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### WHY ARE YOU RUNNING?

#### II Samuel 18:5-18

It often happens that the children of famous men are a disappointment to their fathers and to society. We have seen this in our own time in the Roosevelt and Churchill families and it has happened repeatedly throughout history. One of the most tragic examples is recorded in the Bible -- the family of King David. Though David was a beloved leader and a legendary figure commanding great respect, his children were a major disappointment.

We don't know exactly how many children King David had; the Bible mentions only four by name; three sons: Solomon, Amnon, and Absalom, and one daughter: Tamar. Of these four, only Solomon realized a reasonable amount of respectability and attained a portion of the great character of David. The other three were disappointments. Tamar, David's beautiful daughter was raped by her brother Amnon and spent the remainder of her days as a recluse, because of that humiliation. Amnon, in turn, was murdered by his brother Absalom because of that crime. But Absalom caused his father the greatest heartache. Absalom knew that Solomon, his older brother, was slated to be David's successor as king. Absalom made a play for the throne through violent means; he organized a rebellion and tried to overthrow his father. Judging by the space given the account in the Bible, it must have been one of the most troublesome things in David's reign. It involved the defection of some of David's most trusted advisors, and utterly broke his heart.

A showdown came between the army of David and the guerilla force of Absalom in a battle in the forest of Ephraim. We read earlier the account in II Samuel how despite David's request to his general, Joab to deal gently with his son Absalom, the young man is killed after he had gotten trapped in an oak tree.

Two runners were available to carry the report to the anxious monarch. There was Ahimaaz, and there was Cushy. Now Ahimaaz could run faster than Cushy, so he pushed forward when it came time for the general to make the assignment. "Let me bear the tidings to the king," he cried

But Joab knew Ahimaaz and knew that it would be better for someone else to break the delicate news to David; someone who could remember while he was running why he was running. "No, Ahimaaz, you shall not bear tidings today. Another time, you may run. But today the king's son is dead." And then General Joab turned to Cushy and said,

"Run, and tell the king the things you have witnessed this day." And Cushie was on his way at once.

But Ahimaaz was not easily put off. He pleaded some more. His commander was too worried to be sympathetic. "Wherefore wilt thou run, seeing thou hast no tidings?" Ahimaaz pleaded, "But nevertheless, let me run." So off he goes, too, overhauling and passing Cushie, and arriving before David long before the slower Cushie is in sight.

King David was anxious. "What tidings do you have Ahimaaz?" But, of course, the sprinter didn't know how to tell the king that his son had been killed. Ahimaaz improvised: "All is well." But that wasn't what David wanted to know. He asks: "Is the young man Absalom safe?" And then Ahimaaz goes to pieces. Stuttering and stammering, he only angers the anxious monarch, who waves him impatiently aside. There was a reason why Joab had not entrusted the grave news to him.

By this time, slow, plodding Cushie arrived, and with him a simple, coherent account of what had happened in the battle and how victory had been won. And when the awful question came, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Cushie knew just how best to break the tragic news. Joab had been right in his judgment of the men. Listen to the beautiful answer Cushie gave the king: "May all the king's enemies be as that young man is." It was hard news to break, but it couldn't have been broken any more delicately.

So the king knew what he had to know, but knew it in a way to which he could react with dignity and nobility. This runner proved himself responsible because he remembered why he ran. He ran slower, but he had a message to deliver.

I'm sure you can identify with either Ahimaaz or Cushie in how you are running the race of life. At the beginning of a new year it is well for us to pause and ask ourselves the question: "Why am I running?" Is there any purpose in my pursuit through life or am I just sprinting through my days without a "message"? Looking back over the past year did you run like Ahimaaz or Cushie? Did you run just to be running or did you run for a reason? This is an important question to consider for it will determine how you run in the future. We must consider this question, else we run completely through life without knowing why we ran.

A Chicago newspaper once ran a contest where readers were asked to tell in 100 words or less what they regarded as "a success in life."