

Unshakable Kingdom Hebrews 12:25-29

Introduction

Life—decision-making

Avoid trouble, bad consequences

Pursue happiness, reward

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. 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.” 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. 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.

1. Give Heed to God’s Warnings (25).
2. Hold Fast to What Can’t Be Shaken (26-27).
3. Respond to God with Acceptable Worship (28-29).

1. Give Heed to God’s Warnings (25).

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.

See to it—we've seen this exhortation before.
Hebrews 12:15

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.

You recall this warning was first given in Deuteronomy to the Israelites. Watch out for those whose hearts were turning away from God to idols, those who could bring poison influence among the people of God.

This was another way of saying what we read earlier in Hebrews 3:12

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

The entire letter keeps exhorting us not to give up the gospel we've received, no matter what pressures we may be facing. And more, to help one another hold fast to Christ.

Hebrews 2:1-3

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away

from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,

Hebrews 3:7-8

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness.

All these warnings rise from God having spoken to us in His Word. We do not worship a god who is silent and unknown.

(Agnosticism is not so honest and humble as one might think.) He has revealed Himself in words and deeds recorded by eyewitnesses. *Christianity is no mere philosophy or code of ethics. It is a revealed religion. God has spoken. It only makes sense that we should listen to what He has said.*

We are awash with voices in our day—exposed to more "speaking" than perhaps any previous generation. It all easily becomes noise we tune out. But when the voice is that of living God, universal Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Judge, we dare not do so.

To refuse is not just to ignore. It's more deliberate than that. Word is used of declining an invitation to a feast. It's rejection. Something else matters more. God has given us ample evidence that He has indeed spoken, and what He has said has been made known throughout the world. If you are among the millions that have heard what God has to say, you carry greater accountability than those who've had only the revelation of the design of creation and the voice of conscience to point them to God's power and authority.

To count God's words as unimportant and his invitation to life insignificant is to belittle the One in whose hand is your life breath. How shall we escape?

The point is, we can't and we won't.

Those who heard God's words shake the earth at Sinai under the old covenant were held accountable. The Bible records the sins of Israel and the judgments they suffered. How much more those who've heard from heaven God's words of the new covenant—the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Hebrews 10:28-29

28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. **29** How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by

the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

Because the gospel is the good news of God's grace offered to us through Jesus Christ, who has paid our sin penalty and died the death we deserve, rising from the dead, and coming back to establish an everlasting kingdom, some imagine that God won't make a big deal about their deciding not to believe the gospel nor to trusting in Jesus the Messiah as their Savior. But God's goodness revealed in Jesus calls us to repentance and to joy in His great gift of salvation. It removes any excuse we might have that God somehow won't receive us if we do repent and believe. *If we refuse the gospel, we not only mock God's warning of eternal judgment; we belittle God's priceless gift of forgiveness and an eternal inheritance. In so doing we belittle God.*

In what ways do you show how highly you value God's Words, how you prize the gospel, how you treasure the inheritance you have in Jesus?

Do you really think there will be no cost to counting His warnings of small concern and His promises of little value?

2. Hold Fast to What Can't Be Shaken (26-27).

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." **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.

Quoting from
Haggai 2:6-7

6 For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. **7** And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.

The shaking of heaven and earth makes way for the eternal kingdom of the Lord. A messianic prophecy.

2 Peter 3:10-13

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. **11** Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, **12** waiting for and hastening the coming of the

day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

We have a hunger for permanence, for significance, for our labors to matter, for our lives to matter. We watch buildings and institutions crumble. We see the great ones of the earth rise and fall. We observe that even our best achievements fade from memory, and we mourn as our loved ones and ourselves age and die. *The temporal nature of this life and the things of it can drown us with anxiety, sorrow, disillusionment, or cynicism. But only if we have placed our hope in such insubstantial things instead of eternal things.*

When we devalue eternal things, it is generally because we have overvalued temporal things. Don't chain yourself to a sinking ship.

If we were living in the first century, the Roman Empire would have seemed permanent and invincible, but it fell. As every world empire has and will. Compared to Rome's pomp and power Christianity seemed utterly insignificant. But millions upon millions follow Jesus as Savior and Lord today, while

Rome's grandeur is the stuff of museums and ancient history.

We look at towering mountains, and all the natural creation, and we feel like falling leaves in the wind by comparison. But it is those mountains that will fall, while those trusting in Jesus will remain forever.

When human beings want to perpetuate their memories, they build monuments and palaces in their name. But nothing they build will survive the fire of God's final judgment. The material things that seem substantial and permanent to us are just the opposite.

It is natural to want to leave our mark in the world, but our significance is tied to our relationship to God. He made us in His image. He redeems those trusting in Him. They are the ones who will shine forever.

1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Matthew 24:35

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Everything Jesus taught is coming will happen just as He said. So bank on it. Stop chasing shadows. Cling to what is substantial forever. Your life is made of time. Where are you spending your time—your life?

3. Respond to God with Acceptable Worship (28-29).

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.

Worship (liturgy) well-pleasing to God expresses gratitude, reverence, and awe.

Ungrateful people can't worship God because they have shortchanged how priceless God's gifts to them are. Every kingdom fades and falls. All but one. That is the one—the unshakable kingdom—God grants to followers of Jesus as their eternal inheritance—immortality, sinlessness, new heaven and earth where righteousness dwells. And Jesus the Good Shepherd will lead us all the way home. "I am with you all the days" (Matthew 28), His goodness and steadfast love will pursue us all the days of our lives, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23).

Daniel 7:27

And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

Real worship is not dampened by current circumstances. It rises in response to who God is and what God does—and what He promises. And it does not rise from trying to create a certain atmosphere on cue. It pervades all of life.

Reverence marks true worshipers. They are careful and watchful in every circumstance to live life toward Him. They are in awe of Him.

And our text tells us why: our God is a consuming fire.

Deuteronomy 4:23-24

²³ Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. ²⁴ For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

God is zealous for you. He wants you to guard your relationship with Him from every idol that would steal your heart away.

Think of the power of a forest fire raging across a wilderness or engulfing a town like a tsunami. Such raw power is breathtaking. But it is small compared to God's power unleashed. But what if you were to seek your protection in Him? What if you were to love Him with all your heart and make Him your refuge instead of your enemy? How safe would you be then—if the all-powerful God were your almighty defender and Savior who fights for you not against you?

This is the contrast the Scriptures Old Testament and New keep presenting to us:

Psalms 50:3-6

³ Our God comes; he does not keep silence; before him is a devouring fire, around him a mighty tempest. ⁴ He calls to the heavens

above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: ⁵ "Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"

⁶ The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge! *Selah*

Nahum 1:6-8

⁶ Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him. ⁷ The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. ⁸ But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 (addressing persecuted believers)

⁵ This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— ⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when

he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

*The grace of God has reached for me,
And pulled me from the raging sea.
And I am safe on this solid ground:
The Lord is my salvation.*

Gratitude, reverence, and awe—will you not lift your liturgy—your worship—to Him from your heart every day your life till you see Him face to face? Why would you choose to make Him your enemy?

Conclusion

1. Give Heed to God's Warnings.
2. Hold Fast to What Can't Be Shaken.
3. Respond to God with Acceptable Worship.

Discussion Questions

1. What are ways we show careful attention to God's warnings and promises, and what are ways we decline to do so?
2. In what ways is the truth that "God has spoken" foundational to the Christian faith?

3. How does the historical fact that God has spoken, as recorded by firsthand witnesses, undermine both atheism (There is no God.) and agnosticism (We don't/can't know if God exists.)?
4. What does refusing to listen to what God has spoken show about our view of God, and why does such a spirit toward Him bring His wrath on us?
5. What are some temporal things that could make us feel secure, but in fact are things that will be shaken?
6. How does holding fast to what cannot be shaken help us in our journey of life and at our journey's end?
7. What are some ways you have found help you keep gratitude, reverence, and awe as vital elements of your worship of God?
8. What thoughts come to your mind from the following statement based on Deuteronomy 4:23-24 (quoted by Hebrews 12:29): "God is zealous for you. He wants you to guard your relationship with Him from every idol that would steal away your heart."