

## Hebrews 12:18-24 “Exceeding Endurance”

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### I. Introduction

The writer has given his readers both the position as well as the purpose of trials and persecution: *To inwardly bring about maturity and spiritual growth and to outwardly be a witness to an unbelieving world for the hope that lies within.* Next in verses 18-24 we immediately recognize the personal appeal of the writer as he writes, “*For you*” as the focus here is not upon the position and purpose of persecution but rather to motivate the person who is in the midst of it as the writer was writing. Many of these professing Hebrews were facing extreme pressure and were having to make a decision to neglect their tradition, they were facing persecution and loss even of their life if they continued with Jesus. The writer doesn’t deny such real fears but instead of those fears he warns them of something far worse than this and that is the fear of God’s judgment! The fear of accepting Jesus and the persecution which may follow if they do should be contrasted with the judgment that they would receive from God by rejecting His Son and His sacrifice. Their fear should not be of coming to Mount Zion but of turning back to Mount Sinai! Every person will be judged on one of two bases. Either by the law of grace, by their works of Jesus finished work, by the provisions of Sinai or the provisions of Zion. God has two sets of books, one is recorded every name that rejected Jesus and in the other are the names of those that trusted God’s only Son and His sacrifice. Those whose names are in the “Lambs book of life” are judged by Jesus righteousness and those whose names aren’t there are judged by their own righteousness which Isa 64:6 tells us are a filthy rag.

### II. Vs. 18-21 Mount Sinai

Vs. 18 The mention of Esau in verse 16 leads the writer to speak of other first testament comparisons with the New Testament. And this one involves the response to two different mountains Sinai and Zion. Sinai is the Mountain that “*may not be touched*” and the word in the Greek means superficial contact, this along with the description given by the writer of Mount Sinai as “*burning with fire and to the blackness, darkness and tempest*” are all meant to describe the fear associated with the first testament. The contrast is this description when compared to coming to Jesus as the Messiah and His work on the cross.

The old covenant is associated with Mount Sinai because that is where God spoke to Moses and the Covenant was instituted. It was the covenant of judgment and fear as it said, “Do this, or don’t do that, or you will be judged.” To this the writer says “*You have not come to this mountain.*” No sinner could come near to this mountain as they couldn’t witness God’s holiness and live. The purpose of this Old Covenant encounter at Mount Sinai was to convince the people of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. The people were understandably terrified as they stood at a distance and trembled as they plead with Moses and said “*You speak to Him, lest we die.*” The reason the writer brings this up is to warn some of these Hebrews about going back to the covenant of the law with the knowledge of Jesus’ sacrifice. Paul called it in 2 Corinthians 3:7 “*the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones.*” At Mount Sinai a sinful and unforgiven person stands at a distance from an infinitely holy and perfect God. The purpose of this covenant is that forever shows a person is an awareness of their own sin and failure, to bring

people face to face with their own sinfulness with no place to hide. The law makes no allowances for sin, no exceptions or justifications nothing less than perfect obedience. Paul said of the law in Romans 7:9-11 *“I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.”* And in Galatians 3:10 he writes, *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”* These first testament Hebrews were obedient from a position that didn’t want lose something from God instead of the position of grace that realize that they already had been given everything from God. Over time they naturally concluded that they “deserved” God’s blessings by their works. The writer uses two mountains and the Israelites response to these mountains, “Mount Sinai” and “Mount Zion”. The comparison is more than geographical it’s relational as the writer is saying, ***“You have come, not to Mount Sinai (the place of fear and trembling), but to Mount Zion, the place of grace; the new Jerusalem, the city of the living God.”***

Vs. 19-21 The writer continues to describe the scene of the Israelite wonders upon their revelation of the law at Mount Sinai as the delivery of the law was accompanied by terror, the reason for this walk down memory lane is so that the reader would recall the reaction of those ancestors who first witnessed the giving of the Law so that they would not go back to that dispensation of how God initially dealt with sinful man and instead would go past the terrifying shadow and move on to the grace-filled fulfillment of Jesus’ sacrifice. To touch or handle the mountain where the law came down from was to profane it and even Moses according Deut. 9:19 was frightened away from it.

### III. Vs. 22-24 Mount Zion

Vs. 22-24 The writer contrasts the 1st testament Jews what the ones that had heard and responded to the message of Jesus as they had come into a new relationship through the door of Jesus. Instead of “returning to Mount Sinai” the reader is encouraged to continue to approach Mount Zion, described as the ***“city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”*** The mountain of the New Covenant is Mount Zion and it represents the heavenly Jerusalem. It is opposite of Mount Sinai:

- ***Sinai is untouchable, Zion is approachable***
- ***Sinai symbolizes the law, Zion symbolizes God grace***
- ***Sinai was terrifying, Zion is inviting***
- ***Sinai is closed to all, Zion is open to all***
- ***Sinai was covered in darkness, Zion is the city of light***

Believers are being told they HAVE COME to Mount Zion as they were already of the gracious mountain, they were already citizens of heaven, already dwelling in the presence of God. Because they were believers in Jesus they they enjoyed seven blessings of Mount Zion:

- A. ***The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem:*** Coming to Jesus is synonymous coming to heaven, as He is the only “Door” by which a person can enter in. That is where our treasure, hope and inheritance is! Currently He is here with us in our heart but soon He will take us bodily to be where He has been preparing a place for us, that where He is we shall always be. We are on earth now as His ambassadors, representing Him to people in a foreign country.
- B. ***An innumerable company of angels, to the generable assembly:*** This describes a public gathering of a festival. There were an innumerable number of angels at Sinai but they weren’t their celebrating, they were blowing trumpets of judgment. When we come to Zion we are gathering for a celebration with the angels. Paul said in Romans 8:21-22 *“creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of*

*will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.”*

- C. ***Church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven:*** This is the body of Christ, those who have received their inheritance, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus. These are those who are “enrolled in heaven” whose names are written in the Lambs book of life! (Rev. 21:27)
- D. ***To God the judge of all:*** On Mount Zion, we come directly into the presence of God, as Luke 23:45 tells us the “veil of the temple was torn in two”. God’s presence in Christ has been opened because of Jesus’s sacrifice. This concept was completely incomprehensible to the Jews.
- E. ***To the spirits of just men made perfect:*** These are all the First Testament saints who were looking forward to forgiveness, peace and deliverance. We will join Abraham, Abel, Moses and David in the household of God. We will not be inferior in righteousness with any of them because like them our righteousness is by faith in Jesus alone!
- F. ***To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant:*** Supremely we come to Jesus who is the mediator of a new covenant with the promise of 1 John 3:2 where we are told that, “*Now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*”
- G. ***To the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel:*** To come Zion is to come to the atoning blood of redemption in Jesus’ own blood. And the readers by faith will join Him there as Jesus is the mediator of a better agreement where His blood speaks of ***vindication*** and ***victory*** instead of Abel’s blood which spoke to God about ***vengeance***.

***Because of Jesus there is no problem between man and God that is not settled by his blood.*** There is no longer any question of guilt. We are as Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus that “***to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the beloved.***” Gone forever is the slippery slope of maintain works to be accepted, our acceptance is in Jesus work not our own! ***What is in view with regards to our security is not our continual failure but instead Jesus Finished success!*** Further more because of Jesus work we have all of His resources at our disposal all operated through the power of the Holy Spirit! This is the same power available to use that raised Jesus from the dead! This is why Paul proclaimed the victory in Romans 8:31 “***If God is for us, who can be against us?***”