

## 12. Receiving a Kingdom that Cannot Be Shaken

As noted in the introduction chapter 10, Heb 10:19-25 spells out how we achieve and maintain the promised rest:

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Chapter 11 illustrated the principle of diligently seeking after God by ushering forward one witness after the other from the old covenant dispensation, concluding with Heb 11:39-40. “39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. 40 God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”

### ***Running the Race Marked out Before Us***

*Heb 12:1-3. 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

The word, *therefore*, begins chapter 12 by drawing conclusions based on the testimony of the lives and actions of that great cloud of witnesses from of old. Those things that hindered them were the sins of disobedience to the clear teaching of the new covenant. The writer taught the certainty of the punishment for those beset with these sins in Heb 6:4-6:

4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Heb 10:26-31 speaks directly to how severe and certain this punishment will be:

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

This passage uses an analogy of our lives to the Christian race. None of the endurance of the witnesses of old matches that of the Lord upon whom we are to set our eyes, seeing that he

endured suffering and shame. God rewarded him with a seat at the right hand of His throne. The importance of the entire race analogy is that we are not to “grow weary and lose heart.”

### **Accepting the Discipline of the Lord**

*Heb 12:4-17. 4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:*

*"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

*7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

*12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.*

*14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. 16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. 17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.*

The second analogy in the chapter is one where the discipline that God gives us is comparable to that of a loving father. Granted, Christians must have wondered, “Why the struggle, Christ reigns supreme.” After the discipline analogy, the writer precedes to amplify the teaching on the sins against which we struggle. The passage specifically teaches to be at peace with all men and to be holy. Without holiness, we will not see the Lord. Do not let trouble rise up is a command to the church. It will defile many. Do not be sexually immoral. Our reward can be totally lost, just as Esau lost his.

### **Coming to Mount Zion**

*Heb 12:18-21. 18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; 19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, 20 because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." 21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."*

Mount Sinai was temporal, and the senses comprehended the physical terror of the entire unfolding in the old covenant. They heard, they saw, and they touched. Even Moses was terrified.

*Heb 12:22-24. 22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

But the new covenant is spiritual. Mount Zion replaces Mount Sinai; the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, replaces physical Jerusalem. We are come to the heavenly hosts of angels

and to the church of Christ, the firstborn. Our names, with theirs, are written in heaven in the book of Life. We are come to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant—the one of which he said before dying: “ 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Matt 26:28. The kingdom is with us, the church is with us, the heavenly Jerusalem has come. No turning back; no turning back.

### ***Receiving a Kingdom that Cannot be Shaken***

*25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? 26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain.*

*28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."*

God will shake the created things. We cannot escape if we refuse him. Therefore, we must receive the kingdom that cannot be shaken. Paul called that kingdom the kingdom of light and the kingdom of the Son he loves in Col 1:12-14:

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

John concluded the Revelation with similar descriptions. Rev 1:5-6 reads, “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.” In Rev 5:10, the teaching is repeated, “10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.”