

Sermon Series
The Superiority of Jesus Christ
September 18, 2022

Title: The Imperative of Hearing

Subject: The Word of God, The Word of Christ, Ears that Hear, Deaf Ears, Divine Warnings, Heaven, Earth, rejecting Christ, Rejecting the Word, regeneration

Theme Text: Hebrews 12:25 (ESV) ²⁵ See 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.

Theme Illustration: It would be a false understanding of the relationship of the first or Old Covenant to the New to the difference between a system of laws and a system of grace supposing that the requirements of holiness and justice are less or less important than in the Old Covenant. That is a gigantic misunderstanding of the New Covenant of God's grace that could have disastrous repercussions. Those who despise grace must and will be punished as were those who despised the Law. In fact, those who are despisers of grace are guilty of a greater offense. Just as Mount Zion is superior to Mt Sinai in God's revelation, so too are the punishments for those who despise Christ will exceed those who despised Moses.

Remember those who heard the Lord on Sinai closed their ears to Him who spoke on earth. Greater is the responsibility of those who are called Christians to hear the revelations that come from heaven. Our problem with hearing is well represented by the rebuke of Peter by our Lord on the mount of Transfiguration, **Matthew 17:5 (ESV)** ⁵ **He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."** If we are to persevere in this grace given to us we have a greater responsibility to the greater revelation than Israel did at the foot of the

mountain. The principle is sufficiently stated by Our Lord, **Luke 12:48 (ESV)** ⁴⁸ **But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.**

The much is the Gospel message of God's grace freely extended to us through faith in His Son and that Son's obedient sacrifice of Himself under God's wrath because our sins were imputed to Him. Our receiving this greater revelation then binds us to God in a grace relationship which produces in us heart-led obedience to Him who is our Lord.

Read: Hebrews 12:25-26 (ESV) ²⁵ **See 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.** ²⁶ **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."**

Introduction: We can immediately understand this warning as being like God's warning to Israel given through the prophet Isaiah, **Isaiah 6:8-9 (ESV)** ⁸ **And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."** ⁹ **And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'** From God's standpoint hearing is more than the physical reaction to a word but a grasping of what is being said and an impact upon the heart to obey.

Of course, we know that God has not changed His mind on sin, rebellion, and our duty to Him, **Malachi 3:6 (ESV)** ⁶ **"For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.**

Fornication is still fornication, Homosexuality is still homosexuality, idolatry is still idolatry, and all of these are improper for the person who confesses Christ.

Transition: Thus, today's text is making practical application to the verses we covered in the last two weeks. We are now being exhorted to faith, obedience, faithfulness, and perseverance. In today's text, the Holy Spirit first gives us:

1. The Warning: Hebrews 12:25 (ESV) ²⁵ **See 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.

Let me assure you that the frequent warnings in Scripture against apostasy are there because the security of the believer is not true. These warnings are a means of God's grace to help us stay on the narrow way. He is exhorting us to faithfulness and obedience. The audience is just as much to us as it was intended for those Hebrew believers in the apostle's day. Just as those Jewish believers were being enticed back into Judaism, we, today, are being enticed to go back to the world. So there is a one-to-one correspondence between them returning to Judaism and our reluctance to pursue holiness or separation from our former life of worldliness.

The Greek word see is the call to take heed to what was being written. The word refuse means to reject. In other words, hear Him, heed Him. We have an amazing way to rationalize Christ speaking away from our own excuses. This is the foundation of all gospel faith and obedience, and the reason for the condemnation of all unbelievers. God has given a command to all the earth, **Acts 17:30-31 (ESV)** ³⁰ **The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,** ³¹ **because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.** It is our responsibility as God's chosen means to deliver this message. Those who refuse to hear, refuse Christ Himself, **Luke 10:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ **“The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”**

The Scripture tells us that Christ is still speaking to us through His gospel, by His spirit, and His called and commissioned servants, calling upon all who come under the sound of his voice to repent, concede their wills, and serve Him.

There are many ways we can refuse to hear Him. First, by neglecting the word of God through which He speaks. Second, by failing to attend to the public preaching where His word is faithfully delivered. Third, by failing to comply with the terms of the gospel and refusing to yield to His authority. Fourth, by leaving the narrow way of His commandments and going back to the world. Fifth, abandoning His truth for error which can lead to full apostasy. That means abandoning the apostle's teaching for the error of godless philosophies such as CRC, intersectionality, and identity theologies.

Transition: Just like under the old covenant there were repercussions for refusing Him who speaks, we moved to the repercussions for refusing Christ who speaks from heaven. Thus, we see:

2. The Result: Hebrews 12:25 (ESV) ²⁵ See 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.**

Here, we see one of the contrasts between Judaism and Christianity. God spoke from Earth at Sinai the Christ speaks to us from heaven, **Hebrews 1:1-2 (ESV)** ¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. The speaker is the same in both instances. He first spoke from Sinai, He spoke to men by the prophets. But in Christianity, He speaks through His beloved son, **Matthew 3:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Judaism was a religion for the earth, a temporary arrangement for a time. Christianity is a revelation that concerns a heavenly calling, heavenly citizenship, and a heavenly inheritance with eternal relations and realities,

John 1:18 (ESV) ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Under Judaism, God dwelt behind the veil, but under **Christianity**
Corinthians 3:18 (ESV) ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. Formerly, man was unable to go into God; but under the new covenant, God has in the person of His Come out to Us.

So it stands to reason that the revelation given to us, the contrast between Judaism and Christianity, is greater and more blessed but highlights how equally Solomon terrible is the contrast between the punishment meted out under each covenant. God now speaks from a higher throne than the one He assumed that Sinai. Thus, the guilt of those who refuse to hear him today is far greater than the punishments that accompanied such refusal at Sinai.

We must forever bury the assertion that the God of the new covenant is a far more benevolent and amiable God than the God of the old covenant. That is Marcionism. The Scripture declares that He is the same, yesterday, and forever. **Hebrews 13:8 (ESV) ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Remember, John 10:27 (ESV) ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And John 10:28 (ESV) ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.**

Transition: The third element in our text concerns:

3. The Promise: Hebrews 12:26 (ESV) ²⁶ 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."

Notice that the emphasis is made concerning the past and the present at the time of this apostle's writing. This text has its origins in **Haggai 2:6 (ESV) ⁶**

For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. The apostle wants us to keep in mind that if He who shipped the earth is to be feared how much more should we fear Him who shook the heavens? This shaking is not referring to the shaking of the end time but refers to the shaking of the replacement of the old covenant by the new.

When God spoke at Sinai there was an earthquake which illustrated that when God speaks in His eternal decrees is earthshaking. When God speaks the creation trembles, **Psalm 29:4-5 (ESV)** ⁴ **The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.** ⁵ **The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.** When God declared His authority by applying His sovereignty, Sinai convulsed.

What did the fulfillment of God's promise to shake the heavens entail? The shaking of the heavens refers to the final episode in removing the stumbling block of Judaism. Nowhere in the Old Testament had God promised to do away with Judaism. Yes, He promised a new covenant both in Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

The shaking referred to in Haggai is the removal of the old covenant and the institution of the new. The word but now places a timestamp on the shaking of the heavens. The button now refers to the fulfillment of the promise in the establishment of Christianity. The word shaking refers to monumental change, produced by the power of God.

At Sinai, when God shook the earth, the external status of Israel was altered. They were organized into a kingdom and a church-state, into a theocracy. However, this shaking did not alter the condition of the heart. Sinai was a temporal covenant, with a worldly nation, referring to temporal promises, earthly inheritance, a worldly sanctuary, and a typological priesthood with carnal ordinances.

The shaking of the heavens produces more extensive and permanent effects. The shaking of the earth affected only one nation. The shaking of the heavens reaches into all of the earth, all nations, and in effect and its effects are eternal. This was written of the gospel advance, **Acts 17:6 (ESV)** ⁶ **And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also ...the old covenant shook the earth, the new covenant shook the heavens.**

Conclusion: The greatest shaking that is ever occurred was the replacement of the earthly worship at Sinai with the heavenly worship of the gospel and the church on Mount Zion against which the gates of hell will not prevail.

The outward sign of this great shaking was the shaking of the crucifixion of our Lord and His glorious resurrection, and 30 years later removal of the signs of Judaism.

The warning against refusing to hear the words of God was echoed to Israel during the ministry of our Lord, **John 10:26 (ESV)** ²⁶ **but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.** They did not hear and believe his word thus they were not his sheep. How can a person know if they are saved? They heard his voice, they believed, and they follow him. We do apply that to our conscience and judge for ourselves.