

August 18, 2019 -

Hebrews 12:18- 29

Living with Hope not Fear

Introduction:

The Greek word used in the NT for “fear” is “Phobos” from which we get our word “phobia,” a term we use to describe all kinds of fear. “Hydrophobia” is the fear of water, “tachophobia” is the fear of speed; and “claustrophobia” is the fear of tight places. Yes, there is even gamophobia the fear of marriage. There are more than 1,000 different kinds of human fears. All of us, even the best of Christians, have fears. Fear cripples our faith in a hurry. Fear is the result of trusting in ourselves instead of trusting in God. The natures of these disorders reflect the landscape of worry and stress of 21st-century life. Life was not much different in the first century. Under their cultural pressures, many Jewish Christians were threatening to go back to Judaism. They were on the edge of salvation but they were in need of the warning to...

I. Abandon their fear (12:18-21).

1. The scene in verses 18-21 takes us back to Mount Sinai when the Israelites are camped at the foot of the mountain (Ex 19). God is preparing the nation to receive the Ten Commandments and instructions for the tabernacle. It is an awesome, frightening scene as we read in vv. 18-19. As a result of this terrifying sight, note what Moses say in verse 21!

Under the old covenant, God's people were afraid of Him. Fear is the result of thinking our relationship with God is based on what we do, our performance. If that is the case, we have reason to fear. Fear paralyzes us... because we fear others and we fear that we can never please God. This is no excuse to disobey God. There is no reason to live in fear when you have the mighty presence of the Holy Spirit within you. Fear will enslave you, but Christ has come to set you free. Howbeit, we no longer have to go to Mount Sinai. By living with the future Mount Zion in view, we can abandon fear permanently,

2. The writer is pointing out that living under the Law was frightening. Even receiving the Law was a terrifying time. On the morning of the third day at Mount Sinai, God appeared in an awesome display. There was roaring thunder, flashing lightning, a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, and all the people trembled in fear.

3. The Law given at Mount Sinai was a covenant of fear. In some cases, violating the Law required the punishment of death-the penalty for even touching the foot of the mountain. Since Mount Sinai was such a frightening experience, the Israelites say to Moses in Exodus 20:19, **“Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.** Look at verse 19.

4. This fear did not succeed in promoting holiness among the people of Israel. It did not succeed in changing the heart of Israel. 40 days later, they worshipped a golden calf and said this was the god that brought them out of Egypt.

Application:

Most fear is fear of the unknown. We do not know what lies ahead of us, so we become apprehensive. Our imaginations can magnify problems until they seem insurmountable. We

need a sound mind to see things in proper perspective. That is why God gave us His Holy Spirit, to enable us to see things as God sees them. He does want His children to fear Him.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. II Tim. 1:7

II. Approach God Joyfully (12:22-24).

1. The mountain of the new covenant is the future Mount Zion. In Christ, we have come to Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22a-b). The earthly Mount Zion is the place where King David established the city of Jerusalem and His son Solomon built the amazing Jewish temple. Mount Zion symbolizes God's dealing with men under the new covenant of grace.

2. What a glorious comparison this is. Mount Zion represents grace, atonement and forgiveness. It represents the spiritual place where God dwells; so by coming to Jesus Christ, says the Holy Spirit, you're coming to Zion. (Heb. 12:22c). We note what does John see in his vision (Revelation 21:2a-c) In the New Jerusalem we will join innumerable angels in joyfully worshipping God

3. Under the old covenant, people were afraid to approach God. However, under the new covenant, every believer can approach God joyfully, without fear and should stand without fear. This is because there is no fear in love Therefore, John writes: **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.** The phrase made perfect means fully developed or mature. The word "fear" is mentioned here four times.

This is not the righteous fear or awe we should have for God. This fear is based on a consciousness of guilt and anticipation of punishment. If we understand God's love and forgiveness, when we approach Him we are not afraid of punishment for confessing and forsaken sins. --- (I John 1:9)

4. In Christ, we are the church of the firstborn, and have our names written in heaven (12:23). Because of our spiritual birth, we have a right to be there. In the future Mount Zion, we join the spirits of just men who have been made perfect (12:23c-d). When we arrive at the future Mount Zion, we will have *come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel* (12:24). The blood of Abel cried out for justice, but the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn 1:7).

Living with the future Mount Zion in view means we can abandon fear permanently, approach God joyfully, and ...

III. Await Judgment Fearlessly (12:25-27).

1. We must be careful and not refuse to listen to the Spirit if Christ (12:25). Jesus give warning in Luke 13:3- *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* When God spoke at Mount Sinai, His voice then shook the earth (12:26a).

2. Yet, God has promised, saying, **Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven** (12:26b-c, Hag. 2:6). This refers to God's judgment at the end of the world, which is called the day of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:10).

And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain (12:27). God is going to destroy His old creation-the heavens and the earth. He will replace them with a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1). However, some things will remain because Jesus says that even though heaven and earth will pass away, His Word will never pass away (Mk 13:31).

When God unleashes His judgment of wrath on the old heavens and earth, we can be fearless. Why- look, according to **1 Thessalonians 1: 10**.

If we live with the future Mount Zion in view, we will be able to abandon fear permanently, approach God joyfully, await judgment fearlessly, and...

IV. Aspire to worship God acceptably (12:28-29).

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace (12:28a). The word wherefore refers to what has just been written. Because we are a part of God's eternal kingdom in the future Mount Zion, our motive for worship should be gratitude. That being the case, we should serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (12:28b).

Reverence refers to a holy "caution" that results in piety toward God. We must also have a sense of godly fear. The word translated godly fear means we have combined feelings of reverence and wonder because we are coming before the spectacular, holy God. We recognize we are worshipping an awesome God. --- Psalm 96:6

We must worship God with both Mount Sinai and the future Mount Zion in mind. Yes, God is a God of love and mercy, but God is a consuming fire (12:29, Deut. 4:24). That verse says God is, not was. Those who reject His Son, Jesus Christ, will never know God as a loving, heavenly Father but only as a consuming fire. Because He is a consuming fire, what God says cannot be taken lightly.

Conclusion:

God means what He says. It is easy to just focus on God's love and grace and forget His fierce judgment on all that is sinful and evil. Consuming fire is symbolic of judgment that, like a raging forest fire, cannot be contained and consumes everything in its path.

If we live with the future Mount Zion in view, we can enjoy these four privileges: abandon fear permanently, approach God joyfully, await judgment fearlessly, and aspire to worship God acceptably.