Hebrews 12:1-4

Intro…

- WHO – Jesus – who is BETTER than EVERYONE and EVERYTHING [NINE ways] …
- HOW - The author declared – the JUST shall LIVE by FAITH – **Habakkuk 2:4**
  - The HALL of FAITH – EXAMPLES that PROVE to us what it means to WALK by FAITH!
  - The Author gave us NINETEEN examples of Men and women who WALKED daily by FAITH…
  - Their FAITH had TWO results – they had VICTORY and DEFEAT…
  - By FAITH – they shut the mouths of lions – quenched the violence of fire – received the dead to life!
  - By FAITH – others were tortured – put in chains and prison - of whom the world was NOT worthy!
  - All were given a GOOD testimony – by FAITH – made perfect in Christ!
- NOW – Because it is not just about those who came before – this is OUR race to run!

Finish the race… (4 points)

- **1st – The witnesses… vs. 1**
  - 1st – The RACE…
    - THEREFORE we also…
      - THEREFORE – 2x in NT – rare word that emphasizes the CONCLUSION of something!
      - Building towards the CONCLUSION of this amazing book…
      - Having established that Jesus is BETTER than EVERYONE and EVERYTHING …
      - And the importance of WALKING by FAITH…
      - The Author now turns the FINAL corner – and encourages us to RUN!
    - The EXAMPLE of a RACE…
      - If you have ever seen a MARATHON – they are grueling FORTY TWO kilometer RUN…
      - It is EASY to start that kind of a RACE – but it is NOT easy to FINISH!
      - The ONLY way to be able to FINISH a MARATHON – is with ENDURANCE
    - The WALK of FAITH is like a MARATHON - **I Corinthians 9:24**
      - It begins the day we are SAVED – and the FINISH line is HEAVEN…
      - But we need ENDURANCE to be able to RUN this demanding RACE…
      - The Author will give us FOUR things to help us in our RACE!
  - 2nd – The CLOUD…
    - Since we are surrounded by so great a CLOUD of witnesses…
      - The FIRST aid we are giving in our RACE – is the GREAT CLOUD!
      - GREAT CLOUD – speaking of an enormous quantity of WITNESSES…
      - No doubt referring to the Old Testament saints – a few of which were listed – **Hebrews 11**
    - What the CLOUD does…
      - Do NOT get the PICTURE of the OT saints looking down on us – cheering us on…
      - As if they are the spectators in the bleachers of some great SPORTING event!
      - WITNESS – [μάρτυς] as we mentioned last week – comes from the word MARTYR…
      - And many of the OT saints FINISHED their RACE by being MARTYRED for their FAITH!
      - The CLOUD is an EXAMPLE – of how God was FAITHFUL to help them complete the RACE…
      - Even if living by FAITH meant DEFEAT – we see in the END – they were VICTORIOUS…
      - Because they FINISHED the RACE – and received the PRIZE of heaven!
    - How the CLOUD helps…
      - Let us say you wanted to RUN a MARATHON – and asked me how HARD it was…
      - And I told you it was EASY – you just start jogging – and then you come to the FINISH line…
      - It might encourage you to START running – but you would quickly get DISCOURAGED…
      - AFTER the first kilometer – when reality set in this is HARD – you might give up!

- Too often when people accept Jesus – they are told this will make life EASY…
- They are given the FALSE impression the RACE will not be demanding…
- As a result of false EXPECTATIONS – they become quickly discouraged…
- And some even give up – and STOP running their race!
- The Gospel is NOT a message of an EASY life - it is all about our perspective...
- We understand – because of the CLOUD – that our RACE is going to be HARD…
- But there is no CHALLENGE that measures up to the REWARD that waits for us at the END!
- **II Corinthians 4:17** – "Our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever!" [NLT]

- **2ND – THE CHALLENGE… VS. 1**
  - 1st – The WEIGHT…
    - Let us lay aside every WEIGHT…
      - The SECOND aid we are given is to lay aside the WEIGHT…
      - The analogy is OBVIOUS – do not run a RACE with extra WEIGHT!
      - No one gets ready for a MARATHON – by strapping on an extra TWENTY kilos…
      - You want to LAY ASIDE any extra weight – to help give you ENDURANCE in the RACE!
    - What is the WEIGHT…
      - WEIGHT – only here NT – a very interesting word that can have several meanings…
      - BARB – something that sticks into you and will not let go…
      - PRIDE – speaking of self-reliance or arrogance…
      - TUMOR – it can also refer to a large MASS a CANCER that can cause death…
      - All of which perfectly descried the ONE thing that can WEIGH us down in our RACE!
  - 2nd – The SIN…
    - The ONE thing that will keep us from finishing our RACE – SIN…
      - **Hebrews 3:12-13** – "Beware… lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God… lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of SIN."
      - BEWARE [present / imperative] – we are commanded to ALWAYS be watching…
      - Lest there be in ANY of us an evil heart of UNBELIEF - and we DEPART from the living God!
      - Sin is devastating - if we REFUSE to repent of our sin - it will HARDEN our hearts...
      - The danger is we can end up DEPARTING from God – stop RUNNING the RACE!
      - **Romans 6:1** – "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound… God forbid."
    - The sin which so easily ENSNARES us…
      - Easily ENSNARES – only here NT – to be VERY good at surrounding something…
      - It is NOT hard to become surrounded by SIN – it traps us and WEIGHTS us down…
      - Where does the SIN that can weigh us down come from – THREE places!
    - The BARB…
      - We have an ENEMY who wants nothing more than to get us to SIN!
      - Like a drug dealer - satan LIES and tells us sin is fun - just give it a try – and get we hooked...
      - He LIES again and tells us once you have sinned – we cannot go back to God...
      - Nothing that the devil says is true - everything that comes from him is a LIE!
      - **John 8:44** – "The devil… is a liar and the father of it."
    - The PRIDE…
      - **James 1:14** – "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed…"
      - SIN can come from our own desires – our PRIDE…
      - PRIDE can be tricky – it is not always easy to see – but it always sets us up for a fall…
      - PRIDE can be – I think I know it all / I am never wrong / I do not need correction…
      - PRIDE can also be – thinking I am nothing / being shy / PRIDE means it is all about me…
      - Whether it is arrogance / or false humility – if I am the focus - it is PRIDE…

- If I am the focus – then I am not looking to Jesus – and I may NOT finish the RACE!
- **Proverbs 16:18** – "Pride goes before destruction, an arrogant spirit before a fall."

▪ The TUMOR…
- SIN can come from the influence of the people around us…
- The Holy Spirit killed Ananias and Sapphira - for lying – **Acts 5:5**
- Which might seem EXTREME – but God understood the danger of sin SPREADING…
- It only takes a little CANCER before the life of someone is in peril!
- A little sin in those we hang out with - can quickly grow to be a HUGE problem...
- The longer the sin goes untreated - the more dangerous it becomes...
- The only solution - cut out the cancer - remove the problem!
- **II Corinthians 6:17** – "Come out from among them and be separate - says the Lord."

- **3RD – THE COURSE… vs. 1**

o 1st – How to RUN…

▪ Let us run [subjunctive] with ENDURANCE…
- The THIRD aid we are given is to make sure we run with ENDURANCE…
- ENDURANCE / PATIENCE – [ὑπομένω] - compound word – [ὑπό] and [μένω]…
- We are told that apart from Jesus we can do nothing - **John 15:4**
- We must ABIDE – [μένω] – in Him in order for us to be able to RUN with PATIENCE!

▪ ENDURANCE is the byproduct…
- An athlete is NOT born with ENDURANCE – it does not come naturally…
- ENDURANCE is the byproduct or RESULT of training and exercise!
- In the same way as long as we EXERCISE our relationship with Jesus – we have ENDURANCE!
- It does not something we get instantly – it is the result of our relationship with Him!

▪ Connected to something else…
- The big TREND these days is ELECTRIC cars [save the world] …
- If I were to try and plug a CAR into bamboo – there is no POWER…
- It would become LOW BATTERY – and it would NOT be able to continue!
- We try and model our lives after the world - then wonder why we have no power…
- We are connected to the wrong source – and therefore lack ENDURANCE…
- It is only when we plug into Jesus – that we can RUN the RACE!

▪ HARDSHIP brings ENDURANCE…
- If the Children of Israel had not been caught between Egypt and the Red Sea – **Exodus 14**
- They never could have seen their God was able to part an ocean!
- If we always had enough money – we would never see the Lord provide for all our needs…
- If we were always healthy - we could never see the Lord miraculously heal!
- It is through our trials / challenges – we learn to ABIDE in Jesus and receive ENDURANCE!

o 2nd – Where to RUN…

▪ The race that is SET BEFORE us…
- It is TRUE that GOD directs our steps and choses our PATH – **Psalm 37:23**
- Because God knows what is BEST for our lives – and directs us accordingly!
- But the word here - SET BEFORE [πρόκειμαι] [middle voice] – meaning we CHOSE!

▪ The CHOICE…
- That does NOT mean we can do whatever we want – we have ONE choice…
- Do we reject the WORD of God – or do we CHOSE to submit to it!
- I had a woman come in for counseling – asking if it was OK to leave her husband…
- I told her she had a CHOICE – not whether or not she could leave her husband…
- Her choice was whether or not she OBEYED the Word of God!
- We CHOSE our COURSE in life by either obeying or rejecting the Word…

- If we CHOSE to REJECT – God is going to allow our lives to fall apart…
- Not because he is MAD at us – but to try and HUMBLE us – and bring us back to Him!
- If we CHOSE to OBEY – it does not mean our lives will be EASY…
- But it does mean we will have ENDURANCE and POWER to finish the RACE!

- **4TH – THE EXAMPLE… vs. 2-4**
  - 1st – LOOKING to Jesus… vs. 2
    - The FOURTH and final aid we are given in our RACE – is LOOKING to Jesus…
      - LOOKING – 2x in NT – to turn away from one thing in order to see something else…
      - The IDEA is we need to TURN away from SIN – and LOOK instead to Jesus…
      - Because EVERYTHING Jesus did was an EXAMPLE of how we should also live our lives!
      - From His BIRTH through His DEATH – the life of Jesus was a model for us to follow!
      - Jesus was HUMBLE – leaving heaven and becoming a man – **Philippians 2:8**
      - Jesus was DEPENDENT – always trusting in the FATHER – **John 5:19**
      - Jesus was a SERVANT – not looking to be served but living for others – **Mark 10:45**
      - Jesus was BOLD – not afraid to stand up for the TRUTH – **Matthew 23:13**
      - **John 13:15** – "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."
    - The author and finisher of our faith…
      - AUTHOR – 4x in NT – can also be translated as the CAPTAIN or LEADER…
      - FINISHER – from the root [τέλος] – the one who COMPLETES or ENDS…
      - Jesus final words of the cross – It is FINISHED [τέλος] – **John 19:30**
      - The EXAMPLE Jesus LEADS [author] us to – is one the ENDS in death to self!
      - Luke 9:23 – "If anyone desires to come after Me - let him deny himself - and take up his cross daily - and follow Me."
      - LOOKING to Jesus means being HUMBLE – denying our old life – rejecting the world…
      - LOOKING to Jesus means being DEPENDENT – seeing our daily need for Jesus…
      - LOOKING to Jesus means being SERVANT – not living for ourselves but lives for others…
      - LOOKING to Jesus means being BOLD – not afraid to stand up for what is right…
      - But we can only do these things when we FOLLOW His EXAMPLE…
      - Take up our CROSS – DAILY – deny ourselves and CHOSE to FOLLOW Him!
  - 2nd – REWARD of Jesus… vs. 2
    - For the JOY…
      - Who for the JOY that was set before Him endured the cross - despising the shame…
      - Jesus was able to ENDURE the cross – [ὑπομένω] – verb form of the noun ENDURANCE…
      - DESPISING [to think nothing of] the shame [disgrace or dishonor] …
      - Because of the joy SET BEFORE Him – [πρόκειμαι] – Jesus had the same CHOICE we do!
      - It was the PLAN of God for Jesus to DIE for the sins of all men…
      - But Jesus did not desire to suffer – He did NOT want to go to the cross!
      - And He could have walked away at any point - spared His life - avoided death...
      - Yet Jesus prayed - not My will but Yours be done - **Luke 22:42**
      - Jesus ENDURED knowing what came AFTER the cross!
    - The REWARD…
      - [Jesus] sat down at the right hand of the throne of God…
      - Do NOT miss – how do we ENDURE the COURSE set before us in life [take up our cross]…
      - We do what Jesus did – we look to the REWARD – we look to HEAVEN!
      - **Revelation 3:21** – "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."
  - 3rd – ENDURANCE of Jesus… vs. 3-4

- THINK about it…
  - CONSIDER Him who endured such HOSTILITY from sinners against Himself…
  - CONSIDER [imperative] – this is the FIRST command in this passage…
  - We MUST think about WHAT Jesus ENDURED [ὑπομένω] …
  - HOSTILITY [ἀντιλογία] – verbal abuse – speaking against…
  - Jesus came proclaiming the TRUTH – but SINNERS constantly refuted Him!
  - Why did the PEOPLE not LISTEN – confess Jesus was the answer for their SIN…
  - It is not that they did NOT see their NEED – the GOSPEL was NOT difficult to understand...
  - Men rejected Jesus - because they LOVED [ἀγαπάω] the darkness – **John 3:19**
  - The same LOVE God has for us - is the same LOVE they had for sin!
  - SINNERS were HOSTILE to Jesus because they LOVED their sin!
  - If the WORLD would NOT listen to Jesus – we should NOT be surprised when they reject us!
- Do NOT become WEARY…
  - Lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls [mind]…
  - WEARY [subjunctive] – it can be easy to become discouraged by the HOSTILITY of SINNERS…
  - The reality is NOT everyone who hears the Gospel will believe…
  - Most likely ONLY a small portion of those who hear will believe!
  - **Matthew 7:13-14** – "For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."
  - When we share the Gospel with SINNERS – they may reject us / mock us / ridicule us…
  - But CONSIDER the alternative – there is a VERY real consequence to rejecting Jesus!
  - We do NOT share Jesus because out of some sense of obligation – or for some reward...
  - We share because of the very real danger of Hell - the destination for any who reject Jesus…
  - Hell is not temporary – hell is the SECOND death – eternal separation from God – NO hope…
  - Keeping people from Hell is worth a little ridicule – people are worth fighting for!
- No BLOODSHED…
  - You have not yet resisted to bloodshed - striving against sin…
  - Jesus did not just suffer HARSH words - He was put to DEATH for the sake of the TRUTH!
  - Therefore no matter how hard our RACE might become…
  - We know that Jesus went through MORE – and ENDURED!
  - Considering what we have WAITING for us at the END…
  - Let us RUN the RACE set before us – with ENDURANCE – not in OUR strength – but His!
  - **Lamentations 3:22-23 –** "The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning."