of it will be empty, so running as if to win, so he says that we may have the Philippians 3 verse 12, that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid a hold off by Christ Jesus, not interested in dying old, Paul died, they say when he was about 60, 60 plus years old, beheaded as a martyr, he met an end that very, I mean imagine, he could have lived for 20, 30 more years and written more, more epistles and planted more churches, but the Lord called him home and the Lord had a destination that Paul was, that he was interested in Paul reaching and Paul reached that destination, why?

Now here's the thing about Paul as well, because Paul, for the first half of his life, Paul didn't know that he was going to die at the age of 60, 60 plus, but for the first 30 years or so of his life, he was the enemy of Jesus, this gives me hope, Paul was the exact opposite, if you were interested, I mean Paul was the Isis of his day, you know that? Paul was the Isis of his day, he was the one going out there and killing Christians and beheading them and sending people to persecute the Christians and throw them in jail and God could take him, God could take him who was the enemy of Jesus and turn his life around and say, you too can finish, oh does that give you hope?

You too can finish, you, you too can reach the end of your life and say it is finished, this is great news for me, see the hope, 1st John chapter 3, let me show you this verse, yeah we get that from my dad, we use a lot of scripture, if you've listened to brother Zach, you know that, we use a lot of scripture, because I'd rather your confidence rest on the Word of God than in something I'm saying, like I said earlier, if it's a cute idea that I gave you and came up with, it'll die with me and probably die at the sermon, but if it's the Word of God, it will change your life, the Word of God, these verses that I'm hoping to show you, I hope that you will take it and it will be food that will be meaningful and a help to you on Wednesday afternoon when you're going to face that trial that you

know is waiting for you, coming this week or the month to come, so 1st John chapter 3, let's begin in verse 1, 1st John chapter 3 verse 1, see how great when he says, actually in some translations it says behold, behold is, I like that word better than see, behold means see, when I think see, I think okay just see, yeah see is very casual, behold is something different, behold means if you really want to get this, you need to be sitting down, you know it's like they say, I hope you're sitting down, that's what John is saying, I hope you're sitting down, stop, pause and behold how great a love the Father has bestowed on you, let me say that again, behold, sit down and meditate on how great a love the Father has bestowed on you, see I know the John 3 16 love, you know John 3 16, for God so

loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes on him should not perish but have eternal life, this is how great a love the Father had for the world, but then he's talking to children who have already understood this love of God and they understand that it's a great love, but he's saying you Christians who have understood that God loved you so much and loved the world so much that he sent his only begotten son, do you know that God's love is greater than that yet, have you sat down long enough to meditate that God loves you in a deeper way, what way John, tell me, that we should be called children of God and such we are, for this reason the world does not know us because it did not know him and then he explains what it means to be a child of God, behold now we

are children of God and it has not yet appeared what we will be, now we are children of God, listen to that carefully, now we are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we will be, but we know this that when he appears we will be like him because we will see him just as he is, now for years I just read through that verse, you know how you can read the Bible just because you're interested in doing the check mark, I read the Bible in a year and I'm on this reading plan so I get to, I move past verse 2 very quickly because I'm interested in getting to verse 3 because I got to get to verse 4 so that I get to the end of the chapter so that I can say finished August 16th Bible reading plan, I read the Bible for many years like that and if that's working for you that's great, but

along with that every now and then read one verse and chew on it and meditate on it and one day the Lord asked me to do that with this verse and I tell you it changed my life so dramatically when I stopped and I spent about a week on verse 2, verse 2 alone, just verse 2, what does that mean?

You know what happened when I started to meditate on that verse? I saw this, behold how great a love the Father has bestowed on me, Santos, that I should be called a child of God and such we are, behold beloved now children we are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we will be but we know this, in other words right now if you look at me you can't see what I will be, right now if you're looking at my life and you're examining my life and you get to know me and you might think I'm a great guy and all that but it still has not appeared what I will be, what will I be?

This is the hope of my calling, this is why I'm running as if to win because I want to be certain that that is true of my life, what will I be? He goes on to say in verse 2, when Jesus appears we will be like Him, five words, we will be like Him.

I want you to know how that transformed my life because when I read that, when I meditated on that, on those five words for a moment, you know what I thought about? I thought about how wonderful Jesus is and how perfect He is, how long-suffering He is, how patient He is, how unshakable He is, that no matter what people said to Him, no matter what people did to Him, you couldn't shake Jesus and then I thought about me and who I was and the filthy wretched person that I was and I thought really?

Sorry you guys, you mean God you can take that and make it that? When I started to see Jesus more clearly and I remembered how filthy and wretched I was, then He, when He says I, I too will be like Him, I thought you mean really? Me, Santosh, wretched sinner that I was when Jesus stopped and glanced at me and looked at me and says come, I want you to be like me. See this is what it means to be a child of God, it means I have a father, it begins there, I have a father who's in heaven but it also means this, see if you look at my, I have four children in the back and if you see them with me and you can see, oh yeah they look like daddy, must be one of Santosh's children, looks like him, actually they get their good looks from their mom, but you can look at two children who are related to each other, who are siblings and say, hey you guys, are you brother and sister?

Are you brothers? Are you sisters? Because you look like each other, this is what He's talking about, this is I believe a deeper understanding of the love of God and what it means to be a child of God than saying I even, I have a father, yes I have a father but you know what that means? That when I get to the end of my life, listen to this carefully, I believe this is the Word of God and I'll show you to you from God's Word, God will reveal Jesus to the world and He'll show them how He was the greatest person that ever lived, it wasn't so and so and wasn't this other person and that other person that did wonderful things, the greatest most awesome person that ever lived on the face of this earth was Jesus because He was perfect and He was holy and He was just and He was loving, He was the epitome of everything that's good, anything else compared to that is evil, Jesus is the only good, there is only one good and that was Jesus and then He'll reveal Jesus but you know what He's going to do next?

He's going to peel back the covers of Santos, He's going to peel back the covers of put your name there if you have this hope fixed on you, He's going to peel back the covers and stand you next to Jesus and the world is going to behold the revelation of the sons of light it's called and they will see Jesus and they'll see me, they'll see you standing next to them and they'll say you guys must be related, you look just like each other, you're pure Santos, you're holy, see how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, this is why I'm running to win, I don't want to just have a crown and all this stuff, I want to be like Jesus, I want to love my wife in a sacrificial self-denying way that it doesn't matter what we go through, it doesn't matter what discussion or argument or difficulty we're going through, I have an unshakable life that Jesus had, I want to be the kind of husband to my wife that Jesus would be to my wife, I want to be the kind of co-worker in

my workplace that Jesus would be if He was sitting there, imagine if Jesus took your chair for a day, think about it for a moment dear friends, where you work if Jesus took your chair for a day, would there be a difference, would there be a difference, it's Jesus sitting there do whatever it is you do for a living, Jesus is sitting there, those people around that cubicle will talk about it, man something's different, now do you know that that's the reality of what it means to be born again, Galatians 2 verse 20 says this, it is not I who live but Christ lives in me, do you know what happened when you were born again, the world had the privilege of no longer having to deal with you but to have to deal with Jesus living in you, this is the glory of the gospel, now Christians are good at faking it aren't we, so we like to quote that verse and say hey guess what it's not I who live but Christ lives in me, the reality is it's not always like that, isn't that true, and I know this, I know this was true about my own life but that's my goal, I want to get it, I want it to be true that by the time I get to the end of my life, it will have been complete which means what, every day I'm running as if to win, every day I'm saying Lord let it be less of me and more of Christ living in me, tomorrow when I go to work just like I did the last Monday, it must be a different me that's shown up there, who?

Jesus, and step by step because I'm running as if to win Jesus, I want more of Jesus in my life and less of me, less of my agenda and what I want and what's good for me and what will please me the most and more of what will be glorifying to Jesus and if I run in this way, one day I will be standing over there next to Jesus and it will be revealed, they look at Jesus and they look at me, are you guys related, you look just like Jesus, I want to be like Jesus, when the Lord said seek my face, the psalmist writes of this, David didn't even fully understand what he was writing but this is what it means, when you said Lord seek my face, I said thy face will I seek, I want to be like Jesus, I don't care what the Lord, you know I remember this when I started early in my ministry, when I was

started preaching there in Colorado about seven years ago or so, shortly after that, it was exciting when I first started preaching and I sensed the Lord had given me a gift but one day the Lord said to me, I know you seem devoted to me now because you're excited about how I'm using you but what if and what if a few minutes from now you're driving in the car and you meet with an accident and you lose the ability to preach, I take away ability to speak and you can't read anymore, will it change your devotion to me because all of a sudden now you can't do certain things, is your devotion to me, in other words is your devotion to me characterized by what you're doing or do you love me so passionately, are you interested in me filling your inner being so much with my nature that it doesn't

matter what you did, I mean you may be sitting here and you're a mom who gave up a career to raise children in a home and you feel like Lord did I waste my life, I want you to know this, you too, it doesn't matter what you do for a living, it doesn't matter what gift you have or you don't have, it doesn't matter what ministry God gives you, this must be true and this is true, that God has a purpose for your life and that purpose is to conform you completely into the image of Jesus and he will do that and he wants to do that no matter what ability or disability you have, that is true, I want to show you this so that you know it's true in God's Word, Hebrews 2 verse 13, Hebrews 2 verse 13, while you're turning there I'll tell you this, Hebrews 2 verse 13, see once upon a time Jesus was the

only begotten Son, I told you that verse already, John 3 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that was the only begotten Son that the Father had, Jesus was the only Son, but look at what he says here now in Hebrews 2 verse 13, verse yeah, this is Jesus saying to the Father and I picture these words being said by Jesus at the end of time, there's Jesus and he's speaking to the Father and the rest of the world that didn't believe in Jesus is watching this and Jesus says to the Father, I will put my trust in him, verse 13, and again behold I and the children whom God has given me, this is what I said

in first John 3, he says behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God, there is Jesus saying Father look

once upon a time it was just me your only begotten Son, but look now behold I and the children, behold Father you have other children who look just like me, I am now the firstborn, the firstborn, that's a new word in the new covenant, Jesus who was once the only begotten Son is now the firstborn of many, that verse is in Romans 8, anybody know Romans 8 28?

Amen, thank you, Romans 8 28, wonderful verse you must know that, let's read it Romans 8 28, we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose, there's that purpose again, this is Paul again writing to the Romans, he uses that word purpose, hope, you must know you have a purpose, run towards that purpose, now it is for those who are called according to the purpose that all things work together for good, if you're running after money, running after women, running after ministry, running after this, running after that, I can't guarantee, in fact I can guarantee that all things will not work together for good, even if you think they're working together for your good, even if you make that million dollars, if

your mind was set on that it will not work together for good, just ask anybody that won the lottery, I mean see how quickly that money will disappear, but if you know you've been called with a purpose and that purpose is what, he says in verse 29, this is the real verse I wanted you to know, I'll tell you this, if you know verse 29, you will see the reality of verse 28 in your life, verse 29, for those whom he foreknew he also predestined, he gave them a finish line, that's what predestination means, it's a very confusing word in Christendom, but this is all it means, he gave them a finish line, what is the finish line my dear brothers and sisters, it's this, to become conformed to the image of his son, so that he, Jesus, would be the firstborn, the only begotten is now the firstborn of

many brothers and sisters who look like him, not in our physical appearance, but in our nature, and they will look at your co-worker will say, is that the same guy, is that the same lady who used to work with me, I remember when she was so irritable, and she was such a gossip, and he, all he could talk about was the niners, and all he could talk about was this, and all he was so irritable, and if things didn't go his way, and if he was having a bad day, you knew it all the way across the room, and you mean he looks like Jesus, oh that's good news indeed, and they will be amazed, they will be amazed that God could take somebody down here, and take him all the way here, see if I wanted to show you how long my arms are, and I said, look at how long my arms are, you think, well that's not

really proving anything, but if I stretched my arms as wide as I possibly could, and my arms are not that long, but imagine if LeBron James, or somebody, you guys don't like LeBron James here, right, that's right, uh Steph Curry, or somebody stretched his arms out, and he's like, well he's got long arms, this is what God wants to do, he wants to show you just how powerful and long his arms are, by saying, I can take the worst, the absolute worst, and make them like Jesus, conform them into the image of his son Jesus, this is what God is in the business of doing, now do you feel like your problem is worse than anybody sitting in this room, guess what, God wants to manifest his glory by way over there, you're the one that's way over there, sitting in the back, ashamed to even be seen by

others, because you think there's no hope for you, God wants to stretch his arms all the way there, and say, I will make you like my son Jesus, you run as if to win, and see if God does not do that, I have placed my confidence and my faith on the word of God, I'll finish with this, in Philippians chapter 3, go back to

that, I already read verse 12, Paul had a purpose, he saw the finish line so clear, and that's why he said, God if you would take me, and give me a hope, that you would make me like Jesus, and you would give me your very nature, then this is what I'm going to do, that I may lay a hold off, he said in verse 12, that for which also I was laid a hold off by Christ Jesus, brothers I, verse 13, I do not regard myself as having laid a hold of it yet, but one thing I do, make this

your goal my dear friends, one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on, I run as if to win, toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, forgetting what lies behind, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, remember this, it doesn't matter where you've been, doesn't matter what you've been through, and you my dear friends as a church have been through a lot, but I believe God has a purpose, and it's true about us individually, it's true about your marriage, maybe you're sitting here, and you feel like your marriage is starting to get to the place where it's beyond hope, you go before God, and say Lord I saw this verse today for the first time in a new light, that you

have a hope, that you will make my marriage like that of Christ and the church, because that's the example, Ephesians chapter 5, Lord I am setting my eyes on that goal, that you will transform my marriage, this marriage that has been in shambles for so many years, transform it Lord, or maybe it's a relationship with one of your children, or with your parents, it's a relationship that God wants to heal and transform, you fix your eyes on the goal, and say I'm going to run as if to win, I'm going to make it my goal that you will transform me completely into the image of Jesus, and I will run as if to win, and you see if God does not change that situation, and bring glory out of it, likewise in the church, a church, Abundant Life Christian Fellowship, let's set our eyes on that destination

that God, it wasn't just casually that God brought Abundant Life together, it wasn't casually that he started the work in Cumberley, and then in O'Brien, and brought it here, it wasn't just empty, there is a purpose, and as you run together as a church, fix your eyes on that destination, fix your eyes on that hope, run as if to win, do everything excellently, the glory days aren't to come, the glory days are now, you run as if to win, I run as if to win, the glory of Jesus will be manifest in our life, do you believe that with all of your heart?

See if you don't believe in your heart, God can't do it, but if you do, if you receive faith from his word, faith comes by hearing the word of Christ, but if you've received faith today, and you say, Lord, it is written in your word, it shall be so, you know what the word is for, it shall be so, Amen, yes, Amen, Amen, thank you.

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