

Session 14

The Mountain of Fear and the Mountain of Joy

Hebrews 12:18-24, ¹⁸ You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; ¹⁹ to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, ²⁰ because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death." ²¹ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." ²² But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."

This passage is a contrast between the old and the new. It is a contrast between the giving of the law on Mount Sinai and the new covenant of which Jesus is the Mediator.

Understand...the writer here:

Shows God of the Old Covenant as being a God of power...a God that demands holiness to the point of fearing Him in this power. Moses said: 'I am in utter fear and trembling.'

Now...the writer of Hebrews makes a list of the new glories that await Christians...who are now under the New Covenant:

1. ***The New Jerusalem awaits them...glory!***
2. ***The angels await them in joyful assembly.***
3. ***God's people await them...***

"First-born" ...first-born son means that the inheritance and the honor is his. Names are written in heaven. In ancient times, kings kept a register of their faithful citizens. Those who await the Christians are all whom God has honored and all whom God has declared as faithful citizens (part of that great cloud of witnesses)...

4. ***God, the Judge awaits them...***

In the end, Christians must stand the scrutiny of God. The glory is there; but the awe and the fear of God still remain. We never sentimentalize the idea of God, the One Who sits on the Throne.

Note: The teacher feels like some people fail to see the awesomeness and the holiness of God. God does not change (He might relent on His first inclination of punishing sin to the uttermost, but He will not ever be tolerant of sin to the point of overlooking it and not judging the person and the sin). We might feel like God changed His disposition and understanding of sin...but, He still is adamant about sin's devastation on His creation. Sin cannot enter heaven.

5. ***The spirits of all good men and women who have achieved their goal await them. They (the Christian) go to join those whose names are on God's Role of Honor.***
6. ***Jesus is waiting...the One who made this reunion possible.***

It was He, the perfect priest and the perfect sacrifice, who made the unapproachable approachable...and He did this as the cost of His blood. His blood opened the way for reconciliation with a Holy God.

If you knew that the treasure was on the other side of the raging river, would you forge the river to gain it?

Hebrews 12:25-29, “⁵ See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” ²⁷ The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.” ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our “God is a consuming fire.”

The voice warned us of God’s requirements...from the earth (Moses and the Prophets) and now from Him who is speaking from heaven. He is not just the transmitter of God’s voice as was Moses; He was and is God’s voice.

All things will pass away; the world as we know it will be uprooted; life as we know it will come to an end...but one thing stands eternally sure—the relationship of every Christian to God. However....there is a great obligation placed upon us.

What obligation?

We must worship God with reverence and serve Him with fear.

The eternal truth is this:

***“If we are true to God, we gain everything; and, if we are untrue to God, we lose everything.”
Loyalty to God is what really matters!***

Exhortations to the Church:

Hebrews 13:1-6, “*Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. ² Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. ³ Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. ⁴ Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. ⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” ⁶ So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”*

Five essential qualities of a good life:

- 1. There is a mutual, brotherly love***
- 2. There is hospitality...Christianity was, and still should be, the religion of the open door.***
- 3. There is sympathy for those in trouble.***
In early days, no Christians who found themselves in trouble for the faith were ever neglected or forgotten by their fellow Christians.
- 4. There is purity... the marriage bed undefiled.***
- 5. There is contentment...***
Nothing that the world can give me can improve on what God has given me.

Hebrews 13:7-8, ⁷“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

What is it saying to us?

Who are the leaders of the faith...the real leader?

1. **Real leaders of the Church preach Christ (who is the Word) and, therefore, bring others to Him.**
2. **Real leaders of the Church live in the faith and bring Christ to others**
Real leaders do it after they tell about it...not necessarily what they are saying, but what they are.
3. **Real leaders, if needs be, die in loyalty.** They show people how to live and how to die.
4. **Real leaders leave two (2) things to those who come after....example and inspiration.**

Another thought in this passage...All other earthly leaders come and go. They are a part of the drama of life...then all of it ends as an individual (the earthly treasures and the earthly successes are only remembrances).

BUT...Jesus' status above all others is permanent; His leadership is forever; still seeking men and women...and still finding.

Hebrews 13:9-16, “Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so. ¹⁰We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. ¹²And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. ¹³Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. ¹⁴For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. ¹⁵Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. ¹⁶And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

There were some problems in the church...and it sounds like they were having problems giving up the practices of Jewish traditions...

We can only guess what was going on in the church, but the writer let them know that it was not what was put into the body that defiled us, but that which we place into our minds and hearts which defiles our spirit man.

God enters into man one way...that is through grace. It is grace that brought it down to man and grace will lead us home...to that city that is to come....that heavenly Jerusalem...and we know that its founder and maker is God. **It is the blood of Jesus that purifies and it is not the blood of bulls and goats.**

Christ offered and sacrificed once and for all...and we can offer sacrifices in other ways:

We can offer:

- **Continual praise and thanks to God.** All can offer this...Our lips and our heart should extend praise and adoration to the Lord.
- **Our public and glad confession of faith in the name of Christ.** Unashamed loyalty to Christ by our confession of him to our friends...and enemies.
- **Acts of kindness to our neighbors**...those more fortunate and less fortunate than we. Who knows...maybe that person that seems to have it all together is hungry for fellowship and kindness by someone who genuinely cares about them.

All of these sacrificial and generous acts, God is pleased.

Hebrews 13:17-19, “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. ¹⁸ Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. ¹⁹ I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon.”

The writer lays down the duty of the congregation to its present leaders and its leaders who are absent.

Congregation’s duties:

1. **To its present leaders—obedience and respect** (the leaders must give an account to God for their leadership). When the congregation is in proper alignment with the Scripture, the pastor will have no greater joy than to know that they are willfully working and walking in the truth of the word. John said in 3 John 4, “I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”
2. **To its absent leaders—prayer for the safety and guidance of those away from them.**

Benediction and Final Greetings

Hebrews 13:20-24, “²⁰ Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

²² Brothers and sisters, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you quite briefly.

²³ I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.

²⁴ Greet all your leaders and all the Lord’s people. Those from Italy send you their greetings.”

The prayer that draws a perfect picture of God the Father and Jesus the Son.

1. **God is the God of peace.** He is the One that can make us at peace with ourselves, at peace with each other, and at peace with Him.
2. **God is the God of life.** It was God who brought Jesus back from the dead. His love and power are the only things that can bring us peace in life and triumph in death.
3. **God is the God who both shows us His will and equips us to do it.** Remember....God never gives us a task without also giving us the power to accomplish it.

The picture of Jesus is also seen as:

1. **The great Shepherd of His sheep.** Ready to give His life for His sheep...He puts with their foolishness and keeps forgiving when asked.
2. **The One who established the new covenant and made possible the new relationship between God and man.** He made a way when there was no way.
3. **The One who died....as the Way.**

Grace be with you all... The writer ends with the greatest story ever told.

The Grace of God....

A picture of a God who loved us so much that He would do anything to bring us back to Him!

Keep running, keep up the pace, keep striving, and keep moving forward...for Heaven’s Inhabitants await us!