

He who Speaks Hebrews 12:25-28

Psalm 102:1-18

Psalm 102 19-28

Responsive Ephesians 2:1-10

Over the past couple of weeks we have been focusing on God's power, his sovereign nature and control over all things and how this reality should in one sense strike fear in our hearts yet, the very thing that causes that fear is also the same which brings us perfect peace and hope. For we, who are Christ's have no need to fear the coming judgment, or even fear the world around us for Christ has conquered all. So while we contemplate God's nature, to the extent that we are even able to grasp, it does and should bring a sort of reverent fear understanding out fragile and insignificant we really are, yet it also brings us great hope and peace knowing that such an awesome God, loved us, even while we hated him, he stooped down, took us out of that lump of fallen humanity changed our nature, formed us to be like our savior, a people, holy, and without blame for it is God himself who has made it so, it is only he who has enable us who once hated him, to now instead love him.

Throughout this book the Author has always brought in comparisons, usually comparing that which was, to that which now is. That is, the promises of the old testament in comparison with the fulfillment of Christ, or the punishment of the law in the old covenant in comparison with the mercy in the new covenant. Today's passage is the same, he continues this comparison that he started in the previous verses that we looked at last week. So let us start this morning by reading in chapter 12, from verse 18 through to the end of the chapter. ( read Hebrews 12:18-28)

So again we see this sort of comparison, in verse 24 he says, "Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and whose blood of sprinkling speaks better things that that of abel." We didn't get into it last week, but this verse arises the question, what things did the shedding of Abel's blood speak, and in comparison how does that relate to Christ's. Well to answer this I think its best to work backwards, as we all know the significance of Christ's death on the cross. As we have seen going through this book, Christ's death, and shed blood stand in contrast, and is indeed greater then all that which has gone before, that is the animal sacrifices hos blood was taken and sprinkled on everything to purify it, and make it holy. But as we have seen in chapter 10, when the Author was talking about this very thing he said, in verse 4 "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." Therefore we know that they were a sign, they were an ordinance given to point to something greater, something in the future, and we know that their fulfillment is found in Christ, his sacrifice is greater then all of those, for he being the Son of God, gave of himself a willing sacrifice to die in our place because of his love and mercy toward us.

So this we all know, so where does Abel fit in, what does it mean that the shedding of Jesus' blood speaks of better things that Abel's." Well, as we know Abel was the first human blood that was shed, but not only that it was shed by his brother. Who out of jealousy and anger murdered his own brother. The death of Abel shows the horrifying truth of the depravity of mankind, the rule of sin in the heart of us humans, and as we now, this was only the beginning of generations upon generations built upon violence and the shedding of blood. Then compare this with Christ, who was also a recipient of mankind's sinful hatred and violence, who died a cruel death by the hands of those who out of jealousy and anger plotting to have him killed. But Christ was not murdered as was Abel, for he willingly laid down his life, motivated by his love and mercy toward his children so that the sin of Adam which is by our very nature, the ruling power in our life, for all who are born of the flesh are born into Adam, yet by Christ's blood.. which speaks louder then Abels, for with it brought redemption and salvation, he has by himself nullified and conquered sin.

This concept of Abel's blood speaking, comes from Genesis chapter 4, when God says to Cain, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground." Even though Cain tried to hide it, nothing can be hidden from God, Abel's blood which was shed cried out for justice and retribution but the blood of Christ speaks of greater things, for with the shedding of his blood came redemption and peace with God, for his blood was shed so that we may be purified and sanctified. Abel's blood was taken, God's blood was given. Where Abel was killed by his brother, Christ laid down his life for those whom he is not ashamed to call his brothers. The blood of Jesus speaks to us who are guilty sinners of something better something more gracious than Abel's blood which cried for vengeance, Christ's blood speaks of redemption, instead of condemnation, the final putting away of sins which the animal sacrifices of the old covenant could not accomplish. Purging our evil conscience and perfecting and sanctifying all to whom it is applied. Christ's blood speaks of repentance instead of rejection, it speaks of blessings instead of cursings. The blood of Abel cried out from the ground for judgment, but Christ's blood cries out for mercy and pardon.

Which brings us to verse 25, which says, "see that you do not refuse him who speaks." The language used here in this admonition from the author ties back to the previous verse, to what he has already said. This mention of him who is speaking is an assertion of the previous verse that the shedding of Christ's blood speaks to us by virtue of the redemption that he has freely provided in Christ who is our High Priest. But not only that, it also ties this back to the very first verse of this book, which says, "in these last days God has spoken to us by the Son." To refuse him who is speaking to us, is to do like it says in chapter 10, which is to trample under foot the blood of the covenant, it is both the same thing, for both is to treat the goodness of God's word and grace with contempt or to again turn and rebel against God.

Which is exactly why this Author was writing this book, for he was afraid that these Hebrews to whom he was writing were in danger of being led astray, of stopping their ears against the voice of God himself. Being led away from the word of God, and instead turning to the mystical. Having their focus taken away from God, and put upon anything else. It is likely that the Author here has in mind a comparison between these he is writing to and to the Israelite in the wilderness as we saw mentioned in the previous verses, even though fear was their motivation they cried out that God would not speak to them for they could not endure that which he commanded. HE is imploring them to not be like these Israelites, do not turn away, do not stop listening to the voice which has brought you redemption and salvation. IT is only he to whom we should be focused, it is only upon him that we should set our gaze. All else is a distraction, and only leads to death, for it is only the blood of Christ which speaks life.

The Israelite did not escape condemnation for their unbelief, as we know none of the generation who left Egypt ever entered into the promised land of Canaan, they all died in the wilderness. We see this earlier in the book the Author says in chapter 4, verse 16. "For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was he angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned. Whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that he would not enter his rest, but to those who did not obey." Verse 25, parallels this, "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."

God has warned, that if we do not heed his word, if we do not listen, if we reject him and his word then we will not escape judgment and condemnation. If those who did not obey the old covenant perished, and did not enter into his rest...how much more so for those who reject the new covenant in his blood?

For in a large sense we can see in the old testament that the old covenant dealt with earthly promises, and do these things, and prosper if we were to sort of crasly sum it up. The voice from mount Sinai, God who spoke to Israel on earth, was ignored and rejected, and because of this..they perished. Now God has spoken from heaven, through his Son by the spirit in a greater covenant, with greater commandments whose promised land is not a physical nation, but a heavenly one, whose kingdom isn't a perishable one, but an everlasting one.

If those who did not heed Gods word in the covenant which as Paul wrote, faded and passing away, then how much more dire is it for those who do not heed God's word in the new covenant today? As the Author says here, How can we expect to escape the wrath of God if we turn aside from the salvation he has given. If we look to things other then him for our sanctification. IF you are looking to your good works, or to your own choice to save your soul, you have turned your back on the word of God, you are not listening to what he has said, you are refusing him who speaks and have stopped up your ears like the Israelites at mount Sinai. Having your salvation be based upon anything other then the grace and mercy of God who chose you is having a salvation that is empty and is built upon false beliefs.

The issue of the day for the Hebrews here as we know is they were dabbling with the idea of angel worship, looking to give praise and glory to something other then God, and in doing so trampling underfoot the very blood of Christ by which their salvation has been bought. This very same issue is still alive and well today, we see it rampant in our churches today, we see it rampant in our friends, and in our family. There are those who deny what scripture teaches about salvation, and there are those who look to other means for their sanctification, there are those who look for signs and gifts from proof and assurance....and they are all doing exactly the same thing as these Hebrews here. Looking away from the one true God having been deceived into believing false doctrines being lead astray by false teachers.

So how does this happen? We are 12 chapters into this book of Hebrews, the author here has been imploring them, and instructing them in the superiority of Christ in all things. Throughout he has counted them as brothers, he is reaching out to them out of love and concern as fellow believers that they are being lead astray, and he is imploring them to return, to cast aside the false belief and return again to the God who has given them their salvation. It was the same in the book of Galatians, they were being deceived and lead astray back to the law, back to the old covenant. How does this happen to people who have the indwelling of the holy spirit, who have the spirit of God living in them?

Well again I think verse 25 answers this question. He warns them here saying.. “see that you do not refuse him who speaks.” The reality of what happens here, is an issue of complacency. When an individual, or a church loses focus false teachers are allowed in, false beliefs start to grow. If we set aside the word of God, if the pastor stops preaching from the word, or the individual stops reading the word an environment is created which allows for such false ideas to arise. But a body of believers, or an individual who is grounded in scripture, who is fed constantly by the meat and substance of Gods word will be protected from such deception, for in their constant focus upon God's word they will grow in understanding, build up protections, and gain discernment.

False prophets, false teachers, and false doctrines prey upon the weak, those who are only babes in Christ, who have not moved on from the milk of the word are in more danger then those who are hearing God speak through his word, who have grown in their understanding and belief. Again we see that with these Hebrews here, for at one point the Author chastises them that they should by now be teachers, but yet, they are ignorant, and still feeding on the milk of the word like babies.

When God spoke to the Israelites at mount Sinai the Earth shook his voice was like thunder which came from the mountain shrouded in cloud. As we talked about last week, even Moses was afraid, for while he had seen God in the burning bush, he had communed with God before, it was not like this. There was a show of power here, that scared Moses, and in which the people said was unbearable. IF this was the case when God came to bring the law, think of the power of God when he comes again. As verse 26 says, “Whose voice shook the earth, but now He has promised saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.”

When God came to mount Sinai he came to bring something, he came to commune with his people, and to make his power and holy nature known. But when he comes again, he comes not to bring, but to take. Verse 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 can not be shaken may remain.” The Author here is pointing clearing to God creation, to those things which are on earth which are temporary, which have been stained by the fall, will all one day be destroyed. As he quoted in Psalm 102 in chapter 1, which says, “You Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will parish, but you will remain. And like a garment Like a cloak you will fold them up, and they wil be changed, but you are the same, and your years will not fail.”

The purpose of this final shaking, is so that which is eternal, that which is Gods will still remain, while all other will perish. For us, who are the people of God, who he holds in his hand, he has made us to be a part of him, to likewise share his nature, to be among the unshakable. Which is verse 28, “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptable with reverence and Godly fear, for our God is a consuming Fire.”

If the moment of God's shaking the earth at mount Sinai was a moment of terror, much more so when God, the consuming fire comes and shakes the entire creation. Again, we see this theme of the lesser to the greater, from that which came before to that which has come, or is coming. God and his power is beyond our feeble understanding, yet likewise so is his grace and mercy toward us. And one day, he will come again in power unlike this world has ever seen, and all that which is not found in him, the eternal, unchanging, unmoveable God, will be destroyed. There is a great counter diction here, for at one level this reality should strike fear into the hearts of each and every one of us...yet, if we are numbered among the kingdom of God, as inheritors of this eternal promised land in the very presence of this almighty God, then this moment of his second coming, in power, and in wrath upon creation....is not wrath for us, but deliverance. For he has not come only to destroy the sin and rebellion of his creation, he has also come to gather his eternal kingdom to himself.

This final moment of judgment, this final show of his power upon his creation, is also the fulfillment of his promised redemption of his people. There are 2 mountains, mount Sinai, which is law and judgment, or Mount Zion, which is mercy and grace. One shall be destroyed, and the other preserved for all eternity. And even now, the greater, that is mount Zion has made the previous obsolete. Christ has come, has died, and imputed his righteousness upon us..so that we maybe saved from God's righteous judgment. So that we may be found in this unshakable kingdom, Do not refuse him who speaks, do not harden your hearts, or turn away in ignorance, for it is only the blood of Christ which speaks, that brings salvation to the lost, and hope to the hopeless. Rejoice in this God, praise him for his mercy and grace, love him, hear him, believe him, and follow him.

