

# Hebrews

## Chapter 12:12-29

*November 19, 1995*

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- **Hebrews Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Christ is greater than the prophets and the angels.
- Chapter 2 Christ's message is greater than the angel's.
- Chapter 3 Christ is greater than Moses.
- Chapter 4 Christ is greater than Joshua and His rest is superior.
- Chapter 5 Christ's High Priesthood is greater than the Aaronic Priesthood.
- Chapter 6 God's faithfulness to Abraham and his seed is confirmed by an oath.
- Chapter 7 Christ is a Priest in the order of Melchizedek and Christ is greater than Abraham.
- Chapter 8 Christ is Mediator of a new covenant.
- Chapter 9 Christ offered a better sacrifice at a better sanctuary.
- Chapter 10 Christ's sacrifice was offered only once and then He sat down.
- Chapter 11 The just have always lived by faith.
- Chapter 12 God disciplines His sons who are citizens of the New Jerusalem.

- **Introduction & Review**

The readers of this letter were obviously experiencing much persecution. We know that they had had their property stolen and we know historically that Christians, especially Jewish Christians, were persecuted and ultimately martyred. These saints had not yet (obviously) suffered to the point of bloodshed but the author tells them to receive this persecution as from the hand of a loving Father. Our heavenly Father protects us for our benefit and He also disciplines us for our benefit.

- **Exposition**

### Hebrews 12:12-29

*12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. 14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*

- He admonishes them to keep their countenance up and not to become discouraged at the opposition. This is not just a Christian version of a positive mental attitude; this joy and strength comes from the faithfulness of God and from the knowledge that many faithful saints have gone before us and ran the race successfully.
- We should be characterized as a people who are not just in favor of peace but as people who *pursue* it. The world attempts to find peace by determining that there is no such thing as truth and blurring the lines. Christians who are armed with the wisdom from heaven seek peace but also know that true, lasting peace can only be found by being included in Christ.
- Falling short of the grace of God is done by thinking that we are saved by grace but then our continued salvation is secure because of our works. Just as Paul rebukes the Galatians for this foolishness, so too does this author exhort the saints not to abandon the firm foundation of grace for one of works which is no foundation at all.
- Bitterness is described as a root; it is subterranean in nature and over time, will always sprout above surface, bear fruit and when it does, it will defile many. As Christians we must have a good solid handle on this sin because it is pervasive and frequently hard to identify. The way we deal with it is not the way the world deals with it. Generally, the world has two options, suppress it (until a later date when it defiles many) or let it all out now (when it defiles many). As you see, the world can't cope with this

because the world is not *forgiven*. When a Christian is forgiven by God, he has no grounds for not forgiving another person. Bitterness, although prompted by someone else's sin, is always our sin. We must confess our bitterness and repent from it- whether or not the one who sinned against us is repentant.

- Let us pursue peace and holiness so that there will not be fornicators or those who profane sacred things (like Esau did) in our midst. How is this done? This is done by the regular, deliberate, faithful admonition that we give to one another seven days a week. We want it to be a very difficult thing for those who are not truly regenerate to continue in our midst. We want them to truly turn to the Lord but not continue in the delusion of salvation by association with the church.

*18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. 20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." 21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.")*

- The author now moves into a comparison of the Law and grace. The comparison is embodied in a comparison of two mountains- Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. We also know that this comparison has additional images related to it. The mountains are also symbolic of Hagar and Sarah (the bondwoman and the free woman) Galatians 4:21-31. The two women are symbolic of the two covenants: one of bondage and one of freedom. The symbolism continues with Mount Sinai representing the earthly Jerusalem and Mount Zion representing the heavenly Jerusalem.

*22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

- We have not come to a mountain that can be touched; we have come to a kingdom which cannot be touched. The author makes a comparison again of physical vs. spiritual and types or shadows vs. reality. Those who are true citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem are part of the firstborn. The author warns the readers about squandering the blessing of being firstborn as Esau did. The way this would be done is by returning back to the types and shadows. However, we also know that God preserves the Elect. Those who fall away demonstrate that they were never perfected.

*25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, 26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." 27 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire. (NKJV)*

- An extremely strong warning comes from the author again. He is emphatically pleading with these people not to abandon their profession of faith. If they are true believers then they are in sin and be certain that their sin will be found out. If they are just professors of faith but not really of the Elect then he warns them about the wrath of God upon godlessness.
- Even though God shook Mount Sinai, we are inheriting a kingdom which cannot be shaken. Nothing can prevail against it for God has built it and it is sustained by Him.
- We sin because we don't fear God. Notice in Exodus 20:20 God said that He appeared in the Mountain as fire, smoke and earthquake so that the people would fear Him and *not sin*. The modern evangelical church is guilty of turning God into just a big one of us. But no, this is not true. Our God is a consuming fire. Our God is the owner, creator and ruler of the entire universe. We are privileged to know Him; to enter His presence; to be called His child; to even speak His name. If we truly had even a glimmer of the awesomeness of God and His glory we wouldn't sin. But when we sin we are declaring that we do not fear Him. We should.