

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc. www.dtrminc.org Today's Date: July 19, 2020

An Unshakeable Kingdom

by Dan Trygg

“Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ Watching that no one is lacking the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springing up, might cause trouble, and by it, many might be defiled. ¹⁶ And there might not be any immoral or irreverent person like Esau, who sold his birthright in exchange for one meal. ¹⁷ For you know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected because he didn't find any opportunity for repentance, though he sought it with tears. ... ²⁵ Watch that you do not reject the One speaking. For if they did not escape when they rejected Him who warned them on earth, even less will we if we turn away from Him who warns us from heaven. ²⁶ His voice shook the earth at that time, but now He has promised, ‘Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also heaven.’ ²⁷ This expression, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of what can be shaken-- that is, created things-- so that what is not shaken might remain. ²⁸ Therefore, taking-to-ourselves a kingdom that cannot be shaken, we might have grace. By which, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.”
Hebrews 12:14-17,25-29

The book of Hebrews is an exhortation. The author is trying to call some disheartened, discouraged Jewish Christians to stand strong in their faith in Jesus. They were considering returning to live as practicing Jews, where it seemed they had more support and protection. **It is important to understand what the author is trying to do, and the stylistic way in which he builds his case. He makes a strong argument for Jesus being the fulfillment of God's revelatory plan (1:1).** In fact, while God had spoken bits and pieces through prophets in the past, now He has spoken through the person of the Son, whom He has made heir of all things. **He presents Him as the Creator and Sustainer of everything (1:2).** He is much greater than a mere angel (1:4). While angels are called servants, He is called God's Son. **He is called God, and the angels are required to worship Him.** After He had made purification for sins, He has taken the seat of honor at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and God will put all His enemies under His feet (1:3).

This is the first of several exhortations or warnings. “We must pay close attention to what we have heard, that we do not drift away from it. For if the word of God revealed through angels was unalterable, and those who disregarded it were punished, *how could we expect to escape if we disregard this even greater revelation?* It was spoken by the Lord Himself, confirmed by the witnesses, and testified to by signs, wonders, and gifts of the Spirit (2:1-4).

God did not even subject to angels the world He was about to create (2:5). Instead, He appointed humans to be over this created world, and subjected everything to them, though for the time being they were little lower than the angels (2:6-8). **Jesus took on humanity so that He might experience death for everyone (2:9), ...that through His death He might render the devil powerless, and bring many sons to glory (2:10,14).** Though sinless, He had to be made like us in all things so that He could be a merciful and faithful high priest, and make a satisfactory sacrifice (2:17). **Because He experienced human weakness and temptation, He can help us who are being tempted (2:18; 4:15).**

A second warning: Take care that there be in any of us an evil and unbelieving heart, leading us to fall away from the living God. Exhort and encourage one another day by day, that none may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (3:12,13). This warning is in the context of recounting how Israel had turned away from following God into the promised land, and they missed out on the blessing of the “sabbath rest” God had prepared for them. They were not able to experience this because of their unbelief (3:19). There still remains a promise of entering into God's rest, a life where we have stopped striving in our own works, and have accepted God's provision (4:1-10).

Jesus is a better high priest. In fact, He is a priest like Melchizedek, who was even greater than the Levitical priesthood that would later come under Moses' covenant. He can sympathize with our weaknesses, though He never sinned, and He has passed through the very heavens into the presence of God Himself to represent us (4:14-5:6). But **even Jesus had to learn obedience from the things He suffered.** Having learned to trust God through many trials, He was ready to become the high priest after the order of Melchizedek (5:6-10).

A third warning: By this time, they should have become mature, and teachers of the word (5:11-14). Instead, they are babes, because they have not invested in the word of God, and in developing their spiritual maturity. It is time to move past the basic teachings about Christ, and on to maturity. There is a danger of being a person who has been in the company of believers, has seen truth and experienced the power of God, but who has walked away. God is looking for maturity and fruit, and those who never produce anything positive are close to being cursed. The writer hastens to say, however, that he *has* seen fruit in their lives, so he does not expect them to fall away. He exhorts them not to be sluggish, but to be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises of God (6:1-12).

Not only is Jesus a better high priest, than those within Judaism, but **He introduced a better hope and established a better covenant, by offering up a better sacrifice** than that of bulls and goats, ...the sacrifice of His

own life. **The offering He offered was a once-for-all sacrifice. The covenant He established was able to change the heart.** He removed the former covenant and established a new covenant. We have been sanctified by the offering of His body for us, once for all time. And by that single sacrifice, He has also completed and perfected us. Therefore, we have confidence to enter into God's presence, we can hold fast the confession of our faith with full assurance, and we can consider one another, to help one another grow in love and good deeds (6:13-10:25).

A fourth warning: If we go on deliberately sinning, after knowing the truth, there is *no other sacrifice* for sins, ...just the prospect of judgment. God will deal with those who are unfaithful. These believers had already suffered much in following Christ. "Don't throw away your confidence, which has great reward," says the writer, "for you need endurance, so that when you have done God's will, you may receive what was promised" (10:26-39).

At this juncture, the writer talks about what faith is, and recounts a history of many heroes of faith (11:1-40). They believed the promise they were given, and chose to live in obedience to God. Their lives were changed, and many went on to do great things, in spite of opposition, difficulty and suffering, ...though many did not receive the fulness of the promise they had seen. *We live at a time when a greater fulness is available to us, than what many of them ever experienced.* **The writer brings the message home by exhorting them to run the race with endurance, mindful of these others who have gone before us, but looking to Jesus,** the first-leader and completer of the faith journey. He too, for the joy set before Him in future hope, endured the cross, thought-little-of the shame, and now is seated at the right hand of God (12:1-3). **He reminds them that they are children of God, and they should expect to experience discipline and training.** God is dealing with them as sons and daughters. No discipline is fun at the time, but it is intended for a good purpose. God's discipline is perfect, and it is designed to cause us to share His holiness. So, buck up, ...stand up straight..., and make straight paths to walk forward with God (12:4-13).

This brings us to our passage for today. These are some practical exhortations we are to implement. WE are ALL in this together. These admonitions are for us ALL. We are to be pursuing peace with ALL, and the holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. **We are ALL to be "watching over" one another to see that no one is lacking the grace of God,** no 'root of bitterness' is springing up, causing trouble and poisoning many. We are ALL to be watching out for people dabbling in immorality or having a godless mind (not taking these things seriously), ...because, like Esau, they could lose out on opportunities and blessings that are unrecoverable (12:14-17).

Then he draws a comparison: We have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, dark gloom, a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of God that was so terrifying that the hearers begged that no further messages be spoken to them, as happened at Mount Sinai. No. We have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to thousands of angels in festal gathering, to the assembly of believers through the ages, 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 His sprinkled blood (12:18-24). The vision described is awesome. The contrast so stark. **We are called to something so much higher and fuller than the Jews ever knew.**

A fifth warning: "See that you do not refuse Him who is speaking", for if *they* did not escape when they refused Him on earth, much less will *we* escape if we reject Him who warns from heaven. **At that time God's voice shook the earth, but now He has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens."** The writer goes on to say that **this indicates a removal of all things that can be shaken – created things – in order that only the things that cannot be shaken will remain** (12:25-27). "Therefore, taking-to-ourselves a kingdom that cannot be shaken, we might have grace. By which, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire" (12:28,29).

The language here is very interesting. It says that we *are* or *can be* "taking-to-ourselves an unshakeable kingdom." **The kingdom of God is not the world we see around us, which is temporal, shakeable, corruptible, coming to an end. We are to be taking-to-ourselves this eternal, indestructible, unending, incorruptible kingdom.** Most versions translate the phrase "taking-to-ourselves" as "receiving". Thirty-five times it is used in the NT of "taking someone with you", and a dozen times it is used in reference to a person "taking" a teaching. It is never in the passive form, in this regard. It is always "taking-to-oneself" a teaching or example. The implication is that you "owned" it, you made it your own belief and practice. **How do we "take the unshakeable kingdom"? We choose it, we "own it", we embrace it, we put it into our lives, we implement it.** We live for the eternal, unshakeable as our highest value, and we disregard, discount, and devalue what is the temporal, the shakeable. **Grace comes with the reign and rule of God** (4:16). **By faith, we take it, and by grace we serve in it. We serve as emissaries of that unshakeable kingdom, even as we live in this temporal, corrupt, passing age.** We call that kingdom into *our* experience, and *our* realm of influence, every time we choose to join ourselves by faith to respond to the King. **We take the kingdom to receive the grace to serve the King in ways that are well-pleasing to Him, in reverence and awe.**