

Unshaken Christians in a Shaken World ***Hebrews 12:25-13:17***

Dr. Steve Horn
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Introduction to the Text: Many consider the book of Hebrews to be one of the most complex books in the New Testament. Our unfamiliarity with the Old Testament sacrificial system is probably one of the issues that makes this a difficult book. In addition, the “warning” or “apostasy” passages also cause great concern for some. We can make the book much easier to understand if we understand the context of the original letter. The Book of Hebrews, written by an author unknown to us, was written to encourage Christians to persevere in their faith in the midst of persecution. Even though the recipients of the letter were victims of persecution, the call of the author is for them to persevere in their faith. Nothing, even persecution, should detract them from following Christ. Salvation through Christ is and was so superior to every aspect of their former religion, that they would be fools not to persevere in their commitment to Christ.

Our text today is from the latter fourth of the book—a portion of the book that is heavy on this application of perseverance in the midst of the uncertainty brought about by the persecution.

Text: ²⁵ See that you do not reject the One who speaks; for if they did not escape when they rejected Him who warned them on earth, even less will we if we turn away from Him who warns us from heaven. ²⁶ His voice shook the earth at that time, but now He has promised, Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also heaven. ²⁷ Now this expression, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what is not shaken might remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us hold on to grace. By it, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe; ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

¹ Let brotherly love continue. ² Don't neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it. ³ Remember the prisoners, as though you were in prison with them, and the mistreated, as though you yourselves were suffering bodily. ⁴ Marriage must be respected by all, and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge immoral people and adulterers. ⁵ Your life should be free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for He Himself has said, I will never leave you or forsake you. ⁶ Therefore, we may boldly say:

The Lord is my helper;

I will not be afraid.

What can man do to me?

⁷ Remember your leaders who have spoken God's word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. ⁹ Don't be led astray by various kinds of strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to

be established by grace and not by foods, since those involved in them have not benefited.¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle do not have a right to eat.¹¹ For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy of holies by the high priest as a sin offering are burned outside the camp.¹² Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the gate, so that He might sanctify the people by His own blood.¹³ Let us then go to Him outside the camp, bearing His disgrace.¹⁴ For here we do not have an enduring city; instead, we seek the one to come.¹⁵ Therefore, through Him let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips that confess His name.¹⁶ Don't neglect to do good and to share, for God is pleased with such sacrifices.¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Introduction: It seems like just yesterday, but the calendar reminds me that it was 11 years ago. Y2K—some called it. Doomsday prophets spoke of upheaval in our world. We survived. Every generation will have its false alarms and every generation will have its real life crises—some global, some local, some individual.

For the original hears of Hebrews, they lived in a time of crisis. First, there was a theological crisis. People were struggling to identify exactly who Jesus was. Second, it was a time of political crisis. Christians were being persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. This political crisis brought about a personal crisis for believers in Jesus. Finally, the church was in crisis. People were leaving the church confused and disappointed. Let's see: theological crisis, political crisis, and church crisis of people abandoning their spiritual convictions. One might say that this letter is written just to folks like us living in 2011.

What do we do in such times like these when we realize that we live in a “shaken kingdom?” In times like these we remind ourselves that there is a “kingdom, which cannot be shaken.”

I want to point out three ways that as Christians we ought to respond to such crises.

I. Let our Worship go up!

A. By Praising God.

Verse 28 says that we must serve God with reverence and awe. I need to worship today more than ever. I find that when I worship, I worry less. It's impossible to worry and worship at the same time.

B. In our Public Actions.

1. Love for fellow Christians (12:1)
2. Love for fellow humans (12:2)
3. Love for fellow sufferers (12:3)

C. In our Personal Actions.

True worship will be in our personal actions.

(Illustration) A young man was making his first climb in the Alps. Making the climb with guides he felt safe. As he reached the summit, the guides wanted the young man to get the first view.

As the young man arrived, he leaped to his feet, but the guide quickly dragged him down. “On your knees, sir!” he shouted. “You are never safe here except on your knees.”

May we all learn that we are only safe when our constant focus is worship.

II. Let the Word of God come in!

A. Pay attention to our Spiritual Leaders. (13:7)

B. Pay attention to Jesus. (13:8)

C. Pay attention to Teachings. (13:9)

As a freshman at a large high school, I spent the first couple of days trying to find my way from class to class. I quickly learned that I could trust no one for directions. Fellow first year students, out of ignorance, might lead me in the wrong direction. Evil minded upper classmen might purposefully point me in the wrong direction to get a laugh. To find my way correctly I needed to consult the map.

Some today give wrong advice out of ignorance; others pervert God’s laws out of deceit for His word. The only way to stay in the truth is to follow the map—the Bible. Whether a person is deceived ignorantly contrary to the truth or intentionally distorts the truth, the result is the same—theological error.

The only way to protect ourselves is to immerse ourselves in the Word of God. Certainly and thankfully God uses individuals through preaching, singing, and writing to point us to the truth. However, only in knowing and growing in God’s Word with the Holy Spirit as our ultimate teacher will we be able to navigate through the false directions that get sent our way.

III. Let our Witness go out!

Jesus was led out of Jerusalem—symbolically He was rejected by the establishment. Jesus now calls us to go outside the camp. The unshaken kingdom has its future not inside, but outside the camp. A world in crisis is no time to huddle. Instead, we must go outside the camp.

We, like Jesus, must be willing to bear the burden and bear the reproach.

“We must go outside the camp.” No time to huddle. Time to speak as the Lord gives opportunity.

Conclusion: Only 3 things will last forever.

1. God

2. Word of God

3. People

Pour Yourself into these 3 things!

Perhaps you have heard these words from the Christmas broadcast of King George 6th in 1939. England, of course, was already at war. He ended his broadcast with these words.

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown!"

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

The words are actually from a poem entitled "God Knows" by Minnie Haskins written in 1908. After these beginning lines the rest of the poem is this.

So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night
And He led me toward the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

So, heart, be still!
What need our little life,
Our human life, to know,
If God hath comprehension?
In all the dizzy strife
Of things both high and low
God hideth His intention.

God knows. His will
Is best. The stretch of years
Which wind ahead, so dim
To our imperfect vision,
Are clear to God. Our fears
Are premature. In Him
All time hath full provision.
Then rest; until
God moves to lift the veil
From our impatient eyes,
When, as the sweeter features
Of life's stern face we hail,
Fair beyond all surmise,
God's thought around His creatures
Our minds shall fill.