

Running The Christian Race To Win

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of running the Christian race faithfully, drawing parallels from the stories of Saul and David in the Old Testament. It highlights the need to remain humble, seek forgiveness, and finish the race with a focus on honoring Jesus. The message encourages helping and supporting fellow believers in their journey to finish the race with joy.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:24, 1 Samuel 15:17, Hebrews 12:1, 1 Samuel 9:21, 1 Samuel 10:24, 1 Samuel 15:28, Psalms 51:17, 1 Corinthians 10:6, Psalms 51:10

Topics: "Faithfulness in the Christian Race", "Humility and Support in Community"

Description

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Transcript

I was thinking of the Christian life being like a race. There are only two places in the New Testament where the Christian life is called a race, and I thought I would look at them. First of all, of course, in Hebrews, in chapter 12.

Now, Hebrews chapter 12 is a continuation from chapter 11. Let me repeat what I've often said, that when the books of the Bible were written, they were not divided into chapters and verses. They may have been paragraphs, but chapter divisions were made by man, maybe three, four hundred years ago, long after the Bible was written, just to enable us to be able to access a particular verse quickly.

So Hebrews chapter 12 begins actually in chapter 11, verse 40. And chapter 11 is a description of all the great men in the Old Testament, how they lived by faith. And that is an example for us, because our race is also a race of faith.

Faith in Jesus Christ and the Father. Now the Old Testament people did not know Jesus Christ, and they did not know the Father. They only had faith in a God who did miracles for them.

But here we are told of all these people who did many wonderful things by faith, but it was all external. They defeated enemies, they pulled down the walls of Jericho, they split the Red Sea. Everything was external.

Even Abraham getting a son. There's nothing spiritual in all this. In that entire Noah made an ark.

And then it comes to the last verse of Hebrews 11, and it says God has provided something better for us. Think of shutting the mouths of lions in chapter 11, verse 33, and people being raised from the dead further down in that chapter. And then it says there's something better for us than all that.

When you read about splitting of the Red Sea, or people raising the dead and shutting the mouths of lions, you think, boy, I wish I could have done something like that. I want to tell you, every one of you, brothers and sisters, God has provided something better than pulling down the walls of Jericho, better than stopping the sun like Joshua did. You take any miracle in the Old Testament done by anybody, for everyone sitting here, you and me, we have the opportunity to do something better than the greatest miracles done in the Old Testament.

I've said this before, but I need to repeat it. Hebrews 11 is full of the miracles, and the last verse says God has provided something better for us. But we need to have faith to understand that that is better.

And what is that better thing? And that is in chapter 12, verses 1-4. It's a continuation. He's just saying, now I'll explain that better thing.

He says the ones in chapter 12, verse 1, says all these people, all died and they've gone to heaven, they are witnesses. And we are, chapter 12, verse 1, we are running a race. So the picture here is of a stadium, like the Olympic Games stadium, and sitting in all the stands are the Old Testament people, who already died and gone.

And in the race today are you and me. That's the picture here. Remember this.

The Old Testament saints are witnesses. Perhaps they can see us from heaven. And they're watching you, how you run this race.

And me. Have you ever thought of that? That some of these men like Noah and Abraham, and David and Elijah and Elisha, and all these people, are witnesses, it says here. That's perhaps one of the verses that indicates that perhaps they can see us.

There's no clear verse that tells us that, but Paul said to the apostles to be with Christ. So from there, here it says, chapter 12, verse 1, they are witnesses. Witness means someone who is seeing something.

You can't say I witnessed something unless you can see it. So this verse seems to indicate that they can see us running the race here. And of course they can't do anything for us, they can't pray for us from there.

But I think they'd be terribly disappointed with the way some people are running the race. They'd have thought, boy, if we had the opportunity that these New Testament Christians have, wow, what we could have done. God never gave us that.

That's what Elijah is saying. That's what Elisha is saying. That's what Daniel is saying.

That's what Moses is saying. I wish I could have the opportunity that these folks sitting in CFC today have. Do you see your calling like that? You know, it's wonderful when we realize what a privileged position we are in.

God has given us the resources for it. So I plead with you, don't miss out on what God has for you in this one life. It's one race.

It's like a marathon race. And all of us have been running. Some have been careless in their running.

Some haven't got rid of some of the chains in their legs. While running, then it slows down. You can run with a chain in your leg, but it will slow you down.

I remember the Lord told me once, that what I had done at the beginning of my Christian life, when I was born again in 1959, I was nearly 20 years old, 19 and a half. The Lord reminded me in my unconverted days while I was working in the Navy, how I had not paid all my taxes properly. Like the other officers in the Navy, were like that, so I did like them.

The Lord said, that's cheating. You must give it back. So I calculated and gave back.

It was about a four-month salary I had to give back. That took a long time to save that much money. But many years later, the Lord said to me, if you had not done that way back then, 20, 30 years ago, you would have been running with a chain on your leg all these 30 years.

Thank God you did it immediately when you were converted. Is there any chain on your leg as you run this race? Any unsettled matter about the past? You know Zacchaeus, when he met the Lord, and the Lord met him, he said, yeah, I remember now, I've cheated some people, I want to give that money back. And he said, I want to give it back with interest, more interest than he'd have got from the bank.

He was so upright. I'm absolutely certain I'll see Zacchaeus in heaven. Such people end up in heaven who are so radical.

And boy, he must be so delighted today in heaven that he set those matters right. What did he lose? Maybe a few thousands of rupees, but look what he gained today. He took it seriously.

So in this race, we have to make sure that there's no weight that weighs us down. It says here in chapter 12, verse 1, let us lay aside every encumbrance. Encumbrance means some heavy thing that's like dragging you back, something hindering you, a chain on your feet, something unsettled.

It may not be money, it may be just the fact that you didn't go and ask forgiveness from somebody you hurt. You can't run the race. You're running, but you could have made ten times more spiritual progress by now if you had settled that matter.

I remember when I settled those matters, how suddenly the Lord anointed me and began to give me a gift to serve Him right from that time. Right from the time I was 23. So how thankful I am that I did not miss out on that.

And if you have not settled those matters, I want to urge every one of you, do it now at the earliest opportunity. So it says here we must lay aside this encumbrances and weights that entangle our legs and we must run with endurance. The race set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus who also ran this race.

So when we see that He also ran this race, He didn't have anything to set right because He lived a perfect life. But He had to fight against temptation. That we see right from the beginning of His baptism.

The very first thing before He preached a sermon, He was being tempted, just like us. And that's where He was faithful. That was the race.

Every time He overcame a temptation was one step forward in the race. Another temptation is another step forward. That's why God allows us to be tempted every day.

So that we can make a progress in the race. You overcome a temptation, you've taken one more step forward. Another temptation during the day, another step forward.

Can you imagine how in a year, what a long distance you would have run. But if you don't, if you're not faithful, then you're not just standing still, you'll be going backwards. So it says, we look unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who endured the cross.

This is how He ran the race. Endured the cross means, in very simple words, He died to Himself. And we get plenty of opportunities to die to ourselves every day.

Jesus said, if you want to follow Me, deny yourself, pick up your cross daily. That means every day we have opportunities to forgive somebody or not to retaliate if somebody treats us badly or yells at us. Somebody behaves with us with a bad conscience and we keep our conscience clear and don't respond to that.

Willing to take the blame for something which we never did. I remember the days when I was riding the scooter here in Bangalore. I used to ride a scooter here for many years.

And I discovered through the years that whenever two scooters collide, there'd be a yelling match. And because the rule in India is whoever shouts louder, he's right. And I discovered this over a period of time, that even if somebody else came and hit me, he would get up, he would stand up and stop and start shouting.

Because that is the way he would prove that it was my fault. So I decided that even if somebody came and hit me, I would immediately say, I'm sorry, sir. Oh, then he'd smile at me and say, it's okay.

He would forgive me for hitting me. And then he'd move on. So I discovered, what do I lose by saying, I am sorry? I have said that hundreds and probably thousands of times to different people and never felt ashamed to do it.

Never felt too proud to say it to people who are much younger, even to unbelievers. Accidentally, I hurt them in some way. I mean, for example, you travel in a crowded bus and you accidentally step on somebody's foot.

What do you do? You say to him, hey, listen, I didn't purposely do that. No, you say, it was accidental, I know, but you still say, I'm sorry, sir. Please forgive me.

Even though you did not do it deliberately. That is, even the worldly people know that. How much more a Christian.

Sometimes it's not deliberately that you say something to hurt your husband or wife. Accidental, just like stamping on somebody's foot. Husbands and wives are stamping on each other's foot.

Spiritually speaking, many times. That's not the time to say, hey, I didn't mean that. No, you don't say that to the man in the bus.

Don't say it to your husband or wife. Say, I'm sorry, I think I hurt you there by those words. Please forgive me.

Can you remember the last time you asked somebody to forgive you? You would be running much faster today if you did it. I know it may increase the speed in my life of running that I decided I'm going to do it, even if there's the slightest suspicion that I hurt somebody, I'm going to ask their forgiveness. I'd even write it down.

If they're not around, I would send them an email. Let them have a permanent record that they can keep. That brother Zak Poonen came and asked my forgiveness.

They may think it's humiliating for me. I personally don't think so. I think it is just setting something right so that I can run the race.

I don't look at that person. I look at Jesus. It says you're fixing our eyes on Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of faith, who endured the cross.

This is a sort of cross, a cross where when you have to die in some situation, it is a cross. If you're unwilling to die in a situation, you're not taking up the cross, and you can't run this race efficiently. That is a shame.

There can be a shame when you ask forgiveness. People may mock you, but it says Jesus despised the shame. It says in verse 2. He was not bothered what people thought about him.

Imagine him hanging on a cross, completely stripped except for an underwear there, everybody laughing at him. It's a shameful thing to be stripped like that. At least if he's wearing clothes and he's crucified, that's one thing.

But stripped and nailed, there's a shame there, but he despised it. He said, it's okay. If my father wants me to go like this, I'll accept it.

There may be situations in your life as well, in your office, or in your home, or with relatives, where you're put to shame because you stand up for Christ, or they think you're acting like a woman instead of being a man. That's okay. Let people think what they like.

If I'm doing what is pleasing to the Lord, I despise the shame. The result was, Jesus said, he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Now, compare Scripture with Scripture.

How did he sit down at the right hand of the throne of God? Read carefully. He endured the cross and despised the shame of hanging on that cross, 90% naked. He despised that shame.

People laugh at me, make fun of me, it's okay. He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. He endured the cross and despised the shame.

That's how he reached the right hand of the throne of God. Now, compare Scripture with Scripture. Turn to Revelation in chapter 3. God has given us this Bible in our own language so that we can compare Scripture with Scripture.

I want to make this very practical in your life, brothers. Don't listen to this as some theoretical message. Intensely practical.

You'll need it every day of your life. Because Jesus said we have to take up the cross every day. Even your children, young people.

If you start now, it will be very easy. I'm glad that I started when I was 19. That's made it so much easier for me as I've grown up.

Now, how did Jesus sit down at the right hand of the throne of God? Now, here in Revelation 3.21, it is spoken in another way. Jesus says, He who overcomes, I'll make him sit with me on my throne as I sat on my father's throne by becoming an overcomer myself. Did you see that? The last part of verse 21, Revelation 3.21, because I overcame, I sat at the right hand of the throne of God.

And if you overcome, you can sit down with me on my throne. But in Hebrews 12, we are told that he sat down at the right hand of the throne because he despised the shame and endured the cross. So when I put the two verses together, I understand what it is to be an overcomer.

In Revelation 3.21, it is said this is an overcomer. He will sit on my throne. In Hebrews 12, that overcoming is explained as despising the shame, enduring the cross.

That's being an overcomer. And sitting on the right hand of the throne of God. I can get there too.

So, in this race, the other place where you read about a race is in 1 Corinthians chapter 9. In 1 Corinthians chapter 9, Paul says, here again, actually chapter 9 verse 24 should be the first verse of chapter 10. If I were dividing the Bible, I'd put chapter 10 verse 1 at chapter 9 verse 24 because the rest of chapter 10 and 13 verses are a continuation of that subject. So read it like that.

Let's begin at chapter 9 verse 24. Don't you know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize. It is called overcoming in chapter 12, Hebrews 12.

Here it is called receiving a prize. The prize is the throne of God. We saw that.

All can run, but not all get a prize. But the wonderful thing in the Christian life is, Paul is writing to these Corinthians and saying, you must run in such a way that you win. But you say, hey Paul, you said only one person can come first.

Yes, all of you can come first. This is the wonderful thing about the Christian life, that if 3,000 people are running, all 3,000 can come first. And all of you sitting here, is it what, 500? All of you can come first.

There's not a single person sitting here who cannot come first. You can come first. And decide that from now on, every day you're going to die to yourself.

That's enduring the cross. And you're not going to be bothered about any shame that comes to you because you stand up for Christ in your place of work, or with your unconverted relatives, or some shame that comes to you because you take a stand for the Lord in some way. I mean, despise that shame.

Don't be bothered by it. And you'll receive the prize. The prize is the right hand of the throne of God.

All of you can get it. But he says, if you want to win, you have to exercise the 25, self-control in all things. You have to discipline yourself if you want to win in this race.

It's a spiritual discipline. Dying to yourself is the equivalent of what the marathon runner... See, a marathon runner, for example, is very careful about what he eats. Because if he eats whatever he likes and puts on a lot of weight, he's not going to win in the race.

And if he's not practicing every day, he will not win in the Olympics. If he's lazy to train for the race, he will not win. So it says here, everyone who competes in games, verse 25, exercises self-control in all things.

I've seen that many believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit, genuinely filled with the Holy Spirit because they prayed and they still don't grow spiritually because they don't exercise self-control. So, being filled with the Spirit and taking up the cross must go together. This is what the Lord showed me when I began to seek the Lord as a young man.

I used to go to an assembly that did not preach the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They preached the study of the Word. So I studied the Word.

I was thankful for that. When I read the Word, I found that John the Baptist said that Jesus will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire. You know, the first two promises in the New Testament.

The very first two promises in the New Testament. Matthew 1.21, Jesus will save you from all your sins. Not forgive your sins.

Save you from your sins. Every sinful habit He can save you. That's the first promise in the New Testament.

Matthew 1.21. And the second promise is telling us how He will do it. How will He do it? Matthew 3.11. He will immerse you in the Holy Spirit and fire. And that's what I sought the Lord for.

And the Lord met with me. And I realized that I have to continue in that all the time. You know, like charcoal fire.

It won't just burn forever. You've got to keep stoking it and putting more charcoal in and then it keeps burning. Or even a wood fire.

You've got to put wood in. So this fire of the Holy Spirit we've got to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to experience that continuous fire. And then we have the strength to run the race.

So the Holy Spirit the fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5.22-23 is self-control. Self-control means when somebody provokes me to anger, I can keep quiet.

When somebody doesn't forgive me, I can forgive him. That's self-control. If somebody yells at you and you yell back obviously you don't have self-control.

You're not running the race. You're grieving the Holy Spirit. So everyone who is serious about this race to follow Jesus must exercise self-control.

That's why we need the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot control our self. Self-control means controlling this big ruler in our heart called self.

Self is easily offended, hurt. You've got to put self in the proper place. That's why God gives us the Holy Spirit.

And if I do that in the different situations in life I'll make progress in the race. Little by little by little by little and one day I finish. Come to the finishing line.

And so Paul says here, I also am running in such a way not without any aim. I've got a definite goal. You know every race, whether it's a hundred meters or a marathon race, they know there's a finishing line somewhere and this is the track to go there and they never go outside the track.

It's a waste of time going out there. You just stay in the track and get to the finishing line whether it's a hundred meters or a forty kilometer marathon race. There's a goal.

We work towards it. So he says I don't run in such a way as without aim. I want to ask you my brothers and sisters lovingly do you have an aim in your Christian life when you send your children to school the kindergarten you encourage them to have an aim.

You must learn the alphabet. You must learn to read. Gradually you must learn addition and then you go to chapter I mean first standard and then you have an aim.

You've got to study some new subjects and every standard there is an aim. There is a race to be run and that's how a student goes all the way to 10th standard and finishes school and then goes to PUC or 11th and 12th and then goes to college. All of you who are working today you wouldn't be working today if you didn't have an aim and in the Christian life also you must have an aim.

I want to tell you that aim is should be that you want to become more and more Christ-like. Not necessarily every day. Say over a period of a year or at least 2 or 3 years you become more Christ-like and if you're married the best person who can tell you is your marriage partner You ask your husband or your wife and they'll tell you whether you've become more Christ-like in the last 2 or 3 years or whether you're the same stubborn selfish person who's only thinking about yourself.

Even your children will probably be able to tell you. Now you don't have to ask them but I think you know what they think about you because you know how you have been behaving and even your office the people around you who work with you in the office will be able to give a testimony about you whether you conduct yourself in a Christ-like way It's not how successful you are in your business or how much money you make. Those are not the tests.

The test is how much have I reflected Christ in my place of work That is the mark of success in our Christian life In the world they evaluate success by how much money did you make how much did your business prosper, how much promotion did you get in your job how much did your salary increase but for a Christian life how much did I reflect the life of Christ in my place of work More and more? Then you're running the race Are you going backward? That means at one time you were more Christ-like and now you're not. But many married couples it's like that Many married couples in the first year of their married life they had behaved in a Christ-like way to each other and see them five years later and they're fighting and quarreling with each other Which way are they going? They're going backwards and only because they're not willing to die to themselves when they're insulted or provoked or tempted So he says, I run in

such a way not without aim I've got an aim and so, verse 27 I discipline my body and I make it my slave What that means is when I'm provoked by somebody to anger my body says I want to speak back to him in the same way and I say no Tongue? Keep quiet That's disciplining my body Otherwise you're not the master of your body, your tongue is the master or it could be your eyes and your eyes, men especially tempted to look at something or nowadays you can see filthy things even on your phone look at something and you tell your eyes, no you're not going to be the master in my life I'm going to be the master I'm going to tell you what to look at and what not to look at I'm going to tell you what type of stuff you should read and what you should not read I'm going to tell you what type of movies you should see and what you should never see Most of today's movies you should never see That is to run the race It's a daily affair You may not see much progress in a day but over a period of five years people would be amazed if they hadn't seen you for five years Supposing some handsome other believer had not seen you for five years and sees you and says, wow that brother has really become Christ-like since the last time I saw him Isn't that a good testimony for the glory of God? Not for your glory, no, no, no You seek your glory, you destroy yourself but that Jesus Christ and the angels can rejoice that there's a brother or sister who's glorifying Christ in his life Paul says, I discipline my body I make it my slave and one paraphrase of that verse is, verse 27 My body does not tell me what I should do I tell my body what it should do I tell my eyes where to look and I tell my tongue what to speak and I tell my inward being how to respond to different provocations and if I don't do that it says in verse 27 I can preach to so many people and when I come to the end of the race the Lord will say, disqualified Imagine running a race and coming to the end of it Marathon races, even the world record is about two hours, some few minutes Imagine running a race for two or three hours with all your effort and all the training and at the end the referee says you're disqualified That'd be terrible Imagine somebody trained for the Olympic Games for years and years and years finally was selected to represent his country in the Olympic Games and ran the marathon race with all his heart and at the end, even though he came pretty high quickly and the referee says you're disqualified because down there you made a foul He says I can be disqualified Even the Apostle Paul says at the end of the race I could be disqualified because he did not follow the rules In many of the races within the stadium they have a rule that you must stay within your lane If you go outside your lane you're disqualified So some person may carelessly go outside the lane and come first and the referee says you're not first Down there, at that particular point, you went outside your lane In the Christian life, when we go outside the lane we can set it right by immediately asking God to forgive us and the Lord says, OK, forgiven, now continue the race My dear brothers and sisters, please take this seriously I've taken it seriously and it has made my life supremely happy It's not a strain It's more of a strain when you live in sin It's not a strain when you set everything right I mean, I look at sin like a thorn comes into my foot Well I don't know what I do when a thorn comes into my foot As soon as possible I take it out If I accidentally cut my hand as soon as possible I try and wash it or put some medicine or something If you break a bone, as soon as possible you fix it These simple rules, if you do it, you remain healthy The same thing in the Christian life, as soon as possible set it right Make that a law in your life from today That when your conscience tells you there was something you did wrong As soon as possible, set it right Then you'll never be disqualified at the end of the race Imagine Paul saying, I can preach to others and at the end of the race I'm disqualified Before Paul became Paul, his name was Saul Originally you read of him as Saul of Tarsus They changed his name to Paul But Paul completed his race in a wonderful way See, in 2nd Timothy because he was careful about these things that he said He says in 2nd Timothy in chapter 4 in verse 7, the middle I have finished my race And now verse 8, I'm going to get a crown He was not perfect, but as soon as he did something wrong, he set it right immediately I fought a good fight, I finished the course I kept the faith And remember this, this is a man who wasted 30 years of his life committing terrible sins like imprisoning

Christians and murdering some Christians as far as we know A man who was eager to kill Christians for 30 years of his life got radically converted and finished the race Some of us may think, oh I wasted so many years of my life how can I finish the race with great joy Yeah, think of Paul, that was not God's plan for him that 30 years of his life he should be against Christianity and fighting with Christians, no He missed out on God's will for 30 years And some of you may have missed out on God's will for many years At the end of your life, can you say, I finished the race If Paul can say it, why can't you and I And you may say, how is that possible I'll tell you how, because God knew that this man Paul would not come to Christ till he was around 30, or he wouldn't take the Christian life seriously till then, and God knows with some of you that you're not going to take the Christian life seriously till a certain point in your life Okay, God says, I overlook I don't look at those previous years forget them, I blotted them out You can still run from where you are today and win the prize, that's the encouragement in the Christian life You don't have to say, oh Lord, I wasted so many years of my life Never mind, start today Paul is a great example, and you can also get the crown on the final day So when Paul says, there's a crown later for me remember, he died when he was 67 but for 30 years he was going the wrong way not just that he was not a Christian he was killing Christians putting them in jail, he was dead against Christ and still he got a crown at the end That shows us, even though we have wasted many years you can still get the crown of righteousness The crown of righteousness doesn't sit on the throne You take it radically from now and say, Lord, I'm going to be serious about running this race In 1 Corinthians 9 I told you that chapter 10 should begin there 9 verse 24 because it goes on to say let me give you the example, he says in chapter 10 of people who 1 Corinthians 10, who were baptized they came under the cloud that means there's a picture of the Holy Spirit they ate the same spiritual food picture of reading God's word they drank the same spiritual drink chapter 10 verse 4, picture of the Holy Spirit so picture of a Christian, saved from sin baptized in water, verse 2 reading God's word, verse 3 filled with the Holy Spirit, verse 4 but verse 5, God is not pleased with them they had all these experiences but they backslid after receiving all this and God punished them will that happen to us, verse 5 verse 6, these things happened to them as an example for us who are running the race today that we should not crave for the evil things they crave for and don't act immorally in an impure way sexually, verse 8 as some of them did and 23,000 people were killed in one day, don't tempt the Lord by playing the fool and saying it doesn't matter if I sin, I can always ask God to forgive me don't grumble, verse 10, like some of them grumbled and were destroyed and these things all happened to them as an example written for our instruction therefore, verse 12, if anyone thinks that he's going to run the race perfectly, take heed if you're careful about all these things, you will run the race perfectly but otherwise, be careful that you don't fall and as a comfort, he says in verse 13, a great verse God will never allow you to be tempted beyond what you're able to bear that's like saying a teacher in a school will not give a 10th standard paper to a 3rd standard student that's understood, he won't even give a 4th standard paper to a 3rd standard student a 3rd standard student will only get a 3rd standard question paper his elder brother who's in 6th standard will get a 6th standard question paper God will not allow you to get a test which is beyond your ability it's a great encouragement to me I find God tests me today in areas where he never tested me 10 years ago in the early days of my Christian life, I was tested and tempted in small, small things it's exactly like going to kindergarten then you go to 1st standard and 2nd standard my dear brothers and sisters, are you progressing? just like you want your children to progress from one class to another God wants you to progress don't fall by the wayside you know how some people drop out of school in 4th standard in some of the villages and all, it's like that they say we don't want to study anymore, they drop out of school in 4th standard don't be a dropout in the Christian life so I was saying Paul's name was Saul in the Old Testament also there was a guy called Saul I want to show you a little bit of his history that's a great warning for us if you turn to 1 Samuel the first time you read about Saul in the

Bible was when he was in obedience to his father he went looking for some donkeys belonging to his father that were lost and you read about it in 1 Samuel chapter 9, verse 3 1 Samuel 9, verse 3 the donkeys of Kish, who was Saul's father were lost so Kish said to his son Saul, go take the servants and go search for all those donkeys he did it immediately very obedient son and he went many many miles, he didn't just go quickly and come back he went to Ephraim and Shalisha went here and there looking for them and didn't find it he went to another place, look at verse 4 he went here and there looking all over, what an obedient son then finally he said we haven't found them, let's go back to our dad because he'll be anxious about us now and that's when Samuel he met Samuel God told Samuel, there's a guy called Saul coming to you verse 15 1 Samuel 9, verse 15 before Saul came there, the Lord told Samuel there's a man coming tomorrow and he's the one I've selected to be the first king of Israel the first king of Israel was not David it was Saul and I'm going to make this man king so what Samuel, when the Lord told him that you see in chapter 10, verse 1, this is how they anointed them Samuel took some oil from a flask and poured it on Saul's head and said you're anointed to be the ruler over the Lord's people and then the time came to publicly anoint him as king chapter 10, verse 17 Samuel called, he had privately done it already but then he wanted all the people to know it too and he said to the sons of Israel chapter 10, verse 17, he gathered all the people together and told them, verse 18 onwards I'm going to give you a king like you wanted it so he didn't tell them, hey listen, I've already anointed Saul as a king because the Lord told me the people will say, oh you did some partiality there he didn't want to be accused of that he said, let the Lord show himself who's the king and the Lord brought, verse 20, all the tribes of Israel there were 12 tribes and they said, cast lots you know how they cast lots to find out and pick out one one name, which is that? Benjamin they cast a lot and out of 12 that was God's sovereignty, picked out Benjamin then they said, put the names of all the families in Benjamin and one family the Matrite family was taken, verse 21 okay, then let's put all the children in this family and they took out a lot and the name of Saul came out so nobody could accuse Samuel of partiality that's how the Lord controlled a lot in the Old Testament like that and so they wanted to anoint him now this is the thing I want you to notice they looked for him and he could not be found he knew that they were going to look for a king and he knew he had been anointed king already, he should have been there he should have been going right up in front and where has this guy gone? in verse 22 it says he had gone and hidden himself in the baggage, that means a lot of suitcases the suitcases were lying there and he was crawling underneath some near some suitcase so that nobody would see him he did not want to be king, he said I'm just a nobody and he hid himself so that they wouldn't find him and then somebody saw him there they ran and took him and Samuel said this is the one, verse 24, whom the Lord has chosen and everybody shouted, chapter 10, verse 24 long live the king and the Lord was with him in a mighty way in a wonderful way and he got victory after victory he was doing very well and then finally it came a test one day when he was after a battle Samuel told him I will come and offer a sacrifice for you but Saul did not wait for Samuel to come we read here, then a second thing happened the Lord told, this is all in chapter 14 and chapter 15 I want you to go and kill all the Amalekites and Saul did not kill all of them he spared the king and he spared the sheep you can see that all in these verses and Samuel came to Saul Samuel came to Saul in chapter 15 and verse 16 no, earlier Samuel came to Saul in verse 12 and Saul said to him praise the Lord, I've carried out the command of the Lord and Samuel said, what do you mean you've carried out I can see the sheep of these Amalekites which God told you to kill, you haven't killed them then he made some silly excuse no, the people wanted it you know how when we are caught in a tough situation we find some excuse to get out of it, Saul was like that and Samuel told Saul, verse 16 let me tell you what the Lord told me last night verse 17 this is a great verse a verse that you must remember for yourself 1 Samuel 15 verse 17 Samuel told Saul, isn't it true there was a time in your life when you were small in your own eyes you hid yourself in the baggage, you were nobody the day you

came to CFC, you were a nobody you'd be very thankful if one person came and spoke to you but you've been here some years and you've begun to think you're such an important person now aha there was a time when you were small in your own eyes it's a great expression to be little in your own eyes 1 Samuel 15 verse 17 keep that expression before you all your life I keep it before me I say Lord, I always want to be little in my own eyes I know a lot of people appreciate me, say so many things about me let them do that, that's their business but in my own eyes, I want to be little a small person just like I was the day I was converted the day I was converted, who knew me? nobody knew me even the people in that small church I went to did not know me I want to remain small in my own eyes I would encourage that to everyone sitting here why have you become now big in your own eyes and he lost the kingship and he told King Saul verse 28 the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you and he's given it to somebody else who's better than you and Samuel never met Saul after that had nothing more to do with him a man who started so well in his race but he got victory after victory after victory and it went to his head, his head became bigger and bigger maybe God has blessed you after coming here to this church and gradually you've become a little prouder I'm somebody, I'm respected brother, be careful remain little in your own eyes even if you become the greatest saint in CFC or on earth remain little in your own eyes because God gives his grace to the humble that's the only way you'll be able to finish the race David came after Saul he made some more serious mistakes than Saul he did some terrible things he committed adultery with somebody else's wife and killed the husband and married her can you imagine something like that, ever heard of anybody doing that? committing adultery with somebody else's wife, killing her husband and marrying her even though he already had 3 or 4 wives before that but how did God deal with him? Saul never did anything like that you know the way we evaluate sin is not the way God evaluates sin because very often it is what we do after we have failed that God sees the one difference I see between Saul and David is when Samuel confronted Saul and said, didn't you do this? I told you to wait until I come and you went and offered to sacrifice yourself why didn't you kill everything that God told you to kill in the enemy? you had become big in your own eyes God has taken away the kingdom from you these are written for our instruction David on the other hand he slipped up badly he was tempted in a moment of weakness and he fell into sin he was in the Old Testament remember, there was no Holy Spirit in his heart so don't compare yourself with him today we have the Holy Spirit but you may slip up maybe in some way you know what David did? he wrote a Psalm, Psalm 51 he let the whole world know brothers and sisters I am your king I want you guys to know that I committed adultery with somebody's wife I killed her husband and married her but I have repented I have asked God to forgive me I think this is one of the most terrible sins in the whole Bible the sin is evaluated by who is the person doing it the more knowledge you have the more serious the sin but he got saved because he openly admitted it I don't blame anybody else I don't blame her for tempting me I am the sinner read Psalm 51 he cries out Lord please have mercy on me and the one thing he says Lord whatever you do verse 11 please don't take your Holy Spirit from me he didn't have the Holy Spirit inside him like we have he had the Holy Spirit upon him I see that prayer oh God please don't take the Holy Spirit from me whatever else I may lose I don't mind losing the kingship, I don't mind losing my money but please don't take the Holy Spirit from me how many of you pray like that? even when you slipped up verse 17 the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit Psalm 51 it's a great Psalm the Old Testament Saul slipped up and lost the New Testament Saul endured till the end became Paul let us run the race with patience not because we are waiting for a crown I will tell you the crown that I am looking for what is the crown that I am going to get if I am faithful to me the crown will be that along with others one day I will be able to say thou art worthy O Lamb of God thou alone art worthy that will be my crown that I can say that that I can put a crown on Jesus head that's my crown that's the only thing I live for I am not waiting for some crown to be put on my head this is my crown that I will be able to join that crowd that says

thou art worthy keep that in mind brothers and sisters I pray that CFC will produce a bunch of humble, really humble brothers and sisters who don't have any airs about themselves who don't go around acting as if they are some special senior brothers or sisters I want the new convert in this church to see me as his own brother a fellow believer in Jesus Christ not somebody special keep low thoughts about yourself and you will finish the race let's pray I want to show you a little picture here we have to run this race and we have to help one another and here is a video, just have a look at this video this is a video of two brothers running and one was fainting it's a long race, it's called a triathlon and the other brother helped him even though he lost his own position he helped him, can you play it please please watch this Johnny has to win and to be sure of taking the title and right now he seems to have lost control of his legs and this is worrying and he is starting to slow and there is a little way to go, there is half a k to go and Johnny is running out of time and he is losing he is losing his sense of direction, this is worrying oh goodness me, this is a horrible sight Jonathan Brownlee has lost it now and has staggered to a stop at the side of the course and Alistair has stopped to help him along and Alistair is going to try and carry his brother home dramatic scenes in Cozumel as the Olympic Champion carries his younger brother towards the podium I cannot believe what we are seeing here Matt is this allowed, is he allowed to help his brother is that part of the rules, I am not too sure we have never seen anything like this before unbelievable scenes unbelievable scenes in Cozumel the Brownlee brothers are in arm but it is not by way of celebration Henry Schoeman is celebrating he is going to win this race in Cozumel out of nowhere but we have to be concerned about the health of Jonathan Brownlee and they are not even on the final stretch yet Schoeman wins in Cozumel the brothers are coming home arm in arm to finish in second and third but Johnny can hardly stand and Alistair is having to drag him across the line and pushing him home for second Johnny finishes in second goodness me, what an incredible conclusion here in Cozumel I have never seen anything like that anywhere in world sport worrying scenes all around thank you now what you saw there was there were two blood brothers, world champions and the younger brother was running and he was coming first and his older brother was coming second in this huge race, many many miles bigger than a marathon and when his brother, just a few meters before the end of the race, he stumbles and falls and he is giving up, he was first, coming first his elder brother holds him and someone behind him who was third ran forward and came first, he said never mind let that chap come first, I am going to help my brother go across the line and when he came to the line, his older brother pushes the younger one and says you go ahead of me, so that chap came second what a testimony apply that to the Christian race and you see somebody, maybe your brother or sister stumbling and falling, instead of criticizing say Lord what can I do to help him finish the race and to push him ahead of me let's pray, Heavenly Father help us each one of us to run this race faithfully and to think not only of ourselves but to help one another brothers and brothers, sisters and sisters so that we can help everyone to finish their course with joy, before you come again we pray in Jesus name, Amen

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