

An Unshakable Kingdom

Hebrews 12:25-29

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Good morning again to you. It is always a pleasure to open God's word together. We're back in Hebrews chapter 12, actually this morning finishing chapter 12.

Next time we will begin the final chapter of Hebrews entering into chapter 13. I'm excited this morning though as we look at this wonderful passage in verses 25 to 29 of Hebrews 12. And as you turn there, I was reminded this week in study of one of my favorite authors, Eric Larson, and a book he wrote called Isaac's Storm.

It's a book that is the historical account of the 1900 hurricane that hit Galveston, Texas. The story centers around a man named Isaac Klein, who was a meteorologist in Galveston at the time, who became suspicious that a dangerous hurricane was brewing somewhere in the Gulf. But in the year 1900, the science of meteorology was an emerging field and it had yet to gain any kind of credibility in the eyes of the general population.

So it was also falsely believed that there was some topological factors that made it impossible for Galveston to be hit by a hurricane. And so people lived there in the ignorance of believing that. And so when Isaac Klein began to raise the alarm that there seemed to be some concerning changes in the weather that would indicate an approaching storm of great proportions, the people just blew him off. They paid no attention. And the end result was devastation.

In fact, you can even Google today images from the 1900 hurricane in Galveston and see the massive destruction that was left in the wake of that storm. It's estimated that somewhere between 8,000 and 12,000 people died as a result of that hurricane and the flooding that came from it. In fact, the storm was so strong that it continued up the length of the country. And the last death recorded as a result of that storm was a fisherman in a boat up in the Great Lakes area.

It was a powerful, powerful storm. At the time, Galveston was a major port city. The who's who lived there. It was thought to be a port that might rival New York one day. But after that hurricane, it would never rise to the same level of prominence that it had before.

Unfortunately, there are far too many historical accounts like this one in which warning was given of a coming disaster that went unheeded and the people paid the price. And this morning, the author of Hebrews is committed to helping us not commit the same error. He's giving us a warning today that he's desperately calling us to heed. And it's not a warning about some approaching temporal storm in a local place.

It is a warning of the end of the world that will come as the judgment of God. A judgment that will sweep away those to eternal condemnation who reject the wonderful gospel of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is an event in which there is no physical location on earth in which a person can run and hide himself or herself to escape the terrible coming wrath of God. The only solution is to hide ourselves in the person of Jesus Christ through repentance and faith in the gospel.

Let's remind ourselves where we've been so far in Hebrews. The theme of the letter, of course, is **The Superiority of Christ**. We've seen that He's greater than the prophets and the angels and Moses and the priesthood and all of the Old Covenant including its sacrifices. That has been proven to us and we've seen many applications of that truth since the middle of chapter 10. Most recently, we've seen that we are to **Take Heart, Run Straight, Pursue Peace, and Pursue Holiness**.

Out of those responses were three dangers that we're to be on guard against in the church. We're to watch out for **The Drifter, The Defiler, and The Defiled**. The drifter is he who comes short of the grace of God, rejecting the gospel of grace. The defiler, the one who's hardened in his own heart and yet also whispers in the ears of others to draw others away from Christ. And the defiled is illustrated by the man Esau who was so godless that he sold his own birthright for a single meal. We're to be on guard against these temptations in our own heart and in the church as a whole.

And then last week, we were given two contrasting scenes, one from the Old Covenant and one from the New, two different approaches to God. There was the **Fear of Sinai** in which it was recounted to us of how Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness stood there at that physical mountain, Mount Sinai, and the awesome glory of God came upon that mountain and fire and a whirlwind and a violent shaking and darkness. It was a terrifying scene, really.

It was a reminder of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man and that we are not welcome in and of ourselves to approach a holy God. But then in the second scene, we were spoken to about the **Joy of Zion**, that heavenly city that believers are welcomed into, the great privilege that we have to fellowship with a holy God and His angels and all the saints saved by grace for all time. Now that leads us to verse 25 as the author is going to call us to respond to these things.

These are given to us for the purpose of edification and application, and he wants to cause us to cling to the gospel of Christ, but also to see again the terrible dangers of apostasy. What we have in our passage today is the fifth and final warning passage in the letter to the Hebrews.

There are five. We've covered the first four. Those are in Hebrews 2:1-4, Hebrews 3:7-4:13, Hebrews 6:4-8, and Hebrews 10:26-31. And today we have the fifth and final warning passage which is contained in verses 25 to 27, but that warning passage is followed by a positive admonition in verses 28 to 29, and we will cover that entire section together.

And that positive admonition will help us to remember that these warnings given by the author of Hebrews are meant not for our harm but for our good. Not for our discouragement but our encouragement. He's intending to stir up our faith, not cause us to lack assurance.

He desires us to double down in perseverance in our faith in Christ and we'll see that again together as we come to this wonderful passage. Let's read together Hebrews 12 beginning in verse 25 down to verse 29:

25 *See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. 26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." 27 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire.*

Now the theme that we will bring our thoughts to this morning is **Do not forfeit Christ's eternal kingdom but serve Him in reverent gratitude!** Do not forfeit Christ's eternal kingdom but serve Him in reverent gratitude. And it begins, of course, with the warning itself. So really two things we'll see today, the warning and the admonition. And the warning is this: **Consider The Greater Judgment.** Consider the greater judgment. Verses 25 to 27.

He begins here in verse 25 with the words "*see to it*", literally, watch out is the idea. Be on guard against, be on the lookout for something in particular. And what is it that we are to watch out for? He says watch out "*that you do not refuse Him who is speaking,*" that you don't reject Him who is speaking. This is ultimately another reminder of the extreme danger of rejecting the gospel of grace, and we'll see that as we unpack this.

Of course, we can't get too far from the context of this letter. We mention this every time because it's crucial to make sure that we understand accurately the people hearing this letter originally, the original audience. There are people in the congregation struggling, it seems with their faith. Some of them are wavering in the faith for a variety of reasons, persecution being one of those.

The author's goal throughout Hebrews, of course, has been to reinvigorate that faith, to call them to wake up to be strengthened in their faith, to see the superiority and the magnificence of Christ, and to continue following after Him, resisting any temptation to turn from Christ to any other gospel, because there is no other gospel.

What we have here is another way of presenting the same warning. Remember one of the previous warnings was worded like this in Hebrews 3, verse 12. He said:

12 *Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.*

It's a call to stay on the path, continue following after Christ, not to fall away. This is the same kind of warning, but here specifically, he words it in such a way as to say don't reject this person who is speaking. Someone is speaking something to us and we're not to reject it.

So we have to answer the question, who is this person speaking? And there are really two options: this is either God the Father or God the Son who is speaking to us, and upon

reflecting on Hebrews both in its immediate context and in the context of the letter as a whole, I believe the idea is that God the Father is speaking through the Son.

And I believe that because first of all, we look at the preceding verse. The immediate verse before this in verse 24, and it brings up this idea of someone speaking. It says *"and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood which speaks better than the blood of Abel."*

So this sprinkled blood is speaking. That introduces this concept, then immediately after that he says see to it that you don't refuse Him who is speaking. Now what is he talking about? As we said last week, the sprinkled blood of Jesus speaks in the sense that it's a declaration of the satisfaction of God's wrath, that we are saved, justified, accepted before the Father. It is, as it were, God the Father preaching the gospel through the sprinkled blood of His Son.

Remember all the way back in chapter 1 of Hebrews. I know it's been a while since we were in chapter 1, but there we were told that the Father is speaking through the Son. He has spoken in several ways in these last days he's spoken through his son Hebrews 1:1-2:

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

This text makes it clear that God the Father is speaking through the Son. Certainly in His earthly ministry that was true, but even in the sprinkled blood He is speaking to us through the Son. Remember how Jesus expressed this in his ministry John 12:44:50:

44 And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45 He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. 46 I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. 47 If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. 49 For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. 50 I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

Over and over again this is how Jesus described Himself in His earthly ministry. He came to do the will of the Father. He came to give the message of the Father. He represented, the one who had sent Him. To reject Him is to reject the one who had sent Him, God the Father.

Therefore, the idea here is in rejecting this gospel of grace that is so loudly preached by God the Father through the Son and the sprinkled blood of Christ is going to come with consequences. If we reject so great a gospel, we will not escape the condemnation that comes for that rejection. And that's the point that's now made through the use of two illustrations.

So he begins with this overarching statement: *“watch out, see to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking”* and then notice the next word is the word “for”. And in verse 26, it begins with the word “and”. These introduce two illustrations that make an argument from the lesser to the greater, because this lesser thing is true, this greater thing must also be true. And this is a technique he's used throughout Hebrews, particularly in these warning passages, he likes to argue from the lesser, Old Covenant reality, to the greater New Covenant reality.

We saw this in Hebrews 10. Just as one example in Hebrews 10:28-29. Notice this argument from the lesser to the greater: *“28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses (the lesser) dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. (Verse 29 is the greater) 29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?”*

Now notice this is exactly what he's going to do in the next couple of verses. This first illustration from the lesser to the greater is in verse 25 and we'll call it this: **Warning From Earth Versus Warning From Heaven**. Warning from earth versus warning from heaven. Verse 25 says it this way: *“25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.”*

Now this first illustration flows right out of last week. If you were here with us, this comparison between Sinai and Zion. The key point there was that Mount Sinai, of course, was a literal earthly place. When He spoke to the people of Israel, He was speaking to them having revealed His presence in that special manifestation there in that localized place on earth. In that sense, He spoke on earth. But here, remember in Mount Zion is the illustration he used last week of God speaking from a being in heaven. He now speaks from that heavenly place. This has been all throughout Hebrews. Jesus has entered into the Holy Place, the actual presence of God. This is where He is residing with the Father.

The idea, now, is under the New Covenant, He speaks there from heaven. In this case, through the word of God speaking to us and his point is if the people of Israel were condemned for rejecting that voice of God on the mountain, how much more would we be rejected for rejecting the voice of God who preaches the gospel to us from heaven.

Heaven, of course, is greater than earth. That's been the whole contrast throughout Hebrews, that Jesus is the great high priest because he ministers in the better tabernacle, the actual tabernacle of which the earthly tabernacle is only a shadow.

And so there we have the voice of God through the Son resounding from heaven, as it were, and the point is obvious: how much greater will be the condemnation of those who reject this voice? He's assuming that we remember the history. We've gone through this already in Hebrews about the Israelites. This is the wilderness generation. The way he expounded on this in Hebrews is that they were not allowed to enter God's rest. You remember talking about that, that is, they did not get to go into the promised land because they were rejected as an act of judgment by God.

How much greater will be the rejection of those not entering into that heavenly place, the abode of God, because they're under the judgment of God for rejecting the gospel of His Son? There will be no escape from the wrath of God for those who set aside this voice that is speaking the gospel.

Remember Jesus said something very similar as He closed out his famous Sermon On The Mount, at the end of Matthew 7, verses 24 to 27. He says this: **24** *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."*

The same idea is true here: the rejection of the teaching, the preaching of God, through the sprinkled blood of the Son, the gospel, will have eternal consequences. Just as there were great consequences under the Old Covenant for rejecting Yahweh, there is even greater consequences under the New for rejecting this gospel of grace. That's the first illustration.

But there's a second illustration that makes a similar point, arguing again from the lesser to the greater. Illustration number two is in verses 26 and 27. We'll call it **Shaking of Sinai Versus Shaking of Creation**. Shaking of Sinai versus shaking of creation. Look back at verse 26. It says: " **26** *And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven. 27 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

Now again, a similar illustration playing off of the Sinai versus Zion realities that he brought up last time. Remember there was this violent shaking of Mount Sinai, an earthquake type event that accompanied all the other things there on that mountain when God appeared and Moses went up to speak with Him. That mountain trembled. That's the idea here of this earthly trembling, this earthly shaking.

But the author's point is that as terrible and as frightening as it would have been to see God's power displayed in this way at Mount Sinai, it is nothing compared to the demonstration of God's glorious power that's coming in the future. That shaking of a singular mountain is going to be replaced by the shaking of the entire created universe. All of it will be shaken. In this case the word "heaven" as it's used here in verse 26, *"yet much more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven"* in the singular there.

The idea is the created heaven, that is what we call the sky, and outer space, the universe in its totality, will be shaken. So this is not heaven in the sense of God's place of His abode but in this case of the heavens as we know them in their created form. There is coming a day, a future day of judgment in which God is not going to simply shake a small portion of the earth like Mount Sinai but the entirety of the universe.

And this is coming from an argument from the prophet Haggai. In your Bible, in verse 26, the second half of the verse may be in a different font that's because it's a direct quote from the Old Testament in, this case from Haggai 2:6, Haggai 2:6 reads this way in its full form *"for thus says the Lord of hosts once more in a little while I'm going to shake the heavens and the earth the sea also and the dry land."*

Now this is clearly a way of holistically describing creation, all aspects of creation, he says, will one day in this future event be shaken. This is an eschatological event, that is, an end time event. Eschatology, the study of last things or the end times. The author is inspired to reveal here for us that that verse in Haggai 2 is a prophetic warning of a future destruction that God will have not only of a single place on earth but the entirety of the universe that He has made.

Now, this does broach the topic of eschatology itself, and we have to be careful not to fall into that ditch and talk about only that this morning. There's a lot of debate, obviously, about eschatology and views of the end times. It's not my desire to solve all of those debates this morning and that's not even the intention of the passage. We would miss the point of the passage if we spent our entire time on that. But I do want to mention a couple of things about how the end times will unfold, I believe, from the scriptures just so that we know what event we're talking about here. It's important that we're clear on that.

If you've been a part of our church for any length of time, if you've read our church doctrinal statement, it should be no surprise to you that I and the elders hold to what's called a premillennial view of the end times. That is to say, we believe, biblically, Christ will return prior to a literal 1,000 year reign on this earth in which many of the prophecies of the Old Testament that have yet to be fulfilled will be fulfilled at that time. That 1,000 year reign will culminate ultimately with one final battle in which Christ will easily mow down His foes and win that battle. That will then result in what's called the Great White Throne Judgment in which all unbelievers will be judged and eternally condemned in the lake of fire. After that judgment will come this removal of the created universe in which it is replaced by what's called a New Heaven and a New Earth, and that, I believe, is the event that's meant here in our passage, this final heaven and earth.

When you think about heaven, obviously Paul's clear that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, so when a believer dies today, their soul absolutely goes to what we normally call heaven. That is, they're in the presence of God. Their soul, they're with Him. I believe that's what was meant by that heavenly Zion in this context as we talked about last week. Although it's used differently at different times in scripture.

But ultimately heaven is going to be this New Earth and New Heaven. A new earth in which we will dwell with God with resurrected bodies, in our full glorified form. And he's speaking of that final reality, that final kingdom, the true city of the heavenly Jerusalem that we will be a part of. We have hope of that, that's the idea. So all of this then is expressed, I believe, in the next verse as we read in verse 27, he makes this point. He says this expression, *"yet once more"* he's quoting from Haggai, *"denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken as of created things so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."*

Here's the idea. There's coming a day in which all of these created things will be shaken in the sense of removed and they'll be replaced by a new kingdom that can never be shaken. An eternal kingdom that will never be removed, in which we never have to fear that one day it will come to an end. This is a wonderful place. When we talk about heaven, this is what we're ultimately talking about.

In Revelation 21:1-8 he describes this reality, and also what the reality will be like for those who are unbelievers, but he says here beginning in verse 1: *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away,(that's the event we're talking about here) and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."* 5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He **said*, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Second death referring to final judgment. All of us experience the first death. We die in this temporal life, but we will know eternal life. We will not experience the second death if we are in Christ. The second death is eternal judgment under His wrath.

So now this is the point being made in Hebrews: if you reject the voice of God which preaches the gospel of grace through the sprinkled blood of Jesus Christ, you will find yourself rejected by God in the end, at the final judgment, in which He removes this created universe to replace it with an eternal universe. That's the idea. Only those who have repented of their sins and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will go to be a citizen in that eternal kingdom, and all those who reject this glorious gospel will find themselves numbered among those that John calls the cowardly and unbelieving, who are cast into the eternal lake of fire.

And so let me just stop here and say this morning, if you're considering if you're on the fence in your assessment of the gospel of Jesus Christ, maybe you've come this morning and you've heard the gospel, you've known the gospel, but you know in your heart of hearts you've never really bowed your knee to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, understand what's being said. Stop and think with an eternal lens about what the author has just said. This is the truth, this is the reality. Whatever temporal difficulty you're walking through or temporal temptation that's captured your attention, step back from a moment and understand that if you reject the only gospel which is the gospel of Jesus Christ, then you will find yourself rejected by God, underneath His wrath for eternity.

This is the clear teaching of scripture. And so the author of Hebrews is desperate to say, do not reject the gospel, repent and believe the gospel, this is eternal life and be welcomed ultimately into this eternal kingdom which is a wondrous kingdom, beyond compare, in which God Himself will dwell among us. This is the first and foremost application of these verses. The warning is to get a hold of us and say, wake up. If you've not come to repentance and faith, don't leave your chair this morning without turning to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and you will find Him eager and ready to forgive every sinner who repents and places their trust in Him. That's the warning, that's the wake-up call.

But it's followed by a joyous admonition. He doesn't leave us on that note. He brings us to the admonition, that we'll call **Cultivate a Reverent Gratitude**, cultivate a reverent gratitude. Verses 28 to 29, and verse 28 begins with the word "therefore", that is in light of this warning, there's an application, there's something that we ought to do. This should affect us in a certain way, and I'm so thankful for this admonition because a lot of people really get worked up about these warning passages in Hebrews because they falsely take these as saying that a genuine born-again Christian can apostatize and lose his or her salvation. That is not what's being taught here. I pray I've made that clear throughout Hebrews, but many people worry about that and therefore when they hear these warning passages, that's how they interpret them.

Understand the author is using these warning passages for two primary purposes: one for believers and one for unbelievers. The first purpose for believers is to stir up the faith of true believers who maybe are momentarily weak in their faith, or their energy of running for the Lord is waning. He is giving these warning passages to say wake up, keep running, persevere in the faith, and I believe these warning passages, much like the discipline of the Lord, are one of the means He uses to make sure His true people will persevere in the faith because a true Christian hears this and says yes and amen, and I want to follow up to the Lord, and I would never turn from the gospel of grace, but it strengthens us in our faith.

The second purpose for which he's using these warning passages is for those in the church who have attached themselves to the church but perhaps have never truly come to saving faith. They've never truly repented of their sins and put their faith in Christ and they are legitimately towing the line and looking over at other things that would lead them astray, and he's calling them to repent and believe the gospel.

So whichever category you fall into this morning, apply it in that way, but what I want you to see is that it's for good, these warnings are for our good. And in fact, in studying this again this week, it was helpful to go back because it's been a while since we were in one of the warning passages and just to remember that at the end of each one of these warning passages, he ends with a note of encouragement, which clues us in that he doesn't actually think everyone in that church is going to be an apostate. That's not his expectation. His expectation is they're going to hear this warning and get up and run hard for Christ and we know that because of verses like this, Hebrews 6:9, the end of that warning passage he says: *"9 But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way."*

Hebrews 6 is one of the most stern warnings in the book and yet he ends with this encouragement. Hebrews 10:39, another end to a warning passage: ***“39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.”***

You see his expectation is no, that's not us, though we're not going to be like that, we're going to follow after Christ. And I love that because he does the same thing through different wording here in our passage this morning. He speaks very confidently about the spiritual state of these believers. In verse 28 he says:

28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken,”

Now notice the first-person plural word “we”. He includes himself among the people as if collectively. This word “receive” is in the present tense. They are receiving this kingdom, it's a reality, and they're receiving this kingdom which cannot be shaken, which has to refer back to that new heaven and new earth that is to come. He's speaking of his confidence, hey we're going to be there, that's going to be our kingdom. And because of that it should change some things about us. It proves that these warning passages are meant to wake us up when we're struggling in our faith and struggling with temptation and discouragement. They're meant to wake us up to strengthen us to keep running, not to throw us off track, not to shake our assurance.

If you've repented of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ this morning, you are His and that will never change. And the goal of this passage is to say now, because that is true, get up and run, Christian, for the Lord Jesus Christ. This eternal kingdom one day is going to be your home. You already have your passport, so to speak, you already have citizenship, you're ready to go, it's coming for you, and this kingdom can never be shaken.

Think about that for a moment. Imagine a kingdom that can never be shaken, and shaken in this context meaning removed, torn apart and removed. Think about that. You know we live in a fallen world. We live in a world that can be shaken, so to speak, by natural disasters, things that threaten to harm us and our property. Think about the money we have to spend to protect ourselves from the unknown things that can quote, unquote, shake us. We have life insurance and health insurance and car insurance and home insurance. Why? Because this place can be shaken, this place requires wisdom in order to protect ourselves from those things providentially that may come our way that we're unaware of because that's the kind of world we live in right now.

But imagine living in a place that has none of that, can never be shaken, no stain of sin has ever touched that place. That place is glorious in every respect, and that's how it will be forever and ever and ever, when 10,000 years have come it will be just as stable as it's ever been, and it will be that way forever. This is the hope that he intends for us to feel when he says *“therefore since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken”* that's the reality for you if you're in Christ, it's the reality for me by the grace of Christ.

And the author's point is that because that is true, because we have citizenship in that kingdom, it should affect us today. It should change the way we live in the present tense, and I think sometimes as Christians we miss this. Sometimes people dwell on heaven and it

makes them discontent with their earthly life. That's not what God intends. He does intend us to anticipate that it will be better, it will be glorious, as Paul says, to go and be with Christ, that is far better. And yet biblically, thinking on heaven ought to change our perspective in the sense of encouragement of how we live in the present. And we see that even here because he says *"therefore since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken let us show gratitude."* Let us show gratitude.

We, as those who receive this eternal kingdom in Christ, should be the most grateful people on the planet. Christians should be the most thankful, grateful people on the planet, amen. With all the riches that we have received in Christ already today and the riches that He's promised eternally that are coming in the future that are secured for us, we should be a grateful people. This is why the scriptures so frequently call us to gratitude and thanksgiving.

I'm going to read sort of rapid fire through a few verses that remind us of this across the New Testament. Colossians 2:6-7

"6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude."

Philippians 4:6: *"6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."*

Colossians 3:17 **17** *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

Ephesians 5:3-4: *"3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."*

And then finally, as we'll come to it here in a few weeks, Hebrews 13:15: *"15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."*

Let us show gratitude, let us be thankful. You see, thanksgiving and gratitude are essential attitudes for the Christian, and it's out of this sense of gratitude that the Christian life flows forth. As we cultivate gratitude in our hearts, it causes us to live in accordance with that gratitude. It's impossible to do that without an eternal perspective. The whole passage is calling us to reflect on the gospel, to reflect on our coming kingdom with Christ, and as we think on those eternal realities it ought to affect our temporal hearts in the sense of gratitude, overflowing with thanksgiving.

Let me ask you, Christian, this morning, how often do you give thanks to God? How often, literally, do you stop during your day in prayer and thank God for specific things that He has done and is doing and will do, the Bible says, in you?

Are you a thankful person? Are you a grateful person? You know, a lack of gratitude is deadly for our spiritual lives because gratitude is so closely tied to walking in godliness. They go hand in hand in the scripture, to walk in a manner worthy of the calling we received requires us to proactively put on a heart of gratitude. And our author is giving us the ammunition for cultivating this kind of grateful mindset. We are to dwell on the unshakable eternal kingdom that is ours in Christ, and as we dwell on that, our hearts are filled with gratitude, and then we work and serve God out of that heart of gratitude.

So how often do you reflect on the glories of heaven? How often do you think with an eternal lens and imagine what it will be like to be in that kingdom? According to Revelation 21, thinking on the descriptions given to us of heaven and what is ours in Christ, how often do you encourage your heart with those eternal realities when temporal temptations and temporal difficulties enter your life, how eternal do your thoughts become? That's what it's going to take to cultivate a heart of gratitude, to think on who God is, what He has done, and what He has promised to do, and that then stirs up gratitude and gratitude goes on to fuel service of God.

That's what he says next. He says: *"let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe."* We are to give praise to God, and that giving praise to God prepares our hearts to offer acceptable service to God.

This idea of serving God has been emphasized in Hebrews already. Hebrews 9:13-14: *"**13** For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, **14** how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"*

I chose that quote from that particular verse because it gives us a right understanding of service under the Old Covenant versus service under the New Covenant. God's people have always been saved by grace through faith. That's true in both covenants, and yet the Old Covenant had this aspect of law in which the service of God was a matter of keeping the law of God.

But under the New Covenant, we are free from the law and the sacrificial system. So many Christians falsely are tempted to think that that means that since we don't live under the law, we live under grace, there's really nothing left for us to do when it comes to service. But the Bible is clear that we are saved by grace unto good works. Service of God doesn't disappear under the New Covenant. In fact, finally under the New Covenant we are empowered to serve God freely because we're free from sin and death. We're free from its penalty we're free from its power, so now from a genuine heart we serve God with gratitude, love, and thanksgiving.

God doesn't want our service as some means of appeasing Him or earning His favor. We already have His favor because of the Son. He's already been appeased because of the Son, so now under the New Covenant this motivation for obedience becomes this natural overflow of love and gratitude that we have for God. And yes, He says He will give us eternal

rewards, which is mind blowing, and yet those eternal rewards are not in and of themselves the primary motivation for which we serve.

We serve because of who He is and our love for Him and our gratitude for Him. So, this fact that we already have citizenship in Christ's eternal kingdom should produce a heart of gratitude, and that heart of gratitude in turn produces a desire to serve God, and that kind of service is acceptable and pleasing to Him. He delights in the service of His saints when that service is fueled by love and gratitude

Now as he closes out the end of verse 28 and verse 29, the whole argument comes full circle. Because remember last week I mentioned that the difference between the Old Covenant and the New, the change in how we approach God, was not anything to do with a change in God Himself. God is the same yesterday today and forever. The holiness of God has not changed in any sense from the Old Covenant to the New. He's just as terrifyingly awesome as He was on Mount Sinai today and we have to keep that in view even as we rejoice in our citizenship of heaven, even as we think on places in Hebrews that says: let us draw near to him with confidence. That's absolutely true, but we still must keep in mind the holiness and the grandeur of the God to whom we draw near. And that's why he finishes this by saying we're to do this with reverence and awe *"29 for our God is a consuming fire."* With reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire.

The Old Covenant was not the end of reverence and awe for God, not even close. The glory of the Father, the glory of Christ today, is no less than it was at Sinai. The full unveiled glory of God is still unspeakably awesome, majestic, overwhelmingly wonderful to a degree that our minds cannot even conceive. I don't have words to put it into a picture for us. And I think a lot of Christians get confused on this point when we end a passage like this that our God is a consuming fire and we're to have reverence and awe and they wonder, how does this idea of God being loving and approachable and wanting me to draw near to Him mesh with these descriptions of Him being someone that I should fear, being a consuming fire? How do those two things go together?

Well, I want to say to you they're not in competition. They're both absolutely true, and if your mind struggles to conceive that let me just say, I'll put it this way: if you saw Him your questions would melt away. Just one glimpse of the glory of God and we would be like Job: no more questions. I understand because I've come to understand my God.

Just imagine a being, a transcendent being, perfect in holiness, awesome in power, to the point that He glows with glory. Of course we ought to stand in awe of Him and to fear Him, not in the sense of fearing judgment from Him because that has been settled. But in the sense of respect of the utmost order that He is God and we are not. This is how we ought to think of Him.

We don't have time to go there this morning but if you turn later to Revelation 4 verses 5 to 11, you see a scene in heaven that demonstrates that He is still holy and glorious as even these four living creatures in verse 8 say *"holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty who was and who is and who is to come."* So He has not diminished in His holiness, therefore it's right that the author would quote in verse 29, he's quoting from Deuteronomy 4:24 that

says “**24** For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” He's still a holy God and those who trifle with Him in the sense that they mock the gospel and turn from the gospel, they will find one day as they stand before the living God that He's not to be trifled with. That He is a consuming fire, and they will be consumed in His judgment and wrath.

Now as we draw this to a close there really are two applications we ought to make from this passage and the first is this: **Heed the Father's Gospel Call**, heed the father's gospel call. And there's a sense in which this is true for the unbeliever of course and also for the believer. The unbeliever, I hope I've made clear, heed the call of the gospel in the sense of repent of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ, the only one who can save you from your sins because He paid for your sins on the cross and rose again on the third day.

But believers, we also must heed the gospel in a different sense, in the sense of Hebrews we heed the gospel in the sense that we're emboldened in our faith, to persevere in our faith, strengthened in our faith, new wind in our sails, to live in light of the gospel. And also for believers, we heed the gospel in the sense that we're overcome with a desire for other people to know the gospel.

This is a passage when we read these warning passages that should stir up within us a heart for the lost, that other people would know the gospel of grace, to share, to get our eyes up looking around in this fallen world for the many opportunities we pass every day to open our mouths and to share with someone the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. And God will save who He saves, but may we be faithful to proclaim such a gospel, to pray for opportunities, to pray for eyes to see opportunities, and for God, as He brings those opportunities, which he does all the time, to be faithful to take them. That others may heed the gospel of grace.

But secondly as we apply this passage, we are to **Rejoice Over the Unshakable Kingdom**. This passage ends on a hopeful note that we as believers have a citizenship in that kingdom which is eternal and will never be shaken. We ought to have hearts filled with gratitude.

So let me ask you, Christian, are you in the habit of shepherding your thoughts and your emotions by dwelling on Christ and your inheritance in Christ? Do you stir up gratitude by meditating on this inheritance that is ours, that will never be taken away? What do you do if the honest truth is you're pretty low this morning on gratitude? Well, you stir it up. You take hold of your meditations and you start giving thanks. Just force your mind to the things that you're grateful for and they will begin to flow. Think on Christ and what He's done and what He's promised and start actually physically giving Him thanks and prayer for those things and notice how it changes your disposition and your heart, and then get up from that and begin to serve Him and others.

When we are grateful, it centers us on what is real about our lives. The truth is God has been exceedingly good to us and we have far more than we could ever imagine deserving. There's always a reason to have a heart full of thanks and gratitude. Don't forfeit Christ's eternal kingdom but serve Him in reverent gratitude.