Hebrews 12:1-29

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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January 2021

***Hebrews 12:1–29*** (ESV)  
**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, **2** looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. **4** In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. **5** And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. **6** For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” **7** It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? **8** If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. **9** Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? **10** For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. **11** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. **12** Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, **13** and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. **14** Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. **15** See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; **16** that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. **17** For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. **18** For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest **19** and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. **20** For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” **21** Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” **22** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, **23** and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, **24** and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. **25** See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. **26** At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” **27** This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. **28** Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, **29** for our God is a consuming fire.

1. The “**therefore**” in Heb 12:1 seems to refer to the past chapter’s discussion of those people who showed great faith. As you reflect on Chapter 11 what is the one theme common to all these people of great faith?
2. Heb 12:1 is a major turning point in the epistle to the Hebrews. In what way is Chapter 12 different from all previous chapter of Hebrews?
3. What is the implied **kal v’chomer** (“light and heavy”) argument that the author is making, in chapters 11 and 12? Where do the “**great cloud of witnesses**” fit in this argument? Where do the readers (and us) fit into this argument?
4. Looking at Heb 12:1-2, there is one primary command. What single word summarizes that command? Are we obedient to this?
5. Looking further at that single primary command, what are the specific instructions on **how** we are to carry it out? List each, and consider how it applies to us.
6. Why do you think the author uses the picture of a race? He says a race is set before us. In what way? What is the competition? See also 1 Cor 9:24-27, which was written by Paul at least 10 years earlier.
7. The author seems to equate “**weight**” and “**sin**”. Why? And why does he further describe sin and “clinging closely to us”. What does that imply? What are the consequences for us?
8. Yeshua is referred to as the “**founder**” and “**perfector**” of our faith. What do each of these words really mean, and why are they applied to Yeshua? Does this remind you of an expression that Yeshua used to describe himself?
9. Heb 12:2 states that Yeshua endured the cross for the “**joy that was set before him**”. This seems like an unusual thing to say. What do you think this means? What is the “**joy**”? Consider Isaiah 53:11.
10. Hebrews 12:2 speaks of Yeshua “**seated at the right hand of the throne of God**”. Where else in Scripture is a similar phrase used? I think this phrase may also refer to the final words to James the Just (**Yaakov HaTzaddik*)*** the brother of Yeshua, spoken just before he was stoned at the temple in 62 AD. His proclamation is recorded by Eusebius (quoting Hegessipus). See if you can find out what Yaakov said. Why might this be especially relevant to the readers of Hebrews?
11. Heb 12:3 says to “**consider Yeshua**”. Why? How did Yeshua face hostility?
12. What is the literal translation of “**weary and fainthearted**”, especially the phrase translated as “**fainthearted**”? How does the more literal translation add depth to what is being communicated?
13. Consider Hebrews 1:4. What is our struggle against? And why does the author say they haven’t resisted to the point of shedding blood? What is the implied **kal v’chomer** argument here?
14. Hebrew 12:5-6 quotes Proverbs 3:11-12. What is the point of this quote?
15. Considering Hebrew 12:7-11, what do learn about discipline? How is God’s discipline different from an earthly father’s discipline?
16. The author was talking about “**enduring hostility from sinners**” (v.3) and “**struggling again sin**” (v.4), and now about receiving “**discipline from God**”. The discussion seems to flow together seamlessly, suggesting that he may be equating these things, or at least linking them together. Is that the case, or are we really talking about entirely different things here?
17. Hebrew 12:12-13 quotes Isaiah 35:3 and Prov 3:6-8. Notice the reference to “**healing**” in Heb 12:13. How does an understanding of the context he is quoting from help show us how this healing is to be obtained?
18. How does Heb 12:14-15 instruct us to live? What is the danger if we don’t live that way? Can you give examples of a root of bitterness that you or someone you know experienced?
19. It is interesting that Esau is used as an example in Heb 12:16-17. With what you know about the situation the Hebrew believers were facing at the time, why is the example of Esau particularly relevant?
20. The next verses (Hebrews 12:18-24) do not begin a completely new thought, but rather are linked to the prior passage with the word “**for**”. These verses seem to tie back to the main point of the prior passage: “**strive for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord**” (Heb 12:14). What is the event being referenced in these verses (Heb 12:18-24)? Review Ex 19:10-19.
21. What is the contrast between what Moses and the people faced and what the readers of Hebrews are facing? Why does the author say the mountain can be touched when God specifically told them it couldn’t be?
22. What is the connection with the blood of Abel (see Gen 4:6-13), which seems to be contrasted with the sprinkled blood of Yeshua and new covenant? What does the “**sprinkled blood**” refer to? Recall our discussion of Heb 10:22.
23. Are “**the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven**” and “**the spirits of the righteous made perfect**” two different groups? Who is being referred to?
24. Hebrews 12:25 says “**see that you do not refuse him who is speaking**.” What does this mean? Consider Heb 12:19 as well Heb 1:1-2.
25. What is the **kal v’chomer** argument in Hebrews 12:25?
26. Heb 12:26-27 quotes Haggai 2:6 and Haggai 2:21. What does it mean to “**shake the earth and the heavens**”?
27. What does it mean that “**the things that cannot be shaken may remain**” (Heb 12:26)?
28. According to Heb 12:28-29, what should be our response, assuming we are of the group that is not shaken?
29. What is “**acceptable worship**”? Who defines what is acceptable? Consider Rom 12:1-2, Ps 51:17, Micah 6-8,1 John 5:3-4.
30. The last phrase of the chapter is “**for our God is a consuming fire**”. What is the author trying to accomplish by using this phrase?