

Unshakeable Kingdom

Hebrews 12:18-29

I was 6 years old and so terrified I peed my pants and ran home crying.

I thought I could get away with stealing an apple from our neighbors tree, but Mrs. Maidens caught me red-handed and I was as guilty as Adam in the garden.

Under her scornful gaze and stern rebuke, I ran home, stomach empty, pants wet and conscience stained by the guilt of thievery.

I was 14 years old and so terrified I tried to lie my way out of trouble.

I thought I had gotten away with it - a low grade criminal offense involving **malicious destruction of property** - but a friend ratted on me and my sin caught up with me.

After he police visited our home and talked to my parents, they asked me about my involvement. I lied to their face trying to avoid conviction, but it only pressed heavier.

After a few moments, my heart broke beneath the weight of conviction, and I wept, admitted the truth, and placed my fate in the hands of justice.

I was 16 years old and so terrified I was sobered up...

*It was a foolish night of teenage drinking when my friend rear ended a car.

*When police lights shined behind us, the fear of judgment had a rapid sobering effect on the evening, reminding us that we were young men who deserved justice.

Those stories are connected by **3 common elements** of the human soul. In each story...

***Guilt** – a knowledge of guilt. Something I did wrong.

***Conviction** – a feeling of weight that spoke in my inner being.

***Judgment** – a fear that the crime deserved punishment.

*When those 3 elements pressed down, one other emotion instantly popped up:

***A strong desire to escape penalty...by whatever means necessary.**

*Have you shared those feelings?

*Well it's one thing to **fear judgment from man**, even more to **fear judgment from God**.

*When **guilt, conviction and judgment** we down up us, what do we do? Try to escape? Ignore it? Cross our fingers and hope for the best? Finagle our way out?

*Or perhaps we try to get out of it by doing better and trying harder?

My friend, I have good news for all of us who stand with **stolen apples in our hands**:

*The blood of Jesus offers a path of joy and freedom that forever cleanses the guilty conscience and removes the fear of condemnation.

*It is a great blessing to live in the **day of grace** with **unshakeable confidence**.

*This section of Hebrews is a celebration entitled: "**A Kingdom That Cannot Be Shaken.**"

It **celebrates** the day of grace in which we live, as far superior to the Old.

It issues a **stern warning** reminding Christians that listening to God is serious business.

It calls for obedience, showing that in light of who God is, we owe him our best!

1. Be glad we live now, not then, (v.18-24)

- *Joy, instead of gloom.* (v.18-19 & 22)
- *Life, instead of death.* (v.20 & 23)
- *Peace, instead of panic.* (v.21 & 24)

*Key: "*For you **have not come** to...But you **have come** to...*" (v.18 & 22)

*He compares the New Covenant under Christ to the Old Covenant under Moses (Ex.19)

*He compares what happened at Mt. Calvary to what happened at Mt. Sinai where God delivered His commandments amidst darkness which raised the **terror level to critical**.

*The reason for the comparison: To show how blessed we are to live now, not then.

Joy instead of gloom.

THEN: "*For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers **beg that no further messages be spoken to them...***"

*Mt. Sinai. The place where God gave the 10 commands and the people were under such conviction they literally begged God to stop talking!

*Imagine that happening Sundays. Such conviction of the Spirit that people literally beg the preacher to stop b/c they are terrified of judgment.

*I haven't ever seen that...but I have seen people walk out during a sermon knowing they are under conviction and by leaving they are trying to escape guilt.

NOW: "*But you **have come to** Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering...*"

*What a difference Mt. Zion is to Mt. Sinai. Mt. Sinai brought such terror...while we who share in the grace of Christ literally gather at a **festal gathering - party!**

***Festivity!** Whenever we who are in Christ gather together, it is attended by the angelic hosts, where the dominate mood is: JOY.

***N.H. Keep in mind,** A right understanding of the gospel will bring about conviction of sin (**produced by guilt**) and will simultaneously produce a tremendous amount of joy (**produced by grace**).

Rom. 2 *"God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance."*

Life instead of death.

THEN: *"For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."*

*IOW: *Don't cross that line!* It was a clear line between holy God & sinful man.

***Imagine a childhood moment where a playground feud led to someone "drawing a line" in the sand and warning others of consequences if they cross**

*In Ex. 19, there was a clear line between a holy God and sinful man, and the penalty for crossing that line was death.

*Keep in mind: *"The wages of sin is death."* But that's not the end of the story. In the day of grace, we celebrate *"the gift of God is eternal life in Christ."*

NOW: *"we have come to...the assembly of the firstborn who are **enrolled in heaven**, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of **the righteous made perfect**..."*

*My friend, God has dealt with the line of separation at the cross.

*Sinful man is now able to cross the line and dwell in the presence of the holy God. We are part of an assembly...**enrolled in heaven.**

*It's not that **God is less holy...or man is less sinful...**but God did something at the cross which has declared the **"righteous made perfect."**

*What joy and life we have, made possible through the cross of Calvary.

Peace instead of panic.

THEN: *"Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."*

*I was terrified by Mrs. Maidens because of an apple. How much more were the people of God terrified by the presence of a holy God?

*His holiness exposed every sin and flaw, as if their entire life was revealed before His eyes...and it produced a conviction so deep it resulted in pure terror.

NOW: *“We have come...to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”*

*Good news, apple thieves! Something happened at the cross with the shed blood of Jesus that replaces the panic and gives peace.

*It’s blood of an **innocent man** that was shed by those who were guilty...a man like Abel (righteous)...but better in every way.

*The blood of Jesus is the instrument of God’s grace where our guilt is cleansed

*That’s why we **sing about blood, rejoice we are ‘washed’ in the blood, and why we ‘drink’ his blood at communion...**and no it’s not weird cultish behavior

Action Step: Turn to God in joyful repentance.

Acts 3:19 “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...”

How to deal with guilt?

- **Do Better?** In **the secular world**, people with a guilty conscience try to avoid judgment, thinking if they just try harder, they may be able to escape punishment.
- **Try Harder? In our own faith**, some Christians with a guilty conscience may feel they have to *earn their way back* into good favor through trying harder.
- **Fail Less? Hindus in India** deal with guilty conscience with a system of sacrifice (Puja’s) where give an offering to appease their god.
- **Pay More? Catholicism** dealt with guilt by a practice of indulgences: *“a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins.”*

Key Thought: The only effective way to deal with guilt & fear of judgment, is **NOT** by *doing better, trying harder, failing less, or paying more...***BUT** through faith in the **shed blood of Jesus.**

My friend, it’s way better that we live NOW, not THEN...

2. ...but we still take God seriously, (v.25-27)

- *A warning to heed* (v.25)
- *A promise to hold* (v.26-27)

A warning to heed:

*“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.”*

*It’s another stern warning in Hebrews, calling Christians to take this stuff serious:

Heb. 2 – We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift

Heb. 3 – *See to it that none of you have a sinful, unbelieving heart that causes you to fall away from the living God.*

Heb. 4 - *Today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart.*

*Added to all of those, Hebrews now warns: ***Do not refuse him who is speaking.***

*The reasoning is surprising, but true? Yes, it's a wonderful thing to live in a day of grace, but don't think for a moment there are no consequences for rebellion!

*If they "didn't escape" when they refused God's voice on Mt. Sinai, how much more are we accountable if we reject God speaking to us through His Son?

***If I send my daughter to tell my son to clean his room: "No!"**

***How much more will he be accountable if I go and tell him?**

*The point is clear: *What God did at Calvary is serious business and we are accountable to listen!*

A promise to hold

*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." ²⁷ This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are **shaken**—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that **cannot be shaken** may remain.*

*One of my favorite passages in Hebrews...with profound implications to a day in which our financial, global and political economy seems shaken to the core.

***Here's the picture.** In Moses' day, God **grabbed Mt. Sinai by the neck** and shook it, and when everything was shaken, the people took heed: These are God's commands!

***1200 years later**, God piled all our sins on Jesus and shook Mt. Calvary by the neck, declaring that He was dealing with the sin problem: It is finished!

*Hebrews has an encouragement for us: **Another shaking is coming.**

"Yet once more!" It's a quote from Haggai 2, where God promised a day when he will **"shake the heavens, earth, sea, nations"** and fill creation with his glory!

*On the day when **God shakes the world by the neck, 2 things will happen:**

*Everything rooted in this world will be uprooted and removed.

*Everything rooted in the Kingdom will hold firm and remain.

Action Step: *Cling to the 4 pillars of God's unshakeable kingdom.*

4 Pillars of God's Unshakeable Kingdom:

Sovereignty – His rule is firm.

Authority – His word is true.

Certainty – His plan is sure.

Security – His grip is safe.

3. ...and should give Him our best! (v.28-29)

²⁸ Therefore **let us** be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus **let us** offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ **for** our God is a consuming fire.

Two “let’s” and a “for”

Let us = be grateful – hearts overflowing with gratitude because in Christ, we have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken. No matter elections or politics, we remain unshaken.

Let us = offer lives of obedience – acceptable worship (with reverence & awe)

IOW: Let’s be grateful and let’s live lives of worshipful obedience to him. Why?

For = *our God is a consuming fire.*

This is how Moses described the Lord to Israel after having witnessed his power.

Dt. 4:24. *“The Lord is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”*

Dt. 9:3. *“The Lord your God is...as a consuming fire.”*

*NH: there is a **dangerous movement in our culture**, especially among the youth which basically says: *We aren’t that bad.*

***Key Thought:** A *diminished view of God* and an *elevated view of man* will always produce **an impoverished view of obedience.**

*My friend, the pathway to joyful obedience will never come from trying to wash away a guilty conscience with a bar of soap and saying: *“I’m not that bad.”*

Rather, true joy will come when we see **God as a consuming fire** and yet at that moment realize: ***“Even when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!”***

Action Step: ***Stop making excuses...and give God your best.***

*NOT because we are trying to pay him off, or earn his favor, or get out of trouble, but because He is worthy and we owe him our lives!

Summary Actions

- *Turn to God...*
- *Cling to the 4 pillars...*
- *Stop making excuses...*