

## Hebrews 12:18-29

“You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm;<sup>18</sup> 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,<sup>19</sup> because they could not bear what was commanded: ‘If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.’ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, ‘I am trembling with fear.’

<sup>22</sup> “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,<sup>23</sup> 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,<sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

<sup>25</sup> “**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?**

<sup>26</sup> “**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.’**

<sup>27</sup> “**The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,<sup>29</sup> for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’”**

**Do you like cleaning other people’s messes?**

**If you own a dog or have kids, you’ve cleaned many messes.**

Children and pets don’t create all of life’s muddles, though.

**When Norma and I first moved to California in 1957, her parents visited us. Aerosol shave cream was new at the time.**

I was taking “it all off” then—my whiskers, that is.

Norma’s dad had never tried shave aerosols.

**I urged Buck to try my new shave cream. He took the shaving equipment into the snug bathroom of our little one room house. After he’d been in there a long time; Norma, her mother, and I became concerned.**

**To the left as you entered, hung a nearly full length mirror.**

Norma and I stealthily opened the door.

**There stood Buck in his usual kakis, eyes fixed on that mirror.**

Spray cream plastered Buck’s face, the mirror, his kakis, and even the ceiling.

We slowly closed the door leaving Buck alone in his plight.

**After sixty-two years, the image of Buck’s mess still makes us giggle.**



**Yet the grand mess societies find themselves in causes no chuckles.**

Prominent voices advocate immoral behavior demanding freedom to act as they please.

**They attempt to silence anyone who criticizes or disapproves of their conduct.**

Coincidentally violence erupts in many parts of the world.

Anger and fear intensify.

**The morality shifts alarm many Christians and make them feel threatened.**

**They expect governments to allow them freedom of worship.**

**They strongly work to keep that right.**  
In this uncertainty many Christians wonder why they should have to struggle so.

**Why does life have to be so difficult?**

**Doesn’t God promise to make our paths straight?**



**Hebrews 12 speaks to these circumstances. It gives insight and understanding.**

Helps us sleep at night and be at peace.

**The connection between unbelief in God and world chaos seems apparent.**

As the world severs its ties with God, it becomes increasingly restless and hateful. As we get caught up in society’s situation, our nerves get more tangled than day-old spaghetti.

**We Christians forget a fundamental truth that the Bible strongly emphasizes:**

Life doesn’t end in the grave;

**This life is a learning stage.**

For those who learn their lessons now, God promises better existence beyond.

**Parents prepare their kids for adulthood.**

In the same way, God deals with us as children needing preparation for eternal life.

**The first part of Hebrews 12 (4-17) speaks to believers grappling with “messes tests.”**

**Are you facing hardship on many fronts?**

**Verse 4 speaks to where most of us are:**

“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”

**We are still alive aren’t we?**

**We survived that last “spanking.”**

We might experience some pain, but we’re very much alive and kicking.

**The struggle is part of the Lord’s schooling.**

Verse 5 and on remind us of God’s intentions: <sup>5</sup>“And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup>because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.’”

**Keep in mind that the word “discipline” is related learning.**

If the reference to “son” sounds sexist to you, remember that in first century society, sons were the primary heirs.

**In Christ, sons and daughters receive equally: —“there’s neither male nor female.”<sup>1</sup>**

**Jesus informed us that in the resurrection, there will be no marriage.**

All will enjoy equal status before the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 3:28

“At the resurrection,” Jesus said, “people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.”<sup>2</sup>

One day at a Bible study in Hollywood, a woman asked what Jesus’ statement meant.

When she learned that she wouldn’t have to be married to her husband in heaven, she muttered;

“Thank God; I thought I’d have to live with him forever!”



This section of Hebrews 12:4-17, makes the following evident:

- **God disciplines us for our good.**  
Learning and applying what we learn benefit us.  
If the Lord does not correct us, we are not His true children.
- **Discipline rarely pleases us, but it produces good things.**  
Our kids thanked Norma



<sup>2</sup> Matthew 22:30 NIV

many times for disciplining them.

Sometimes we parents correct our kids because we get irritated and impatient.

**God’s discipline always helps us.**

Two more vital points in Hebrews 12:

First, make sure no **“bitter root grows up.”**

**We must regularly take sweetness tests.**

**Anger spreads like lethal infection.**

When we claim that we have a right to be angry, we deceive ourselves and endanger our loved ones.

**Bitterness easily rots everything we do.**

**“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” Ephesians 4:26 NIV.**

Second, immorality easily deceives us.

**Check out Esau’s story in Genesis 26-28.**

**Esau lived by his society’s standards.**

**His desire for pleasure led him to some stupid mistakes.**

Instead of admitting his errors, he became and remained bitter.

**Hebrews tells Esau’s sad example:**

“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. <sup>16</sup> See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.

<sup>17</sup> Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.”

You could call today’s text a *Tale of Two Mountains*.

To further build on Charles Dickens’s famous lines:

We can choose the “best of times” or the “worst of times.”

God gave Israel the commands known as the *Law of Moses* under memorable conditions.

Most folks have seen the movie Exodus.



**God demanded Israel take His Law to heart. All men and women had to follow strict moral guidelines.**

God remind them that He meant business:

**No one but Moses and his assistant Joshua could even touch that mountain.**

When Moses went up on Mt. Sinai, the mountain shook and smoked.

**At the time, God gave Moses a law for Israel that remained as long as they were a nation. Smoke, fire, and quaking scared Moses silly.**

**Those were the worst of times.**

**God promises you and me the Best of Times.**

You and I now stand before Mt. Zion, a symbol of exquisite afterlife in heaven.

**Graduation from our present life-schooling occurs on Resurrection Day.**

**Myriads of angels assemble there.**

**Nearby is God’s big book list of the saved.**

**Whose names appear in this Book of Life?**

**It includes the names of all who faithfully to the end endure testing in Jesus’ name.**

When he returns, Jesus raises them to life. They recognize now that life doesn't end here.

For now we learn and gratefully endure. God judges loyalty to Him and to His word. “You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant . . .”

Churches should be assemblies of thankful people, who are learning to be like Jesus, and joyfully telling others how great God is. **Do you love God our Creator more than you do this world and its present idols?**

Everything on this earth spoils, rusts, fades, and rots like autumn leaves.

All we see now will shake apart leaving only the eternal things that God alone sees now.

**Are you choosing life?**

<sup>26</sup> “At that time (in Moses' day) his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’”

<sup>27</sup> “The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is,

**created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. “**

**I pray that all of us will accept the offer of life God gave to all of us in Jesus, His son. And hang tough.**

<sup>28</sup> “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, <sup>29</sup> for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’”

Doubt, evil, and hate will end for those loving God. Peace and love will prevail. **How can we refuse this offer?**



“As it is written: ‘What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived’ — the things God has prepared for those who love him—”

**1 Corinthians 2:9 NIV**

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