

Connection to Hebrews 3:1-19

Given the promises of the unshakeable kingdom of God, the people of God are to serve in reverence and awe. This isn't simply a command for a future destination (heaven). Rather, it's a privilege for us as current citizens of His kingdom. Our worship of God includes love and service towards others as well.

Introduction/Opening:

In various parts of the world, certain seasons each year bring devastating fires to large areas of land. Some of these fires may be the result of the recklessness of man, an accident of some type, or natural forces such as lightning. Whatever the cause, the destructive nature of fire is clearly evident.

Yet, many believers use the word *consumed* in a positive way. The bush was completely aflame with God's holy presence before Moses, yet it wasn't consumed to destruction (Exodus 3:2). If individuals can be consumed by God, then what impact should it have on their lives? Is being consumed by God only reflected in times of private or corporate worship, reading Scripture, singing songs, praying, or the like? Or should being consumed by this holy fire impact our relationship with, and toward, others as well?

Hebrews 13 begins by stating that our brotherly love (Greek – philadelphia) should continue. The good news is that by using the word *continue*, the writer is stating this love is already present. Removing the chapter break connects the thought that our worship, in reverence and awe of a holy God must also include loving and serving others if it's to be acceptable in His sight. (Compare with Colossians 3:23 and 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Note: The word for continue (Greek – meno) is the same word used in Hebrews 12:27 for remain. It also captures the idea of enduring.

Outline

1. Our worship of God must include loving strangers. (Hebrews 13:1-3)
Our willingness to serve others shouldn't be based on who they are, what they have, or what they might do for us. (James 2:1-4) Our service to others is a reflection of our love for God as we imitate His service toward us.
2. Our worship of God must include loving our family. (Hebrews 13:4)
Specifically, the text says *marriage*. For those who are married, this message is clear – honor your spouse, remaining pure to and for one another. For those who are not married, a day may come when you are (perhaps one of the strangers shown hospitality in the previous verses), so honor a prospective spouse even while you are unmarried. Ultimately, our service and love toward others is not to be at the expense of our service and love toward our families. But neither should our service to our families be at the expense of our service to God.

3. Our worship of God must include loving God. (Hebrews 13:5-17)

As we worship God, we will:

- a) Trust Him. (13:5) If we are consumed by Him, how can we not trust Him?
- b) Remember our leaders. (13:7) Leaders who have pointed the way to God.
- c) Obey the leaders. (13:17) Obedience should be done with joy.

Why should we follow these commands to love strangers, our family, remember and respect our leaders? Because by doing so,

- a) We will give others an opportunity to give God glory. (Matthew 5:16)
- b) We are bringing continual praises to God. (Hebrews 13:15-16)
- c) By using our lips (Hebrews 13:15), others may know the name of Jesus. (Romans 10:8-17)

Conclusion

The conclusion of this message also represents the conclusion of Hebrews. The writer of Hebrews used many examples from Israel's beginnings as a nation freed from bondage. These beginnings included the giving of the Law and the means of atonement amidst a system built upon sacrifice. These examples from as many as 1500 years prior to the letter still resonate today, some 2000 years later, though the application has changed. This is true because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)

That is the purpose of Hebrews. It was written to show that all of the promises given to a previous generation were but a glimpse of the true promise to come. The true promise – Jesus, the Son of God, provides a better rest, is a better priest, and instituted a better covenant because He is a better sacrifice than what the ancient Israelites could have known.

Yet, for us, with a faith like many of those from ancient past, we can look back at how God fulfilled His promises to the Israelites and is still fulfilling His promises today. God's chosen people are still being called to a better life – a life that's eternal and one that dwells in an eternal kingdom is available to us now and forevermore.

Idea: Close by reading Hebrews 13:20-21 as a prayer.

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