

"The Race of Our Lives"

Hebrews 12:1-2

November 10, 2024

Introduction: *From one generation to the next the population of Christ followers has increased. From the One came twelve, then seventy. At the birth of the church on the very day of the Jewish festival of Pentecost where one hundred and twenty disciples waited and were filled with the Spirit, suddenly there were three thousand, then five thousand. And from that beginning, the faith-filled followers of Jesus have continued to expand across two millennia in the face of fierce spiritual warfare, visible and invisible, opposing Christ's church. Though the spiritual warfare to destroy His church rages on, today's church spanning the mid twentieth and now twenty first centuries must stand firm and run with endurance as did the saints of the past, for we now hold the baton, for we are next in line.*

Hebrews 12:1-2 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Next In Line

The Population Research Bureau:

- 8 billion alive today on the planet, representing 7% of earth's all-time population
- 117 billion estimated of all ever born on the planet (everyone of them formed by God)
- 3,237. The number of people named in the Bible
 - Represents .0000000026666667% of those who ever lived.
 - 14 people are listed by name in Hebrews 11 as heroes of the faith, with a general mention of prophets, mothers, miracles and martyrs.

➤ Yet billions of the faithful remain nameless to most. So, who do you think you are?

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."*

Isaiah 49:15-16 *"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. ¹⁶ Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands..."*

You and I are the joy set before Him!

Enduring Faith, Then...and Now!

Hebrews 12:1 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...*

- The writer knew his readers needed a fresh infusion of faith, so he went from generally teaching about enduring faith, to testimony time.

And what about us? We've got a more updated list: the Apostles, other Church Fathers, Augustine, Origen, Pascal, Wycliffe, Edwards (not Edwin), Whitfield, Spurgeon, Lewis, Keller and generation upon generation; one generation after another by faith passing the baton to another.

Psalm 145:4-5 *One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.⁶ They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.⁷ They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*

- **By faith....at Lakeview Christian Center!**

What Weighs Us Down; What Weighs us UP!

Hebrews 12:1 *Since we have so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us also lay aside the weight and sin that so closely clings to us.***

Lay aside: (Gk. *apotithemi*) to place literally or figuratively; properly, in a passive or horizontal posture

- A most encouraging 4 letter word: A-L-S-O (Their faith was not void of fumbles!)

Psalm 32: 3-4 *For when I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.*

Ephesians 5:18-20 ¹⁸ *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Matthew 11:28 *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

What's In Your Closet?

Colossians 3:8 *In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away; anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*

Romans 13:12 *The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

- **It's a rare morning that I don't get dressed before getting out of bed!!**

Ephesians 6: 11-18 *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts*

of the evil one;¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

The “Not-So-Sweet” Little Lies That Aren’t So Sweet or Little

Hebrews 12: 1b-2 Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

➤ Don’t be the Devil’s Dumping Station!

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Too Many Regrets! Too Ignorant of the Word! Too Busy! Too Old! Too Tired!
Too Young!

IMPORTANT REMINDER: God doesn’t call the equipped; He equips the called

➤ Dad wants to play pitch and catch!

2 Corinthians 10:5-7 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

For the joy set before Jesus, He chose to lay down His life regardless of the pain and shame. Will we not, for the joy set before us of running the race with endurance that is set before us, hand those things that weigh us down and slow us down where they belong, in the loving, desiring hands of our Lord?

Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Focus, Focus, Focus

Hebrews 12: 1b-2 Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

“Looking to” (Fixing our eyes on-NASB) **Gk, aphorao** (only time used in NT) means to look away from other things and steadfastly or intently look toward an object, at that which fills the heart. The idea is to direct one’s attention without distraction.

(Definition adapted from www.sermonindex.net)

Psalms 32: 8-10 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.⁹ Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or

it will not stay near you.¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.

QUESTIONS FOR US TO “aphorao” (Gaze and Stare at; Be fixated upon):

- What’s blocking or impairing you looking to Jesus?
- Who are your “present day witnesses” with whom you are running?
- What’s the weight and sin that’s impeding you from running the race with endurance?
- What are the “Not so sweet” little lies that Satan keeps lobbing into your heart?
- What “baton” are you passing down to your next generation? (Perhaps a pre-death eulogy would be in order)