

# Hebrews 12:18-28

## Remember where you Live

Please turn to Hebrews 12

Worship

I was 5 when my parents got divorced. After the divorce my mother took us to Europe to live for a year. We lived in Lausanne Switzerland for a number of months and although my mother could speak the Language, my sister and I could not. I remember her telling us that if we ever got separated we should go to a policeman and just say over and over...

***“Cent trent cank alowiss Voky” (4x)***

I had no idea what I was saying, but it was our address in Lausanne

That was the only French we knew and she drilled our home address into us so that the police would bring us back HOME

My mother wanted little 5-year-old Blake to remember, above all else, where I lived in case I got lost

- ❖ In a way, the author of Hebrews is doing the same thing in our text today
  - The persecuted Jewish Christians he is writing to had gotten a little lost
    - Because of the Roman government’s persecution because of their faith
      - They were thinking of leaving Christianity and returning to Judaism
        - Leaving Christ for Moses
        - Leaving Grace and returning to Law
    - Metaphorically speaking...
      - Leaving Mount Zion and returning to Mount Sinai
  
- ❖ And here, the author is reminding them...

- Where they actually live

## **READ 12:18-24**

- ❖ In this chapter author has...
  - Told the persecuted Christians **HOW** to make it through persecution
    - Fix your eyes on Jesus...
      - Preach Gospel to themselves
  - He has told them **WHY** they are being persecuted
    - It is God's discipline, Training
      - God is treating them as his children
- ❖ Now he turns to encourage them one last time before concluding his letter
  - By answering the **WHAT** question
    - What they would be giving up if they turned away from Christ
- ❖ He wants these believers to realize the Greater privilege we have as Christians

## **The Greater Privilege of Christianity**

## **OVERHEAD**

- ❖ You have heard it said...
  - Eternity began when you gave your life to Christ
    - In other words...
      - By looking to Christ's work and not your own for salvation
        - Your eternal life has begun
          - Eph 2:6 states that
            - God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus
            - Christians are now citizen of the heavenly city with all its privileges

- The Bible uses many metaphors to convey this
    - From enemy of God to child of God (Eph 2)
    - From a child of darkness to a child of light (1 Peter 2:9)
    - You have gone from death to life (John 5:24)
      - Jesus told the crowd...
        - Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.
    - And here the metaphor used is...
      - From Sinai to Heavenly Zion
- ❖ What the author is trying to help them to understand through this metaphor is that...
    - Their basic relationship, approach and worship of God is far, far better than it was in the old Covenant
      - You see...
        - Christianity is not simply a progression of Judaism...
          - ***Christianity is a thousand times better than Judaism***
            - As Hebrews 8:6 has said
              - It is a New and better covenant
  - ❖ And here he shows this by comparing the two mountains where God dwelt among his people
    - Mount Sinai and Mount Zion where Jerusalem is

## **Sinai**

- ❖ In verses 18-21 God's people's experience at Sinai is described
  - Reflecting back on Exodus 19
- ❖ God led his people directly to Mount Sinai after leaving Egypt

- It was the place where the Law was given
  - The covenant was entered into
  - A nation was formed
- But primarily...
  - It was the place where they met with, experienced and worshipped Yahweh God for the first time
  
- ❖ And as Ex 19 and here describes, it was...
  - A place of Dread (Fear)
    - There was fire, darkness, gloom and storms
    - Voice of God so scary that they wanted him to stop speaking!
    - Where the sound of trumpets was so loud it was terrifying
    - So much so that even Moses was trembled!
  - A was also a place of Distance
    - Yes the people of God had been closer to God than they had ever been
      - But if you read Ex 19
        - The people were told to keep their distance by God himself
        - The people and priests were told to stay away
          - So Holy and set apart was God that if anyone of anything touched the mountain
            - It was to be killed
  
- ❖ Thus Sinai was also
  - A place of Death
    - That is how Paul described it in 2 Cor 3:7
      - (A) ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone
  
- ❖ That is what the author is saying it was like to live under the Old Covenant

- Dread, Distance and Death
  
- ❖ Now...make not mistake...
  - Living in the Old Covenant was not HORRIBLE
    - God dwelt among his people
    - Sacrifices for sins were given
    - It was a great privilege to be a member of the Covenant community
  
- ❖ But as Al Mohler writes...
  - Sinai is no longer the mountain on which Christians define their experience with God
    - Heavenly Zion is!
      - We are citizens of heaven, as Paul wrote to the Philippians
        - Heavenly Jerusalem
  
- ❖ FF Bruce
  - Awesome as were the circumstances of the giving of the Law in Moses' day, more awesome by far are the privileges associated with the Gospel...Mount Zion
  
- ❖ So, the author is saying...
  - Don't go back to Law
  - Don't turn back to Sinai
    - Where there is dread, distance and death
      - ***Remember where you live***
        - In Heavenly Mount Zion
      - ***Remember what amazing privilege you have being a Christian***
        - And that is what the author does in v. 22-24

❖ The author is explaining at least three ways that our spiritual position on Mount Zion is greater than Mount Sinai...

❖ **Greater Intimacy**

- Look at v. 23
  - *We have come to...God, the judge of all*
- At Mt Sinai there was distance
  - Could not touch the mountain
  - Could not approach God
- In earthly Jerusalem there was distance
  - Court of Gentiles, Women, Holy and Holy of Holies (curtain)

❖ But now in Heavenly Mt Zion...

- There is Intimacy

❖ Hebrews has said this again and again...

- Heb 4:16 implores us to...
  - ... approach the throne of grace with confidence
    - We do not have to stand far off like at Sinai
      - We are able to approach God
        - In Prayer
- Heb 10:22 opens the door for us to...
  - ... draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith
    - Talking about Relationship here
      - We are able to have an intimate relationship with God!!

A recent Craigslist ad posted a request for a "generic" dad to barbecue burgers and hot dogs at an outdoor party. The ad listed several "dad-like" activities as desirable, including "grilling hamburgers and hotdogs ... referring to all attendees as 'Big Guy,'

'Chief,' 'Sport,' 'Champ" and "talking about dad things, like lawnmowers, building your own deck, Jimmy Buffet." Additional requirements included a minimum of 18 years' experience as a father, 10 years' experience grilling, and a preferred name of Bill, Randy, or Dave.

❖ Now...

- This might be many people's relationship with God
  - Generic, distant,
    - But it is not what is available to you through the Gospel of Jesus Christ
      - And it is not what God wants with you either!

❖ God himself wants an intimate relationship with you

- He asks us to call him Abba, "Dad"

❖ We are invited to know him intimately

- Through his Word
- So many people have locks on their diaries and hide their diaries
  - Why?
    - Because they have put down on paper their most intimate thoughts
    - They have put intimate details of who they are on paper
      - They lock them so that who they are will not be exposed
- Yet God through his Word ...
  - Lays himself out for all to see
    - He says...
      - This is who I am fully
        - No lock...no key...nothing hidden
          - An open invitation to intimacy with Him

❖ That is the experience of Heavenly Mt Zion

- So don't go back to the distance of Mt Sinai
  - Al Mohler
    - Sinai is no longer the mountain on which Christians define their experience with God

Secondly, Sinai was a place of incredible worship, but we have a far, far greater worship experience...

### **Greater Worship Experience** (v. 22-23a)

- ❖ When we think of Great OT worship experiences...what comes to mind?
  - Maybe the day of atonement? (2 goats, priest in Holy of Holies)
  - Maybe when the Temple was completed and filled in 1 Kings 8?
    - Thousands of sacrifices and glory cloud
  - And certainly @ Mt Sinai
    - When God was visible in cloud and storm and fire
    - The people heard his voice, felt the ground shaking
    - The 10 commandments brought down etched with God's own finger
  
- ❖ These are all amazing worship experiences
  - But they all pale in comparison to what is described here!
    - Because v. 22-24 is describing what is actually going on in our worship service right now!!
  
- ❖ Here God pulls back the curtain a little and allows us to see what is really going on when the people of God gather for worship
  - Here we have a micro-theology of worship
    - We are worshipping with...
      - Innumerable angels
        - Yes they worship God too



- The Assembly / church of firstborn
  - This is the NT body of Christ
    - Enrolled = Whose names are written in the Lambs book of life
- And with the Spirits of the righteous made perfect
  - These are the OT saints
    - All worshipping...
      - With God at the center
- It is the worship that was fleshed out in what John saw in Revelation 4-5
  - The triune God, rainbow, no sea of judgment, the 4 beasts, the elders, the crowns, myriads upon myriads of angels...
    - And us!
      - All worshipping, singing, falling down in honor, casting our crowns that were given to us
        - Happening actually, spiritually each Sunday morning

#### ❖ Al Mohler

- Because we are part of the heavenly Jerusalem, we are part of this congregation. We have already joined in eternal membership with this congregation of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven. This is the church eternal and the church universal, and it is the church to which we have come
  - Awesome...right?

#### **APP:**

- ❖ But our hearts are a little like the Jews he is writing to
  - Many of us sitting here today would love to go back to Mt Sinai worship
    - Because it was visible
      - The smoke & fire
      - The rumbling sounds

- The audible voice of God
  - Many perhaps would like to go back to the visible because we think it is superior...
    - It is not!

❖ Hywel Jones in his commentary writes...

- In the Christian church today, fascinated with visible things...from images to icons, smells to symbols, robes to rituals, is as sure sign that true spirituality is either absent or on the decline.

❖ And that is what is being said here

- Sinai is not as good as Heavenly Zion
  - Worshipping by faith and not by sight is better
    - That is one of the main themes in Hebrews, isn't it?
      - Living by Faith is greater than living by sight
      - And worshipping by faith is greater than worshipping by sight!

❖ And all this is made possible by our mediator Jesus Christ

- And his greater sacrifice

### **Greater Sacrifice (v. 24)**

❖ READ v. 24

- 2 views
  - Abel's blood sacrifice
    - Which was accepted and Cain rejected
      - In this case the author is saying...
        - Jesus' sacrificial blood offering is greater than the sacrifices of the OT
  - But it could also mean Abel's spilt blood

- Cain killed Abel and his blood cried out from the ground for vengeance and judgment
  - But Christ's blood cries out Good News
    - It shouts forgiveness and peace with God
- ❖ Either way of reading this...
  - What the author wants to say is...
    - Jesus' sacrifice is far, far greater than what you are thinking of going back to (Gospel Here)
      - Stay in heavenly Zion
        - Do not go back to Sinai
          - When you are tempted to leave, give up, stop running the race...
            - Preach the Gospel to yourself
- ❖ You are a citizen of Heaven, living in Heavenly Jerusalem
  - Not because you live a moral life
  - Not because you do more good than bad
  - Not because of anything you did
    - But because of what Jesus did for you...
- ❖ Jesus willingly put himself under the Law
  - Gal 4:4-5
    - But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons
      - Jesus did what you and I can never do
        - Live under the Law perfectly
          - Earning a righteousness that he willingly gives to all who trust him

- ❖ Jesus willingly suffered and died in your place
  - 1 Peter 2:24
    - He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, ... "by his wounds you have been healed
      - Jesus suffered and died in your place
      - He took the punishment for your sin in his body
      - In His blood there is forgiveness for your sins
- ❖ And Jesus rose from the dead
  - Conquering sin and death
    - Proving that he is God
- ❖ And if you trust in what Jesus did for you
  - You will be saved
    - This is Good News that we have
- ❖ This is the Good News that these Jewish Christians once believed
  - And now are thinking of leaving
    - And so the author gives one final warning to them in v. 25-29
      - **READ v. 25-29**
- ❖ This is the last of 5 warnings in Hebrews
  - 2:1-4; 3:7-19; 5:12-6:12; 10:26-39 and here
    - And the theme in all of them is...

## **Greater Privilege...Greater Responsibility**

## **OVERHEAD**

- ❖ That is the principle that Jesus laid down in Luke 12 after the parable of the unfaithful servant

- (The) servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.
  - All the warnings in Hebrews must be read with this in mind

❖ The author is telling them 5 different times...

- You have been given the Greatest gift in Jesus Christ...
  - Thus if you refuse him, turn away from him, apostatize...
    - The punishment will be more severe than if you had never heard
- With Greater knowledge...
  - Comes greater culpability
- With Greater revelation...
  - Comes Greater responsibility

And in v. 25...

### **A Greater Responsibility to Respond the Gospel (v. 25)**

- ❖ I was registering over the phone for a doctor's appointment I have coming up
  - And one of the questions she asked me was
    - "What religion would you consider yourself?"
      - I said, "Born again Christian"
        - She responded, "There is no category for that on the form."
- ❖ In God's eyes, there are only two categories of people on earth
  - Christians and people that consider themselves not Christians
    - I would like to speak to those of you here right now if you consider yourself a non-Christian

- If you are visiting a friend
- If a family member asked you to come
  - First...delighted you are here!

❖ But v. 25 is for your ears

- Do not refuse him who is speaking
  - There is only one truth
  - There is only one God
  - There is one way to heaven
    - And that is through Jesus Christ
      - John 14:6
        - I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me

❖ You have heard what Jesus went through for you today

- Coming and living, suffering, dying and rising from the dead
  - And that is Good news...that is the Gospel
    - And so...
      - With greater knowledge comes greater responsibility
- Paul wrote...
  - Today is the day of your salvation...
    - I want to invite you to respond to the Gospel today
      - Accept Jesus' gift to you
      - Accept his sacrifice
      - Accept his love
- Because, just as heaven is a real place...
  - So is Hell
    - I don't say this to scare anyone
    - This is not a scare tactic at all

- It is just a simple truth
  - There are two places a soul goes after death
- And the warning here in v. 25 is that
  - If you reject Him who warns from heaven
    - You will not escape the same fate of the Jews in the wilderness
      - The judgment of God...Hell
- Because the same God that sent Jesus to forgive and bring peace...
  - Is the same God that is a consuming fire

But there is a warning for those who are Christians here today as well

### **A Greater Responsibility to Remain in the Gospel**

- ❖ This of course is the emphasis of the whole book
  - Anything and everything in this world worth giving up for Christ
    - Comfort, ease of life, fame, reputation, family, grades, money
      - Anything that the world offers is worth sacrificing for Christ
        - Because...
          - Only that which is eternal will last
- ❖ And that is the meaning of the “shaking” metaphor in v. 26-27

Just yesterday our family was driving together and I commented that in three weeks the Christmas season will be here. Christmas music...lights...decorations...

### ***And the all-important purchase of “The Christmas tree!”***

When you buy a pre-cut Christmas tree along the roadside, you pick out the trees and check 4 things:

Fullness, bank spots, height and freshness

How long has it been since the tree has been cut down?

You test this by “shaking” the tree to see how many needles fall off, right?

You shake and the dead ones fall, those that are alive stay

- ❖ And that is what the shaking metaphor is teaching us
  - Only the eternal things will remain when God shakes the earth
- ❖ Haggai 2 is being quoted here
  - He is reminding the Jews that at important moments in redemptive history...God shook the earth
    - He is asking them to remember the shaking at Sinai
    - And Haggai is saying he will do it again
      - I think he is referring to when God shook the earth at Christ's death
    - And the author of Hebrews is saying that there will be a third and final shaking at the end of time when Christ returns
      - And only that which is eternal...
        - Only that which is alive will remain
- ❖ And so...
  - When temptation hits...
    - When life gets hard
    - When the world offers comfort and ease and acceptance if we will just compromise
      - We have to remember that there will be a final shaking
        - And only those things that are eternal will remain
          - Only those who are alive in Christ will remain

Henry of Navarre was a member of French royal family, which was Roman Catholic, but he heard the gospel, professed faith in Christ and sided with the reformation. However, in 1593 the opportunity came to be crowned king of France, and his profession in Christ was put to the test.

In order to gain the crown, he must revert back to Roman Catholicism. For Henry it was a choice between a royal crown on earth and the crown waiting him in heaven...



Henry chose the world.

Explaining his willingness to revert to RC in order to gain the crown he remarked...

“Paris is worth the Mass.”

❖ When you are faced with gaining a worldly crown, and you will be

- Remember...

- Where you live

- Remember...

- There will be a third shaking

- And Paris is never worth the Mass!