

See that you do not refuse him who is speaking

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Date: 24 November 2019

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[0 : 0 0] You're going to be turning to Hebrews. It won't be an awful much longer that you'll hear me say that. We are getting close to the end. Tonight we're going to look at a passage that sums up his argument, and then he's going to do some application beyond that in chapter 13.

We're going to finish chapter 12 tonight. We're going to be reading chapter 12, verses 18 to 29. And I want us to be careful to see how we are strengthened and encouraged by seeing the wonder and privilege of our present position, and to be careful to listen to him as he speaks, and to be people who are thankful for that position, and to give worship with reverence and awe. You'll see those statements at the end of the reading.

Hebrews chapter 12. Follow with me as I read verses 18 through 29. For we have not come to what may be touched. I'm sorry. Yes.

For we have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them, for they could not endure the order that was given.

If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned. Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, I tremble with fear.

[1 : 3 7] But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See to it 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.

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. 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.

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, for our God is a consuming fire.

Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for this passage. I thank you for the wonder of how you have called this one who wrote the book of Hebrews to bring his whole argument together to show us a beautiful picture of where we're not and where we are.

[3 : 2 2] And I thank you for the warning to pay heed to him who speaks. Lord, help us to be careful not to dismiss this as something that was written to people 2,000 years ago, but help us to pay heed to it as though, as it truly is, as something that is written to us.

Help us to see our position. Help us to be careful in how we live and how we listen to you. And I pray that you would be with us. I pray that you would give clear understanding of your word and apply it to our hearts.

In Jesus' name, amen. I normally go through a long review. I've chosen not to do that tonight. I'll simply remind you that the theme of the writer's argument through the whole book that we've been through is that Christ is better.

People are wanting to turn away. But the argument of the book is Christ is better. We've read verses 18 to 29. In these verses, the writer of the Hebrews finishes his exhortation.

Now, he's actually started it back a ways. He started the ending part of it at the beginning of what we call chapter 12. But he's been arguing for his exhortation for two chapters now.

[4 : 44] And he's been setting up. And what we'll look at tonight is how he wraps up the whole of his exhortation. We're looking at the very end of his exhortation.

And he's exhorting them to hold fast to the faith and to hold fast to their profession of Christianity in spite of the trials that tempt them to return or to turn away from Christ.

It tempts them to return to Judaism. That's the way the writer of the book of Hebrews has written Hebrews because he's writing to people who had come out of the Jewish system.

And because they had trusted Christ, they had turned from it. But as they had gone through trials, they were tempted to return to it. And they thought, well, it was just easier.

And so he's encouraging them to hold fast to their faith, their profession of Christianity in spite of those trials. And as we begin this last section, verses 18 to 24, in that section we have an illustration that pictures the old covenant that the persecuted Hebrew Christians were, that they had left and they were tempted to turn back to.

[5 : 53] So he has this picture of what they had left and what they were tempted to turn back to. And yet then he has a picture of the surpassingly better new covenant where they were at the moment.

And so he writes that these people, that they would be warned, strongly warned, don't turn back. The writer of the book of Hebrews has used a picture.

He's done this before. Paul does it in his writings. Paul does almost the same thing. We don't know that Paul wrote Hebrews. We're not sure who wrote Hebrews. But there's a commonality in an illustration that is used, and that is that there are two mountains that are talked about.

Here in Hebrews, he mentions two mountains. And you heard me stumble at the beginning because there's the mountain that can be touched and the mountain that can't be touched. Yet.

And yet that we are at. And so we want to pay attention to what's here. We see two mountains. The first mountain in these verses in 18 down through halfway to 24, verse 21 is where it ends.

[7 : 05] That first mountain is the mountain that we have not come to. It's the mountain where everyone was at one point, especially the Jews who were in the old covenant, but in a sense, all people were there at one point because it's a mountain that speaks of our sin and our responsibility and how we are in trouble facing God.

But as we think of it in the Jewish context, the mountain that they were at that they had left, that mountain is now the mountain that they had not come to. It's not the one we're thinking about as to where we are.

He's saying this is the mountain we're not at anymore. And he wants to give us this picture of the mountain that we're not at anymore to show us how great it is that we're not there.

The mountain that we have not come to. We have not come to the mountain that can be touched. Okay? So, keep thinking backwards.

Okay? He's saying we have not come to the mountain that can be touched. Okay? And what he's getting at here is that the old mountain, the first mountain that he's talking about, is a real mountain.

[8 : 21] It's Mount Sinai. It's the place where the old covenant was instituted. As God had Moses lead Israel out of the land of Egypt, they went through the beginning part of their travels and they went through the Red Sea and God brought them to the Mount Sinai.

And it was there that God established this covenant with them. And you can read about this situation in Exodus 19 and 20.

It includes the Ten Commandments, but chapter 19 begins the situation that is described in summary detail in this passage. What it was like to be ready for it, what they could do, what they couldn't do, what the mountain was like.

And so he uses this illustration. It was the real mountain. It was where the old covenant was instituted. He said, we have not come. Brothers and sisters, we are not at the real mountain Sinai.

The second thing he says is, we have not come to the mountain with blazing fire, with darkness, gloom, and tempest. Now, if you were to go back to Exodus chapters 19 and 20, you would see the things that the writer of the Hebrews is talking about.

[9 : 39] You would see that as they prepared to be made part of this covenant, as God called them to be prepared to enter into covenant with him, he set down some regulations.

And not only did he set down some regulations for this all to begin, things began to happen. As you read in Exodus 19 and 20, you see that there was a great dark cloud that ascended over the Mount Sinai.

There was gloom and thick darkness. There were lightnings and peals of thunder and other things that we're talking about, trumpets, and we'll talk about that in just a minute. It was a mountain that was terrible and awesome.

It was a mountain that was terrifying because the mountain spoke of the presence of God, a presence of holiness, not in opposition to the mountain we are at, but a mountain that spoke of the terror of God in relation to who the children of Israel were and who we are.

As God had a people stand before him that were sinful and rebellious as a result of the fog, he was a God full of wrath and holiness.

[10 : 50] Not that there wasn't mercy there, but this mountain pictured this relationship with God. There was, as I said, blazing fire, darkness, gloom, and tempest.

And these were signs that showed that we could not see God or we could not come near to God. There was a separateness. God made sure that there were things that showed, you can't be near me.

I am holy, you are not. There is a separation. It was a place where God's glory and holiness was totally hidden from our eyes. Man could not behold God.

Man beheld the signs that showed of God's attributes. Man beheld God in the things that pointed of his wrath and his power.

But they didn't see God face to face. There was no fellowship there. It was the picture of God and his holiness. A place where God was hidden from man.

[11 : 50] It was a place that showed that God's wrath burned against sin. And remember, the writer to Hebrews is saying, this is not the mountain we're at.

He's painting this picture and for many of these people, maybe they're thinking back, you know, I remember being in a position where that was my life. I stood before a God that I hate.

I stand before a God that I can't stand before. I stand before a God whose holiness calls me to turn away or pushes me away because I am not holy and he is.

This passage goes on to speak about that we have not come to the mountain of blaring trumpets. The trumpets sounded to call the people to come near and to receive the commandment, to give heed to what God had said.

And those trumpets were loud and louder to the point of being terrifying. They stood before a mountain where the trumpets alone, aside from the burning, aside from the darkness, aside from the thunders, the trumpets were terrifying, but yet they were calling them to come, to give heed, to pay attention, come near and give assent.

[13 : 06] Yet they were so loud, people feared to come near God. He goes on to speak about this mountain that we have not come to.

We have not come to a mountain with a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them, for they could not endure the message that was spoken to them.

Do you remember the situation? God gave them this picture and he gave them some instructions we'll talk about in just a minute. But in the process of doing all this, after all had been accomplished and it came to that moment, he began to speak from that mountain.

It was God's voice, as it were. God speaking audibly to them, not that God has a mouth, but accommodating man. He spoke audibly to them. And not only with the authority that gave terror, with the boldness that gave terror, what he spoke gave terror.

I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me. You should not make any likeness, a graven image of any likeness of things in heaven and earth or in all the things. You should not murder.

[14 : 20] All the Ten Commandments. And he elaborates on the severity of those commandments. God is perfectly holy. And as they listen to this, coming from this scene of seeing the smoke and the gloom and the thunder and the trumpets that were so loud calling them to hear and pay attention.

And then the voice of God giving the commandments says, Thou shalt and thou shalt not. They came to the point where they could not stand to listen to it.

It could have been just they felt so guilty because here they are people not even 20, 30 days from hence they'll be building a golden calf. Rising up, dancing and maybe already festering in their hearts was this desire to create some way to worship God in a way that they thought was pretty good.

And now hearing these commandments says, I can't stand before this. I feel so convicted. I feel so guilty. I am so sinful. Between the weight of the law and the weight of the way it was delivered with what authority God gave it, they said, we can't listen to this.

And they told Moses, we don't want God to speak to us anymore. Let Him speak to you and you speak to us. And that's the mountain that they stood before.

[15 : 47] So terrifying was a scene that they said we can't stand to hear God's voice. How flippantly these days people say, if I could just hear God say something, I'd be so pleased to hear God say something.

These people heard God say something and they couldn't stand it. And that was appropriate. But we've not come to that mountain. a mountain that had a voice that gave the law that no man could keep.

A voice with such power and authority that none could bear to continue listening. Nor have we come to the mountain. I have to be careful because of the reverse things here.

We have not come to the mountain that could be touched. but if a person did touch it, they were stoned.

Okay? The mixed upness. They were at a physical mountain that if God wasn't on the mountain, they could have touched it.

[16 : 49] They could have gone up, picked up rocks. It was a real mountain. And they were at a mountain that was real, but they were at a mountain that they dare not touch.

Because God had set out the regulations. No man, no animal was to come to that mountain, to be on that mountain. Why?

Because God's holy and man isn't. All things are impure before the eyes with whom we have to do. No being could, no human, earthly being could be on that mountain because holy God was on that mountain.

And God says, don't you let a man cross onto that mountain. Don't you let an animal cross onto that mountain. If anyone ventures, kill him, strike him through with a dart, cut him off with a sword, whatever it takes.

No man is to come into God's presence. God is too holy. God is too pure. Man is too vile. Let there be a separation.

[17 : 55] The mountain was made so holy by the presence of God that no man nor animal could be allowed to venture. No man could draw near to God at that mountain.

We're not at that mountain. We have not come to the mountain to quote the passage here. We have not come to that mountain. Indeed, so terrifying was that sight at the mountain that Moses said, I tremble with fear.

That mountain that the old covenant people stood before. They stood before a mountain that Moses himself said, I tremble with fear.

Moses was God's designated mediator of the old covenant. And even the designated mediator of the old covenant, the sight of that mountain caused that designated mediator to tremble with fear.

No one went to that mountain when God was there. But praise God, brothers and sisters, believers aren't at that mountain.

[19 : 22] There's a second mountain. The mountain we have come to, those who trust Christ as Savior, have come to Mount Zion, a spiritual mountain.

One that we'll actually be at someday, but we're still there. One that we are at already and yet and not yet there.

The already not yet. We're present with Christ, but we're still here. There's a spiritual aspect to it. Going on, he goes on to describe the mountain we are at.

We have come to the mountain that is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. we're going to see as I progress through these that we're in a different situation.

You might say, we're not at the mountain you couldn't go on. We're able to travel right up the mountain we are on, the mountain we are at.

[20 : 31] We're not kept back from the presence of God. God. In fact, he spent chapters dealing with how Christ, because of his work, his sacrifice as our high priest, as the perfect sacrifice, has taken that sacrifice into the very holy of holies and made it so that we as his adopted children can walk into the very presence of God.

That's the mountain we're on. We're not kept back from the presence of God. God. We are in his city. We've seen in the book of Hebrews that because of Christ's work, we again have been brought right into the very presence of God.

A place where because of Christ's work, because of the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to us, a place that we can walk boldly into. That's the mountain we're on.

We've come to a mountain that has an innumerable angels in festal gathering. It's not the way I would say it, but it says it here.

It's innumerable angels in festal gathering. We're not kept out of God's presence by angels. Have you thought about that? When man sinned, what happened?

[21 : 50] He was cast out of the garden. Two angels were sat at the gate of the garden with flaming swords. angels never letting man back into the garden. Going on, at the holy of holies, there was a veil.

What was on that veil? Two angels that kept man in figurative sense from going into the very presence of God.

Angels, among other things, have been shown to be people who have said, no, you can't come into the presence of God. But we're not on a mountain where we can't go into the presence of God, and we're not faced by angels any longer who said, no, the access is denied, he is holy, you are sinful, you are not allowed here.

Instead, the very angels that would have kept us out, who would have guarded the very holiness of God, now are an innumerable host of angels, clothed in festal garb, and we are among them, as those who go to the very holiness of God.

We're not kept out, we're gathered with. As the angels enjoy the very presence and holiness of God, we, as believers, are on the mountain where we can enjoy the very holiness and presence of God.

[23 : 22] we have come to a mountain where the assembly of the firstborn are enrolled in heaven.

I'm going to be honest with you, between this one and not the next one, the one after that, I'm not sure of the distinction, but there's some things, the one after that talks about the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

I'm not sure of the difference, but there are a couple things I can see that might be hinted at. And that is, we're on a mountain where the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven.

We're gathered with those believers who's gone before. And like all the believers who have died before, you can look in Ephesians chapter 11 and see a good example of them.

You can look to people you have known who died trusting Christ. We are gathered with those people who have gone before, and with those people, we are in the very presence of God.

[24 : 27] We'll speak more in just a minute along those lines. Fifthly, we have come to God, the judge of all.

On the other mountain, a mountain that could be touched, we could not get anywhere near. if we were to step one foot, man had the right and the responsibility to slay a man who would try to come to God.

But what a blessing it is that we as Christians, because of the work of Christ, we can stand in the very presence of the judge of all the earth.

If you've committed a crime and you've not been caught, the last thing you want to be found at is a party at the judge's house. But we, because of the work of Christ, can be in the very presence of the judge of all the earth with no fear.

We can kneel before him and don't fear him whipping out his sword and cutting our head. Rather, we can anticipate him holding out his hand and drawing us close because we have Christ's righteousness.

[25 : 48] All our sin has been placed on Christ. He looks at us as being perfect, as being holy, as being as valuable by means of Christ's imputed righteousness as his own son is.

Judge just makes him beautiful. Doesn't make him fearful. We are not condemned. we are people who are at rest in the very presence of God.

Now, this other phrase that I mentioned, and again, I really don't know how to distinguish between the two, but some other things that we can glean from the thoughts of being with the saints.

We have come to the mountain where the spirits of the righteous are made perfect. I'm not sure if this is referring to the same people as the firstborn, but whoever it speaks to, we know that they're righteous humans.

It speaks of the fact that we are at the mountain where God's people are made forever perfect. We're not people who will go, I hope I never have that thought again.

[27 : 04] I hope I never say that thing again. I hope I never trip up in this temptation again. We as people of God are on a mountain where we will be someday.

We are perfect before God now. We're simultaneously sinner and saint. The sin is paid for.

We are pure and holy before God. There's coming a day when we are on that mountain. We are as that now, but when we are on that mountain more real than we are.

No, you can't say that. It's really that we're on. But there will be a day when we will never again struggle or fight temptation. We will forever be like Christ.

And it keeps going. And as we're on the mountain that we're on, it says that we have come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.

[28 : 13] On this new mountain, we are with the one who has mediated the situation that we're in. We're not staying in a mountain that we can't touch, where we can't see God, where we can't stand what he says because it oppresses us for our own sinfulness and his holiness.

We are in a situation where we can be in the very presence of, and not just a, ooh, you know, I can't stand to be here, his glory, but I'm here and I shouldn't be.

But we're in a situation where we are with the one who has brought us into that. We're with the one who has suffered the wrath for our sin, who's lived a perfect life, who's given us perfect righteousness.

We're on the mountain with Jesus forever. And the last phrase here is odd, but I think it's a blessing.

From what several people explained, I thought this was just a great explanation. We're on this mountain, and we've come to a place, or we have the sprinkled blood that speaks better than the blood of Abel.

[29 : 37] What? We have blood that speaks better than Abel? Well, that harkens back to the first murder. Cain, the firstborn, killed Abel, the secondborn.

I think I have that right. And as Abel's blood was shed, and it laid on the ground, as God came about, around there, Abel's blood cried out.

What did it cry out? Well, the insinuation, if I understand this right, is that Abel's blood cried out for vengeance for the sin of Cain. Abel's blood said, someone has done me wrong.

I need vengeance. We don't come to blood that says, someone has done me wrong. I need vengeance. We come to Christ's blood.

And what does Christ's blood cry out? It cries out, paid, paid in full, wrath satisfied, righteousness gained.

[30 : 51] We're now at a place, and we sing hymns about this, where five bleeding wounds he shows. God says, I'm forgiven.

I'm declared righteous. I am able to be in the presence of God. We're in a place where now the blood that has been spilled doesn't cry, someone has done wrong.

It cries out, many have been made right. blood, and the one who deserved punishment has been made free.

This passage goes on. as he finishes up, in verse 25, he says, see that you do not refuse him who is speaking.

You can say that that phrase really harkens back to the whole book. It harkens back to the exhortation that sort of started in chapter 10, the argument's been building, that has really began to be summed up in chapter 12, saying, see that you do not refuse him who is speaking.

[32 : 16] What's going on? He's saying, I've been making an argument for you not to turn away. This whole book has been written to those who consider going back to the old covenant.

The whole book has been arguing the old covenant can't deal with your sin. The old covenant can't give us access or rest in God. The whole book has been saying Christ is the sacrifice, the perfect sacrifice, the perfect priest, the covenant maker, the mediator that we need.

And so this phrase is summing all this up and saying you're not at this mountain, you're at this mountain. You best listen to the voice that says don't turn away.

When you look at the mountains and you compare the mountains, this awful mountain that people couldn't even stand to be in front of and this mountain where we're in the very presence of the judge and we're perfect and we're with the Messiah, the Savior who died for us and we have his blood who cries out righteous, holy because I have died for that one.

Why would we make such a choice to go back to this one? and yet all of us are tempted to do it. Life gets difficult.

[33 : 43] Trial upon trial and you say I don't know why I'm even trusting Christ. Listen to the voice of the one that speaks. You're in such a better position, don't turn away from it.

It is a perfect salvation. You cannot go back to that which only points to the fact that you're a sinner and you need a Savior and a Savior's coming. Stay with the old covenant.

Don't refuse his exhortation that calls you to endure. He goes back and refers to the mountain situation again.

If a person spurned the command of God and said I don't care what God says, I'm going on the mountain. Well, he suffered what God had commanded.

He may have made light of it, but when he spurned the command that God gave to Moses and Moses declared to the people, don't touch the mountain, he got what he deserved.

[34 : 49] He got the severest punishment for rejecting the warnings. That was Moses before a covenant that would only condemn us of our sins and point to a Savior and our need of a Savior.

We are now at the point where there is a covenant where total and true redemption has taken place. And the one who has given that covenant, who mediated that covenant says to you, don't disregard what I say.

how much severe punishment do you think, it says earlier in Hebrews, would be to those who trample underfoot the cross of Christ and make his shedding of blood a light thing.

Oh, Christian, don't let trials turn you away. Should our country get worse and the way we're progressing, I don't know if we'll keep going this way, God's grace, we don't know what will happen.

But should it be that it is not only illegal to live by standards and have a business that would have standards that comport to the word of God, should it become illegal to name the name of Christ and declare your trust in Christ and you face the possibility of persecution or even death?

[36 : 19] Let that voice that cries out from the new covenant remind you to take heed. And it's such a tender voice. And it's such a voice that says when you really look at the true comparison you could almost say duh, what's the comparison?

But all of us are people in the midst of trials and persecutions. We are people who can let the things cloud our mind and we say it might be better to just back off on our convictions.

Back off on what we're to profess. See to it 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.

when they stood before the mountain and God's voice spoke the mountain shook. And the writer of Hebrews says now that happened when the first covenant was made.

When in the second covenant God promises when I speak again I'm not going to just shake the earth. I'm going to shake heaven and earth and everything that is removable will be removed and only that which is firm will remain.

[37 : 51] And so he's warning us in the end don't fear them who can kill only the body. Fear him who can kill the body and soul in hell.

Christian I don't know what days are ahead. I don't know what days are ahead for us as Christians in this country. I don't know what days are ahead for you.

Trials come into our lives and we all know different ones among us who have had trials that have shaken our faith to the core. And we know of people in this congregation right now who have faced things that shake them to the core to the point of saying I don't know if I can go on.

Hear him who speaks from heaven. Don't turn back. Instead let us be thankful.

Again an understatement be thankful you're in this position this grand mountain where you're with God versus this. We need to keep perspective.

[39 : 09] We need to be people who stay thankful and offer acceptable worship with reverence and awe for being able to be part of a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

again. So brothers and sisters don't turn back. I need to watch for you. You need to be watching for me.

Hebrews speaks of that. That's why we get together on the Lord's day to watch for one another to exhort one another to encourage one another. Besides the times during the week.

Oh I encourage you be people who are careful to keep the right perspective in view and heed the warnings from heaven. Let's pray. Thank you father for this whole book and I know we're not done but the way you've put this argument together Lord I thank you.

I thank you that we are a people who if we've trusted Christ are on a mountain of exceeding joy and unspeakable glory. Help us to be people who worship you with reverence and awe and are thankful.

[40 : 20] And I pray that you would help us to be people who are constantly heeding the voice from heaven. The voice that can shake heaven and earth. And may we be always careful to not turn back. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen. Hallelujah.

Can we stand now for this song? we're gonna go to hymn number 257. Hymn number 257.

Hymn number 257. Hallelujah. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[43 : 00] Amen. Amen.

Amen. You can sit down now.

We're going to the Lord's Supper in remembrance of our Lord Jesus. That's for us. May the gentlemen come forward who are helping us to serve tonight.

The Lord's Supper is something that reminds us of the work that Jesus did. As we partake of the bread, we remember that Jesus...