

# Run So as to Win the Race

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of running the Christian life as a race, looking unto Jesus, and following the examples of godly men like Paul and Peter to finish well and win the prize.*

**Duration:** 1:05:01

**Scripture:** John 13:1, 2 Thessalonians 2:11

**Topics:** "Christian Living", "Spiritual Deception"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of running the Christian race by focusing on two key aspects: loving others until the end and being willing to do any lowly task for them, just as Jesus humbly washed His disciples' feet. It warns against being deceived by the devil or even by God Himself if one does not love the truth and seek to be saved from sin. The message encourages a deep love for the truth revealed in God's Word and a desperate desire to be saved from sin to avoid deception and ensure a glorious entrance into God's kingdom.

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## Transcript

In this church, we have taken seriously the command in Hebrews 12, verse 1 and 2, that we must run the race looking away from everything and everyone else unto Jesus. Now, not everybody takes that verse seriously. That teaches us that the Christian life is a race.

And in a race, a person who is serious, never relaxes. We can relax in our Christian life physically, like going to sleep, etc. But spiritually, never.

We have to be awake spiritually 24 hours. You know, there is a beautiful expression in the Song of Solomon, where the bride says, I sleep but my heart is awake. That's a beautiful way to put it.

I sleep but my heart is awake all the time. 24 hours, because I never stop running the race. If you take the Christian life seriously like that, and God's word seriously, you will discover there is only one way to run this race, where we will have no regret when we come to the end.

And that is if we keep looking steadfastly at Jesus. And never allow our eyes to be taken away from Him. Because there are so many things that will make us take our eyes away from Him, where we don't meditate on Him and His life as we read in scripture.

And those are the things that can distract us. And this is the reason why backsliding takes place. A person who looks at Jesus can never, never backslide.

It is impossible. There is a growth, more and more like Him, but there will be no backsliding. It is like the Bible says, the path of the righteous is like the sun.

It constantly keeps rising in the sky. So when it comes to running this race, the Holy Spirit helps us by showing us the glory of Jesus whenever we read the scriptures. So, as I read the scriptures, I am not looking for a sermon to preach, I am not looking for some clever idea to come into my head.

I want to see Jesus wherever possible, to see Christ. Because the Bible says, as you have seen often in 2 Corinthians 3.18, the Holy Spirit shows us the glory of Jesus in the mirror of God's Word, and then changes us into that likeness. So, there is one particular verse in that connection that I was thinking of sharing with you this morning, and that is in 1 Corinthians 9.24. 1 Corinthians 9.24, Paul says, Don't you know that in a race everybody runs, but only one receives the prize? So what is he saying? That among all the Christians who lived in 2,000 years, only one is going to get the prize? We might as well give up, because I am sure there are lots of people who did better than you and me.

That is not the meaning. The meaning is that, if you read the next sentence, Run in such a way that you may win. He is telling all the believers in Corinth, All of you can win.

That means all of you can get the first prize. That is the difference in the Christian race, that anyone who is serious can get the first prize. And none of us need feel, Oh, I am too bad, because this is written to one of the most immature churches in the first century.

After years and years, they were babies. It is a church where Paul, the apostle, had stayed for one and a half years, Corinth, and preached. And yet at the end of it all, they were taking each other to court, and there was a lot of immorality in their midst, and they were fighting jealousies and strife.

I mean, if there was a church like that today, none of us would even join it. That was the church in Corinth. And to them, he says, You can run so that you can win.

That means you got to turn around from the way you are living. So that gives all of us hope. There is nobody sitting here who is worse than that.

I want to say to you, You can run in such a way that you win, even if, in past years, you have been up and down and not been serious. We are coming to the end of a year, and it is good for us to take stock of our life, and say, Lord, I want to take it more seriously. You may say, Well, I made those decisions a hundred times, but it never happened.

You know, it is like accepting Jesus into our heart. I think I must have asked Jesus to accept into my heart about a hundred times, between the ages of 13 and 19. Many, many times.

But one of those times was the right time. So, you may take many what you call New Year resolutions, or resolutions, I am really going to turn around and turn around. Don't give up.

Keep doing it. Keep doing it. And many times you went back, you went back.

Never mind. One of those days, it will become real. So, don't ever give up saying, Well, so many times I made those resolutions and nothing happened.

Keep doing it. One of these days, it will really be serious. So, run in such a way that you may win.

I want to say to all of you, Run in such a way that you may win. Very, very important. And when we think of winning the prize, you know that nobody wins a prize for starting well.

There are people who take part in races, in a school race, or an Olympic race, who start so well, and they don't even finish sometimes. They drop out. A marathon race, so many people start, they never finish.

And there are some others who don't start so well, but who come first. So, the other thing we got to remember in a race is, not how well you started. I think many of us who came to CFC started so well.

The question is, how are you going to finish? Run in such a way that you may win means, not that you started well, not that you did well in the middle of the race. Okay, good. How are you going to finish? That's the important thing.

You know, and as we get older, we think more and more of the finishing line. And say, I want to finish well. I want to run in such a way that I may win.

So, I want to share something with you in that connection. Again, looking unto Jesus. That's the answer.

See, turn with me to Hebrews in chapter 13. You know, the other thing we have taught in this church is, that we must follow not only Jesus, but those who have followed Jesus, like Paul, who also, inspired by the Holy Spirit, could say, in 1 Corinthians 11 verse 1, follow me, as I follow Christ. So, that is also the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that God has given us godly men, like Paul, and like other godly men through the centuries.

There are people like John Wesley, different godly men, who finished well. There are many people we read of who started well. We're thinking of those who finished well.

Those who ran and won. Paul was one of them. As Paul says in 2 Timothy 4, 7, I've run the race, I've fought a good fight, I've finished my course, I didn't get distracted with all the things on the side.

There's a good example to follow. So, Hebrews 13 and verse 7, it also says, remember those who led you, or take a good look at those who led you, and consider the end of their conduct, or as in the Good News Bible it says, consider how they ended their life. The outcome, the result of their life, that means the end of their life.

That means, think of godly people, think of Paul, how he ended his life, or Peter, how he ended his life, or John, in the book of Revelation at the age of 95. These are great examples. And not just Jesus.

And that's another thing which scripture says, and we need not be ashamed. I'm not ashamed to say that I take great inspiration from following the example of Paul. You know, the way he finished his race.

It's a great example for me. Or the way like Peter, who is 10 years senior to Paul as an apostle, and yet he writes in his letter, you know, think of the things that Paul writes in his letters, Peter says, think of some of the things that are hard to understand. Imagine a man who is 10 years older spiritually, and who knew more about Jesus' physical life than Paul ever knew, and appreciates that younger brother, and says, boy, that guy says something which really blesses me.

Sometimes some things are hard to understand. I want to finish my life like that, with the humility that can appreciate godly younger brothers. Don't you think Peter is a good example there to follow? Or John, who could lean upon the breast of Jesus when he was 30, and 65 years later, when he sees Jesus on the Isle of Patmos, we read in Revelation 1, he doesn't lean on his breast, he just falls on his face like a dead man.

I want to follow John, who fell on his face like a dead man before the Lord. There are people who say, I'm not going to look at any man, I'm just going to look at Jesus. I'll tell you something from my experience of 55 years as a believer, those who say that are some of the most carnal Christians I have met.

We read in Corinth, there were some people who said, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, and the third group who said, I'm of Christ, and I believe the worst of the lot were those who said, I'm of Christ. You'd say, how can that be? Because, you know, when a person was following Paul, he was only following Paul as he followed Christ. There was nothing wrong in that.

But when a person is so arrogant, that says, no, I can't look at any human being. There's nobody more spiritual than me. Only Jesus.

So, I follow Jesus. They are the ones who are most carnal. I'll tell you from my experience.

We have had people, when we started this church, nearly 40 years ago, I think of one particular brother. He, in the beginning, was such a humble brother, such a revelation on God's word, whenever he shared something, God was so blessed, sometimes I would appreciate him publicly. He was a young brother.

Unmarried. And, I think, my appreciation of him went to his head, and he became, in the beginning, he appreciated many who are older than him, and after some time, he would not appreciate some of the others. He finally came to the place where he said, I can only look at Jesus.

He's the only example I can follow. Like Jesus walked alone in Nazareth. I have to walk alone.

I was scared for him immediately. And, within a short time, he fell away. Went after... I predicted, he'll either go after money, or fall into adultery.

One of the two. I don't know whether he fell into adultery, but he went after money, and he went astray. That's always what happens.

I'm just giving you a warning, of these people who say, I only follow Christ. Be careful. You may think you're spiritual, but these are the lonely people whom the devil just knocks off.

He gives them a, sort of a, spiritualized language. I only follow Jesus. I'm not a Paul or... So, here it says, remember those who led you.

Who are they? Paul, Peter, John, in those days, and many others. But, not anybody who spoke the word of God to you. Faithfully, without compromise, and, not just that, those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, and see how they ended their life.

That means, well, you don't have to wait till a person dies. But, see in which direction they're going as they move towards the end of their life. Is the sun still rising in the sky? And, imitate their faith.

Not their ministry. There are a lot of people who say, I wish I could preach like Brother Zach. I say, they are carnal people.

They are seeking honor. They want some glory for themselves. It doesn't say imitate their ministry.

You and I cannot imitate Paul's ministry. When Jesus said, follow me, he was not saying, imitate my ministry. Can you die for the sins of the world? Crazy! Can you walk on water? What did he mean? Imitate my life.

My faith. I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. So, it's here it says, imitate their faith, because, if you live by the principles by which they live, that is their faith.

You will end up winning the race, just like they did. So, you know, just like people train with people who are very good in a particular field. If you send your children for tuition in a subject, you send them to someone who is really good in that subject.

So, I thought of this. There are very few people, I must say, through the years that I have been able to follow. There are a few, but I'm not disturbed that there are few.

Thank God, there are a few whose faith I can follow, who I saw how they ended their life, or I see how the direction in which they are going. And, like it says in 2 Corinthians 3, 18, from glory to glory to glory to glory. And, of course, the greatest example is Jesus.

And I want to turn with you to John chapter 13. And see there, this has been a great challenge for me, because I believe this is how the Apostles also lived and ended their lives. And, for many, many years now, I have meditated on this passage.

It said, The Last Supper, the last day of Jesus' life on earth. And see how he ended his life. And I meditated on that and said, Lord, that's how I want to end my life too.

Whenever it comes. I don't know whether I'm going to live on earth for another 20 years or 25 years. Or, like James says, we cannot even say we live tomorrow.

James 4 says, we have to say, and if the Lord wills, we will live tomorrow. And we will do this. He doesn't just say we'll do this.

He says, if the Lord wills, we'll live tomorrow. Isn't that a great way to live? You may say, well, I'm not your age. I'm only about 25.

You better say that too. James 4 is written for you as well. If you can die crossing the road, if the Lord wills, we will live tomorrow.

And we will do this. Keep that humble attitude. It's a very good attitude to have.

It's what I encourage all people to have. I've tried to have that for many years. If God wills, I will live tomorrow.

And I will do this. So, John 13, Jesus knew that his hour had come, that he was going to depart out of this world. He had lived 33 and a half years, and he sensed in his spirit, you know, I think the time has come.

The Holy Spirit impressed upon him, you're going to leave the world pretty soon. So what did he do? When he knew he was going to depart out of this world, it says, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them right up to the end. So that's the first thing.

I say, Lord, I want to remain in love for God's people right up to the end. This is how I'm going to win the race. I'll testify about myself.

I decided many years ago that I would love until the end by the grace of God and by the Holy Spirit. And I'll tell you, the more you serve the Lord and the more you seek to be wholehearted and live for him and not compromise and stand up for the truth, you're going to face a lot of opposition. Jesus faced more opposition than anybody because he wouldn't compromise.

If you're a compromising type of preacher or a believer, you may not face so much opposition. But if you're going to be ruthless and uncompromising and totally without partiality, you're going to face a lot of problems. But then, it's a test of whether you can remain in love.

Jesus loved until the end. So when it says, run in such a way that you may win, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, I look at him as I run this race and I say, he loved until the end. He loved people who were going to deny him within the next 6 or 7 hours or 12 hours.

He loved them. This guy's going to deny me. He's going to say, I don't even know this person.

I don't want to be associated with him. It's like, somebody says, I don't want to be associated with Brother Zach. I think he's a heretic, just to be popular with somebody else who thinks I'm a heretic.

I say, Lord, I want to love that man who wants to, in my presence, appear to be very friendly with me and behind my back pretend to be against me because he wants to be friendly with somebody else. Lord, I want to love that person. That's Peter.

Or, what's worse, somebody like Judas Iscariot who wants to stab me in the back, behind my back. I want to love him until the end. It's got nothing to do with him.

I mean, he may go to hell. I can't do anything about that. I'd try to save him, but I'm going to love him until the end.

That's what it means to run in such a way that you may win. Some of us have had problems with people. It is a drop in the bucket compared to what Jesus faced.

Mosquito bites compared to the lions that Jesus faced. We make so big issues of small mosquito bites we got here and there. Somebody said something or did something.

Dear brothers and sisters, run the race looking unto Jesus, looking away. I often think of Peter's example, walking on the water, overcoming gravity. What a fantastic thing it was to overcome gravity and walk on water.

Can you think of anything greater than that? I'll tell you. Overcoming sin. Sin is more powerful than gravity, believe it or not.

But Peter overcame gravity as long as he looked at Jesus. The moment he turned his eyes away on something, the wind, the waves, you know, somebody flinging something at me or some circumstance or oh, there are 101 things in the world the devil can create just to upset me. If I can see that one of the great schemes of the devil, you know, Paul says, we're not ignorant of Satan's schemes.

And if you want a little advice on the number one scheme of the devil, it is to turn your eyes away from Jesus unto some circumstance or some person or somebody who you think can harm you, maybe your boss, maybe your landlord, maybe some relative or somebody who has actually harmed you, maybe cheated you of the family property or you keep meditating, meditating, oh, I wish I had got that part of my family property, it's rightfully mine, but this guy cheated me of it, your brother-in-law or your somebody. That's number one scheme of the devil. You're no longer looking at Jesus, you're looking at your brother-in-law.

You're looking at that other guy who did some harm to you. You, same thing will happen to you that happened to Peter. I don't care how long you've been a believer, you will sink.

Is there a solution for it? Sure. Do what Peter did. Lord, save me! He didn't wait till he hit the bottom of the Sea of Galilee.

He'd have drowned. You know, there's only a limited period of time that a man can be underwater. I don't know, maybe two, three minutes, that's it.

It's a very short time. If a man is underwater for more than three minutes, brain's damaged and even if he revives, he'll never be normal. Well, Peter, same thing would have happened to him if he had waited and said, well, I'm not sure whether I should call on the Lord right now.

Brother, call on him right now! And say, Lord, save me! That's a beautiful verse which I always love to read in Matthew and chapter 14 about this passage where Peter was walking on the water. You know, it says Matthew 14 verse 30 Seeing the wind, Peter became frightened. Fear.

You know, fear can make you sink. You're afraid. What somebody will do to you? What will happen if this goes on like this? What will happen to your children? You'll sink.

That's why we say we should hate fear just like you hate pornography. A lot of you hate pornography, praise the Lord. Do you hate fear and anxiety in the same way? You should.

You think only pornography makes people sink? Fear can make you sink. Peter sank because he was afraid, not because he was watching pornography. He was just afraid and anxious.

What's going to happen? As if you're no heavenly father. And the birds say to one another, this guy's anxious because he doesn't have a father like we have. He was frightened.

And when did he cry out? This is the passage I like. Beginning to sink, he cried out, Lord, save me. I love that.

Many times it has come to my mind. When do you begin to sink? If you've gone one inch into the water, you've already sunk quite a bit. Two, three centimeters.

Beginning to sink means he sensed. You know, you feel when you're getting off balance, you sense it in a split second. You know how our reflexes are.

Supposing you lose your balance, going down the steps or something. Your reflexes know it immediately. You don't have to stop and think for five minutes what's happening.

No. It's immediate. And that is how it happened with Peter.

And you and I know that when we are slipping into sin or a wrong attitude towards someone, you know it immediately. You don't have to wait. Unless your conscience is dead.

And I believe most of you, your conscience is not dead. Because you've come here and heard the strong preaching of God's word for many years. You'll know immediately, hey, something's happening.

That's the time to say, Lord, save me. Something's happening. I'm not going to go tumbling down the stairs.

No. I'm not going to sink. Beginning to sink.

He cried out, Lord, save me. And this is the other passage I like. Immediately.

There are two words you must remember in verse 30 and 31. All your life. Beginning to sink.

And the second word is verse 31. Immediately. Jesus stretched out his hand and took hold of him.

He didn't rebuke him. He didn't give him a big lecture and say, I'll tell you why you sank and all that. By the time you reached the bottom of the sea.

That's what I love about Jesus. That when I slip up and I'm beginning to sink and I say, Lord, save me. He doesn't give me a big lecture of this is why you were beginning to sink and this is why you did this then.

No, no, no, no, no. He first of all holds me and prevents me from falling. Then, he gives me the exhortation.

You of little faith. Why did you doubt? Verse 31. I love that.

It's like when I often think, you know, when I see some believers whom I have responsibility for. I don't have responsibility for all the believers in the world. It's impossible.

But some people I have responsibility for. And whenever I see them slipping, I think of the picture that comes to me in my mind is the lion who caught a hold of the lamb that David was looking after as a young shepherd boy. You know, David tells Saul, one day I was looking after the flock and a lion came and grabbed one of my little lambs.

And David says, I went after that lion and I gave a lecture to the lamb. No. I killed the lion and pulled the lamb out of his mouth.

That's the picture that always comes to me. I say, Lord, whenever I see someone I have responsibility for, it could be your son or daughter who's doing something wrong or slipping up. Don't go giving a lecture to your daughter and son first.

Jesus didn't give a lecture first. David didn't give a lecture to the lamb. He killed the lion, pulled the lamb out of his mouth, and then must have communicated to the lamb in some way.

Be careful. Don't do that again. Don't go wandering off by yourself.

It's dangerous. You know, this is the godly way. First, fight the devil on behalf of that person.

Bind Satan's activity there. You know, that's what you should do if you have a problem in your home. Maybe one day your partner, husband or wife, is upset about something.

Maybe they were under pressure. Don't judge them so severely saying, oh, I'm not upset. Well, maybe you were not under pressure.

That's why you were not upset. And maybe your partner was under such much more pressure than you and slipped up. Don't judge.

Think of the lion catching the lamb. The lion, the devil has grabbed your partner. What are you going to do? Supposing you and your wife are walking down the street and one man grabs your wife.

Are you going to give a lecture to your wife? Hey, listen, you should be careful. I mean, you'd be a stupid husband if you're giving a lecture when that man has grabbed your wife and is going to run away with her. You're going to fight that man.

Who do you fight when your wife is upset at home? Or your husband is upset at home? I hope it's the devil. I hope it's not your partner. At least from now on, you win the race and help him or her also to win the race.

We are to help one another. So, remember that that as we look unto Jesus, I see he loved his own right until the end. And even Judas Iscariot, as I said, the one who was going to betray him, who was evil.

It says here in John 13, turn back to John 13. You know, right at the beginning it says in the second verse, during supper, John 13 verse 2, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray him. Before he came to that table, the devil had put something into Judas' heart.

And he didn't take that seriously. You know, the devil sometimes puts an idea into your mind. He's all the time putting ideas into the minds of believers to have a wrong attitude towards somebody or to say this or to do this or give that fellow a piece of your mind or you know, cheat somewhere or something.

He's always putting people, things into and if you just, if you don't take that seriously, if you don't resist at that point, it's going to get worse. Because the devil is going to push. He just puts some little thing in and it's like he's putting his foot in the door.

And once he's put his foot in the door, you know, like the Lord told Cain, if you don't have a right attitude towards your brother, sin is crouching at the door. Don't think the devil is far away. Just outside your door, you don't have a right attitude to Abel.

The Lord says, then sin is just crouching at your door. Do you know that whenever you don't have a right attitude towards anyone, remember what the Lord told Cain. There's someone crouching at your door waiting to get in.

This is the advantage of reading scripture and remembering it. In the time of your temptation, that word will come back. I've got a wrong attitude to this brother.

That means there's somebody at my door. The devil is right at my door now. He's not far away.

And because Judas took that lightly, just like Cain took it lightly. Oh, it's okay. Lord, it's okay.

I can handle that. You can't. If Cain had taken that warning, the devil would not have come inside the door.

Do just a little jealousy. Why is the fire falling on him, my younger brother, not on me? Be careful of that. Be careful when you find God's blessing falling on someone who you think does not deserve to be blessed more than you, the senior brother.

The sad thing that I have seen in the last two or three years. In the last two or three years here in CFC Bangalore and in some other CFC churches is that people who have been with us for many years fall away and leave. That's okay.

I mean, if they find a better church, I would encourage them to leave. I'd encourage everybody to leave. I mean, what do you do if your family, your wife or somebody is in a hospital and the hospital is not giving them good treatment, they're not getting better, don't you take them out of that hospital and put them in a better hospital? But you don't put them in a worse hospital.

You've got to be crazy if you take a family member out of a hospital and put them in a worse hospital. That's my only question. I have no problem with people leaving CFC.

I say, brother, go ahead, leave, but please go to a better hospital where you'll be cured more than you were cured in the years. Every church is a hospital, I might as well tell you that. There's no church that's perfect.

Every church is full of patients at different degrees of recovery from the flesh. And the flesh is never completely. None of us have recovered fully from the flesh.

Paul said, I have not reached it yet. So every church is a hospital. But I say, if you leave a hospital, please, please, go to a better one.

So I have no objection to people leaving, but what grieves me is, over a period of time, I can see, I don't know which hospital they went to, but if I see their condition worse after one year, then I know what hospital they went to. But if I see their condition better, then I say, hey, you probably want to go to a hospital, man. So that's the thing I look for.

Is the condition better? In other words, what are the words coming out of their mouth? Very often I find, by the words of their mouth, you can find out what is in the heart. You know, the mouth is the overflow valve of what is in the heart. You listen to a man speak, you know what's in his heart.

Not when he's guarded. You know, in church, Sunday morning, we're all guarded. But when he's relaxed, and what comes out, usually when he's at home, or when he's close intimate friends, where he's not on his guard, what comes out of his mouth, that's what's in his heart.

So I say, why is it that some of these people have left? And I sense it's because I know definitely in some cases, they saw the Lord blessing younger people more than them. And younger people being respected by others more than them. It's an old Cain and Abel story written in the beginning of the Bible.

And Cain gets upset. If Abel was older, if Abel was 20 years older than Cain, Cain would have said, great. But when Abel is younger, very difficult for Cain to stomach that.

And that's what I've seen. And the devil got right in. And so there are people who can't accept the fact that someone who came at the eleventh hour gets a higher wage than I who came at the first hour.

Do you know in that story that the people who came at the eleventh hour, Matthew chapter 20, got a higher hourly wage than the people who came at the first hour. The first hour people got one denarius for working 12 hours. So their hourly wage was point less than point one of a denarius.

Less than point one. One twelfth of a denarius. But the people who came at the last hour got one denarius per hour.

Twelve times. Why did they get that? They're upset. You're paying that guy twelve times my salary.

And he came long after me. God, your blessing. You sent a fire upon his life.

People are appreciating him. Be careful. Very dangerous.

So when we allow something like that, you know, the devil having already put something into Judas Iscariot's heart and Judas ignored it. You know what happened later on? Next step. See verse 27.

John 13, 27. John 13, 27. Satan entered into his heart.

You see there? First he just put a thought into his heart. He had put his foot into the door. Judas didn't recognize.

Hey, this foot doesn't look like any angel. It's a devil. Alright.

And he didn't push it out and slam the door. The next thing you read is the devil himself has got right in. Second step.

So be careful when a thought is put into your heart and you know it's not from God. But Jesus still loved him. Jesus was there to help him.

I believe it was an act of love. He was trying to, you know, he said one of you is going to betray me. And when they asked him who it was, you know, John asked him, who is it Lord? Verse 25.

He said, he whispered to John, it's the one whom I'm going to give this food to. I'm going to dip this bread into this liquid and give it. Judas didn't hear that.

So he dipped the morsel into the wine or whatever it is and he gave it to Judas. Now remember, it's only John who heard the meaning of that. None of the others knew it.

He was just whispering to John and Judas didn't know. Judas saw it, hey, the Master is treating me specially. He didn't do that for anybody else.

He's dipping something and giving it was an expression of love as far as Judas was concerned. And instead of responding to that act of love, it says, Satan entered into him. Next verse, Satan entered into him.

And even after that, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Judas came to betray him, Jesus, I believe he put his arm around him and said, friend, have you come to betray me with a kiss? Jesus knew Judas was coming to kiss him. He could have kept him away. Hey, don't come near me.

Let him come. Let me give him a last chance to repent. Let him know even when he kisses me and I put my arm around him and call him friend, at least now, let him know that I love him.

I say, Lord, make me love like that. He loved those who were his own until the end. Run in such a way that you may win.

I don't know how that is applying to you, my brother, sister, but if you ask the Lord, he'll show you whom you have to love until the end. I would only say to you, run in such a way that you may win. I have decided that.

Many people have harmed me by speaking evil of me, telling lies, many other ways. I decide whether that is going to make me bitter or better. That can make me bitter or it can make me a better Christian.

I decided I'm going to let it make me a better person, stronger. You know, if I can love somebody who is betraying me, it makes me a better person. If I hate him for betraying me, I get it.

I become a bitter person. It's your choice. I want to run in such a way that I win.

I'm not interested in proving to the world I'm right. I say the Lord will prove that in the final day. Let people think what they like about me.

Let them think I'm a hard preacher or critical or whatever. I'm not bothered. That all I leave with the Lord.

My job is only one thing, to love them until the end. Because I've decided I'm going to run in such a way that I win. And I want to look at other examples, maybe examples younger than me, who are running in such a way that they win.

It doesn't have to be all of these people older than you. If you find a person who is determined to love, I don't care what age he is. I appreciate anyone who is determined to love until the end.

Then there's another thing I want you to see. How to run in such a way. One is to love until the end.

Whoever they may be, denier, betrayer, whatever it is. The second thing is verse 3. John 13 verse 3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given everything into his hand and he'd come from God and he's going forth to God. What would a person like that do today? Get up and give a sermon.

You know, I've now finished my course. It's been great serving you people. Now I'm going back to my Heavenly Father.

No. No big lectures. No trying to show that I've been more faithful than all of you.

He got up and took the bucket of water that was lying at the door which nobody thought of picking up. Which slaves, the job of a slave in those wealthy Jewish homes would take the bucket and wash the feet of these people, would take off their sandals and wash their feet. Jesus took that.

Remember, this is the last day of his life on earth. He loved until the end and he humbled himself. He humbled himself when he left the throne of heaven and came to earth and the last thing he did on earth was again humbling himself at the feet of his disciples and then humbling himself to death.

He took that bucket and he laid aside his outer robe and took a towel and girded himself and he came one by one to the feet of each of his disciples and he poured the water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet. I want you to picture this in your mind. You know, there's disciples all sitting there like kings and Jesus the slave taking the bucket of water and washing the feet of the one who's going to deny him,

the one who's going to betray him.

He washed Judas' feet also by the way. Yes, because you read about that he gave the morsel to Judas after that. Here he's washing everybody's feet at the beginning of the chapter and of course Peter gets convicted that his master is washing his feet because you know, you get convicted when you see somebody far more spiritual than you doing a lowlier job than you would do.

You say, hey that man's doing that, I should be doing that. That's how Peter felt, hey. He feels suddenly convicted that he should have taken the bucket, not may Jesus take it.

And he says, no, no, I won't let you wash my feet. And Jesus said, you won't understand what I'm doing now, Peter but you'll understand. Peter said, no, I'll never let you wash my feet, verse 8. And Jesus says, if I don't wash you, you have no part with me.

And he washed all their feet. Verse 12, when he washed their feet, he sat at the table again, verse 12 and he said, do you know what I did to you just now? I want you to learn something. You call me teacher and Lord and you are right.

See, Jesus didn't have the attitude of, like some people understand humility, the wrong understanding of humility, false humility, is to say oh, you all are more spiritual than me. I'm not as spiritual as you. That's rubbish.

Counterfeit. Jesus didn't say that. And I don't say that.

I don't look at all of you and say, oh, you all are more spiritual than me. I don't believe it. You may call me arrogant or whatever you like.

I'm just speaking the truth. Paul told the Corinthians, you're carnal, you're babies, but I'm not. Was that arrogance? No, he's just speaking the truth.

If I tell my son, hey, listen, I'm 30 years older than you, I'm not proud, I'm just stating a fact. Don't think humility is to pretend that the other person is more spiritual when you don't believe it in your heart at all. That's hypocrisy.

Call it by its right name. Hypocrisy. Not humility.

The Bible does not say anywhere, consider other people more spiritual than yourself, because I would stand up and say, Lord, that's impossible to obey. Jesus himself didn't do that. Paul didn't do that.

John didn't do that. John speaks about one elder called Diatrophes who thought too much about himself. Did John think that he was more spiritual than him? No.

Philippians 2 says, consider other people as more important than yourself. Consider others, Philippians 2.3, not as more spiritual. Many people haven't understood that.

People who read the Bible carelessly, it says in Philippians, consider others more spiritual. Where does it say that? Philippians 2.3 says, consider others more important. And when Jesus took the bucket, he was not saying the others were more spiritual, he was saying they are more important.

I'm willing to do a dirty job for you. I'm willing to take a lowly place. I believe this is how we win the race.

That means, till the end of my life, I must be willing to do any lowly task for others. Any dirty job. See, this is a dirty job.

Washing people's feet. That means, till the end of my life, I must be willing to go and clean the toilets in the CFC building. If a day comes in my life where I think I'm a bit senior and so I don't, I'm not ready to clean the toilet.

Are you ready to clean the toilet in your own home? Do you consider the church your home? You must be willing to do any dirty job. I'm not saying you have to do it, you must be willing to do it. And sometimes the opportunity comes then you do it.

And I've said that. I say, if you want to be a member of CFC, we don't check your doctrinal statement first, we first check whether you're willing to come and clean the toilets. Whether you're willing to come on Saturday evenings to clean up this place to be ready for Sunday morning.

Are you willing to inconvenience yourself to do some dirty job for others or come and sit like a big king to listen to all the messages. There is a difference. It's always a question of whether you want to win the race, run in such a way as you want to win.

And I praise God that in our CFC churches we have come across some wonderful elder brothers who are willing to do anything, dirty their hands, do anything to serve God's people, to serve the church. You won't find many like that in this country. Or anywhere.

Don't despise them. I'm not talking only here, I'm seeing in other CFC churches some really humble godly brothers who don't want any honor for themselves. Don't even want to be recognized.

Because they do it as unto the Lord. They don't do it for men. Jesus didn't do it just to impress these people with my humility.

No, he did it for the Father. I, the Lord, your teacher, washed your feet. In other words, I want to paraphrase it.

I did a dirty job for you. That's the paraphrase. The real meaning.

It's not taking out somebody's shoes and socks. It's already clean. Why do you want to wash that? But, what he meant was, I did a dirty job for you.

Which slaves do. And yet, I acknowledge that I'm your leader. I am more spiritual than you.

You call me, verse 14, Lord and teacher, and I'm not pretending that I'm not. I am your teacher. I am your Lord.

You're right. Verse 13. You are right when you call me Lord.

You're right when you call me teacher. You're right when you say I'm more spiritual than you. I don't pretend that I'm not.

I have given you an example. Till the end of your life, on your last day on earth, be willing to do the dirtiest job for other people. The lowliest job.

Consider those who ended their life well. He didn't say you all must preach like me. Where could they preach like Jesus? Where could they preach like him? It's completely out of the question.

I don't think all these apostles were great preachers, but they were godly men. You may not have been impressed by some of their preaching. Nobody could preach like Jesus.

There are very few people I've met in my life who come anywhere near preaching like Jesus. There are a few, but not many. There are many, many good preachers, but very few come, in my estimation, anywhere near preaching like Jesus.

But that's not the main thing. That's a gift. Don't pursue after that.

If you pursue after that, you're seeking for honor. If you're pursuing it in order to bless people, that's fine, but if you're pursuing it because you want recognition, that is honor. And the devil's just put a thought into your heart, try to preach like so and so, so and so.

You keep listening to that, one day he'll enter your heart, just like Judas. Second step is enter in. So be careful when the devil's put a thought into your heart and you don't.

That's not from God. God never puts a thought into your heart, try to preach like him. That's 100% the devil.

The thought God will put into your heart is humble yourself like him. Love others like him. That's from God.

Recognize the voice of the devil and the voice of God. Run in such a way that you may win. It's very important if you want to run in such a way that we win, that we distinguish where did this thought come from into my heart? Because if it is from the devil and you don't throw it away immediately, remember what I said, he's already got a foot inside the door, he's crouching at the door and you think you're strong enough like Cain, the next thing you'll kill your brother.

Nowadays we don't take rocks to kill people, we just use our tongues. And you know you can kill a person with your tongue, just like Cain killed his brother with a rock. Smashed his head.

You can smash a person's reputation and everything else with your tongue. Because you're a bit disturbed by something. Why did you get disturbed? The devil put something into your heart.

Make sure he doesn't get right in. I want to be careful. I cannot protect anybody else.

I wish I could. I wish I could at least protect the members of my family. I can't.

I can't protect my children whom I love so much. They have to protect themselves. Each of us has to protect themselves.

I love you all. I believe I'm right when I say that. But I'm sorry, my brothers, sisters, I cannot keep the devil out of your heart.

I can only tell you how you can do it. Almighty God did not prevent the devil from putting a thought into Judas' heart or into Eve's mind. I've often thought about that.

Adam and Eve were going into the garden, having spent a day with God. God allows Satan to go into that garden and put a thought into Adam's mind, Eve's mind. Why in the world did God allow that? So that

Adam and Eve could resist the devil and be strong.

Yeah, they could have said no. That's the point at which God is seeing. You know, you and I come into a similar situation.

Just like Eve in the garden. You come into a situation in your life. For Eve, the word of God was don't eat of that tree.

For you, the word of God is love that person until the end. Humble yourself and be willing to do a dirty job for him. That's the word of God for you.

And the devil says, well, you don't really have to do that. I mean, don't you get a little pleasure out of speaking your own mind? Telling that person what you think of him? You'll get a little pleasure. That's what he told Eve.

You'll get a little pleasure and satisfaction. And Eve thought about it. Yeah, I think I'll get a little satisfaction.

Be careful when you open your mouth. Dear brother, I can only warn you. I can't keep the devil out of your heart, sister.

But be careful when you open your mouth. That what comes out is the thought that God put into your heart and not the enemy. God will never allow you to be deceived if you keep these two things in mind.

And I'll close with that. A verse I've often quoted. 2nd Thessalonians chapter 2. And I repeated, repeated, and I'll repeat it till the end of my life.

Because it is the only verse in the whole Bible. There are more than 31,000 verses in the Bible. But there's only one verse that says that even God will deceive you if you don't have these two conditions.

If you don't have these two attitudes. Almighty God, not only the devil. 2nd Thessalonians 2 and verse 11.

For this reason, remember those three words. For this reason God will send a deceiving, deluding influence on them so that they believe what is false. They believe a lie.

God allowing you to believe a lie? Yes. Why? For this reason. When I say for that, when I read in the Bible for this reason, I say, Lord I want to find out what that reason is.

Because I don't want to be deceived. I don't mind the devil trying to deceive me. I don't mind my heart trying to deceive me.

I don't mind the lusts of flesh trying to deceive me. If God is on my side, I can overcome all of these. But if God himself begins to deceive me, there's no hope.

And let me repeat to you, there's only one verse in the Bible which says that God himself will deceive people who don't have this attitude. There are two things mentioned there. For this reason, go back to verse 10.

First of all, they did not receive the love of the truth. The last part of verse 10. If you don't receive the love of the truth, God will allow you to be deceived.

What does that mean? That means, first of all, when the Holy Spirit says, that was your fault. And you say, no, no, no. You justify.

You say, no, no, no. This, that, this, that. And you've got 25 reasons.

The Holy Spirit will withdraw. Okay. You keep on believing that you're alright.

I want to tell you in Jesus' name, God will allow you to be deceived. And you will believe what is false. What is that you believe what is false? You believe you're right when you're 100% wrong.

And you believe you're okay when you're carnal. There are people who believe they're on their way to heaven, who are actually on their way to hell. There are people in the world who believe they're born again, who are not born again.

People who believe they're filled with the Holy Spirit, just because they babble something. They're not filled with the Holy Spirit. Why is it God allows them to believe a lie that they're born again, that they're filled with the Spirit, they're going to heaven when they're not? Because they don't receive the love of the truth.

The Holy Spirit tells them something, they won't listen to that voice. The second place where the truth comes in is God's word. Jesus said, Thy word is truth.

I come to God's word and I see something there that speaks to me, that shows me what you have believed in a certain area up till now was wrong. Child baptism is wrong. And you say, no, no, no, no, but what will happen? What you're being taught in this particular church that your parents and your grandparents and everybody went to is wrong.

You need to leave that church. And you argue and say, what will people think? And what will my priest think? And what will my uncle think? Yeah, you keep thinking like that. God himself will allow you to be deceived.

He'll let you go astray. Because you saw something in scripture and you didn't love it. I'm scared.

I often call that one of the scariest verses in the Bible. I want to love the truth whenever, there are times many, many times God has spoken to me that was pride. I bow my head and say, yes, Lord.

Immediately. I don't even question. Or the Lord says, that was utterly selfish.

I say, yes, Lord, I'm sorry. I want to judge myself. And I have been saved.

I can tell you, since the past many years when I've learned to judge myself, I have been saved. My life is one of daily repentance. That's my honest testimony.

The second reason. They didn't receive the love of the truth. And second, verse 10, they did not want to be saved.

Saved from what? From sin. And if God sees that in your life you don't want to be, you're not desperate to be saved from sin, particularly from your pride and your selfishness, impure thoughts, if you're not desperate to be saved from it, He will allow you to be deceived. I'll tell you honestly.

He will allow you to be deceived. Isn't it simple that you don't have to think of 25 conditions at the end of this message? Just love the truth about yourself when the Holy Spirit tells you. Maybe what the Holy Spirit told you this morning.

And seek to be saved. I can give you a written guarantee. In your entire life you will not be deceived.

You'll have a glorious entrance into God's kingdom. Let's pray. God gives us His word so that we can be ready for the return of Jesus Christ to stand before Him.

Look unto Jesus and look at those who have ended their lives well. Heavenly Father, please help everyone here to take what they have heard seriously. We humbly ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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