

# Hebrews

## Faith's Warning Label

### Hebrews 12:25-29

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#### INTRODUCTION:

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Thanks to all of the frivolous lawsuits these days, we now may enjoy the comedy of ridiculous warnings on various products. A hair dryer warning label wisely advised, “Do not use while sleeping.” A portable stroller warned, “Caution: Remove infant before folding for storage.” A package of fireplace logs warned, “Caution: Risk of fire!” A *Whiskas Cat Milk* container pointed out, “Milk is not **from** cats but are **for** cats. Not for human consumption.” A snow sled label stated, “Beware: Sled may develop high speed under certain snow conditions.” A fold-up windshield screen to block the sun while parked wisely advised, “Do not drive with screen in windshield.”

We can thank the litigation-happy lawyers for injecting these bits of humor into our daily lives! But the downside of such frivolous warnings is this: they may cause us ignore legitimate warnings. And there are some warnings that we ignore to our peril!

God’s warning of eternal judgment for those who reject the gospel is the most perilous warning in the world. The author of Hebrews was concerned that some of his readers, who had professed faith in Christ, were in danger of abandoning Christ under threat of persecution for the more comfortable old Jewish rituals. And so he issues a repeated, final warning to urge them to persevere in their professed faith in Christ.

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

#### **Hebrews 12:25-29 (NASB95)**

<sup>25</sup> See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven. <sup>26</sup> And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.”

<sup>27</sup> This *expression*, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

<sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; <sup>29</sup> for our God is a consuming fire.

#### Prayer

If those under the old, inferior covenant incurred God’s judgment for their disobedience, how much more will we be judged if we neglect God’s provision in Christ of the new covenant? If the signs of God’s presence were frightening when He shook Mount Sinai,

how much more frightening will it be when He shakes the entire creation? But “**since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken,**” and since “**our God is a consuming fire,**” the only proper response is to persevere in faithful, reverent service to Him.

His message is really a repeat of what he said in chapter 2.

### **Hebrews 2:1-3 (NASB95)**

2 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. <sup>2</sup> For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience **received** a just penalty, <sup>3</sup> how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

In light of our great privileges and our great God, we must serve Him with obedient, grateful, and reverent hearts. We have great privileges; we have a great God; and therefore, we have great responsibilities.

## **BODY:**

### **I. God has Given Us Great Privileges.**

Throughout this epistle, the author has repeatedly shown the superiority of Christ and the new covenant over Moses and the old covenant. If you possess something of superior quality, why would you want to give it up and go back to something of inferior quality? We can sum up our privileges here under two headings:

#### **A. God has Given Us Salvation Through Christ's blood.**

### **Hebrews 12:25 (NASB95)**

<sup>25</sup> See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven.

The author begins the Book of Hebrews this way:

### **Hebrews 1:1-2 (NASB95)**

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Last week, in Hebrews 12:24, the author told us that God's Son is His supreme and final way of speaking to us.

### **Hebrews 12:24 (NASB95)**

...Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel.

When the Jews heard God's voice thunder at Sinai, they were so terrified that they “**begged that no further word be spoken to them**”. The author sees the Jews' request at Sinai as a parable of their hardness of heart toward God that led to their ingratitude and

disobedience in the wilderness. They begged not to hear any more of God's voice, and look at what happened to them! But now, God has spoken in a greater way, through His Son, and even more through the blood of His Son. **"See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking"** now from heaven!

God's invitation in the gospel, to forgive all your sins and to give you eternal life, if you will respond, is the greatest invitation in the world! What more could He do than to send His own Son and shed His innocent blood as the penalty for every sinner who will believe in Him? Since the gospel is the greatest privilege imaginable, to refuse it is the greatest sin imaginable! We who have received God's gift in the gospel should count it as our greatest possession, far above anything this world has to offer!

## **B. God Gives Us a Kingdom that Cannot be Shaken.**

There are several things to note about this kingdom. First, we have already received it, and yet it is still to come in its fullness. **"Receive"** is a present participle, implying that we are in the process of receiving this kingdom. We have already come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and the heavenly Jerusalem, and yet in another sense, we have not come to this city in its final form. That awaits the second coming of the King. We do not work to inherit this kingdom. It is a gift that God freely bestows on all that believe.

### **Hebrews 12:26-28 (NASB95)**

**<sup>26</sup> And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." <sup>27</sup> This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. <sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;**

In verse 28 he says that it is **"a kingdom which cannot be shaken."** This means that it will outlast all earthly kingdoms. Since it is **God's** kingdom, it will be an eternal kingdom that will remain for eternity. Every earthly kingdom that has been established has eventually fallen to other, more powerful, kingdoms. The history of the world is that of the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms. Men such as Alexander the Great have devoted their lives to establishing these kingdoms, only to die and have their kingdoms broken up. The only kingdom that will endure is the kingdom of God. We are privileged to be members of this kingdom by His grace. Even if we are persecuted to death, God's eternal kingdom cannot be shaken, and we are heirs of it through faith in Christ.

So, God has given us great privileges. As we saw in our last study, we should not forget these great privileges that we inherit in Christ, so that we do not let them go for the world's bowl of stew, as Esau did. But there is a second major theme in our text:

The God who speaks to us through the gospel is the same God who spoke to Israel at Mount Sinai. Two themes bring out God's greatness in our text:

## **II. God is a Great God.**

### **A. His Voice will Shake Heaven and Earth.**

#### **Hebrews 12:26 (NASB95)**

**<sup>26</sup> And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven."**

When God spoke at Mount Sinai, the earth shook violently. The author of Hebrews refers to that event in verse 26 and then alludes to a prophecy in Haggai.

### **Haggai 2:6 (NASB95)**

<sup>6</sup> For thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.

This prophecy relates to Christ’s second coming, when all of the kingdoms of this world will be shaken into oblivion. This is also described to us by John in Revelation.

### **Revelation 11:13-15 (NASB95)**

<sup>13</sup> And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

<sup>14</sup> The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

<sup>15</sup> Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying,

“The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

God’s shaking of the earth and heaven is a frequent image in the Bible to refer to the final judgment in the day of the Lord. One example is found in Isaiah.

### **Isaiah 13:13 (NASB95) (NASB95)**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the Lord of hosts In the day of His burning anger.

In Matthew, Jesus predicted of the times just before His coming,

### **Matthew 24:7-8 (NASB95)**

<sup>7</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. <sup>8</sup> But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

As earthquakes become more frequent and severe, we who were spared should view it as a birth pang of coming events. When a woman goes into labor, it tells her that the culmination of her pregnancy is near. Get ready, the baby is coming soon! In a similar manner, the birth pangs of devastating earthquakes tell the inhabitants of this world, “Get ready, the big event is about to happen! Someday soon, God will speak and the earth and all heaven will shake as they have never shaken before.” All that will remain is the kingdom of God and of His Christ. Make sure that you are in submission to the King of the universe before He speaks that terrible word of judgment!

## **B. He is a Consuming Fire.**

### **Hebrews 12:29 (NASB95)**

<sup>29</sup> for our God is a consuming fire.

This verse refers to Deuteronomy 4:24.

## **Deuteronomy 4:24 (NASB95)**

<sup>24</sup> For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Moses warned Israel in verse 23 to watch themselves, so that they would not forget God's covenant and fall into idolatry. Then he added, "For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." Like the earthquake, the image of fire is a frequent picture of God's wrath and powerful judgment.

## **Matthew 13:27-30 (NASB95)**

<sup>27</sup> The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' <sup>28</sup> And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves \*said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' <sup>29</sup> But he \*said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

The God of Sinai of the old covenant is the same as the God of the new covenant. Listen to what Peter tells us:

## **2 Peter 3:9-10 (NASB95)**

<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

But keep reading! In the next verse he continues...

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

These things are a merciful **warning** for unbelievers, but for we who believe, they are a **promise**. Why?

## **2 Peter 3:13 (NASB95)**

<sup>13</sup> But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

We will eventually be in a new heavens and a new earth. We will be in the presence of God in all of His glory. It will be free of all sin. Pure righteousness dwells there. Thus God has given us great privileges. Our God is a great God, whose voice shakes earth and heaven, whose fire will consume every adversary. It follows, then that...

### **III. We have Great Responsibilities.**

There are four responsibilities here:

#### **A. We Must Pay Attention to God.**

In verse 25 of our text it says "See to it,". It means, "Watch out! Be careful!" Because if you do not, you could fall into the same sins that engulfed Israel in the wilderness."

Are you cautious about your spiritual life? Are you on guard about spiritual dangers that could dilute your devotion to God? Do you live in light of the coming judgment? Jesus warned us to stay on the alert.

### **Mark 13:33-37 (NASB95)**

<sup>33</sup> "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come.

### **B. We Must Serve God with Obedient Hearts.**

Verse 25 continues "Do not refuse Him who is speaking." He is alluding to Israel's disobedience in the wilderness. They faced some hardships, but rather than thanking God for delivering them from slavery in Egypt, they grumbled and threatened to go back to Egypt. They should have joyfully endured any trials, trusting that the God who had delivered them would now sustain them. The Hebrews were facing persecution. Would they entrust themselves to the faithful God who had delivered them from bondage to sin, or would they grumble and turn back to Judaism?

How is your attitude when God sends trials into your life? Do you grumble and turn back to the world? Or, do you obediently persevere in serving Him, knowing that He cares for you?

### **C. We Must Serve God with Grateful and Reverent Hearts.**

In verse 28 it says "Let us show gratitude,". If we have experienced God's grace, we should be thankful. Our service to God is never an attempt to "pay Him back" for His grace, which is impossible. Rather, it is the overflow of a heart that gives thanks for His gift of salvation.

The verse continues "by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;"

I feel that most Christians in our day err on the side of being too chummy and casual with God instead of being on the side of reverence and awe. We should hold these truths in balance. The word translated "**service**" means worshipful service. It always refers to that which is done for God. Paul exhorts us in the same way in Romans.

### **Romans 12:1 (NASB95)**

**12** Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual **service** of worship.*

## **CONCLUSION:**

Everything hinges on knowing who God is and what He has done for us by His grace in Christ. He has given us **great privileges**, by speaking to us from heaven through Jesus' blood, and by giving us a kingdom that cannot be shaken. He is the **great God**, whose voice will shake both earth and heaven. He is a consuming fire. So we have **great responsibilities**. We should take heed to serve Him with obedient, grateful, and reverent hearts.

**What a Day That Will Be!**