

Hebrews 12:18-29: Would You like a Life That Can't be Shaken?

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I. Introduction

Is it possible to face life-altering, life-shattering events and circumstances with unshakable strength and peace? If your strength is failing you and you've given up hope that things will ever get better, Jesus says, "Listen to My voice. Let me guide you out of this mess. I know it seems hopeless but it isn't. It never is when you're walking with Me. Take My hand and I'll show you the way out."

II. Hebrews 12:18-29: Follow Jesus' Voice = Unshakable Life, Refuse It = Your World Shakes

This audience is facing persecution so why should they endure their suffering like the long list of heroes the author mentioned, why should they see their suffering as a son who is being disciplined by a loving father the way Jesus did, and why should they strengthen what is weak and not give in to bitterness like Esau did? In a word, why should they not return to Judaism which could easily take away all their suffering? Because they have been freed from this system which only brought terror and an impossible standard set by an all-consuming-fire God. Instead of terror and fear, the Lord has given them a permanent position in His unshakable Kingdom where there is complete cleansing and forgiveness, love, joy, peace, and 24-hour access to the Lord's welcoming grace.

12:18-21, why should they not go back to Judaism? Because the New Covenant the Lord's given them through His blood did not bring an impossible standard that left you trembling before a holy God. When God gave Israel the Mosaic Law it revealed just how sinful they were and just how holy He was. God wanted them to come near, but in order to go near to God, you had to be clean, even physically. But if your sinfulness got too close, you could die (Exodus 19:10-25). So when God spoke the Ten Commandments, they were terrified and trembled (Exodus 20:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:11-12). God loved His people, they were special to Him and He wanted them to succeed so He allowed them to hear His voice. But if they disobeyed His voice, He could destroy them (Deuteronomy 4:35-40). In fact, they weren't supposed to be able to hear God's voice and live (Deuteronomy 4:33). You couldn't hear God's voice and live, you couldn't stand in His presence and live, and you couldn't disobey Him and live (Deuteronomy 5:1-5, 22-28, 32-33). Even Moses feared (Deuteronomy 9:19). How then can we obey God's command to enter His presence with boldness (Hebrews 4:16)?

12:22-24, the Law was never meant to purify us enough to stand in God's presence; it couldn't do this (Hebrews 7:19; 9:9; 10:1) and God never intended it to; we were always supposed to be made perfect by Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:14; Galatians 3:21-24). What Jesus has done for us has given us entry, *right now*, into God's presence, which is why every time we gather as a church we enter the heavenly Jerusalem where we're surrounded by celebrating angels, the church of the firstborn whose names are registered in heaven, God the judge of all, spirits of just men made perfect, Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and Jesus' cleansing blood which speaks better things than that of Abel.

That is, Abel's blood cried out for judgment and retribution, which God provided for Abel when He punished his brother Cain (Genesis 4:1-15), but Jesus' blood cried out for pardon, cleansing, and an unshakable life in an unshakable Kingdom (Hebrews 7:25; 9:12, 14, 26, 28; 10:10, 14; 12:22-24, 28). Thus, instead of having to come to Mount Sinai, where the terrifying presence of God shook the earth, we have come to Mount Zion, the unshakable dwelling place of God where we find rest and welcoming grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:3, 16). God the judge of all has found us righteous because His Son's sacrifice "has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

12:25-27, this is the author's final warning. If those who refused God's voice when He spoke on earth didn't escape judgment, much less will those who refuse to hear Jesus now, who is speaking to them from heaven (1:1-3; 2:1-4; 10:26-31). God's voice shook the earth and brought terror at Mount Sinai, but God has promised that He will not only shake the earth but heaven itself, when His Son Returns (and all the nations bring their wealth to adorn God's temple, Haggai 2:6-9) and at the end of time when He removes the shakable things (the current heaven and earth) and replaces them with things that cannot be shaken (a new heaven and a new earth) (Hebrews 1:10-12; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-4).

12:28-29, therefore, since God has given us the ability *today* to live an unshakable life in an unshakable Kingdom where there is unconditional love, joy, peace, forgiveness and 24-hour access to His grace, how should we respond? By entering His throne room with boldness in order to get the grace we need so that "we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Yes, our God is a consuming fire, but there's no reason to fear Him for He has given us the ability to walk with the All-Consuming Fire. The only time we need to fear Him is if we refuse to hear His voice and instead we walk away as we venture into Satan's kingdom of darkness (1 John 1:5). Those in this audience who refused to hear Him were consumed when the Romans came to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70.

You have two choices: you can follow Jesus' voice and live an unshakable life or refuse His voice and have your world shaken, when all your flaws are laid bare for all the world to see, you'll want it to stop the way the Israelites did at Mount Sinai who yelled "Stop!" as their sinfulness was laid bare before God. When all your flaws are laid bare in your own mind, when you believe that you don't have what it takes to make it, you won't make it and you'll want to escape (you'll grab onto anything: drugs, alcohol, give up on life, suicide). When you step into the unshakable life Jesus has given you, into His light, yes, all your flaws will be revealed but not to torture you. He'll reveal them so you can admit your weakness and allow Him to cleanse, strengthen, and heal you (Hebrews 12:1; 1 John 1:5-10).

III. Conclusion

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel..... Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.