

How to Go to Hell from the Doorsteps of the Church

Hebrews 12:25-29

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, June 18, 2023

Good morning, everyone. Happy Father's Day to you. All the fathers in this room and Roberts already announced that. I don't know what all you got for Father's Day, but the older I get my family's having a harder time finding a present for me. So this year, I got a trash can. I did, I did. And I wanted it real bad. Since I've lived in Canada, I never understood how complicated trash can be. But you got to sort your recycles, and your yard waste, and so trash cans are a big deal. So that's what I got today for Father's Day, maybe you got a tie, or some socks or something. But whatever it was, Happy Father's Day to you. I think Robert already mentioned one thing that we can always remember on Father's Day, is we have a wonderful Heavenly Father, don't we? And however we fail as human fathers, we have an eternal Father, who never fails us in any regard whatsoever. And we should always remember that on a day like this. And so what a blessed time to remember that.

Well, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we are in the book of Hebrews, which we've been in for about a year and a half now as a church. And as I told you last time, we've come to a part of it, where the author gives you two images.

One is that of a race, which is the actually a picture of sanctification. When the Lord saves you, He puts you in the race. But when He sanctifies you, He keeps you in it right? And keeps you in it, and keeps you in it, and then keeps you in it. That's the image here. And when He redeems you, He places you on the track. But when He helps you grow in Christ, He doesn't just leave you there, but He takes you every step of the way to the finish line. Do you know the reason you're a Christian now is because of the Lord Jesus Christ? Not just the reason you were saved to begin with, but the reason you're a Christian now. And do you understand that the reason you're a Christian tomorrow is because God is still with you? It's not because of you. You're not doing anything to finish the race. It's because of His grace and mercy in your life. That's what the first part of Hebrews 12 is about. It reminds you that the Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. And the reward does not go to the one who finishes fastest, but the one who perseveres all the way through.

The second part of the chapter, the author actually is going to change this image from a race to a mountain. And from the picture of a man who's running and striving and moving towards something, to an object that sitting still; it doesn't move. Mountains don't go anywhere, in order to represent death. The picture of a mountain in the second part of the passage is given as a symbol of what happens to you after you die, and the race is over. Because the Bible says when that happens, you will stand before the Judge of all the race in order to go to one of two places. And it was pictured in the sense of two mountains that represent Heaven and Hell. And your eternal destination will depend on how well you kept your eyes fixed on Jesus, and whether you trusted Him or not. That's what we talked about last time. We said quite a bit about that.

But I didn't get a chance to finish the chapter. So I want to go back and finish this today. If you look in your Bibles in Hebrews chapter 12. That's the book we're in this morning. Hebrews chapter 12. And we're going to start reading in verse 18. Where it says this. It says,

For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned." And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.

We'll stop the reading there. As you read that, I don't have to tell you this is an unusual text. It may be one of the strangest ones in this part of the Bible, which is saying quite a bit, because the book of Hebrews has a lot of unusual expressions in it. But the message is clear when you read it because the writer says in verse 25, in our texts for this morning, "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking." And that means this. God is speaking to you this morning. The Lord is calling out to you and telling you something. And that is that in verse 24, Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant. He's the one who died for you. He's the one who went to the cross. He's the one who shed His blood, but you want to be careful you don't refuse that now. Because verse 25 says you will not escape if you do. This whole passage in verses 25 to 29 is just an application of what we talked about with the two mountains. And it's just another gospel presentation for you, as a reminder for you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's even more than that because if you boil this passage down, what it's saying is this, some people do this. They hear the gospel and refuse it. You guys know what I'm talking about. They listen to what the Bible says about Christ, but they ignore it in church. Did you hear what I said? In church, not in the world, in here. We're not talking about the culture right now; we're talking about this place. They're in the church, but they're not in the Lord. They know the doctrine, but they don't know Christ. They profess

Jesus with their lives, but they don't do it with their lives because their hearts are far from Him. So when it comes to the true condition of their soul, it's bad because they're lost.

There are sins that the culture commits, and then there are sins the church commits. This is a sin of the church. These are the kinds of people that he's talking about here that had Christian parents, and they grew up in a Christian home. And they went to a Christian college. And they attended a Christian Sunday school. And they lived in a Christian town, and they had Christian friends who said Christian things. So it was Christian this and Christian that. It was God told me this, and God told me that. To the point that they just learned the lingo and they adopted the jargon; but it didn't help them at all because they never believed that. They just faked it. So if you would pull back the veil on their lives, you would be shocked at what you saw because you would see a dead man there.

Do you know that there are spiritually dead people in the church? You should. You would be naive if you didn't. And do you understand there are lost people sitting maybe even in this room? Maybe in front of you. Maybe beside you. They're there every time that people of God gather together. There are lost people every time the Church of Christ meets. The Bible calls them the tares among the wheat, the goats among the sheep. And what this passage is saying here is that it happens simply because they won't listen. It doesn't happen because they go out and murder somebody. It doesn't happen because they go out and commit some awful thing. They just come to church and hear sermon after sermon after sermon and refuse it. It goes in one ear and right out the other. So when they die, there's nothing left for God to do but send them to hell. What other choice does He have? The Puritan, William Bernal once said that "None sinks so far into hell as those who are closest to heaven because they fall from the greatest height." And this is what these people have done, they begin with a knowledge of Jesus, they start with an understanding of truth, they set out with an awareness of the gospel, and they fall. Because they don't do anything with it.

And I mention this because I've met a lot of people in Chilliwack who tell me they grew up in a Christian home. I said a little bit about that last week. And they were told that in order to be saved, they had to do something to look like they were saved. And I've made a list throughout the years, I gave you part of the list last week, this is the other part of the list. Their parents told them that to go to heaven, they had to avoid certain activities like playing cards, or dancing. Or watching sports or participating in them. They were told that in order to be right with God, they couldn't have facial hair if they were a man, or wear pants if they were a woman, or get a tattoo, or have a piercing, or smoke, or chew tobacco, or wear jewelry, or put on a wedding ring, or listen to music if it wasn't Christian, because if they did, that they would be lost. And if they indulged in those things, they would go to hell.

But let me tell you something this morning. This text says you don't have to do all that to go to hell. Do you know what you have to do to go to hell? Nothing. Do nothing and you will go to hell. What do you have to do to be lost? Just come to this church and ignore the Word of God. Show up in the room every Sunday, act like you know it all, walk in here and tell yourself, "God can't tell me anything. I'm

Reformed. He can't teach me from the Bible. I'm Baptist. I come from a long line of Methodist, Mennonites, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Plymouth Brethren, Church of Christ, Episcopalian, Pentecostal.” Can I tell you something? Who cares? The issue is, are you saved? That's all that matters to God. The question is, are you born again? Because if you're not, you will go to hell as a Baptist. And if you have not been saved by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, on Judgement Day, you will be condemned from the walls of an Episcopalian Church. You have to believe the gospel. You have to repent. I'm sorry, I'm not sorry to be so bold. This is the message for us. You've got to do a 180 with your life, leave the kingdom of darkness for the kingdom of light, or else it's all for nothing for you.

We had a saying where I grew up in Tennessee, that you can put lipstick on a pig, it will not make it pretty. And you can put works on a person, and it will not make them a Christian. You can dress them up, scrub them down, wash them off, tell them to do things, stop playing cards, stop dancing, don't get a tattoo, it will not help them get closer to God because it will never change the true nature of their soul. It takes a work of God in the heart of a sinner to do that.

This is important because if you remember the background for this text, the reason the author's making such a big deal is because he's writing to Jews who lived under the law at one time. And they were told that to be right with God, you had to do a bunch of outward stuff, get circumcised, keep the Sabbath, all those types of things, regardless of whether you're humble or not. And a lot of these listeners had come out of that, and they trusted in Christ. But there was a group that was still lagging behind, and he's writing this to them. And what he's saying is “You need to hear this too.” It is not enough for your friends to be saved; you need to be saved. And it is not just for your parents to hear the Word of God; you need to hear the Word of God. And I think he would say the same thing for us today.

Friends, you need to say to yourself this morning, if you've never done this, “I will arise and go to Jesus.” Even if I've lived in church my entire life, I will put my life in His hands. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning. We're going to look at three warnings that are given to churchgoers in Hebrews 12. And this is the audience today. This is who the author is speaking to. He's writing to people like you and me who come to church and don't listen. There are passages that are given to other people, but these are passages that are written to us. Three warnings given to churchgoers.

The first one, they're all from the text here, the first one is to make sure you do not refuse Him who is speaking to you. The first warning here is to make sure you don't refuse God when He speaks. That means you need to be careful not to take the precious truth God is telling you about Christ and shrug it off and ignore it. Because you say, “I'm reformed, or I'm Baptist” or whatever. You got to be more careful than that with these things.

If you notice, verse 25 starts off with the phrase, “See to it.” And that's blunt. That's a very direct command in the passage, he tells you to give serious attention to something. And that is this, he says, “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking to you.” In other words, make sure you don't

ignore the gospel just because it's familiar. And make sure you don't shrug off Christ because you've heard about Him so many times. Let's be honest, some of you come from a religious background, you have heard the gospel more times than you can remember. And you have heard Jesus Christ and Him crucified and Him preached a million times, a thousand times. And it's so easy to become callous to that. The author tells you not to do that.

And in order to explain this, he's going to give you two points here in the text. These are very simple. The first one is that God is speaking to you. Do you see that here? It's very basic from what he's saying. God is continually speaking to you; this verb is in the present tense in Greek. It means He is speaking to you repeatedly, every time the gospel is preached. He doesn't just do it one time. He doesn't just say it now and then never again. On the contrary, in His grace and mercy, this is what God has done in your life, He has chosen to tell this message to you incessantly. This is Father's Day. And on Father's Day, I'm reminded how much I need to be a better father. And one area I have to grow in is in repeating myself, I don't like repeating myself. I feel like if I told you something one time, that's it. Let me tell you something. God in His mercy repeats himself. Every Sunday. He repeats Himself continually, giving you opportunities to respond to His grace and mercy.

In fact, if you're wondering what is God saying here, when it refers to Him speaking. Well, if you look in verse 24, right above this, it tells you because this is what He's speaking, it says, "And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel." In other words, God is speaking to you about the blood. And He's telling you about how His son went to the cross and died and gave His life to save you from your sins. And as He's doing that, He's telling you to believe it, trust it, put your faith in it. That's the background of these words. This is what God is telling you.

In fact, some believe the entire Book of Hebrews has kind of been building up to this. And everything that we've talked about from chapter one all the way to chapter 12, has been built around this theme, and that is that you do need to come to Christ because He is speaking to you.

If you want to keep your fingers in Hebrews 12 and turn back with me to Hebrews chapter one. I want you to notice this is how the author begins the letter, on this topic. In Hebrews 1:1, it says "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways," that means God spoke in the Old Testament. He revealed His word to them through many different means. Because in the Old Testament, He talked to the people of Israel and dreams and visions. And He talked to them through the Law and the Prophets. And He communicated His message in the Psalms and Proverbs. And He did it in creative ways like Balaam's donkey, and the handwriting on Belshazzar's wall. But the point He's making in Chapter 1 is that in this hour, verse two says, "He has spoken to us in His Son." And that's telling you that God's fullest revelation now has been given to us through Jesus. If you want to know what God is saying to you now, it's Christ. And if you want to know what He's speaking to your heart today, it is the cross. That's God's message for the world.

And the idea is that our verse today in chapter 12 is the culmination of this. It's kind of like the bookends of the book. Hebrews 1 is the beginning of the book and chapter 12 is the end of it and the author's gonna go throughout the entire book of Hebrews telling you what it looks like for God to speak to you through Christ. We've been talking about this for a year and a half, but just some of these things that he says.

In chapter 1:3, he calls Jesus, the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of His nature. So that when you look at Jesus, you're seeing the face of God. And when you think of Him, you're thinking of Yahweh; He shares the same essence. Jesus is not some ordinary man; He's the God man. And He's not a normal person; He's the divine person, one with the Father, the Blessed Trinity. Then he tells you in chapter 2:9 that as God, this is what Jesus did, He became a man and made Himself lower than the angels, so He could taste death for everyone, and provide a sacrifice for your sins. In chapter 4:14 it says He became a great high priest for us and passed through the heavens because you could not pass through heaven yourself. There's no way you could get through there on your own. So Jesus made a way for you. He opened the doors of heaven wide open. Chapter 6:19 says Jesus is the anchor of the soul, or the one that holds your soul in place when the winds and waves of this life assail you. Chapter 8:6 says He is the mediator of a new covenant. Chapter 9:1 says He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle. Chapter 10:20 says He made a new and living way. In chapter 12 He became the author and perfecter of our faith.

But the point is that the author has been talking about this over and over and over again in the letter. He's been preaching Christ repeatedly to you in every chapter, every verse, every story, every illustration. And the question he's asking now, at the end of all this in chapter 12 is, are you listening? Have you heard what he's trying to say to you?

Because if you haven't, then tell me this. What exactly does God have to do to get your attention? If you're sitting in the room and lost this morning, what exactly does God have to say to draw you to Jesus Christ? I mean, how many verses does He have to write? How many chapters does He have to give you? He's given you 12, you need 13, 14, 100? I mean, let's ask it like this. How many times should God have to say something to you before you believe? Once, just once.

Which brings you to the second thing the author's telling you in this verse in chapter 12. And that is this, you need to be careful not to refuse Him. Which means if God has spoken to you this way, over and over and over again, you need to be careful not to ignore what He's saying to your heart. Because He will not take it lightly if you do. So this is the negative side of what we just said. This is the admonition.

The word "refuse." It's a strong word in Greek that means to trivialize something. It doesn't refer to the act of refusing something because you think it's important. It refers to the act of refusing something because you don't. Because you look at it and say, "Who cares?" Or you take a glance at what's being

offered to you, and you tell yourself, "It doesn't matter. The whole thing is useless to me." That word was often used in the first century to refer to people who would see a merchant selling something on the street, and just walk on by even though the merchant is calling out to him and presenting him with this product. You just keep going because you refuse it. The author of Hebrews says you should not act that way toward the Lord Jesus Christ because He is calling out to you, and He's telling you these wonderful things in the book, but it's not going to do you any good if you reject them.

As you read this part of the passage, I get the idea in my mind of Jesus doing this with His hands and pleading with you and beseeching you and begging you to listen with tears in His eyes and offering you all these wonderful things. And at the same time, you get the impression that some people are just doing this, they're just looking at Him and turning away. Saying, "No, I don't want it. I can get along fine without it, thank you very much. I'm gonna go home and watch TV." And this passage says that's a foolish thing to do because there's no other way to be saved. But you have no other way to get to heaven without the blood of Jesus Christ. That's why the phrase, "Do not refuse Him," that's a command. It's not a suggestion. It's an order. Jesus is not one Saviour, among other saviours. He's not one road to Heaven, among other roads. He's the only one. So if you reject that, there is nothing left for you.

And listen friends, this whole sermon is going to be a gospel presentation. Because as I say that some of you might be telling yourself, "Well, I'm not trying to ignore Him, Pastor Jeremy. I'm not trying to be disrespectful when I don't believe in Jesus Christ. I'm searching. I'm just undecided. I'm just looking at my options." Well let me tell you something. Jesus doesn't see it that way. He said, "He who is not with me is" what? "He's against me." You're not searching. You're not on the fence in the middle of the road. You're picking a side. And that's the side of His enemy. And that's a very serious thing.

I mention this, because I think this is one of the greatest problems facing the church in Canada right now. And that is that so many people are lost, because they come to church, they sit in the pews, they listen to sermons, and they're just seeking. They're just searching. They're not convinced. They're not committed. They don't believe. They're not born again. It's just a religious exercise for them. The Global News did an article some years ago, which said that the number of churchgoers are declining so rapidly in some parts of this country that some denominations, like the United Church, are losing almost one church per week. I don't know how that can be accurate because I don't know how you can sustain yourself losing one church per week. But it's not hard to figure out what the problem is for a lot of them. And that is because so many people in the denomination are lost. They're not saved. So as time goes on, they just do what lost people do. And that is that they just leave. They're not interested. And I'm not saying that to pick on the United Church, we could talk about other ones, too. This is just an example. The fact is there's probably more false Christians in this country right now than true Christians. Would you agree? There's more hypocrites than the real thing. And the sad thing is that for so many of them, it does not have to be that way because they have access to the truth. And they have the word of God. They're just refusing it. They don't want to hear it. Will you trust in Christ today? No. Will you put your faith in Him today? No. Will you believe in His life-giving blood? No, no, no, no, they say no to all of it.

So what else is there for them? The door to salvation has been closed for these people, but it's being closed on their side. God is holding an invitation open, and they're shutting in His face.

If you want to look at an illustration of this from the world of food, we could say that Jesus has been presented to them as a meal. And He's been offered to them on a plate. And someone Has cut him up for them in a sentence and put Him on a fork and placed it in their mouth. And they've chewed Him and tasted Him and savoured Him for a while, and then they spit Him out. Because He made them sick. They threw Him up because He made them nauseous. And then they came back the next week and did it again. And then they came back the next week and did it again. And they came back the next week and did it again. Because the good news was presented, the counsel of God was made available, and they made it clear they want nothing to do it. And the thing the author of Hebrews is telling you here is there's no way for God to see that and not be angry. It's like you're slapping Him in the face. There will be a day of reckoning for this. So you want to make sure not to do this.

Friends, this needs to be a reminder. It's not enough just to show up in church. You need to be here, and I mean really be here. Mentally be here, emotionally be here, with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. It's not enough to just walk through the doors, sit in the pews, sing the songs, pray the prayers, you need to pay attention. You have to wake up, straighten up, perk up, sit up straight in the pew. God does not deserve anything less. You're not doing Him any favours by just walking in this room. He wants all or nothing.

I told you before of the time Jonathan Edwards was asked to give his sermon to the kids of his church in the 1700s. And the subject of the message was that you need to follow Christ when you're young. And young people hear that. You need to follow Christ when you're young. You know why? Because if you don't learn how to do it, when you're young, you will learn how to come to church and fake it and be a hypocrite; and then you will die and go to hell. Look, this is serious at every age, when you're little and when you're old. We need to take God at His Word.

And it brings you to a second warning in this passage, and this does not get lighter as we go through this, but the second warning is to remember that if you do refuse Him who is speaking to you, God will judge you for it. If you refuse Him who is speaking, God will judge you. Which means that He's not going to let it slide. Just because you're nice. Just because you're religious, just because you're conservative, and you're better than those people out there at five corners, five corners is that way. On the contrary, a day will come when He will make you pay for your sins just like them, if you reject Christ.

If you notice his second sentence in verse 25, it starts off with the word "for". And that's always used when the authors of Scripture are explaining something to you. This is what he's doing in his second sentence, he's giving you an explanation for the first. And he says, "For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who

warns from heaven.” And when it refers to the time when God warned them on earth, that's a reference to Mount Sinai, which we talked about last time. The Bible tells us that when Israel was on that mountain, the Lord warned them to obey His law, but they refused. And He told them to listen, and they didn't obey because they made the golden calf. Remember that old story? And the author says, if they did that, and God punished them, how much less will we escape if we do the same thing with Christ now? If they didn't get away with it, don't think you'll get away with it.

Verse 26 gives you a similar argument when it says that “and His voice shook the earth then.” That means that his voice shook the earth on Mount Sinai because when the law was revealed, God started an earthquake there. But it says, “Now He has promised saying ‘Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.’” And that's referring to something that will take place in the future because the time is coming, when the Lord will do more than just shake a mountain, He's going to shake the whole world. And again, the question is being asked here when He does that, do you think you will get away with it if you are without the Lord? Of course not. That's not going to happen. So you have to take this to heart.

Now, I just explained these passages very quickly to you so you can see the big picture, but what the author is doing here is he's giving you an argument from the lesser to the greater to say that if the lesser thing is true, so is the greater. And if lost people did not escape God's judgment under the Old Covenant under Israel, how will you escape it now under the New Covenant? You won't? No one will. So you have to keep this in perspective. You're not better than the Jews. You don't get a pass just because you live on this side of the Bible.

Because this passage is talking about the upcoming judgment of God and a time in the future when the Lord will punish the earth. And it's going to begin with a series of events that includes several things like a great earthquake, and it's going to finish at a time when He will raise every person from the dead, great and small to appear before the throne. And just to explain this some more when it says, “Yet once more I will shake not only the Earth, but also the heaven,” If you notice, that passage is in a quotation mark in your Bibles, it's a quotation from the book of Haggai. It refers to an end times event that's talked about there, but it's described more fully in the book of Revelation. And I couldn't do better than just to read this to you if you just want to write this passage down in your notes, Revelation six, starting in verse 12. It says this about the events that are being described here. It says,

I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the

presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Now, when you read a passage like that, just like it is with almost anything in Revelation, some people ask, "Do you take all of that literally?" I think well, when there's times where it says "like" or "as" you do not, there's figurative expressions in there. But I would say the gist of it is literal. Otherwise, John would have written in some other way. This is given in precise language to show you the judgment of God is going to be a precise, literal thing. It's not figurative. There will be a time and a day and an hour when God is literally going to shake the heavens and the earth. And when He does, the sky will split apart. The sun will change and the moon and the stars and the kings of the earth will go into hiding. That's a big deal because to us, there's nothing greater than a king. They sit on top of the earth in a sense, but on this day, it's not going to matter because this event is going to scare even them. Verse 26 is telling you you need to be ready for it. In fact, verse 26, in your passage here, it says God has promised this. That means He has sworn that it's going to happen. It's fixed on His calendar, it's penciled on the wall, it's punched into the computer. It also says, "once more He will do it." That means it's not like He might do it if certain conditions are right. And He could do it if everything lines up accordingly. No, it's a sure and certain thing; this is going to happen.

Which takes you to the next verse when it says that after the Lord does this, He was going to take it a step further by removing everything from the face of the earth that He doesn't want there. If you look in verse 27, it says this expression, "This expression, 'Yet once more', denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." And that means that when judgment comes God will put everything into some categories, either the shaken or the unshaken. He'll put it into the created or the uncreated, and the created things will be removed forever, permanently. If it's not bolted to the floor, it's being thrown out the window. Which means on the Day of Judgment, every flower, tree, and field will be destroyed. Every sun, moon, and star will be abolished. Along with every plan world and galaxy, every rock, hill, and mountain, every forest, desert and jungle, every river, lake, and stream, every blade of grass, piece of hay, patch of straw, lump of coal, and every person who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ. They'll all be eliminated or judged because God is starting over. He is going to create a new heavens and new earth where there won't be any sin. So He's going to get rid of the old one to do it. Which tells us, speaking frankly here, there's a whole lot of people putting a whole lot of stock in a whole lot of things that are worthless. They're not going to last. On this day your house is not going to last. Your yard is not going to make it. Your garage, your car, your RV, the boat in the yard, your money, power, wealth, job, career investments, it's all going to be done away with. And the point the author is making is when it happens, don't think you will escape just because you went to church. And don't get the wrong impression that you're gonna get out of it just because you call yourself a Christian, and you don't play cards. It doesn't work that way. You'll be judged right alongside of everyone else, if you don't accept the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, the gospel message is clear in the book. You need to believe. If you want to avoid the Day of Judgment, you put your faith in His name. Don't worry about what your parents did. Don't worry

about what your friends are doing. You do it. You go fleeing to the cross where the Lord bore the wrath of God in your place. Listen, if you've heard of a hellfire and brimstone sermon, this is it. And if you've been told about a turn or burn kind of message, that's what this is. You turn, you avoid judgment. You don't, you burn. Those are the options. Heaven, Hell; Jesus, judgment.

And I would add, I think we need to talk about this today because so many people have never heard a message like this in church. Not in the world in church. Churches don't talk about this anymore. I just told you one of the greatest problems facing the church in Canada right now is the fact that there's so many unconverted people in it. But one reason for that is because so many of the churches don't talk about hell and judgment. And so the people sitting in the pews have no desire to flee from the wrath to come because they never hear about it. God is just happy with them. Everything's fine. I'm fine, you're fine. We're all fine. Well if we're all fine, why do I need to be here? We've got to give them a different message because the Bible says the time is coming when God will punish every sin in the history of the world. He will not overlook anything. And He's gonna do it in a specific way by laying out a great separation and chasm because it'll separate parents from their kids, wives from their husbands, friends from their neighbors, coworkers from their associates, Canadians from other Canadians, to either shake them or save them, restore them or remove. And it will all be based on what they decided to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the lightning rod. He's the last straw. He's the one deciding factor that will determine who will go to one place and who will go to the other. You will not go to one of these places based on your works or your deeds. You will not go to one of these places based on your political beliefs or the color of your skin. You won't go to one of these places based on what country you came from or the way you were raised. It will only be based on your relationship to Jesus Christ and Him alone.

This is why you can't keep putting this decision off and telling yourself "I'm seeking. I'm undecided. I'm searching." Because if you're without Christ today, you're not searching in His eyes. You're on the wrong side of the chasm. You already have one foot in hell, you're just waiting to die to go there. What do you have to do to go to hell? Nothing. That's what some of you are doing for the Lord, nothing. What do you have to do to be lost? Ignore God. Blow Him off. Some of you have already made that decision. So there needs to be an urgency to turn away from it. Listen, it's not like you might go to hell if you're bad enough. You're bad enough. And it's not as if you might end up there if you do a few wrong things; you've already done them. You have to turn to Christ to be forgiven from them.

Let me tell you something that might surprise you about this. When you go to hell as a religious person, you don't get to go to the nicest part of it. God will not put you at the Holiday Inn. He'll place you next to the meanest types of people because that's where you belong. He will set religious people next to the murderers, adulterers, and thieves. He'll put them next to the liars and blasphemers and killers. He'll put them next to the atheists, sorcerers, members of the occult, because they have heard the word of God repeatedly and rejected it. They sin and you sinned. They said no to Christ; you said no. The only difference is that you've said no a million times, from the doorsteps of a church.

At this time, God will open the books. He'll go through every sin you've committed, every secret thoughts you've had, not just the big ones, but the little ones, in order to place them on a scale and judge them. Luke 8:17 says, "There is nothing hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be made known." Which means every sin will be brought to light in the open as if it's under the noonday sun with the blazing light of God's holiness looking down upon it. He'll bring up sins on that day you've forgotten about. And He'll bring up things you did wrong back in grammar school. And He'll present an insurmountable case against you that will shut your mouth tighter than if it had been closed with a nail gun. And there will be no excuses. And the reason it will happen is because you did not believe the gospel. The most tragic thing about this is it will occur because you listened to God when He spoke to you, and you did nothing about it. And there will be no one else to blame but yourself.

If you're in hell on this day, you can't blame this church. We preach the gospel to you. We preach it week in and week out. We sing about it. We take the Lord's Supper. We do innumerable things to remind you. You can't blame the Bible. The Bible is taught you the gospel. The Book of Hebrews has said it over and over again. The fault will be on your shoulders. I fear for some of us in this room. I do. On this topic. I've prayed for you this week; I've brought your name before the throne. Because I'm afraid some of us have been faking our salvation for so long, we don't even know we're doing it anymore. And I don't have anybody in mind when I say that, by the way. But that's the point. I can't tell. But one day, we're all gonna appear before God and He will know. He will tell. And you have to take this seriously.

It brings us to one more warning in this passage, and just to review these other ones, the first one is that you need to see to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. In other words you have to make sure you don't ever come to church with the attitude that says, "I'm here but I'm not here. And I'm present but I'm not present because I have more important things to do than to listen to another hellfire and brimstone sermon." Can I tell you something, friends? You do not. There's nothing more important in your life and talking about this right now. Your job is not more important than this. Your friends are not more important than this. Your soul is the most important thing to talk about this morning. And that's what we're doing.

A second warning is similar to that. Remember that if you do refuse Him the speaking, God will judge you. And that's what makes the first one so vital. It tells you that if you act this way, you will not avoid the wrath of God even though you're religious. Sometimes I'm afraid we get this backwards because we think we get a pass on this because we're sitting in a place like this. But that's not true. The Lord will not let you slide by his scrutinizing eye.

And that brings it to a final warning that's found in Hebrews 12, and that is that you need to be reverent and show awe in response to these things. A final warning for a churchgoer in Hebrews 12 is that you need to be reverent and show awe in your response. And what that means is that you need to bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ. When you read a passage like this and you hear this type of message,

there's only one way to respond. And that is to come all the way to a saving knowledge, have faith in Him. Don't sit on the fence; don't be halfway. Throw caution to the wind, stop messing around, and commit yourself into His arms. Listen, close enough is not good enough for God. And there's no such thing as a partial Christian. There needs to be a total surrender of all that you are if you want to be delivered from this great and terrible day.

That's what verse 28 is referring to, or starting to refer to when it says, "Since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken." In other words, since we're receiving an eternal Kingdom through Christ, which cannot be removed and altered and destroyed like the kingdoms of this world, here's what you need to do. It says this, "let us show gratitude." And that's a Greek word that means let us be thankful. The King James Version says, "Let us show grace." Why? Because you've been given grace. God's given you mercy, you show mercy. He's given you kindness, you show kindness, and be generous in your attitude. Because the fact is, God could have sent you to hell, but He didn't. And if you trust in Christ and repent, you know He could have put you in the fire, but He chose not to. So the first thing you should do is be joyful about this.

Charles Spurgeon once said, that "As long as the man is alive and out of Hell, he has no reason to complain." You've got no reason to complain this morning, friends. If you're trusting in Christ, there's no reason to be upset. There's such a thing as a discouraged Christian, there's no such thing as a joyless one. We have joy because we're not where we should be. We're getting more than we deserve.

This passage also says you should respond by showing reverence and awe. In fact, that actually says, "Let us show gratitude by which we offer to God an acceptable sacrifice, with reverence and awe." And that may sound a little confusing because the passage doesn't tell you what the sacrifice is that he's talking about. But when you compare it to a text like Romans 12, there it says this, it says, "Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to Him." And that means what kind of sacrifice is it that God wants? He wants your bodies. And what kind of offering does He require when you're saved? Well, He wants your life. He wants everything, heart, soul, mind and strength. He doesn't want you to hold anything back. To become a Christian, you give nothing less than your whole life to the whole Christ. And as you do that, it says, you present yourself with reverence and awe. And that's another way of saying with humility. You don't give yourself to God and say, "Why are you asking so much of me?" And you don't come to him and offer yourself and say, "Why are you making this so hard?" You do it and say, "I'm honored to do this. It's a privilege. I love giving myself to the one who saved me."

Because if you look at the end of the passage, it says that if you don't do this, our God is a consuming fire. Now, why is that in here? As you read this, it makes you wonder, well, what does that have to do with the exhortation to show reverence and gratitude? And the answer is that the author puts this in here to give you one more reminder that if you don't respond this way to the Lord Jesus Christ, and give Him gratitude and reverence and awe, God will send you to hell. It's just another way of saying the same

thing he just did. He's repeating it for the sake of emphasis. So you can know that without a shadow of a doubt, he really means this. If you reject Christ, the Lord is going to hold you accountable for it for all eternity. He tells it to you in verse 26; he does it again in verse 29.

This phrase, "our God is a consuming fire." It means that our God is a fire that consumes sinners and swallows them. So that as He does, the fire comes from every direction and when they look up, there's fire; when they look down, there's fire. When they turn this way, there is hell and judgment; when they turn that way, there's hell and judgment. It's a frightening expression.

And in case you think this is harsh, and we've talked too much about hell in the sermon, I just want to remind you, that's not the case. The Bible talks about this subject over and over again. I gave you a small sample of it earlier, but I don't feel like I would be doing justice to the text if I didn't say some more. Let's hear some more verses on the subject. You can write these down.

Matthew 3:12 says for those who refuse God's offer of grace in Christ, when He has His winnowing fork in His hand and gathers His wheat into the barn, He will put the chaff in a place where it will be burned in unquenchable fire. That means it will be burned in a place where the fire will never go out and won't be quenched. No matter how long you're in hell, there will always be more to go. And even if you're there for a million years or a billion years or a trillion years, there will be more time to spend in that place. It's unquenchable. That's how mad God is at sin.

Revelation 20:14 refers to it as a lake of fire, which tells you that in hell, you will be drowning in fire so that from the top of your head to the soles of your feet will be covered in wrath. Every piece of hair, every fabric of your body.

Matthew 13:42 calls it a furnace of fire, which means you're closed up in like a furnace where the door is shut, and you never get out. God will do that to those who go to this place. Hell has an entrance; it has no exit. And it has a way in; it does not have a way out. Once you're there, it's permanent.

Matthew 5:22 calls it the fiery hell. Luke 19:24 says it is agonizing. Revelation 14:11 says, "And the smoke of the torment of this place, goes up forever and ever, and it has no rest day or night."

But all of this is summarized in this one little phrase in verse 29, "our God is a consuming fire." This is the author's little way of lumping all this together and adding it up and he's putting it at the end in order to give you one more invitation to turn away from this and give your life to the Lord. After this in the book of Hebrews, he's going to move on to practical things. He's going to talk about personal matters like showing hospitality to strangers, and remembering prisoners, and keeping the marriage bed holy. But here he's given you one more reminder to put your life in the hands of Christ because if you don't, the only thing left for you is torment. And that may sound pushy, and that may be hard to hear, and you may not like it. In fact, who likes the doctrine of hell? It's not likable, it shouldn't be. But you have to

talk about it because the book has been so gracious to you. And for some of you, it hasn't worked. And the author has been so kind in these pages telling you about His mercy and His goodness and His love. But for some of you, you just said, "I don't want that." Now he says, "Okay, if you don't want it. Let's pull back the veil and show you what God thinks about your state. He hates it. He's full of rage towards you. You didn't get the mercy. Maybe you'll get the justice part of this."

You say, "Well pastor Jeremy, you just told me about all this." I did. And you say, "but we've already talked about that in the second point of the sermon." That's right. But have you trusted in Christ yet? Then you need to hear it again. And have you believed on Him at this point in the sermon? Then I need to tell it to you a second time. I need to stand up here all day if I have to. What's it going to take to make you believe in Christ? What does God have to do? Does someone have to die? They did. Jesus died. Does someone have to suffer? He suffered. He went through unimaginably horrible things. Did they have to go to the cross? He went to the cross. In fact, the Bible says He went all the way to Calvary. He sweat drops of blood. He drank the cup of God's wrath. He bore the sins of the world and He allowed the Father to crush Him, all in order to save you from hell. That's why He did it. He did it to provide salvation from this place. It says He is the Son of God who is one with the Father, the second member of the Trinity, born of a virgin, suffered under Pilate, was dead, buried and resurrected on the third day, where He later ascended into heaven to sit at the Father's right hand, and wait until the time when He will come back.

But the point is all of this is being offered to you today. It's been offered. Now it's being offered again. Which means at the end of the day, listen, friends, there is nothing that should keep you from coming to Christ. Nothing. In fact, for those of you who have heard the words of this text, and you realize that that you're lost, and headed for hell, if that's you this morning, let me just say you have sat on the fence long enough, it is time for you to do something. You need to come all the way to Christ. You have had your toes in the sand, you have been toying with a narrow way you have been putting a finger on it, take the finger off and land on it, walk on it, live on it. Tell yourself it's now or never. If I put it off now, it may be too late. I don't know what's gonna happen tomorrow. Say "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me the sinner." Now. Do it now. You don't need to get out of your chair and respond to an altar call; that takes too long. You don't need to raise your hand and sign a prayer card; that's going to delay things. Believe it this instant. Go past the halfhearted commandments. Go past the superficial faith that deals with these outward things like piercings and tattoos. Stop being the kind of person who professes Jesus with your lips. Do it with your life. And He'll save you. Do that this morning and He will take you in. I know some of you were raised in a place where you were told you couldn't be saved unless you knew you were the elect. Well, let me tell you something this morning. You believe in Lord Jesus Christ; you are the elect. You trust in Him, and you're predestined. That's the way it works. That's evidence of it. That's the proof of it, giving your life to Christ.

I just quoted Charles Spurgeon to you, but I'd like to mention something he said again. On May 18, 1873, Spurgeon preached a sermon to his church in London, where he said this. He said, "This age is

full of shams. Pretense never stood in so imminent a position as it does in this hour. There are hypocrites everywhere among us, because there is a church that believes in Jesus, and there is a church that believes in sacraments. And there is a church that trusts in Christ, and there is a church that trusts in ritual. There is a church that believes in the Gospel; there is a church that believes in works. But you, my dear friend, make sure you trust in Christ because when you die, and you face this great and terrible day before the Lord, you're going to need someone to carry you into God's arms. And Jesus is the only one strong enough to do it. Your sacraments can't do it; they can't hold your weight. You trust in sacraments, and when you cross that bridge, you will fall through. Your rituals can't do it. They're too flimsy. Your good works can't do it; they're not strong enough. The only thing is Christ. He's the only bridge that can take you into heaven." Amen? And you need to trust in Him today if you have not.

And my friends, I could do no better than just to close with this. And ask the Lord to prepare our hearts as we come to the Lord's Supper. And we remember what our Lord has done for our sins. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father as we wrap these things up. I pray for those here who have heard this message today. I pray for them because the intention of every passage is to reach the heart of the listener and to not just penetrate our minds but to penetrate our souls. And this passage is directed toward those who are sitting among us, whose hearts have not been penetrated yet. Their hearts are hard. Their souls are lost in sin and yet they've just been religious for so long. Lord, would You pull back the veil of their hearts? Would You break the stony ground that is in there so that Your Spirit could pour into it? Father, I ask You this because I can't do it. I can't reach their heart today. No one can. But You're a God who saves sinners. You're a God who raises the dead. You're a God who gives a new birth and imparts a new nature into the soul of those who were once dead. And so Father, I pray You would do that today.

Lord, we thank you for passages like this one. Passages that we probably would not want to preach if it was up to us because they are touchy. And they are offensive. And they're hard to hear, and they're hard to talk about at times. But they're so important. Nothing else matters but our eternal souls. And so Father, I pray for the souls in this room. Lord, I pray that no one would come out of here without being reminded of the importance of putting their faith in the One who died on that cross.

Lord, and as we come to the Lord's Supper, it's always a solemn thing. But it's particularly solemn today, I think. Father, this blood was shed for us. This body was broken for us, and it is a horrible, terrible thing to reject it. Lord, would we not do this today? If there are any tares among the wheat here and goats among the sheep, would they be rattled this morning? Father, would You shake them now so You will not shake them in the future when the judgment day comes? Lord, thank You for the opportunity to talk about this. We never know how many hours we have left in this world. Every moment is precious, and especially when we talk about the gospel. Would we not trifle with these things this morning? Would we approach them with holy hands and take them with blood earnestness for your namesake. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.