

An Unshakable Kingdom: A Call to Hearing (Hebrews 12:25–29)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (12/10/2017)

Introduction

1. The principle found here: the greater the blessings that God bestows on His people, the greater their obligation is to Him (Luke 12:48). However, a great danger lurks in our ignorance of grace that dominates this age, snubbing such warnings in assuming that grace makes us safe any judgment, the subject of such warnings.
2. The warning before us is found in the text that forms the final exhortation based on the final message contrasting the old covenant kingdom (Israel) and the new covenant kingdom (Christ).
 - a. All biblical instruction is designed, not merely to inform or entertain, but to search the conscience with truth—such truth that leads to holy living.
 - b. The design, then, is to move the will and order the walk of the believers so informed.
 - c. Thus, such teaching assumes a practical end in obedience and faithfulness.
3. The apostle understands that there is a natural resistance and tendency to avoid straight forward biblical instruction because it is unpleasing to the flesh, as evidenced in the first part of the exhortation (vv. 25, 26), the subject of this message.

I. Note the *Grammar* of the Warning

1. The word, *see*, means to take heed or to beware of failing to notice something that is vitally important just ahead.
2. To add emphasis to the importance of his warning, the apostle uses the negative approach: “*Beware that you do not refuse . . .*” The warning assumes that a dire consequence will result.
 - a. *Refuse* means to *excuse* oneself from something (Luke 14:18: “*But they all alike began to make excuses*”); Heb. 12:19: “*a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them*”). Sometimes the word is used as a command to have nothing to do with something (Titus 3:10).
 - b. A *passive sense* is understood here because a contrast is made to the Israelites on Mount Sinai (see v. 19). Deuteronomy 5:24–29 makes it clear that their response seems to be approved by God. Nevertheless, Israel’s lack of heart (regeneration) was the issue, a privilege restored to every believer under grace (v. 29).
 - c. The new covenant warnings are against the more subtle refusal through (1) *distraction* (such as television, diversions, etc.), (2) *daydreaming* (lack of deliberate attention), or (3) *disengagement* (neglect of duties through laziness, discouragement, or persecution; Matt. 13:20, 21).
3. *Speaking* is in the *present tense*, arguing that speaking is still going on through the Word and the Spirit (Note 1:1, 2; John 10:27).

II. Note the *Occasion* of the Warning

1. The greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility: If those with less privilege did not escape the just punishment of their failure, of how much greater is the threat that exists for those who spurn the greater privilege (Heb. 2:1–4)?

- a. Mount Sinai spoke of the awful divine righteousness judicially displayed by God, obligated by His own nature, to judge and destroy whatever threatened His will or ruined His created order.
 - b. Mount Zion, on the other hand, speaks of the glorious gift of freedom in grace designed to redeem and restore a people to the proper order of all that He has made.
 - c. Thus, believers are required by this design to walk in holiness, doing His will as suited to His new kingdom house (Titus 2:11–14).
2. On Sinai, God spoke through Moses but now speaks through His Son (Matt. 17:5), thus we are to “hear Him” and, in hearing, “heed Him”—yield obedience to what He asks (Deut. 18:18, 19, repeated in Acts 3:22).
- a. *Hearing* requires believing and to *believe* means to *act* on what is heard (James 2:20).
 - b. Those who refuse Christ also reject God’s authority, depreciating it and so, disregard it to their eternal peril (Luke 10:16).
 - c. Again, to press the warning: “*How shall we escape if we neglect [by passively refusing Christ’s speaking to us] such a great salvation, as was declared at first by the Lord?*”
 - d. The Lord spoke through Moses to those on earth who incurred the penalty of their refusal. Shall those claiming new covenant status expect to escape His wrath if they refuse Him who speaks to them from Heaven (note 2 Cor. 3:7–11, 17, 18)? Should not those who decline the greater privilege also incur a severer penalty?

III. Harmonizing the Warning with Our Security

How, then, are we to harmonize the doctrine of eternal security with the threatened consequences of these dire warnings addressed to declared believers?

1. The promised preservation of the saints depends on the path of obedience taken, not the false security of mere profession of one who continues in self-will and self-pleasing.
2. The whole purpose of the doctrines of grace is to *rescue* and *restore* a people to faith and holiness characterized by self-denial in obediently following Christ (Heb. 5:9).
3. Grace was never meant to protect flesh-preferring sinners from judgment, but to enable struggling believers in their pursuit of holiness and their fight against the flesh.
4. Such warnings provide the grounds for judging the “mixed company” that accompanies the children of God in their exodus from Egypt (Ex. 12:38).

Application

Many well-meaning believers consistently “*refuse Him that is speaking*” in the following ways:

1. By neglecting to read the Scriptures (through which He speaks) daily and diligently
2. By failing to attend the public preaching of the Word whenever it is available
3. By failing to submit to the terms of the gospel, yielding oneself to His authority
4. By forsaking the Narrow Way of His will and order in returning to the world
5. By abandoning truth for error, moving the professing saint toward apostasy

Luke 12:48: *“Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”*

Luke 14:18, 19: *“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’”*

1 Tim. 4:7: *“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness.”*

Titus 3:10: *“As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”*

Titus 2:11–14: *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”*

Deut. 5:24–29: *“And you said, ‘Behold, the LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. This day we have seen God speak with man, and man still live. Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire as we have, and has still lived? Go near and hear all that the LORD our God will say, and speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.’*

“And the LORD heard your words, when you spoke to me. And the LORD said to me, ‘I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!’”

Matt. 17:15: *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”*

Deut. 18:18, 19: *“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.”*

Luke 10:16: *“The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”*

2 Cor. 3:7–11, 17, 18: *“Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses’ face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. . . . “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”*