

- A Warning
- Two Ways to life
- Final Warning

Context:

- Hebrews were being “shaken,” their whole world was being shaken to the core.
 - Pressure, persecution, demonic oppression (fear of death)
 - The context of this persecution and pressure from all sides, behind it all was God. Working in them His discipline. And not as a mean celestial dad but as a loving Father. (LAST WEEK)
 - Doing all this for their **holiness** and **peace**.
 - **Hebrews 12:10-11**

Therefore... (Hebrews 12:12-13)

- *Because it is God who is sovereign. Because it is God who is ultimately in control. Because it is God who is allowing you to be disciplined for your holiness and your peace.*
 - THEREFORE...STRENGTHEN YOUR HANDS AND YOUR KNEES.
- Keeping with the race/athletic metaphor (vs. 1-2)
 - Surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses
 - Lay aside every unnecessary weight of sin (run unhindered)
 - Run with endurance the race marked out, looking unto Jesus
- You know what happens when you get discouraged when you're on a run. When everything and every situation seems against you. And your mind starts telling you, “is this ever going to end?”
 - Your posture gets sloppy, your hands hang down, you start favoring your knees, and you don't have the energy to avoid hazards in the road anymore.
 - Inevitably you stop.
- This is where they were at, so the writer draws their mind up to what Isaiah told the people of Israel who were themselves enduring the discipline of God...

Isaiah 35:3-4, 10

³ Strengthen the weak hands,

And make firm the feeble knees.
4 Say to those who are fearful-hearted,
"Be strong, do not fear!
Behold, your God will come with vengeance,
With the recompense of God;
He will come and save you."...
10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
And come to Zion with singing,
With everlasting joy on their heads.
They shall obtain joy and gladness,
And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

- Put your hope in the work of God. He is purifying you. You're going through persecution and some discipline but He is with you,

Pursue... (Hebrews 12:14-15)

- Pursue the very things God is pursuing in us.
 - Holiness (v 10)
 - Peace (v 11)

Philippians 3:12 (whole verse) NKJV

- Paul describing his race in Philippians says "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on [toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus]...**that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.**
 - "I press on in my race to pursue what God is pursuing in me..."
 - namely: Holiness and Peace.

A WARNING v.15-17

Warning: Don't be an Esau.

- Author's focus is still on the role of a son. It was the first born who got the birthright; the oldest got the bulk of the families wealth and was main recipient of the father's inheritance.
 - We are sons of God, firstborn sons of God. We know this because He disciplines us. He only disciplines sons. (v.6)
 - We get the privileges of His blessings but also the pain of His discipline...both for our good.

- Remember that Esau was a son, the first-born son of Isaac and Rebekah.
 - The warning is don't be a son like Esau.
- Sold his birthright as a firstborn son for one morsel of food, a bowl of soup. Why? Because he was hungry.
 - Bible calls him Godless, secular: a person focused on the immediate, who was willing to give up the things of God for the most basic things of life, **food**.

What Esau said to Jacob was, what good is a birthright if I'm dead!

- See how wrapped up in the immediate he was.
- The condemnation of Esau was his total lack of care in spiritual things. He paid more attention to his flesh than to things of God.
 - Have you ever stopped to think how many times you listen to your flesh in a day?
 - I'm hungry, I'm thirsty, I'm tired, I want a coffee, I want a nap, I want have to go to the bathroom...
 - Esau lived a life where he was an utter slave to his flesh and it's desires that He sold his soul for a bowl of soup...food. The most basic thing in life.
 - This is the brilliance of the writer here. It's subtle.
 -
- Note in verse 17 the finality of his decision.
 - Only time he even cared about his birthright again was when it would benefit him. When Isaac was dying. Which again, showed his flesh.

TWO WAYS TO LIFE V.18-24

Two fundamentally different approaches to life and God...Two different ways of viewing how we relate with God.

- The writer sets these two ways in a vivid reality of two Mountains...
 - "You have not come"
 - "You have come"

Mount Sinai

- **Where the people of Israel received the Law of God. (Ex. & Deut.)**
 - God's presence was on this mountain and God spoke *but they were undone!* The experience was totally terrifying and frightening.

- To drive the point home he describes its terror:
 1. Mountain that may be touched (physical)
 2. Burning with fire
 3. Blackness
 4. Darkness
 5. Tempest (storm)
 6. Sound of a trumpet
 7. Voice of speaking words
- Both visual and audible
- Even their mediator Moses was “*exceedingly afraid and trembling*”
 - They were so afraid that they asked God to stop, to keep His distance

Here's the point: ***The unmediated presence & nearness of God is horrific.***

- Every place the unmediated presence of God comes close, comes to a place or a space it's fatal to go near (even Moses, their mediator, trembled with fear).
 - Every single person in the bible who gets near God's presence is totally shaken to the core...
 - **Job 42:5-6** “I have heard You by the hearing the ear, But now my sees You. Therefore I abhor [despise] myself. And I repent in dust and ashes.”
 - **Isaiah 6:5** “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of Hosts.”

Why? *Why is the presence of God so shattering and overwhelming? Because we see ourselves for who we really are. We see our unbearable smallness, our unbearable sinfulness.*

Mount Zion

- The city where the Architect and Builder is God.
 - The bible starts in the garden but will end in a city, and here we see the Terrors of Mt. Sinai set over against the joys of Mount Zion
 - Balances previous list of seven
 1. Heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God

2. Innumerable company of angels in festal gathering
3. Church of the firstborn
4. God the Judge of all
5. The spirits of just men made perfect
6. Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant
7. Blood of Christ that speaks better things than that of Abel.

- Here the atmosphere is NOT Frightening but Festive. There is no darkness, no fear; instead of a trembling congregation gathered at the foot of mount Sinai we see an assembly of **partying angels** (lit. revelry) and the church and our Mediator, Jesus Christ.
 - The unapproachability of God is contrasted with full access to the presence of God and Jesus whose blood speaks better than Abel.

Why does the writer of Hebrews do this? Why is the author bringing us to the landscape of these two mountains?

Here's why...

These two mountains represent two ways of viewing relationship with God. Remember the goal of Hebrews is to show Jesus as Better.

- Jesus is Better than the Angels
- Jesus is Better than Moses
- Jesus is Better than Joshua
- Jesus is Better than Aaron
 - Consequently He's a better messenger, better mediator, better leader, and better priest...that...
 - Offers Better Promises
 - Opens a Better Sanctuary
 - Sealed by a Better Sacrifice
 - Achieves far Better Results

One of the keys to understanding this section is in verses 18 and 22.

- "You have not come" (v18)
- "You have come" (v22)
 - Same verb "come" meaning: *your fundamental spiritual approach to God and life.*
 - Author uses the verb quite a bit in Hebrews...
 - Let us **draw near** to God in full assurance of faith (Heb 10:22)

- Let us therefore **come boldly** unto the throne of grace (Heb 4:16)
- He is also able to save to the uttermost those who **come** to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb 7:25)

At the end of the book, for a last time, he compares these two ways or approaches to God.

The Earthly Way

Exemplified by a mountain that can be touched. (Physical)

Darkness, storm, trumpet, voice... (What we can see and hear)

- **Basically a life like Esau.** A life lived for the immediate, what we can see hear do what we can touch... a life centered on the here and now.
 - This sort of life will one day leave you painfully aware of your guilt and fear before a holy God, a life that leaves you shaken to the core.
 - There is no Mediator for this way of life.
 - If you plan one day to stand before God and say your mediator is your pastor, be afraid. If your mediator is your religion, be afraid. Your morality, education, charity work, who you are and what you've done...be afraid.

This approach in life will leave YOU SHAKEN, because you are living a life for the immediate and things of this world, and this world will be shaken, so consequently YOU will be shaken.

That's the first approach to life.

The writer says: "**You have not come**" that way.

There is a better way: "**You have come...**"

The Heavenly Way

Notice it is **Heavenly** Jerusalem, the firstborn whose names are written in **heaven**, and to Jesus Christ the Mediator...the One who gets us in and gets us close...

- For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, (1 Timothy 2:5)

- God sees to it that we don't build our life or identity on anything other than Jesus. That we hope in nothing else that we boast in nothing else. He is our aim, He is our goal. Why? Because there is a final judgment coming (a shaking coming), and if you build your life on something other than Jesus Christ, no matter how good it seems to be, it will ruin you.

Luke 10

- Jesus gives power to the disciples to preach, heal and cast out demons.
 - They go out and have so much fun!
- They come back rejoicing & telling stories on how it worked, demons flying everywhere!!!!
 - Staff would totally do this...
- Jesus responds: *"Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."*

Why?

- Don't get your identity from what you can do.
- Don't be known as the demon caster-outer, don't get your sense of self and belonging from that.
 - "Because next time you go to cast out a demon it might not come out. Don't you dare start building your life and identity on something that can be shaken or taken from you."
 - *RATHER REJOICE BECAUSE YOUR NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN HEAVEN.*
 - *YOU HAVE COME...TO THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN WHO ARE ENROLLED IN HEAVEN (vs. 23)*

FINAL WARNING v.25-29

Hebrews 12:25

"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks..."

- Rhetorical climax of the book.
 - Who is speaking?

Hebrews 1:1-2

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Hebrews 12:24

- **The blood of Christ speaks, and it speaks better things than that of Abel**
 - In the account of Cain and Abel, after Cain killed his own brother God came and asked where Abel was, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Cain replied.
 - **Genesis 4:10 “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.”**
 - God cannot ignore injustice. He can’t let sin go... because all sin is sin against God first. He is always the more offended party.
 - The blood of the innocent (in a sense) cries out to God for justice! He must do something, but how? *How does God remain Just while Justifying us?*
- **The Blood of Christ.**
 - Jesus would be born and enter into a whole nation of men like Cain, men who observe the sacrificial system but are full of hatred and bitterness, who were in a sense “brothers” of Jesus. *He came to His own and His own knew Him not. (John’s Gospel)*
 - He came into this world and they killed Him. He died as the ultimate Abel, who was truly innocent and died as a victim of injustice.
 - He died not only as a victim of injustice but by design. As our substitute, in our place, to pay the penalty of our injustices.
 - **Christ’s blood cries out that justice has been met by His sacrifice. God remains just while justifying us.**
 - **1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**
 - Notice it doesn’t say faithful and good, or gracious, or merciful...but JUST.

- Because the justice and the wrath of God for our sin was satisfied in Jesus on the cross and His blood now says to those who trust in Him, YOU ARE FORGIVEN.

Hebrews 12:28-29

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Those who trust in Jesus can be a citizen of that unshakeable kingdom, can live an unshakeable life today...HOW? By the blood of Christ.

- When Christ hung on the cross The bible says that Jesus cried out, My God My God why have You forsaken Me? And Jesus cried out with a loud voice and gave up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks split... (Matthew 27:51-52)
 - What was going on? Jesus was being judged and shaken for us that those who believe in Him can be a citizen of a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Psalm 125

1 Those who trust in the LORD
Are like Mount Zion,
Which cannot be moved, but abides forever.
2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.