

Pembroke Bible Chapel

... from darkness to light ...



Welcome to the Pembroke Bible Chapel Newsletter - August 2008

This newsletter is focused on the 2008 Olympics. The feature article discusses running the race of life. You will find an interesting devotion discussing the victory gained through the conflict of life; an article on mammalian records; an account of Christianity in China; and, a missionary article.



If you would like to read past editions of the newsletter [click here](#).

FEATURED ARTICLE

Running the Race by Mark

The ancient Olympic Games started around 800 BC and continued until about 400 AD - the Games were held every four years, and the period between two celebrations became known as an "Olympiad". Winners of ancient Olympic events were presented with a "crown" of olive leaves and paraded before dignitaries.

It should be no surprise, since the ancient Olympic Games were contemporary with Biblical times, that they are alluded to in scripture. In particular, the Christian's life of service for Jesus Christ is likened in the New Testament to an Olympic race that culminates with the victor being awarded a crown (Greek: *stephanos*, "head wreath" - pictured, not to be confused with *diadema* - a king's crown).



Early Jewish Christians encountered great resistance to their public confession of Jesus Christ as Saviour - they were encouraged not to turn back to their old ways, but to "run the race with endurance" (Hebrews 12:1). The apostle Paul makes an obvious comparison of the ancient Olympic Games to the Christian life in his first letter to Christians at Corinth:

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

The Christian life is a grand race, associated with much training. Such training is often painful, but afterward it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). When we cross the finish line, God's purpose will be complete - we will meet Christ face-to-face and be conformed to His likeness, not only physically (in immortal, imperishable bodies), but spiritually (Romans 8:28,29; 1 Corinthians 15:53; 1 John 3:2). Paul looked forward to this time as he wrote his second letter to Timothy and approached the end of his time in this world:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

When we truly look forward to meeting the Lord Jesus, it has a profound impact on the way we live - it causes us to rejoice in being associated with the sufferings of Christ that are part of our "training" and "race" - we can be assured that our perseverance for Christ will, one day, be rewarded with a "crown of righteousness". Similarly, those who endure temptation and persecution are assured of a "crown of life" (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10). Those who provide Christ-like leadership to believers are told to expect a "crown of glory" when the Chief Shepherd appears (1 Peter 5:1-4). The apostle Paul told the Thessalonians (whom he had evangelized) that they would be his "crown of rejoicing" at Christ's coming for the church (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

The Christian life invariably presents challenges that may discourage us from living an on-going life of faith in Jesus Christ and the Word of God. Especially during these times, we need to set our minds on things above, not on the things of earth (Colossians 3:2). We need to see ourselves as "Spiritual Olympians" - there is prize and reward set before us at the finish line when we meet Christ.

HIGHLIGHTED DEVOTIONAL

Bench or Arena by Stanford, None But The Hungry Heart

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

Initially, all we are able to trust God for is our justification. During this stage we are usually satisfied to remain spectators in the battle of life. Later, when we know Him better and are thereby able to trust Him more fully, we become willing to let our Father take us down into the arena and make us participators. "No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4).

If you would know victory you must have conflict. It is ridiculous to talk about having a victorious life when you have never been in conflict. You must be prepared to enter the arena with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and He will give you lessons day by day. No one can enjoy freedom without paying the price, even in the ordinary values of life. If you would know what it is to triumph, you must certainly pass through tribulation. If you want patience, then it is tribulation, if you want victory there must be conflict.



Does Paul regret the thorn in the flesh that drew forth words that have comforted countless millions? Do the men for whom the winds were contrary wish they had been spared the storm that brought their Lord to them, walking on the sea, and caused Him to speak that immortal 'It is I be not afraid'?

"The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Philippians 1:12).

A daily devotional like this one can be found on our website at www.pembrokebiblechapel.com

SCIENCE & CREATION

Olympic Records and Mammalian Records by Chris

Citius, Altius, Fortius (faster, higher, stronger)

God has made each life form for a purpose in its habitat. Some have many habitats, others have only one specialized habitat for their specialized food. Some mammals are designed to be incredibly fast, or strong, or well camouflaged. Since it is time for the Olympics, let's focus on some mammals and their feats of strength or speed.

Running is one of the most followed events. There is a natural fascination for speed. As you probably know, the Cheetah is the fastest land mammal. It has been clocked at over 100 km/h for a few seconds. That is the speed needed to have the edge over such "fast food" as gazelles, which can flee at 90km/h. But fast running is not the only important thing. Wolves and Wild Dogs astonish us with their stamina; they can exhaust a faster prey just by pursuing it. They have been known to run for well over an hour non-stop. They could qualify for a marathon. So could the Caribou, but they also swim across wide rivers and big lakes. Their endurance would qualify them for a triathlon without the bikes. In speed and endurance, it is tough to beat the Pronghorn: they have been seen running at an average of almost 100 km/h for 3 km... given a 20 metre advantage, they would escape a Cheetah. A great event to watch is the relay race. Coyotes excel in that one... they have been seen chasing a Hare or a rabbit in gangs, each taking a turn in the chase, until the hapless prey collapses.

Swimming is another big event, and many mammals excel at it. For sheer speed, the Killer Whale is probably the winner ... despite its formidable size, it can reach speeds above 50 km/h in frigid waters. None of its prey can outswim it. In synchronized swimming, the dolphins dominate; they often are seen jumping out of the water in perfect timing. In long distance swimming, several whales migrate very far, covering thousands of km over a few weeks. Polar Bears can swim for hours, up to 100 km away from the nearest coast or iceberg.

Enough with speed; strength is interesting too. In heavyweight wrestling, Elephants are sure winners. In mid-weight category, I would give it to Grizzlies. In lightweight, the Rat should have the gold.

In gymnastics, no doubt Lemurs and many Monkeys are extremely dexterous and agile. Because some have a tail, and others don't, we should have 2 categories to make it fair. Maybe the Gibbon wins for the tailless, and the Spider Monkey for the tailed. On the balancing beam, for sure the fascinating Mountain Goat is unbeatable. It is surely the reason it is able to survive an environment rife with predators by escaping on very narrow rock ledges.

For the high jump, maybe the Impala would win, but the world record for high jump with a horse and rider is 2.47m ... quite incredibly strong hind legs!

In diving, it is more difficult to decide a winner. Certainly the playful and graceful Otters win hearts, but so do the Dolphins as well.



Looking at Mammalian Olympics is great entertainment, but be still, and know that God is the Creator, who made Himself known through His marvelous creation (Rom 1: 18-20). Only He is worthy of worship!

COMMENTARY

Turning The World Upside-down by Mark Earley

Every week during the fall, approximately 70,000 people attend NFL games in cities like Detroit and Houston. They pay hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars for the privilege, and, if all goes well, they come away with some happy memories.

Every week throughout the year in China, approximately 70,000 people do something very different: they, too, pay a price, but it's not measured in money. And what they come away with not only changes their lives but promises to change a nation, a continent, and even the world.

According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 10,000 Chinese become Christians every day. That's 70,000 a week!

At the time of the Communist takeover in 1949, there were 4 million Christians in China. Today, there are an estimated 111 million, which makes China the third-largest Christian country in the world, behind the United States and Brazil. By 2050, the Center estimates that the number of Christians will have doubled.

The explosive growth of Christianity in China is only part of a larger story. The ordeal of Korean missionaries at the hands of the Taliban in Afghanistan reminds us of Christianity's growth in Korea.

A happier story is the one Chuck told "BreakPoint" readers about the people called the Nagas. Little more than a century ago, these people living in the area where India and Burma meet were headhunters. Today, an estimated 90 percent of the population attends church on Sunday, and Christian leaders there have set the goal of sending 10,000 missionaries to the rest of Asia.

The Asia Times columnist "Spengler" recently wrote that China may soon occupy the role that the United States has occupied for the past 200 years: "the natural ground for mass evangelization." He adds that "if this occurs, the world will change beyond our capacity to recognize it."

He foresees Chinese Christians, like their Korean counterparts, "[turning] their attention outward." Only, with a Christian population fifteen times the size of Korea's, and a Chinese Diaspora all over the world, the impact will be far greater. "Spengler" uses the word "earthquake" to describe it.

According to John Allen of the National Catholic Report, the most "audacious" Chinese Christians dream of taking the Gospel along the historic "Silk Road" into Muslim lands. As David Aikman has written, they believe it is their task to complete the mission of preaching the Gospel in every land. To that end, Chinese Christians are already secretly "training missionaries for deployment in Muslim countries."

This is what "Spengler" means by an "earthquake." As he puts it, "the greatest danger to Islam" comes from Chinese Christians looking westward toward Jerusalem.

What's remarkable is this vision is taking shape even as Chinese Christians undergo persecution. Then again, Christianity's initial explosion took place under even worse conditions. So it probably shouldn't surprise us that there are more Chinese worshipping in "house churches" than belong to the Communist party.

According to "Spengler," the "fearless" Chinese evangelists may do more to transform their nation and the world than all the armies and diplomats combined. That would be an earthquake worth experiencing.

Life as a Missionary

No Fixed Address by Chloe, an MK from Guinea, West Africa

In June, my brother Silas and I joined a short term missions team that was here in Guinea for three weeks. It was a great experience! I enjoyed getting to know the other people on the team and working together. The couple who led the team had worked in this village with my family several years ago, so it was neat to hang out with them again. The team consisted of an older couple from Manitoba, a younger couple, three gals, three guys, and Silas and me.

The project that we were working on was a duplex for missionary housing on the mission center. It was hard work, but exciting to see the concrete block walls go up so quickly. We were even able to begin working on the trusses for the roof. Of course we weren't working the whole time; we also had some free time and other organized events. We played sports and went swimming in the river. Most evenings we had a meeting, and different missionaries shared their testimonies and told about their ministries.

While visiting in the village on a rainy afternoon, we were invited to sit inside the simple mud brick houses - warm, cozy and dry. One elderly man was telling us about how he had fought with Lansana Conte against the Portugese years ago. To my surprise, he untied a rag wrapped around his leg, revealing his old war scar.

We girls bought colorful material in the market and had native outfits ordered at the tailor's. (here in Guinea it's very common and inexpensive to get clothes custom-made at the tailor shop) The market is full of all sorts of interesting things.... sticky balls of stinky homemade soap, which one of the girls thought were meatballs, flip flops, little teapots for making gunpowder tea, bolts of material in bold colors and designs, medicines, fresh peanut butter, onions, hot peppers, etc! Oh, and flies! I forgot to mention the garbage and flies!

Growing up in Guinea, some of these things we experienced are just ordinary to me. But it was neat to see them anew through the eyes of people who have never seen them before. It made me look at things differently....and notice things I wouldn't have really noticed otherwise. Like all the bugs!

One day, the team packed into two Land Cruisers and drove out here to Tarencha to do a field day for the kids. Another girl and I were in charge of the ball toss. It was a lot of fun! She didn't speak any Susu and my Susu is so-so, but we managed to get our point across for the most part! I think the hardest part was getting the kids to stand on the line (not two inches over it!) Afterwards there were races and water balloon tosses,

and the grand prizes were given out. What are exciting prizes to receive in Guinea? Soccer ball, string and hooks for fishing and gunpowder tea fixings for the boys, for the girls, a towel and body wash, hair bows, mirrors and last, but not least, fake hair extensions! When the activities were finished, the team ate rice and sauce in the village and then stopped by my house before heading to town for supper at a nice restaurant. We all soaked in the air conditioning (a rare treat here) and enjoyed our hamburgers and french fries (also a treat)!

If any of ya'll are interested in missions and short-term mission trips, check out the NTM summit trips at : www.ntm.org



The Field Day

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