“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us… Heb.12:1

1) “Let Us Run…the Race that is Set Before Us,”

let us run… the race marked out for us (NIV)

**2)** THERE IS A RACE, A HOLY PURPOSE, A HIGH CALLING, for each of our lives to accomplish.

The Apostle Paul used this imagery of a race when he told about his own purpose of life in Phil.3:14. There he said, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” PAUL KNEW HIS GOAL- KNEW HIS RACE

**3)** GOD WANTS TO SET OUR RACE BEFORE US- SHOW US OUR CALLING!

Hab.2:2 NKJV: “Then the Lord answered me and said: “Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.”

New Century Version: The Lord answered me: "Write down the vision; write it clearly on clay tablets so whoever reads it can run to tell others.

When the Lord spoke this verse to Habakkuk, it was referring to the custom of having tablets, or large writing surfaces that would be put in public places, maybe at a marketplace or along a highway, to give a public announcement. In modern times we might use a bulletin board to give a public announcement, or as you are driving down the road, there might be a sign flashing a traffic advisory, - a simple clear message so that someone driving along can read it and use the message to help guide their journey!

HABBAKKUK’S MESSAGE, verse 4: THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH- a clear simple message!

**4)** Many of us know the story of A GERMAN MONK NAMED MARTIN LUTHER who 500 years ago nailed an announcement to the church doors in his town- that was where they posted public announcements. The announcement was an invitation for an academic debate. (95 Theses.) However, it so clearly exposed some of the wrongs of the traditional church that it was quickly reprinted in many languages. Martin Luther’s vision was so clear that messengers quickly spread it all over Europe and sparked an awakening- the Protestant Reformation! Millions of people ran with the message, and it changed the world! AND WHAT MESSAGE DID MARTIN LUTHER & HIS FOLLOWERS RUN WITH? “THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH!”

**5)** We don’t write on clay tablets anymore, we rarely put announcements on doors- but we do want to have a clear vision statement for our life & ministry & church. So clear we can write it down on paper or type it up as a computer document. It is good for church leaders to write out a “vision statement” and post it on a wall of the church, for everyone to be able to quickly read it and understand your purpose or goal…and run with the vision! Run the race set before you!

**6)** IF WE DON’T SEE GOD’S RACE FOR OUR LIFE, we will live to accomplish our own personal dreams, we will waste our time & abilities to accomplish things that often have little or no lasting value.

Some people don’t seek to find out God’s call for their life- they dream up their own human goals, maybe make a bucket list- “see the Eiffel Tower in Paris”- “Appear on a TV show” or “become successful in business”

But we don’t have enough time in life to do God’s will ***and*** do our own thing!

\* God will give us all the time & abilities that we need to accomplish our calling if we faithfully follow His plans!

**7)** EX: Australian brother: born without arms / legs / hands or feet (he has a few toes)

-Nick is now a famous motivational speaker & Christian evangelist

(we all have ***some*** skills & abilities- we can all successfully run the race!)

**8)** THERE IS **ONE** RACE THAT WE ARE ALL RUNNING TOGETHER! (Yes we have our individual parts to play- but we are one team with one race!) “Let **US** run **the** race set before **US.” (**Not, Let us run the **races** set before us” or not, “let us **each** run **our own** race.”)

ALL THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST ARE RUNNING ONE RACE!

- IT IS NOT A SHORT RACE, A 100 METER DASH-

**9)** WE HAVE A LONG RACE, LIKE A MARATHON!

The race started at the Day of Pentecost… it will be finished when Christ returns for His bride, the Church! In our own life, we join this race when we become born-again- we don’t finish our part of the race until we die!

**10)** OUR RACE IS A MARATHON LONG DISTANCE RACE- AND IT **IS ALSO A RELAY RACE**!

- We receive the baton from the last generation & we give it to the next generation!

It is important that you receive everything you can from your spiritual fathers & mothers

**11)** -Read Christian Biographies- STUDY the lives of the heroes of Faith who have run a good race before us! The great cloud of witnesses mentioned in Hebrews 11:1- encouraging us, teaching us how to run a good race & become Overcomers!

THEN ALSO pass the good things of God that you have received, on to the younger generation!

KEEP God’s blessings in the Church, and multiply them!

THE MOST CRUCIAL PART of a relay race is when the baton is passed on to the next runner!

**12)** EX: 2008 Beijing Olympics: the USA had 7 world champions in their relay teams, they expected several gold medals. They spent many years developing their own talents to individually become the fastest runners in the world, but they neglected learning how to work as a team and pass the baton on… 3 times the teams dropped their baton and disqualified themselves: they received NO gold medals!

WE NEED MORE THAN YOUNG TALENT & ZEAL- WE NEED TEAM PLAYERS! 5th commandment: “Honor your father & mother that you may live long in your inheritance” Honor spiritual fathers & mothers also!- to keep their inheritances- their mantles & blessings

LET US RUN THE RACE- WE ARE ONE TEAM WITH ONE MAJOR GOAL, WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH IT!

\* ONE OF THE GREATEST WEAKNESSES of the church is the problems we have, working together with each other!

**13)** ONE OF THE GREATEST STRENGTHS OF THE CHURCH is the victories we have, working together with each other!- learn faithfulness, forgiveness, humility, patience, love,

**MATURE LEADERS:** are you pouring yourself out to the younger leaders, training them, teaching them? “The things that you have heard from me, commit them to faithful men who will be able to teach others also,” 2 Tim.2:2. God’s work is to be multiplied thru the generations!

- Mature leaders, give the younger ones increasing opportunities!

**YOUNGER BROTHERS & SISTER PREPARING FOR GREATER MINISTRY**- ARE YOU RECEIVING? STUDYING? FOLLOWING YOUR LEADER’S INSTRUCTIONS?

\* Sometimes younger Christians get offended by their leader’s weaknesses

\* Young David was tested & matured by how he related to King Saul

\* Noah’s 3 sons were blessed or cursed by how they reacted to their father’s failures!

MAKE SURE YOU GAIN THE BATON- RECEIVE THE TRAINING & MANTLE THAT YOU WILL NEED!

**14)** WHAT IS THE ONE RACE, ONE CALLING FOR THE CHURCH? TO PREPARE THE BRIDE OF CHRIST (AND COMPLETE THE GREAT COMMISSION) - LIVE THE GOSPEL & SPREAD THE GOSPEL!

**15)** OUR ONE CALLING: TO BECOME THE GLORIOUS & VICTORIOUS CHURCH!

-IT TAKES INNER SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT TO BECOME THE GLORIOUS CHURCH, THE BRIDE!

- Becoming Conformed to the image of Christ (individually & corporately)

-IT TAKES OUTREACH- EVANGELISM & MISSIONS- TO BECOME THE VICTORIOUS CHURCH!

\* Christ IN us and THROUGH us

\* QUALITY (The Bride) & QUANTITY (The Full Harvest)

**16)** AT THE 1st COMING OF CHRIST: THE CHURCH WAS STARTED, THE RACE BEGAN

CHRIST STARTED TO TRANSFORM HIS DISCIPLES, PREPARE HIS GLORIOUS, VICTORIOUS BRIDE:

(Christ started with a motley, ragged group for His first 12 disciples: they were carnal, argued among themselves, didn’t understand Christ’s teachings, & they wanted the top positions (sounds like some modern-day churches!) Peter, a fisherman who would curse and deny Christ – Thomas, who would not believe Christ had risen unless he could put his fingers into the wounds of Christ! -Judas, who betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver…

**JESUS: “I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH & the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” -Mt.16:18.”**

Peter the unstable-> the Rock!

John the “Son of Thunder” -> the Apostle of Love!

Thomas the doubter-> Thomas the missionary & martyr!

**-** the church began to arise & spread - carrying the baton thru the nations- thru the generations…these past generations now a great cloud of heavenly witnesses!

**-** NOW, Let US run with the vision! The gates of hell will not prevail!- let us run with the vision! Christ & His church will triumph! We will fight the good fight of faith, we will win the race!

**17)** AT THE 2nd COMING OF CHRIST THE CHURCH WILL BE COMPLETED, THE RACE WILL BE WON!

 -Rev.19:6-14 Christ returns from heaven to destroy His enemies & marry His bride, the Church!

**18)** -Mt.24:14 The Great Commission will be completed & the harvest of souls will be complete, Rev.4:9-10 Souls will b saved, the Bride will come“Out of every tribe &tongue &people &nation

\* we are to run in this race: build quality & quantity within the church!

 \* Personally mature & become conformed to the image of Christ- & help others to mature!

 “THE BRIDE HAS MADE HERSELF READY” – Rev.19:7

 \* Personally be involved in soulwinning, evangelism, missions! Go to highways & byways to

 invite everyone to the marriage of the Lamb! (PRAY- GIVE- GO!)

“Let US run THE race set before US.”

**19)** It is also true that we each have our own part in this race, we each have our own talents & ministries that we must faithfully develop & use- to become fully fruitful Christians! (not 60 or 30-fold: 100!) Many ways we can have our own individual part in the race made clearer…

(We don’t have time to study that now, study some of the teachings on the zionph.com website relevant to this, such as *The Hope of the Christian* book- everything is offered for free. However, the Scripture says that we are to buy the truth: you need to spend the time to pray, to investigate your specific callings- to develop your talents- to *experience* these truths there will be a cost!

FOR THIS MESSAGE LET US FOCUS IN & GAIN A CLEAR, UNITED VISION: WE ARE ALL RUNNING THE SAME RACE- WE ARE ALL RUNNING AFTER GOD, TO HELP PREPARE THE CHURCH, THE BRIDE OF CHRIST (AND TO HELP PREPARE THE CHURCH WE MUST FIRST PREPARE OURSELF- AND ALSO REACH OUT TO THE LOST!)

-LET US CLEARLY SEE THE RACE SET BEFORE US- AND THEN RUN IT WITH ENDURANCE!