

## For Our God Is a Consuming Fire

Hebrews 12:29

Have you considered the fact that every person approaches the Bible with a lens through which his or her interpretation begins? Our text is an example of a verse that is interpreted automatically: "God is love, but He is just. Jesus loves me and is convincing God to not send me to hell." The only problem is the entire book of Hebrews is built around conveying *God's incredible love for us*; including vs. 28-29. Last week we read v. 28 and saw how by God's grace in Christ we learn to *live free*, show favor to others, and become so captivated by God we are in awe of Him! Now the text, "*For our God is a consuming fire.*"

### I. "Our God is a consuming fire" must be understood in terms of God's acceptance and love of us.

There is a place to speak of hell. There is a place to speak of justice. But this verse is not that place. **Our God** is a consuming fire. There are several questions that can help us rightly understand our text.

#### A. Who is our God?

Of course, we would answer, "There is but one only, the living and true God" (Westminster). The great Hebrew *shema* is, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4). This one, true and living God has made Himself known to us; Emmanuel is His name (Matt. 1:23). After Thomas had seen the resurrected Christ, he cried out, "*My Lord and My God*" (John 20:28).

#### B. How did God often appear in the Old Covenant?

Fire. From the Garden of Eden when the "flaming sword" kept Adam and Eve out of the garden. When God called Moses it was from a "burning bush" (Exodus 3:4) and the voice of God spoke. When God gave the Law to Israel on Mt. Sinai, "The Lord descended upon it in fire" (Ex. 19:18). When Israel was guided through the wilderness it was a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. When the "glory of God" descended into the Temple and left the Temple, it was through fire! For 400 years the "glory of God" was gone; until it shone all around the shepherds (Luke 2:9). "In Christ all the fullness of the Godhead lives" (Col. 2:9). The transfiguration revealed Christ, "And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun ..." (Matthew 17:2).

#### C. Does seeing Jesus Christ as "the consuming fire" change your view of this verse?

It should. When we are looking at Jesus, we are viewing "the consuming fire." He is our God.

1. Jesus with the woman in adultery did not condemn; He said, "Go and sin no more."
2. Jesus ate with Zacchaeus as people whispered; but Jesus transformed his life.
3. Jesus met the woman at the well and met her at her place of need; and changed her.

### II. "Our God is a consuming fire" must be understood in terms of God's activity and longing for us.

The definition of "consuming" is "the act of doing away with completely" (Merriam-Webster). "You shall call His name Jesus for He shall 'deliver' His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). *God ever has in view the absolute loveliness of those He loves*. Where loveliness is incomplete, He makes us more lovely by *consuming* everything that is not a reflection of Himself. He consumes sin. There is no way we can separate v. 29 "Our God is a consuming fire" from v. 28 and our activity!

#### A. When we do not show grace, He consumes our selfishness.

Through circumstances, events and people, He leads us to a breaking of our self-centeredness.

#### B. When we do not live freely, He consumes our bondage to religious performance.

He brings us to a place where we can't perform or a sense of total frustration or failure.

#### C. When we do not have a sense of reverence and awe of Him, He consumes our need of others.

All that is not beautiful in the beloved, all that comes between and is not of love's kind, must be consumed. The most loving understanding we can have of God is "*Our God is a consuming fire.*"