

DAY 38 THURSDAY

HEBREWS 12:18-29 FORGIVEN!

¹⁸ You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; ¹⁹ to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, ²⁰ because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." ²¹ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

²² But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷ The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our "God is a consuming fire."

The fear associated with being unprepared or negligent drives us to cheat, lie, steal, make excuses, blame others or quit a relationship. It is such a fear that we are willing to compromise our most cherished values in order to avoid the consequences of being caught in such a state.

The cold, hard fact about the Law found in the Old Testament is that it requires us to be perfect in our obedience. In contrast, the record of the Old Testament, the New Testament and of our present lives demonstrate that we are anything but perfect when it comes to obeying God. We simply do not, and cannot measure up to the requirements of the Law. We are not capable of perfection. It then follows that our relationship to the Law is one of fear and that Sinai, the place of the giving of the Law, has become the symbol of our fear of God.

In contrast, through Jesus we need have no of condemnation, because where the Law can do nothing but condemn imperfection, he has made the imperfect perfect. By his death and resurrection, Jesus has done away with our disobedience and its consequences. But in addition, he has imputed to us his perfect obedience to the Law. In short, his *better word* speaks forgiveness rather than condemnation.

To drift away from Jesus is to refuse the word only he can speak. He is God's Word and nothing can be substituted for it or added to it to reconcile us to God. While the Law measures how far we are from God, Jesus brings us back to God. But to turn to anything but Jesus is to return to the Law and the fear that leads to despair.

Dear Lord, save me from drifting away from you as you saved me from my sins on the cross. In loving and grateful response to your forgiveness may I not only forgive others but endeavor to ever keep my focus on you. Amen.