

Finishing the Course - 01 Staying Within Our Boundaries

by Zac Poonen

To grow up in all aspects unto Christ, we must stay within our boundaries, focus on what is truly important, and not go outside our circle.

Duration: 57:41

Scripture: Genesis 2:8, Ephesians 4:15, Colossians 1:24

Topics: "Finishing Well", "Boundaries in Christ", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of growing in all aspects of our Christian life and staying within the boundaries God has set for us. He warns against the dangers of complacency and becoming busybodies in others' matters, which can hinder our spiritual growth. Poonen uses the analogy of a child coloring outside the lines to illustrate how we often neglect our own responsibilities while getting involved in things that do not concern us. He encourages believers to focus on fulfilling God's specific calling for their lives and to avoid distractions that lead us outside our designated boundaries. Ultimately, he calls for a commitment to finish the course God has set for each of us, reflecting on the need for humility and obedience in our walk with Christ.

Transcript

So this year we decided to have a theme for our conference and that's what you see in the two banners here and these are verses we can look at them first of all in Ephesians 4 and verse 15 that we have in the banner right at the back here. Growing up in all aspects into Christ. It says in Ephesians 4.15 that speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head even Christ and the emphasis we want to place is on the word all.

We can grow up in some aspects and not fulfill God's purpose which is that we should grow up in all aspects and sometimes we can make the mistake of congratulating ourselves because we have grown up in some aspects and in some aspects we are better than other Christians and better than other churches and therefore we can have a sense of satisfaction. The Lord warned the church in Laodicea that you are satisfied. You sit back and you say I'm alright but you don't know the Lord said to him the leader in the church that you are wretched and miserable.

You know whenever we sit back satisfied we are going to get that rebuke from the Lord. So it's important that we think of that during these days because we have to acknowledge that the last 27 years since we started the work there are many many things the Lord has done in our personal life, in our family, in our churches that is I believe really glorified God and pleased him but it's possible that we have got so taken up with all the good things the Lord has done and missed out on certain other aspects and that's like I often there many ways we can picture this like a bodybuilder who develops one side becomes very muscular on his left side and his right side is weak. It looks so funny.

He needs to now concentrate a little more on his right arm and right leg and not keep on developing his muscles on the right left side alone. But I think a lot of churches are doing that. They're already pretty good on the left side and they're keeping on building up the left side and the right side sometimes is paralyzed.

So that's what we see also in that little diagram of a circle. You know when a little child is asked to in these coloring books to fill up a circle that's usually how a little child begins. But as that child grows older it learns how to fill up the whole circle, finish the course and it also knows how to stay inside the circle, to stay within one's boundaries.

The reason why a child does not fill up the circle is because he's used up all the crayons and the crayon has been used up to color a lot of things outside the circle. Now that's a child and when a Christian goes outside his boundaries and do all types of things that don't concern him, like a lot of brothers and sisters gossip and discuss so many things which have got nothing to do with them, which have got to do with other people. Remember this picture and that's why you have problems in so many other areas which should have been filled up because you used up the crayons to color things outside without nothing to do with you.

You became busy bodies in other people's matters. I have seen through 43 years that the people who do not grow spiritually are the people who become busy bodies in other people's matters. They are not elders but they judge elders.

Okay, you can do that. You'll end up your life like that circle. Don't let it happen.

Let's wake up and see what is God called me to do and let me concentrate on that and let me leave the other things for other people. There was a psalmist who said, I will not exercise my heart on things that are too big for me. They don't concern me.

He was sensible. So you see we make two mistakes pictured in that circle. One is we don't finish what the Lord told us to finish.

The course that God has planned for us, the plan God's made for each of our lives and the other is that we get involved in a whole lot of other things that have got nothing to do with God's plan for our lives. Now I'll tell you something, if you can keep that picture in your mind from now till the end of your life, you will do a wonderful job with your life and you'll stand in eternity without regret, at least from today, even if you have a lot of regret about the past. So to grow up in all aspects under Him is something we need to think of, staying within our boundaries.

The other verse is on there on the board is Colossians 1 and verse 24. A little expression there in the last part of verse 24 which is filling up that which is lacking and we can think of that circle again. Filling up what is lacking.

How do you know whether you're a mature Christian or an immature Christian? Supposing I were to ask you, was that drawing done by a grown-up person or a child? Everybody here can give me the answer. No grown-up person will fill a circle like that. That's a child and when you go outside your boundaries, you're a child.

Maybe you have been a child for 25 years, maybe you'll be a child for the next 25 years. That's your choice, but you're a child. When you become busybody in other people's matters, when you get concerned about things that don't affect you, which have got nothing to do with you.

You want to have an opinion on this thing and that thing and the other thing, what's happening in that church and this church and the other church and about this elder and that elder and that elder. You are a one-year-old child even though you may have been a believer for 30 years. There are a lot of people who've been believers for 30 years who are exactly like that.

I say show me, don't tell me the age of a person, just show me how they color. I'll tell you whether that's a child or a grown-up. You can do that also.

The same thing, let me see how a person, what type of conversation a person talks about. All about other people, you know like young teenage girls spend their time gossiping about 101 things that don't concern them. Okay, they're like that.

When will they grow up? You don't have to be like that. Jesus was serious at the age of 12. Samuel was serious when he was a child.

Timothy was serious as a young teenager and you don't have to follow all those gossiping teenagers and be like that. We want to raise up a generation in our church. You know the Bible speaks about old wives tales.

People who are like old wives. Why does the Bible speak in that about old wives? The Holy Spirit speaks about old wives means that the Holy Spirit knowing human nature says that older women have a tendency to be like this, to get involved in a lots of things that don't concern them. And some of you older sisters need to take that seriously and say I don't want to be like that.

The purpose of our coming together in the church is to press on to perfection. A lot of Christians are afraid of the word perfection. They don't like that word.

They like the word sinfulness. It's like you some people like the word dirt, filth. Okay if you like that go ahead.

I like the word health, cleanliness. If you prefer words like sickness, dirt, you know it's sad. Think about that in terms of your Christian life.

Are you serious about perfection? Are you serious about perfection in your speech? Think of that circle as your speech. Are there things you speak about which you should not be speaking about? Are there things that you should have spoken about to other people? About Jesus and about his word when people came to visit your home which you didn't. Parts of the circle left blank.

A lot of conversation among believers is exactly like that circle. A lot of the way we can think of that circle as the way people spend their money. You earn a certain amount of money and you can spend it like that.

And that's how a lot of people get into debt. If you want to know why people get into debt think of that circle. If you want to know why people are covetous and they long to get more and more money think of that circle.

It's because somewhere in their life they're spending money where they should not be spending it. And that money should have been spent in some other areas where it should have been spent. There are many many areas we can think of of staying within our boundaries.

Think of that my brothers and sisters. I want to begin with Adam. It says here in Genesis in chapter 2, the Lord God, verse 8, Genesis 2 verse 8, planted a garden in the east in Eden.

And there he placed the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord caused to grow, listen to this, and think of that circle, every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food. Those are all trees inside the circle.

And in the middle of the circle there was a tree of life which God really wanted Adam to take part of. But he put one tree outside the circle and that was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord told him, verse 16, from any tree of the garden you can eat freely.

That whole circle is yours Adam. There are thousands of trees there, wonderful fruit, wonderful trees, and especially the tree of life in the middle. Boy, if you take that, you'll have eternal life.

And Adam, just to test you, I've kept one tree outside the garden. Now he didn't tell Adam, this is a test. He just said, don't eat of that tree.

You know very often when God tests us in some area, we don't realize we're being tested. Somebody comes to your house to gossip. God doesn't announce from heaven, I'm sending somebody to your house to gossip and I'm testing you.

Do you hear such a voice? No. The person comes, you sit gossiping with each other for one hour and you didn't realize that that one hour you were being tested. You probably don't realize it even after he's gone.

It's just one area. You suddenly get a lot of money, promotion, increment, some windfall of money that comes along. There's no voice from heaven saying, I'm testing you to see what you're going to do with that extra money.

No. And God did not tell Adam, I'm testing you. My brothers and sisters, you and I have already been tested in many areas without our knowing it.

You find some defect in an elder brother. There is no elder brother without defect. I'll tell you that right in the beginning.

The only elder brother without a defect that I know is Jesus Christ, our eldest brother. Even Paul had defects. So if you want to look for defects, you'll find it in everybody.

But when you see a defect in a person, you may forget the thousand and one good things that there are in that elder brother. But that one defect that is outside the circle, just like this one tree outside the circle, that's what Adam goes for. And when you go after that one defect that you see in an elder brother, you can be sure that you are a disciple of Adam because you don't see the many good things inside the circle.

So God told Adam, listen, there's one tree kept outside. Don't eat of it because in the day you eat of it, you'll surely die. But you have a choice.

Death outside the circle, life inside the circle. You have a choice. It's a sort of an invisible wall and you sometimes don't know when you crossed it.

Some of you came from Tamil Nadu, many of you. Can you tell me what time you crossed into Karnataka, last night or this morning? Tell me the time. You don't know.

Some of you came from Kerala. Do you know when you crossed into Tamil Nadu? When did you cross into Karnataka? You don't know. But you did.

This going outside the circle is like that. We can be careless and go outside, not even know it, till we are right outside. And a lot of people can spend years outside, not even realize it.

That's because they are children. You know how children will go to the edge of a cliff without thinking about it. You take a two-year-old child to a railway station, it'll go right up to the edge of the platform when a train is coming.

Believers are like that because they are two years old. A mature person will never do that. A mature person knows his boundaries.

There's a line drawn in some railway stations, a yellow line saying don't cross that because don't go too close to the train. I want you to know that right from the time God created man, he's drawn a line around us. Don't think that there is no boundary to your life.

God has drawn boundaries for all of us. The only person without a boundary is God Almighty. And I want to say to you, I don't want to say this in a spirit of condemnation, but I want to say it in a spirit of helpfulness.

You know like a doctor, you go to a doctor and you ask him, doctor why am I having weakness and this thing and that thing. And the doctor examines you and says, you're eating too much of this and you're eating too little of this. He may say you're eating too many chocolates and you're eating too little vegetables.

See what I mean? An occasional chocolate is all right, but you eat too many of them and you go outside the circle. You get sick and you don't eat any vegetables and you've got a whole lot of parts in your circle not filled up. This circle and apply to health.

The same thing spiritually, that you're not having certain things in your daily diet spiritually. And you got too much of something else, too much of sinful things. We shouldn't have even one sinful thing.

There's a boundary God has drawn around us. We got to be careful. And the great danger of keeping on going outside the circle is, I believe that I've not drawn it on that banner there, but there's a little beyond all that.

There is another circle, a very big one, where when a man keeps on sinning, sinning, sinning, sinning, sinning, he crosses the second circle. And then he has sinned against the Holy Spirit and he can never be saved. He's lost eternally.

Jesus spoke about that, you know, sinning against the Holy Spirit. When does it happen? It happens when a man keeps on going outside his circle. He couldn't care less.

He listens to messages. It doesn't bother him. They keep on doing things that are wrong.

They keep on, on and on and on and on, backbiting, speaking evil, lusting, fooling around with pornography and telling lies and false statements. And they call themselves believers and they're in the meetings and they keep on doing it and nothing happens, no judgment, nothing yet, nothing yet, nothing yet, till one day, over the next line and that's it. And how do we know they have crossed the second line? They've got no more desire for repentance.

You know, sin is very light. Yeah, what to do? I sin. I'm like that.

When sin is no longer serious for you, you can be sure you're getting close to that other line, which I don't even want to draw here because I hope none of us will get that far. There's no danger of you're going anywhere near that circle. If you stay within the circle, God has drawn for you.

Filling up that which is lacking, growing up in all aspects unto Christ, finishing our course, staying within our boundaries. God gave Adam a job to do. He told him, it says in verse 15, I put you in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

That's your job. Fill up that circle. That's the garden of Eden.

Fill it up. He didn't do it. In fact, the very first thing he did before he... Adam was really crazy.

He didn't do anything inside the circle. The first thing he did was outside. He straight away went because he was led by his wife.

It's a very sad thing when a home is led by the wife. There are elders who just listen to their wives and even lead the church in the way the wife feels. Wife tells her husband, you know, brother, so-and-so is not like this, brother, so-and-so.

And that stupid elder listens to his wife. Oh, then he changes his attitude to brother, so-and-so and sister, so-and-so and destroys the church. We have had cases like that.

It's just like Adam. That's amazing. It's amazing though these things are written so clearly in scripture that people, they think they know so much.

And I'll tell you something, all going outside the circle is due to pride. Only pride. No one can ever fall.

I'll tell you this, the only person who can fall is a proud man. A humble man can never, never fall. When it says he is able to keep us from falling, it's because he can only keep humble people from falling because he gives grace.

Grace is what keeps us from falling. You see, when I'm standing, you can make me fall. When I'm sitting, you can still make me fall.

If I sit on my haunches, you can still make me fall. But if you see me lying flat on the ground with my mouth in the dust, can you make me fall? Tell me. That is the definition of humility.

Flat on the ground with your mouth in the dust, which I've always exhorted people to stay there. Try and make a man fall who is down on the ground with his mouth in the dust. It's impossible.

It's impossible to make such a believer fall. God can bless him in a million ways, he will not fall. But the trouble is when God blesses that man whose face is with the dust in the ground and gifts him and he gets natural, he has natural gifts and supernatural gifts, gradually from the dust he begins to lift up his head.

Nothing happens for a while because the devil is waiting. Let me get a good shot at him. And he thinks nothing is happening and he's lifting himself up, lifting himself up.

And then he comes in the devil's gun sight. He's gone. That would never have happened if the chap had kept his head in the ground.

But God blessed him and it went to his head and he was better than all the other people lying on the ground. And so he began to lift up his head and he got shot first. That's happened to elders in our midst.

It's happened to brothers and sisters. But do you think others will learn a lesson? Some have learned a lesson, many have not. Many see these elders being shot down one after the other and they lift up their head and say, ah, it won't happen to me.

And they get shot down next. I hope there's nobody here who says, that won't happen to me. You're next in line, brother.

Sister, you're next in line. It's a verse in Lamentations 3, I think it's verse 27 or something which says, if you keep your mouth in the dust, there's hope for you. Keep your mouth in the dust.

Let God judge you constantly. You'll never have a problem. Say, Lord, where am I going outside my boundary? Just show me.

I say that today. I never want to go one centimeter outside the boundary God has drawn for me. Many people have pressurized me through the years to go into some ministries, which are good ministries.

I say, sorry. I've not got nothing against those ministries, but they're not in my circle. You brothers do it.

Go ahead. People have advised me to spend my money on different things. I say, sorry.

No, I'm not going to do it. We say we spend our money on necessities. But do you know what some people's definition of necessity is? Any luxury that you see in somebody else's house becomes a necessity for you.

You're the one who's going to have problems financially, because you don't know how to stay within your circle. Yeah, stay within your circle. And let's recognize God.

I know that also many people have tried to pressure on, put pressure on me not to go to certain places for ministry where I feel I should. I say, that's fine brother. You don't go.

I'm not telling you to go. I feel free to go. I want to fill up the circle.

I don't want to leave some part of the circle blank just because you think I shouldn't go there. You don't go there. That's fine.

It may not be in your circle. It's in mine. Through the years, I have learned to respect the circle of other people and to watch my own circle.

And don't think that your circle and somebody else's circle are the same. We need light on what areas of my circle have I not filled up and what areas am I going outside and wasting my time? This can apply to many other areas. Think of the study of the scriptures.

If you take a bag, think of your brain and your memory like a bag or a suitcase. And okay, even one of these expandable suitcases, you fill it, fill it, fill it, fill it. After some time, you can't fill anymore, right? Okay, your memory has got a capacity, mind has got a capacity to expand.

But after some time, you can't fill anymore. And if I fill my mind with all the useless information about who's getting married and who's getting pregnant and who's this and who's that and who's the other thing and what's happening to this family and that family and the other family, I won't have place in this bag for the word of God. And that's exactly the reason why even some elder brothers don't have, don't know the word.

Their mind, their bag is filled with a whole lot of useless information. And say, what to do brother? I don't know, I'm trying to study the word. No, get rid of a lot of things from your bag and there'll be a lot of empty space there to put God's word in.

It's a question of priority. It's a question of how you spend your time. You can spend your time, think of that as time.

You got a certain amount of time like one crayon and the more you rub that crayon, the crayon is getting smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller and the crayon is finished and you have not finished your circle. You could have finished the circle. You could have finished the circle if you had concentrated on staying within your circle, spent your time in things which are really profitable for eternity, spent your money, spent your life, your energy.

And how wonderful it is if you can start when you're young to say, I'm going to finish the task God has given me. Why did Jesus very often say to people, I can't come there. I can't do that.

My time has not come. My hour has not yet come. There were many things Jesus couldn't do.

He didn't have time for it. Was there anything wrong in a servant of the Lord who is working so hard day and night that he doesn't even have time to eat like Jesus was, to take a small break to go to Rome for a holiday? What's wrong in Jesus taking a holiday to Rome? You know, he's got enough money in the bank to take a trip to Rome. It's a dangerous thing when you have a lot of money.

You know why Jonah went to Tarshish instead of Nineveh? Because he had money to buy a ticket. The ship company was offering a tour to Tarshish. You know, like you see the advertisements in the company, tour to Spain.

Tarshish is in Spain, by the way. Tour to Spain, people cost us so much. And Jonah says, well, I preached a lot and I got a lot of money.

I can spend it on a tour to Spain. I'm not going to sin. But that wasn't where God wanted him to go.

If he didn't have the money, he'd have looked at the advertisement and said, well, I can't go for that. I don't have the money. Sometimes when you don't have the money for something, that's your salvation.

And sometimes when you have money, it can cause real problems. Jesus said, no, there are a lot of things I don't have time to do. I have only 33 and a half years.

I don't have time to waste for unnecessary things. How many of you are gripped by the fact that you don't have a lifetime of 1000 years or something? No, I don't have a lifetime of 1000 years. 63 years of my life is already gone.

I want to make sure that I spend my time, my life, my money, my energy on that which will produce results for eternity. I decided that when I was 21. When I was 19 and a half, I decided I want to live for eternity.

I don't want to live for time. I'll tell you, I haven't regretted it. Maybe when I got married, I did not have all the things that you young people have when you get married.

Okay, I hope you'll finish your course. I hope when you come to the age of 63, you'll be able to look back and say, I spent my time, my money, my energy wisely. A man's life, Jesus said, does not consist in the number of things he possesses.

Please remember that. A man's life does not consist in the number of things he possesses. You read Luke chapter 12.

It consists in fulfilling what God has called you to do. Even if you live in a little hut, remember that. It's not in the type of food you eat or the clothes you wear.

It's in fulfilling what God has called you to do. Stay within the circle. I want to show you another example in 1 Samuel chapter 13.

1 Samuel 13. You know, when Saul was made king, he was one of the humblest men in the whole of Israel. On the day of his coronation, no, before that, let me tell you something before that.

We read in 1 Samuel chapter 10 that Samuel, verse 1, took a flask of oil, poured it on the head of Saul and said, the Lord has anointed you to be ruler, the first king of Israel. And he says, I'm doing this because the Lord has appointed you to be the king of his people. And the spirit of the Lord, verse 6, will come upon you mightily and you will prophesy.

And when Saul went home, his uncle, verse 14, asked him, where did you go? He said, I was looking for the donkeys. My father told me to went out and look for the donkeys. And then I went to meet, we met Samuel.

And Saul's uncle said, what did Samuel tell you? Saul said, well, Samuel told us the donkeys have been found. But Saul did not tell his uncle, verse 16, about the matter of the kingdom. He didn't say, you know, Samuel anointed me to be the next king of Israel.

What a man, anointed to be king and he won't even tell anybody. Think if God did some mighty powerful thing for you and you don't tell anybody. The apostle Paul was taken up to heaven and heard amazing things.

And for 14 years, he never even told anybody about it. These are men of God. They have experiences and they never tell anybody about it.

They never get up and give a testimony of what God did for them. They know what to keep secret and what to keep hidden. Why? Because they don't want to make other people feel small.

You know, if you give some fantastic testimony, if you're going to the third heaven, how do all those people sitting over there feel? They'll feel so small. Oh, this great man of God is up there. So if any of you go to the third heaven, please don't come and tell me about it.

I'll feel very small in front of you. Go there by all means, go. I'm going to, I'm going to go there one day in any case.

You may see it a little before me, that's okay. But don't make people feel small. That's a humble man is a man who never makes other people feel small.

And Saul was like that. He never said it. And we read that finally they want to anoint him as king.

They gather the people together and they take lots with all the names. Samuel says, God controls the lots. Let's take out the lots so that people don't think that Samuel was partial.

They took out all the lots and it says here, the tribe of Benjamin was taken, verse 20. And they're from the tribe of Benjamin. They took the names and the Matt Wright family was taken.

And finally they took out one name, the last one, Saul. See how God controlled the lots? Verse 21. Okay, where is Saul? The whole crowd of people are there.

The fellow standing right in front should be Saul because he already knows his name is going to come. And they could not find him. And they went searching for him.

Imagine the man who was supposed to be king, he was hiding. He did not want to be king. And it says in verse 22, he was hiding in the baggage.

All the suitcases and all lying there. He got underneath there. He said, nobody will look for me here.

But they caught him. And they pulled him out and anointed him king. This is how he started.

But in two years, he became a different man because he got victories. It says here in chapter 11, verse 11, Saul went against some of the enemies and defeated the Ammonites. And he had victories.

And the great danger is when God gives us victories. Victories go to our head. And it went to Saul's head.

And when he had reigned for one year, in the second year of his reign, he selected chapter 13. This is things began to change. There was a huge number of enemy troops.

And verse 6, chapter 13, 6, the men of Israel lost their nerve entirely and tried to hide in the caves and thickets. Meanwhile, Saul was in Gilgal. And verse 8, this is a very important verse, 13, 8. Samuel had told Saul, wait for seven days.

I will come. I will offer a burnt offering. Because Samuel was a priest.

Saul was not a priest. And there were very strict rules in the book of Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers, that only the priests could offer sacrifices. Any Tom, Dick and Harry in Israel couldn't come and offer a sacrifice.

Even if you're a king, you're not a priest. God kept those ministries completely separate until Jesus came, who could be the first king priest. It had to be Jesus, the first king priest.

But Saul thought, what's wrong with me? I'm okay. God's blessed me as a king. And after seven days, Samuel didn't come.

Verse 8. So Saul decided, verse 9, to become a priest as well. That position which God had reserved for Jesus Christ, who was to be the first king priest, Saul decided, I'm going to take it. You know, whenever an elder brother or a preacher or a music leader attracts people to himself, he's making the same mistake.

Instead of attracting people to Jesus Christ, gets people to admire him. Do you fellas see what a wonderful preacher I am? What a wonderful knowledge of scriptures I have. It's the same mistake.

That place is reserved for Christ. He's the only one to whom people should be drawn. Do you think it's a very wonderful thing to stand up here? Some of you may envy those who stand up here, and even some elders may envy someone like me standing up here so often.

I'll tell you honestly, I stand with fear and trembling, because I know how many people have stood here and fallen, and how easy it is when we stand here to take the place of Jesus Christ. And that's why the Bible says, my brethren, don't be many teachers, because your judgment will be more severe. No, I stay here.

I stand here only because I'm thrust here by the Lord. I have no desire. I would rather sit in the back seat any day.

It's a dangerous thing. If your aim in life is not to lead people to Christ, away from yourself to Christ, lead them there, I would encourage you never, never to want to stand up here. It's a dangerous place.

It's like the front line of the battle. How many of you would like to stand in Kashmir in the front line of the battle? If you're a good soldier, and you're appointed by the army to go there, go. But if you don't know how to fire a rifle, and you try to stand up there because it's exciting, you'll be the first one shot down.

So it's like that, you know, Jesus is the first king priest, and Saul, who was a king, decided to be a priest. Saul's circle was king. Priest was outside his circle.

He said, why not? Why can't I go outside my circle? I've done well as a king. He hadn't finished his job as a king, but he wanted to go outside his circle. The whole of scripture is like, teaches this lesson you see in that circle, whether Adam or Saul, it's the same thing, going outside the circle.

And he said, I waited seven days. Well, he didn't wait fully seven days. Maybe he waited from Sunday till Saturday morning.

Seventh day had not finished. Well, he said, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, six days are over. Half of Saturday is also over.

No sign of Saul. Samuel, let's hurry up. And this offering was probably taking about one hour.

As soon as he finished the offering, it says in verse 10, just as he was finishing, Samuel arrived. Samuel had said, I'll come in seven days. And he came.

When people are impatient for God to act, they make this mistake. God, we want you to do something. We wait for a few days.

Okay, God's not going to do it. I'm going to do it myself. That was the mistake of Abraham.

Waited, waited, waited for to get a son. And finally, he said, Sarah is not going to bear. Let me.

They both had a discussion, Abraham and Sarah, and decided, okay, let's have a child through Hagar, the servant woman, and produced Ishmael, which is, Ishmael and his descendants have always been in conflict with Isaac and his descendants. Where did it start? When one man of God became impatient. You know that verse in James chapter 1, which says, let patience have its perfect work.

Beautiful verse. The mark of a man who's pressing on to perfection is patience. When you're impatient with other people in the church, or impatient with your wife, because she doesn't do things on time, or you want to come to the meeting on time, and your wife is making you late, but she's got children to look after, and you don't help her.

How can she be on time? And then you have a big fight, and come to the meeting five minutes late with that grumpy mood, and sing, God is on the throne, and praise the Lord. It's all a farce. Better to come ten minutes late in a good spirit.

Any day. Come ten minutes late in a good spirit. Yeah, it's good to come on time for a meeting, but it's worse to come to a meeting with a bad spirit.

Patience, patience. Let patience have its perfect work. All of you who think you're so spiritual, just test yourself in one area.

Patience. Okay, Samuel didn't come. He'll come.

God didn't act when you think he should. He will act, don't worry. Just wait.

Hang on. You need patience. Hebrews 10 says, let patience.

You have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God. It's the verse towards the end of Hebrews 10. After you have done the will of God, you need patience, that you may receive the promises.

Many people don't receive the promise. They've done the will of God. Why they don't receive the promise? Because they're not patient.

Let patience have its perfect work. How is it believers, who've been believers for 30-40 years, still upset and irritated? Are you upset and irritated? And you sit in a church, where you have the verse in front every week, let us press on to perfection. Where are you pressing on to perfection? You want to press on to perfection in making better food in your home, sisters? Or doing up your home nicely, and the curtains are good, and the floor is good, and the wall is good.

Is that the garbage of perfection you got? What's the use of living in a home like that, if you're not patient? I would rather live with walls like this, with not properly cemented, or cracks and all that, and have patience in the home. Any day, any day. Don't be a worldly person, thinking you live in a grand house, and there's no patience there.

Your house is perfect, but you're not. Your house will collapse. Jesus said, not one stone will remain upon the other.

And the real house which God is building, you're not serious about. Patience. Saul was not patient.

That's why he lost the kingdom. And Samuel told him, what is this you've done? Verse 11. How dare you become a priest? Samuel said, I didn't try to become a king.

God appointed me as a priest and a prophet, and I did not dare to become a king. Samuel was the most spiritual man in Israel. Why didn't God make him the king? Because the post of priest king was reserved for Jesus Christ.

He had to be the first priest king. Even if you're the most spiritual person in Israel, if you're a priest, you cannot be a king. And even if you're the most spiritual elder brother, you have no right to draw people to yourself.

We have seen enough cases of elders who draw people to themselves with their eloquence and their flattery and destroy the church. Don't go in their footsteps. And it says here, Samuel came and said, what have you done? And Saul had an excuse.

Saul was a great person at making excuses. You read here, you read later on. He was a great expert at making excuses.

And Adam was a great person at making excuses also, right? This woman whom you gave me. And if you are a great person at making excuses, you're not in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. You're not a spiritual man.

Are you great at making excuses? When some fault in you is pointed out, yeah, this, this, this, this, this, this, this. Not much hope for you, brother, sister. Not much hope for you.

You follow Adam. Be like David. When Nathan came to him and said, you're the man.

He said, that's right. He wrote a Psalm, Psalm 51. Oh God, I'm the man.

Nobody else. It's my fault. It's not Bathsheba's fault.

It's me. Let your judgment be against me. I wish not only that we had many brothers and sisters like that in the church, I wish in all of our churches, everybody would be like that.

Not these masters of making excuses for their justification, justifying themselves. Jesus said to the Pharisees, you fellows justify yourselves. That's why you're Pharisees.

One of the number one marks of a Pharisee is he justifies himself. Jesus said that in Luke chapter 16, verse 14, 15, 16. You are, you justify yourselves.

Saul justified himself. What is the result? The Lord said, Samuel said to him, you have acted foolishly. You didn't stay within your circle.

You didn't stay within your boundary. The Lord would have established your kingdom forever. You've been on the throne just two years, but now finished.

Oh, please give me another chance. Sorry. There's no other chance.

The Lord has already started looking out for another man, a man after his own heart, and he's already found him and he's appointed him as ruler over his people. I mean, it is still a long way, way up to chapter 16 before David was selected, and David may not even have been born at this time, but the Lord had already seen that's the man. I'm going to choose him, man after God's own heart, who will not justify himself.

When somebody comes up, the prophet comes to him and says, you're the man. He says, yes, I'm the man. There were many kings in Israel who got upset when the prophets told them the truth.

They'll kill the prophet, lock him up. Not David. He said, I'm the man.

The other mistake of Saul was, one, he went outside his boundary. The second is 1 Samuel 15, where it says the Lord told him to kill all the Amalekites, go depart. The Lord told to go and strike Amalek, verse 3, utterly destroy all that he has and don't spare him.

Put to death man, woman, child, infant, ox, sheep, camel, donkey. The whole circle must be completely covered. All that white portion must be destroyed, covered up with God's will.

Saul said, yeah, he killed most of it, but he left out some good sheep. Little parts of the circle. Yeah, I mean, these are good parts.

Why should we kill them? Again, Samuel came in the morning. The Lord said, I gave Saul a second chance. He didn't deserve it, but I gave a second chance.

But now I regret, verse 11, that I made him king. He's not carried out my commands. He's not filled up the whole circle.

He did a lot of it, but he left out bits. And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said, well, praise the Lord. Verse 13, I have carried out the command of the Lord.

I've filled up the whole circle. You filled up the whole circle? And what's all this bleeding of the sheep? Verse 14, that I hear. What are all these patches that are still white? And Saul said, well, you know, the master of excuses is ready.

These people, they brought it, and the people spared it. And Samuel said, okay, wait, let me tell you what the Lord said to you last night. Isn't it true? Verse 17, listen to this word, my brothers and sisters.

Verse 17, when you were small in your own eyes, God made you the head of the tribes of Israel. And he gave you a simple command saying, kill everything. Why in the world did you use your brain? Why in the world did you listen to your wife? Why in the world did you listen to people? Didn't God tell you what you should do? He said, I did obey, but the people took again the same old excuses.

And then he says, Samuel says, what's the use of all your sacrifices? You say you want to keep the sheep for sacrifice. God doesn't want your sacrifices. What's he saying? I sacrificed to do this for the Lord.

Sacrificed to do this. I opened my house to serve the Lord. I gave money for the Lord.

God says he doesn't want your sacrifices. He wants obedience. To obey is better than sacrifice.

Disobedience is like practicing witchcraft. When you don't fill up the circle, it's like practicing witchcraft. It's what it says there.

It's like idolatry, verse 23. Then Samuel, Saul says, okay, I've sinned, but please don't let the people know about it. Please keep me as the elder.

Don't let anybody know. Just come with me and act as if nothing has happened. I'll confess to you privately.

I've had elders tell me that. I said, I'm sorry. I can't do that.

It's like Samuel told Saul, I'm sorry. I can't do that. People have to know.

Why do you want to hide it? God has taken away the kingdom from you, verse 28. And he's given it to your neighbor who's better than you. And God will not change his mind.

Please honor me, he says in verse 30. Please honor me before the other elders. Come with me, so that people don't think anything is wrong, verse 30.

Samuel said no. Verse 35, Samuel never saw Saul again until the day of his death. Samuel said, I'll never come to your house again, because you don't repent.

I've said that to some people. I won't come to your house, till you repent of that thing, that evil that you've done to somebody. That's what Samuel told Saul.

People may have got angry with Samuel. People got angry with me. It doesn't make a difference.

My brothers and sisters, if you want to be a Christian, be a serious Christian. Don't play games with God. Be a wholehearted, radical Christian, who is determined to fulfill all of God's will.

Let's all be like that in our churches, to grow up in all aspects unto Christ. Stay within our boundaries, to say at the end of our life, I finished my course like Jesus said. Father, I finished the work you gave me to do.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/4/SID4136.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/finishing-the-course-01-staying-within-our-boundaries/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net