

## Hebrews 12-25-29

**Preamble:** We are on the home stretch, only five sermons left in Hebrews...

**Prayer:** please join me in prayer...

### **Introduction:**

If I was given a dime for every time I warned my children of danger, I would be a millionaire.

“Don’t run across the road.”

“Buckle your seat belt.”

“Wear your helmet when you ride your bike.”

“Don’t run with scissors.”

“Don’t dive into the shallow end of the pool.”

“Don’t put that nail in the light socket.”

Why do parents warn their children of danger? Because they love their children.

The book of Hebrews is famous for its five sets of warning passages (Heb. 2:1-4; 3:12-4:13; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:25-29). This morning we come to the final warning passage in the book.

Why does the author keep warning his audience about the dangers of walking away from Christ? Because he loves them! Furthermore, he knows the danger of walking away is very real. No one is immune from falling away from Christ. This means that you are not immune and I’m not immune. “But Dave, don’t you believe in the perseverance of the saints?” Yes, I do! So does the author of Hebrews. These warnings are the means that God uses to help the saints persevere. If you heed the warnings it proves that you are a Christian, if you don’t you never were.

How should we respond to the author’s final warning to persevere? We must respond by doing three things-

*First, we obey*

*Second, we prepare*

*Third, we worship*

*Obedience, Preparation, & Worship*

In one sense, this is a summary of the entire Christian life. We obey Christ’s command to repent and believe, we prepare for Christ’s return, in the meantime, we worship! Let’s look at each response....

### **First, obedience!**

The author exhorts us to obey. Obey what? Obey God’s command to keep believing. He does this by arguing from the lesser to the greater, a common rhetorical device in the ANE. Here is how this type of argument work, what is true of the lesser is even more true of the greater.

Let’s look at the lesser and the greater in verse 25.

**Hebrews 12:25 (ESV) — 25** See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth,...

God warned Israel while on the earth. We know from last week's passage that this is a reference to Mt. Sinai. How did God warn Israel from Mt. Sinai? He presented them with the terms of the Mosaic Covenant.

He said, "If you obey my laws you will be blessed, but if you disobey my laws you will be cursed."

These blessings and curses are spelled out in detail in Deut. 28. The blessings are incredible, but so are the curses. Let me highlight a few of them described in **Deut. 28:15-68**

If they disobeyed, God promised to curse their cities, cursed their fields, and curse their livestock.

He promised pestilence, disease, fever, inflammation, drought, blight, mildew.

He promised that they will be defeated by their enemies.

He promised boils, tumors, scabs, itch, madness, blindness, and confusion of mind.

He promised that their livestock would be given to their enemies, locusts will consume their crops, and their wives and daughters would be violated.

He promised that they would eat the flesh of their dead children when their cities were surrounded by their enemies.

Finally, he promised that they would be exiled from their land.

Sadly, all these things came to pass. Why? Israel disobeyed God again, and again, and again. God was exceedingly patient with Israel, but eventually God kept all of his promises to Israel.

That was the lesser scenario... how about the greater scenario?

**Hebrews 12:25 (ESV) — 25** See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

If Israel experienced God's judgment under the Old Covenant, how much more will we experience God's judgment under the new covenant if we refuse to heed God's warnings?

Jesus inaugurated the New covenant with his death and resurrection. Then he ascended to the Father's right hand (Hebrews 4:14, 7:26, 9:24). Now he warns us from Heaven, through his sacred word to obey the terms of the New Covenant.

The new covenant warnings are far more intense because the New Covenant blessings are far more intense. The blessings of the old covenant were earthly, physical, and material. But, the blessings of the New covenant are heavenly, spiritual, and eternal.

**One scholar sums up verse 25 like this,**

"If a man merits condemnation for neglecting the imperfect message of the law, how much more does he merit it for neglecting the perfect message of the gospel? Because the gospel is the full revelation of God, there is laid on the man who hears it a double and a terrible responsibility; and his condemnation must be all the more if he neglects it." (William Barclay)

**Illustration:**

A couple sits down for dinner. Halfway through the dinner the husband offers his wife some of his mashed potatoes. She says, "I don't want your mashed potatoes." How do you think the husband will feel after being rejected? He may be a little miffed, but he is probably going to recover in a few seconds.

On the other hand, imagine this same husband planning an extravagant vacation for his wife (two weeks in Hawaii, shopping, pedicures, manicures, massages, fine restaurants, beautiful hikes, walks on the beach, helicopter tours, scuba diving, and that is just the beginning).

He saved his money for five years and he planned the trip for ten years. He read the five love languages book. Then he studied his wife and was convinced he knew exactly what would make her feel loved.

He finally says, "Sweetheart, I love you so much, I made plans for us to take an extravagant vacation to Hawaii together. The wife responds by saying, "That sounds lame, I'm staying home."

How do you think the husband would feel? If the husband was upset about the lesser scenario (the mashed potatoes), how much more will he be upset about the greater scenario (his wife rejecting the trip to Hawaii)?

### **Application:**

If God was upset when Israel disobeyed the terms of the old covenant, how much more will he be upset if we continue to disobey the terms of the new covenant?

What are the terms of the new covenant? God says, "If you trust in my son Jesus, I will wash away your sins, I will write my law on your heart, I will fill you with my spirit, and I will never leave you or forsake you!"

How do we obey the terms of the new covenant? We believe!!! "What??? That is it??? Don't we have to do a bunch of religious things?" No, we simply believe, and we keep believing, and we keep believing until the day we die.

If we reject these terms, we will experience something far worse than Israel experienced for rejecting the terms of the Old Covenant.

If you are not a Christian, God is warning you as well. He offers you forgiveness, life, joy, and peace in Jesus Christ. But you must make a decision to trust Jesus with your life and keep trusting Jesus until the day you die.

It is impossible to respond half-heartedly to Jesus. It is all or nothing!!! A little Jesus on the side will not work. If Jesus is just another one of your hobbies, you are in trouble. He is king of kings and lord of lords, and he will not share your affection with anything else.

Maybe you are thinking, "I will get serious about Jesus later...."

Maybe you are thinking, "I will clean up my life first..."

Maybe you are thinking, "I want to live a little now..."

If God judged Israel under the Mosaic Covenant for failing to heed his warnings, how much more will He judge you under the new covenant for failing to heed his warnings?

*We respond to God's warnings with the obedience of faith. But there is more to the Christian life... this brings us to the second point.*

*First, obedience!*

**Second, preparation!**

**What do we prepare for? We prepare to be shaken!**

**Hebrews 12:26 (ESV) — 26** At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”

Like the previous verse, the context of this verse is Mt. Sinai, which is described in Hebrews 12:18-21. When God appeared at Mt. Sinai to explain the terms of the Mosaic Covenant, the whole mountain shook.

But when Christ returns there will be a much more intense shaking. Christ will shake the earth and the heavens (that is the entire cosmos). The author of Hebrews proves his point by quoting from the prophet Haggai, found in the OT.

**Hebrews 12:27 (ESV) — 27** This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

Why will Christ shake all things when he returns? He will shake all things to sift out the eternal things from the non-eternal things. This implies that all non-eternal realities will be pulverized when Christ shakes the heavens and the earth. The only things that will survive this cosmic earthquake are the things that were done for Christ and his kingdom.

The book of Revelation describes this great shake up in more detail...

**Revelation 6:12–17 (ESV) — 12** When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, **13** and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. **14** The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. **15** Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, **16** calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, **17** for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

Are you prepared to have your whole life shaken when Christ returns?

### **Illustration:**

During the protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century there were a group of devout French protestants known as the Huguenots. They experienced intense persecution from the French Catholics. For a season they were led by a man named Henry of Navarre. Henry was a member of the French Royal Family, which was staunchly Roman Catholic. But, he had heard the gospel, the true gospel, and professed faith in Christ, leaving his Roman Catholic faith in his past.

But several years later, he was offered the crown of France. This would put his protestant profession of faith to the test. He could only be the king of France if he converted back to Catholicism.

This was the kind of test the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews faced. Would he compromise his Protestant faith (forsaking the gospel of God’s free grace) or would he convert back to Rome to become the king?

Sadly, he chose wealth and position over faithfulness to Christ. He converted back to Rome to possess the throne of France. He famously said, “Paris is worth a mass.”

But Paris is not worth a mass, nothing is worth compromising the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paris, titles, and kingdoms will all be shaken someday. The only things that will survive the great shaking are the things we did for Christ and his eternal kingdom.

## **Application:**

Think about the glory of Rome or the wealth of Rockefeller!!! Their glory has come and gone, and the great shake down has not even happened yet.

All things will be shaken.

Your wealth will be shaken  
Your possessions will be shaken  
Your degrees and titles will be shaken  
Your hobbies will be shaken  
Your relationships will be shaken

The great shaking will reveal that many of the things we invest our time and money in will be pulverized.

What is the point? Invest in things now that will survive into eternity. Invest in things that will survive the great cosmic earthquake.

Give yourself to relationships.  
Give yourself to your families.  
Give yourself to service.  
Give yourself to the church.  
Give your time to non-Christians.  
Yes, make lots of money, but then give it away freely.

The missionary and martyr Jim Elliot famously said,

**“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”**

Please don't misunderstand me, it is good and right to build businesses, create art, create music, provide goods and services, educate, write software, drive buses, build houses, employ lots of people, and have hobbies. As long as you are doing these things motivated by love for God and love for people.

Someday everything in your life will be shaken, and the only things that will survive are the things done to promote the fame of king Jesus.

This means we must prepare now, by investing in eternal things.

*How do we respond to the warnings?*

*First, obedience.  
Second, preparation.*

## **Third, worship.**

**Why should we worship? We have been given an unshakeable kingdom!**

**Hebrews 12:28 (ESV) — 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,**

God will shake all things when Christ returns. But, God also allows us to be shaken right now, in the present, during our lifetimes. Shaking happens all the time!

Our health can be shaken.  
Our grades can be shaken.  
Our relationships can be shaken.  
Our government can be shaken.  
Our jobs can be shaken.  
Our economy can be shaken.  
Our children can be shaken.

But, the kingdom of God cannot be shaken. Why? Because the kingdom of God is ruled by King Jesus, the king of kings and lord of lords. From his throne, he rules and reigns over all things. Nothing can thwart his plans or his kingdom.

The unshakeable kingdom of Christ provides us with stability now, when everything around us is shaking. According to verse 28, this should cause joy and gratitude to well up inside of us.

Gratitude is the heart of worship.

*Why should we worship? We have been given an unshakeable kingdom!*

**How should we worship? With reverence and awe!**

**Hebrews 12:28–29 (ESV) — 28** Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, **29** for our God is a consuming fire.

Since we have been given an unshakeable kingdom, we must worship God with reverence and awe.

What does it mean to worship God? When most of us think of worship, we think of singing on Sunday morning. This is a very small part of worship. We are called to worship God 24-7.

Let me provide you with two helpful definitions of worship-

“Worship is the believer’s response of all that they are – mind, emotions, will, body – to what God is and says and does” (Warren Wiersbe, [Real Worship](#), pg. 26).

“Biblical worship is God’s covenant people recognizing, reveling in, and responding rightly to the glory of God in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Bob Kauflin)

Because of what God has done for us, our entire lives are meant to display the worth of the triune God. Every activity we are involved in, must be done for His praise and glory.

This means that ....

Driving our cars...  
Fly fishing...  
Studying for exams...  
Dating...  
Quilting...  
Paying our bills

Watching the super bowl...  
Eating Thai food...  
And shoveling snow...

Can all be done as acts of worship for the triune God.

But here is the thing...

Our worship must be done with a sense of reverence and awe. Why? Because of verse 29. Verse 29 says, "that our god is a consuming fire." Notice that the author does not say, "Our God was a consuming fire." The text says, "Our God is a consuming fire."

God, the God the Bible, the triune God, is a consuming fire. This means that we must tremble before him in reverence and awe. He has always been a consuming fire and he will always be a consuming fire. This fire will consume all of his enemies someday.

### **Illustration:**

Aslan the Lion is the great Christ figure in CS Lewis much loved children's stories.

"In one of the stories, Jill, a very adventurous girl, comes upon a stream of water. She is dying of thirst. But as she comes forward, she sees Aslan the lion sitting calmly before the water. Terrified, she stops in her tracks. The lion invites her, "If you are thirsty, come and drink." Dying of thirst, she steps forward. "Will you promise not to do anything to me, if I come?" She meekly asks. "I make no promise," said the lion. Drawn closer by the refreshing sounds of water, she wonders aloud, "do you eat girls?" "I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," he replies. Jill recoils and says, "I dare not come and drink." "Then you will die of thirst," said the lion. "O Dear!" cries Jill, drawn a step closer by her need of refreshment, "I suppose I must go and look for another stream, then." But the lion responds, "There is no other stream." (Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, 21-23)

In another story, Mr. Beaver describes Aslan the lion this way. He says,

"Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"..."Safe?" said Mr Beaver ..."Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you." (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*)

God, the God of the Bible, is not safe, he is a consuming fire, but he is also very good.

He is so God that he sent his one and only son to save us from this consuming fire. Even though we have been spared from God's consuming fire, God is still a consuming fire.

This means that he must be feared and worshipped with a deep sense of reverence and awe.

### **Conclusion:**

God is a consuming fire, but he is very good. His goodness is seen in his warnings.

Because he is good, he warns us about the dangers of falling away because he loves us.

How should we respond to his warnings? By doing three things-

We obey

We prepare

We worship

Lets pray...