

Heb. 12:1 ¶ Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
“Wherefore” – Based on what we just read in the previous chapter

“compassed about...witnesses” – The writer is speaking in reference to the people of faith just talked about in chapter 11 and identifies them as witnesses. Webster’s definition of a *witness* adds a lot of perspective:

“...testimony....That which furnishes evidence or proof....One who is cognizant; a person who beholds, or otherwise has personal knowledge of, anything.”

Most significantly, their lives testify to us of the evidence of the power of faith in the life of an individual. I believe that, taken in context with other scripture, it’s possible that they currently witness the evidences *we* give of the power of faith as well.

Matt. 22:32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Mark 12:24 And Jesus answering said unto them....And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

To be *surrounded* by a great cloud of witnesses seems to make reference to a group of spectators watching a competition in context with the rest of the verse.

When running a race, one is bound to do his best only when free of extra weight or impediments. In context, our race as believers is to finish the race or fight (from the Greek) of our life with faith. This is in line with the message of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians.

1Cor. 9:24-27 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

And to Timothy.

1Tim. 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Sin is obviously a great impediment to our success, and is compared to an extra weight that can be put aside. It also jumped out that we are to “lay aside every weight AND the sin...” Sin isn’t our only hindrance; sometimes the choices we make aren’t as distinct as between good and bad, but are often between good vs. better, with better obviously being less a hindrance. (7/09) Other “weights” that can hinder us if we allow them to are the trials and tribulations that are part of life on this earth. If we keep our focus on the Lord trusting that He is allowing

these things for “good” (Romans 8:28), then we can continue to run without carrying the burden of worry that would cause us to stumble.

Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

It is interesting, however, to note that the writer makes note of the importance of running with patience as well. The life of a believer is more to be compared to a marathon—not a sprint. The Greek for *patience* states: “cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy...patient continuance (waiting).” In other words, it’s a reference to our attitude, our mindset as we run the designated course. As I thought about that in connection with the verses in 1Corinthians, it made more sense. Paul states that there is one winner in a race, and that we are to run to win. Considering that we are all running on a different race course, we can all be winners. And every true person of faith will be a winner. How can I say this? Because the fruition of true faith is the work of Christ in the individual.

Phil. 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

I was about to move on to the next verse when I noticed that the race is *before us*. We are not to be focused on what is in the past; we are to focus on what’s ahead.

Heb. 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

In fact, the writer gets more specific as to our focus; it is to be on Jesus—the Author and Finisher of faith. This gives emphasis to the truth of the verse in Philippians quoted above.

“author” = chief leader, captain; Webster: The beginner, former, or first mover of anything; hence, the efficient cause of a thing; a creator; an originator.

“finisher” = completer, from root that includes perfecter; Webster: One who finishes, puts an end to, completes, or perfects...for the workman who gives a finishing touch to the work, or any part of it, and brings it to perfection.

This again gets into an area that I will probably only ever have a glimmer of understanding this side of heaven. The scripture is clear that our Creator sovereignly chose to empower man with a will and holds him accountable to his choices. Scripture just as surely teaches that God is not willing that any should perish.

Ezek. 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Ezek. 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye.

2Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Also clearly taught in scripture is the truth that it is God's work in us that effects salvation.

Eph. 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Phil. 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

2Tim. 1:8-9 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began....

I accept this all by faith and confident that His word is true and righteous and that some day I will be able to understand and explain it more fully.

I think the writer is also making reference to Jesus as the perfect example of living a spirit-filled life of faith. He is the example we are to seek to emulate.

John 13:15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

1Pet. 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

The more amazing truth of this verse is that Jesus considered endured the cross and all its shame (from a human perspective) for the joy it would bring—my redemption. My heart tells me that the joy of the Son is rooted in the pleasure He was giving the Father through His obedience. Scripture is full of the truth that Jesus was completely centered in doing the will of His Father.

Mark 14:36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things *are* possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless **not what I will, but what thou wilt.**

John 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; **because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father** which hath sent me.

John 8:29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for **I do always those things that please him.**

Gal. 1:3-4 Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, **Who gave himself for our sins**, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, **according to the will of God and our Father:**

Jesus explained that his position at the right hand of the Father is a declaration of His power as God's Son.

Mark 14:62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Luke 22:69-70 Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.

The Holy Spirit declares through the words of Paul that it is a position of authority over all creation.

Eph. 1:17-22 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him...according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church....

In looking at the verses separately I almost missed an important point—We are to run our race “looking to the Lord Jesus.” He is to be the center of our focus as we run this race; the Greek states to “consider attentively.” Webster describes this as exclusive or earnest consideration. If we take our focus off the Lord Jesus, we are more apt to stumble and suffer setbacks along the way.

Heb. 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

“consider” = To fix the mind on, with a view to a careful examination; to think on with care; to ponder; to study; to meditate on.

When we take the time to *consider* Jesus and how He endured continued ridicule and refutation from the religious leaders in particular against the truth He was teaching, it will serve to encourage us to keep on keeping on as we hold fast to our faith. I think it is significant to note that the writer identifies the struggle as one of the mind. Yes, the flesh and its lusts can exert great influence; but it is the attitude of the mind, the essence of our being, that is most significant to how we run the race. Jesus was very clear in warning His disciples that they could expect no better treatment than He received as their Master.

Matt. 10:22, 24-25 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved....The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master

of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?

The example of consistency and perseverance of Jesus in faith and obedience to His Father in light of the ridicule and rejection He experienced should serve to encourage every true believer to want to emulate that example.

Heb. 12:4 ¶ Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

This verse puts in perspective the strength of Jesus' example. The writer is reminding his audience that they have *not yet* been called upon to die because of their faith. The writer is also reminding them that to die because of their faith could yet be in their future.

As I read through this verse again, it stood out to me that in connection with the comparison to Jesus, this verse reminds us that Jesus' life was one of "striving against sin." Jesus didn't live on autopilot as the Son of God and breeze through life as a man without confronting the temptations of sin. As a man, He made full use of the power of the Spirit in choosing to reject sin and make choices according to the will of God—just as we, as believers, are empowered to do. Instead of yielding to the flesh and pride, He overcame it. His heart was completely yielded to the Father in faith; He never once exhibited one ounce of doubt that His Father knew what was best for Him. He did not look forward to the cross; He endured the cross. Webster tells us that endurance is to suffer patiently without yielding.

Heb. 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

Heb. 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

The writer is making references to scripture that declare that God will chasten His children, those He loves. Keeping in mind that this is a letter directed specifically to the Hebrews, this is an important foundation to the message he is declaring.

Deut. 8:5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, *so* the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.

Job 5:17-18 Behold, happy *is* the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.

Prov. 3:11-12 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

Only a father who cares will make a concerted effort to train and discipline his child, and God is the best of Fathers. *Chastening* is a reference to teaching through instruction and correction. *Scourging* is a reference to inflicting suffering as part of the process.

Frankly, I think that a lack of truly loving fathers is one of the primary reasons for the downfall of our society today. The enemy has been quite successful in getting our fathers to fall for the lie that love is all about material provision without regard to spiritual provision. This emphasis on the material has resulted in fathers investing less time and energy interacting with their children and more time and energy in pursuit of the financial resources desired to provide them with material wealth.

I totally skipped over the phrase, “ye have forgotten the exhortation.” I interrupted a study in Deuteronomy to do this study of Hebrews, and there are many times that Moses encourages the people to “remember” as a motivation to obedience.

Deut. 7:18 Thou shalt not be afraid of them: *but* shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt;

Deut. 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Deut. 9:7 ¶ Remember, *and* forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD.

Deut. 24:9 Remember what the LORD thy God did unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come forth out of Egypt.

Heb. 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

Heb. 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

The writer is basically saying that those who never experience chastening or discipline by God cannot truly call themselves children of God. Verse 8 emphasizes that *all* of God’s children will experience His discipline--“all are partakers.”

Heb. 12:9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Heb. 12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

The writer is assuming that all those receiving this letter would have experienced times of correction from their fathers. As a result of this correction, they had respected their fathers. He also points out that the correction of their fathers was based on their own judgment—sometimes flawed judgment seems to be implied. If we as believers showed our earthly fathers respect, how much more should we be willing to submit ourselves to the discipline of our heavenly Father whose

discipline is always to our benefit; He is always focused on sanctifying us, conforming us to the image of His Son. His discipline is never flawed.

Rom. 8:29 ¶ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

The writer's reference to God as the "Father of spirits" also stood out to me. This is again a reminder that the essence of our being is in our spirit—not our body. The spirit is created to be eternal; the question is whether one will choose to place oneself in subjection to God in faith and live or to reject Him and experience spiritual death—eternal separation from the Father.

Heb. 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

The writer is acknowledging that to experience *chastening* is to experience grief, sorrow and/or heaviness (from the Greek); in no way does it seem to be a good thing at the time it is happening. In retrospect, however, we can see how it has produced fruit(s) of righteousness through the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us in the process. The more fruit of the Spirit allowed to blossom in our lives, the more at peace we are with God. The child of God understands that though the chastening will produce sorrow, the benefit of the experience is well worth the time of sorrow.

Heb. 12:12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

Heb. 12:13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

In these verses the writer is reminding the believers that they are responsible to make choices that will facilitate spiritual growth and healing. He is pointing out that our attitude and the decisions we make have a direct impact regarding the amount of fruit produced in our lives through God's chastening. Good soil—good fruit. In other words, we are to focus on the truth of God's word and cling to His promises.

"lift up the hands" – I think this can be a reference to prayer and praise of God.

Psalms 28:2 "Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle."

Psalms 63:3-4 "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name."

Psalms 119:48 "My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes."

Lamentations 3:41 "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens."

“feeble knees” – Even when we feel the weakest, the child of God can rest in the promise of deliverance from the Father—though it may not come in the way we might expect it.

Isaiah 35:3-4 “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.”

Feeble knees and *hanging hands* could also be a reference to fear, and the child of God is not to be fearful.

2Timothy 1:7 “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

The child of God is to have faith as was so vividly illustrated in the previous chapter.

Psalms 27:1 “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

Psalm 56:4 “In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.”

Psalms 118:6 “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?”

“make straight paths....” – This is a reference to living an honest life and acting according to what is right.

Proverbs 4:26-27 “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.”

When we choose to stray from faith in God’s word, we can expect to encounter more chastening rather than healing and growth.

This again brings up the reason for this letter. The straight path is that as revealed in Christ by faith—not through the works of righteousness associated with the practice of Judaism.

Heb. 12:14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Heb. 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled;

The writer is careful to emphasize that holy living is expected of one who has experienced God’s grace. He has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit to empower us to live in peace with purity. The Greek for the word *follow* means to pursue. In other words, it’s a matter of choice and effort on the part of each believer; the Holy Spirit doesn’t work us like a marionette. As I have noted often throughout my studies, our actions give proof of our faith; and only those with true faith can hope to “see the Lord.” We are to be diligent in guarding against allowing bitterness to contaminate our lives and/or the body of believers. Scripture is clear that the health of each member of the body affects the health of the whole.

1Corinthians 12:13-26 "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body....For the body is not one member, but many....But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.... And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

Heb. 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Heb. 12:17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

I think in context here the reference is to spiritual fornication and a wicked heathen lifestyle (from the Greek). The writer is emphasizing that the life of the believer is to be distinct from the world and in submission to the Lord. Esau was focused on the desire of the flesh in the *now*. He showed no concern at all regarding the future consequences of his action. It seems that he finally came to value possessing the birthright as evidenced through the tears shed when he realized that he would not receive the blessing from his father. There is no indication, however, that he repented of the deal that he had made with his brother, he was still focused on the desires of his flesh in the *now*, which at the time being referenced was on getting the blessing. His actions remind me of a child whose will has been thwarted and hopes that by playing on the sympathy of his parent can get what he wants.

This is a very important principle. There are consequences to sin, in refusing to repent of sin and submit to God. We in America live in a culture that promotes selfishness and takes the blessings of God for granted. Many in the "church" live as though we despise the blessings of the Lord, which are rooted in the spiritual. Jesus was very clear in teaching that our priority should be on attaining spiritual treasure—not earthly treasure.

Matthew 6:19-21 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Heb. 12:18 ¶ For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

Heb. 12:19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

Heb. 12:20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

Heb. 12:21 And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

In this section of verses the writer begins to draw a distinct contrast between the experience of the Jewish people of old and the experience of the Jewish believers to whom he is writing. Their ancestors had been confronted with a powerful physical manifestation of the presence of God that caused the Mount Sinai to burn with fire accompanied by darkness and smoke. They actually heard the voice of God thunder as a trumpet and it frightened them so much that they begged Him to stop speaking. Even Moses responded with fear and trembling. They had been instructed that no one was to touch the mountain, not even one of their animals. If they did, they were to be stoned or shot with an arrow.

Point being made—God is holy and to be revered with great reverence. This conclusion is supported by the record in Exodus.

Exodus 20:19-20 “And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for **God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.**”

Heb. 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Heb. 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Heb. 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

In contrast, the Jewish believer through faith has come to Mount Zion, “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”

“are come” – It strikes me that this is a reference to a completed act. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, the believer’s home in heaven, the presence of the living God, is guaranteed.

Instead of inspiring fear, God’s presence is described so as to make one desire to be there—not to hear about it from someone else.

- It’s a place full of angels whose purpose is to minister to the “heirs of salvation” (cf 1:14).
- It’s a place full of family, the church, the bride of Christ, all our brothers and sisters in Christ whose names are written in the book of life.
- It’s the presence of God, the righteous Judge of all men, whose judgment the believer has no need to fear since he/she is declared righteous in Jesus.
- It’s a place of fellowship with men and women of faith of all times who have been made perfect through their faith in God.
- It’s a place where we will meet Jesus our Savior face to face, The One through whom we have been reconciled through the new covenant of grace. Abel’s blood cried out for vengeance in response to the wicked actions of his brother. Jesus’ blood cries out in forgiveness for those who will turn to Him in faith.

Heb. 12:25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven:

Heb. 12:26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, **Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.**

“Him that speaketh” = Jesus the Son of God

The warning—Don’t refuse to accept the truth of the word of God as declared by His messenger. Those who rejected the word of God as delivered by Moses, God’s earthly messenger, did not escape judgment. It has already been established that Jesus is greater than Moses. So it stands to reason that to reject the message of God’s heavenly messenger, the man Jesus, God’s precious Son, you will all the more surely suffer judgment.

When God spoke at Mount Sinai, the earth shook. Scripture records that the next time God speaks His commands not only will the earth shake, but so will the heavens.

Isaiah 13:13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

Joel 3:16 “The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”

Haggai 2:6-7 “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.”

I think it is clear from these references that this will occur when Messiah returns as King of kings to establish His kingdom and take His throne in Jerusalem.

Thought--There is nothing more sure than the promise of God.

Heb. 12:27 And this *word*, **Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.**

This seems to be saying that this future *shaking* signifies or declares that only that which is eternal will be lasting. The things of this present creation will pass away to reveal the things that will last for eternity.

Heb. 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Heb. 12:29 For our God *is a consuming fire.*

The writer is pointing out that true believers will be part of that eternal kingdom. This inheritance is only ours through God’s grace, the free gift of salvation through faith in His Son Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." I think the writer is closing his letter with an emphasis on the reason why he wrote the letter to begin with. It is only through faith we can serve God "acceptably."

Hebrews 11:6 "But without faith it is impossible to please him:" We are to serve God in faith with reverence and godly fear. In other words, our works are to be done with respect and reverence to a holy God. When we do anything with the intent of adding to that which is provided to us in Jesus, we are showing ourselves "without faith." We are, however, to have a healthy fear of the Righteous Judge who possesses the power and authority to destroy. This echoes the teaching of Jesus.

Matthew 10:28 "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Luke 12:4-5 "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

I couldn't close without noting the reference to "our" God. This seems to temper the reference to God as a consuming fire. If He is "our" God, we have no need to fear that fire.