

Holy Fear – Part 3

Text: Hebrews 12:28-29 NLT - *Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. v.29 For our God is a devouring fire.*

Context:

1) A Hard Fought Race

Hebrews 12:1 NLT - *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.*

2) Hostility and Hardships: There was, at that time, persecutions and hardships that were extremely difficult. It was so bad that many were getting weary. Their hands were growing weak and their knees feeble. Some could not take anymore and they were quitting. They were tapping out!

3) Heavenly Heroes, a Cloud of Witnesses (see Hebrews 11)

- a) These are the saints that have lived and died so valiantly by faith. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and Moses and all those who suffered and died, “of whom the world was not worthy.”
- b) God wants you to see these famous heroic saints who have run the race before us, as if they were gathered along the marathon route saying, through the testimony of their lives, “Come on man, You can make it! By faith I finished strong, and you can finish your race too!”

4) Heavenly Father Who Loves You Enough to Discipline You

Embrace it, accept it, and love it

(v. 11) *No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.*

5) A Horrific Shaking is Coming!

Hebrews 12:26-29 NLT - *When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: “Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also.” v.27 This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed, so that only unshakable things will remain. v.28 Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. v.29 For our God is a devouring fire.*

- a) A Final Shaking - God has chosen to use a final shaking of the earth and the heavens one day to bring an end to this fallen creation as we know it and bring the Kingdom of God to its completeness.

There are several other places in the Bible where this is made clear:

- i) Isaiah 13:13 - *I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the Lord of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.*
 - ii) Revelation 6:12-17 - ... *I looked and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood ... v. 14 The sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. v. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, v. 16 calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; v. 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?"*
 - iii) Revelation 16:17-19 - ...*A loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" v. 18 And there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake. v. 19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered great Babylon, to make her drain the cup of the fury of his wrath.*
- b) Labor Pains are on the Increase - Before this end comes, God has appointed that this great final shaking will be preceded by smaller earthquakes and other calamities. He is allowing this to happen in order to give notice of something awesome coming.

Jesus called it the labor pains of the last days.

- i) In Matthew 24:6–8, the disciples ask Jesus what will be the sign of his coming and the close of the age (v. 3). He answers in verses 6-7: *v. 6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. v. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. v. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.*
- ii) Calling the earthquakes and wars and famines birth-pangs is important for two reasons:
 - (1) First, it means that there will be an increasing frequency of these things as the end comes near and that the intensity of them will increase, because that's the way it happens with labor pains before a birth.
 - (2) Second, birth pains means that what these earthquakes are leading up to is something wonderful, like the birth of a child. The labor may be painful, but it is full of hope. They are the birth-pangs of the Kingdom. That's what the meaning of increasing frequency of calamities will be as the age draws to a close.

Natural disasters are on the rise.

- (a) Hurricane Katrina 2005 - The deadliest hurricane to ever hit the Gulf Coast. It was ranked as the sixth strongest overall to hit the United States. It was also one of the costliest with estimated property damages of US \$81 billion.
- (b) Haiti Earthquake 2010 - A magnitude 7.0 earthquake hit Port-Au-Prince with 59 aftershocks ranging from 4.2 to 5.9 magnitudes in strength. The strongest earthquake to hit the country since 1770, it had led to over 200,000 deaths, two million homeless, and three million people in need of emergency aid.
- (c) Japan's Earthquake/Tsunami 2011 - A 9.0 magnitude quake followed by tsunami waves hit the east coast of Japan in March 11, 2011. It destroyed 250,000 buildings and caused the worse nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986. 15 million people were killed and/or injured.
- (d) East African Drought 2011 - In 2011, the Horn of Africa experienced a devastating drought. It left an estimated 12.4 million people in need of food. The food crisis reached across Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia. It threatened the livelihood of more than 9.5 million people, and caused widespread death and famine.

c) One thing is Unshakable: The Kingdom of God

- i) The unshakable Kingdom of God is God's gift to those who believe!

Hebrews 12:28 ESV - *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken...*

- ii) Notice: We have already received it. Verse 27 says that what can be shaken will be swept away in one last great shaking, and that what is unshakable will remain. Then verse 28 says that we have already received that unshakable kingdom.

Romans 8:22-23 (NLT) - *For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. v.23 And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.*

Worship God in Holy Fear and Awe

2 Corinthians 7:1 - *Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, **bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.***

1 Peter 4:16, 17 - *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. v.17 **For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God...***

- 1) Don't refuse God when He speaks.

Hebrews 12:18-22 - *You have not come to a physical mountain, to a place of flaming fire, darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai. v.19 For they heard an awesome trumpet blast and a voice so terrible that they begged God to stop speaking. v.20 They staggered back under God's command... v.21 Moses himself was so frightened at the sight that he said, "I am terrified and trembling." v.22 No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God.*

12:23-24 - You are coming into something wonderful and powerful!

You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children...

You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things...

You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect.

You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness...

12:25 - *Be careful that **you do not refuse to listen** to the One who is speaking...*

a) God wants to speak to you through the things that shake you up.

A little suffering always precedes a new birth!

b) Don't be terrified of your future.

Maybe the intensity of painful experiences means God is about to birth something new and wonderful in your life!

Philippians 2:12, 13 - *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**, v.13 for **it is God who works in you**, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

2) Don't replace God to avoid temporary discomfort.

The warning of Esau: Hebrews 12:16-17 - *Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau, who traded his birthright as the firstborn son for a single meal. v.17 You know that afterward, when he wanted his father's blessing, he was rejected. It was too late for repentance, even though he begged with bitter tears.*

a) Esau gave away his inheritance for a single meal!

He was flippant about his destiny and he worshiped a meal more than the work of God. He gave something away that he could not get back!

b) Those who fear the Lord will not satisfy themselves with the things that bring temporary relief.

“Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe.” In other words, instead of being like Esau who spurned the offer of grace for the sake of short-term pleasure, seek to please God.

- c) This race is a marathon! Let the fear of God spur you on toward the finished line!