

Hebrews 12:25-29

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Refusing to listen to God is a very bad idea. Loving in gratitude and serving Him in reverence in awe is a very good idea. Because, our God is a consuming fire.

Paul reminds his readers again with the same warning, *do not refuse Him who is speaking*, which is Jesus, whose blood speaks better than any earthly sacrifices. His blood, His sacrifice, cleansed us once and for all from the guilt of sin (10:12, 22). With that knowledge, we should be careful not to refuse Him, to *neglect so great a salvation* (Hebrews 2:3). The reason we should not refuse Jesus is because we are held to a high standard now when it comes to our sanctification (becoming more like Christ, being obedient). This does not mean we are unable to meet the standard; we are under the New Covenant, which empowers us to endure in our faith. And we have His Spirit.

But there is still a warning that we should continue to abide in Christ. For just as the Israelites failed to inherit God's rest in the Promised Land, so we too who are warned from Heaven might fail to inherit God's rest in the Kingdom. We may fail to inherit the reward of ruling with Christ if we do not endure. Paul references Haggai 2:6, in describing how God's voice will eventually *shake the earth*, in a final way that does away with the old earth, making way for the new things *which cannot be shaken*. Does it make any sense to ignore the same voice that will undo the current universe and create a new one? That voice? That is who we want to ignore? When you think of it that way, it is pretty absurd to listen to any other voices.

Paul also quotes Deuteronomy 4:24, which says *our God is a consuming fire*. This continues a theme of the judgment fire of God, which will "devour the adversaries" as Paul stated in Hebrews 10:27. God's judgment fire will not consume believers, but it will consume empty works of wood, hay, and stubble. The believer whose empty works are burned will *himself will be saved, though as through fire* (1 Corinthians 3:15). We are saved from God's judgment; through the free gift of God's grace we can never be separated from Him or His family. But we are not saved from loss of reward through willful disobedience. Proverbs 9:10 says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Most times we are driven by fear of rejection from other people, or

fear of physical loss. But if we can walk with a perspective of the holy Mount Zion before which we stand, we will be able to gain the wisdom from first having a fear of the Lord, who is a *consuming fire*.

Paul makes it clear that our response to the New Covenant and the coming kingdom should be *gratitude*, thankfulness. In our thankfulness, we should serve God with *reverence and awe* because God is a *consuming fire*. God is God, He is the eternal Judge and ruler over all life. He offers us great things in love, but ultimately He will reward everyone according to how they lived their lives. By enduring in the faith, we will inherit the promises of God, His rest, co-heirs with Christ in ruling His future kingdom on earth. This is a call to be strong in faith, not fearfully abandoning it, or choosing to neglect it for the world. We are empowered and sustained by Christ and should live accordingly. This is a serious matter, but one which we are able to persist in, by the grace of God through the better Covenant under Christ.

Biblical Text:

²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven. ²⁶ And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.” ²⁷ This *expression*, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.