

Hebrews 12:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

Analysis

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: After describing New Covenant privileges, the author issues solemn warning. 'See that ye refuse not' (blepete mē paraitēsēsthe, βλέπετε μὴ παραιτήσησθε, 'watch that you do not reject') warns against spurning God's gracious offer. 'Him that speaketh' refers to Christ, God's ultimate revelation (Hebrews 1:1-2).

The argument proceeds from lesser to greater. 'If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth'—Israelites who rejected Moses' mediation of God's earthly Law from Sinai didn't escape judgment (wilderness death, exclusion from Promised Land). 'Much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven'—rejecting Christ's mediation of God's heavenly revelation brings greater judgment. The privileges are greater; so is the accountability.

This confronts the terrifying reality that rejecting greater revelation incurs greater condemnation. Those who heard Law and disobeyed perished; how much more those who hear the gospel and refuse? This isn't arbitrary divine cruelty but logical consequence: greater light rejected produces greater darkness. The warning applies especially to those who hear the gospel clearly yet reject or neglect it.

Greater privilege demands greater response; greater grace spurned produces greater judgment.

Historical Context

Israel's wilderness generation refused God's voice at Kadesh-barnea when the spies brought negative reports (Numbers 13-14). Despite seeing Egypt's plagues, Red Sea crossing, manna provision, and Sinai theophany, they refused to trust God's promise and enter Canaan. Their refusal cost them the Promised Land—that entire generation died in wilderness. Hebrews argues that rejecting Christ—God's ultimate revelation—brings worse consequences than rejecting Moses. First-century readers facing persecution and temptation to abandon Christianity needed this warning: returning to Judaism or lapsing into paganism after hearing the gospel would incur severe judgment. Church history confirms that apostasy from clearly understood gospel truth often leads to hardening impossible to reverse.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does this warning challenge any tendency to take the gospel for granted or treat it casually?
2. What does 'turning away from him that speaks from heaven' look like practically, and how can you guard against it?
3. In what ways does greater gospel privilege increase your accountability to respond faithfully?

Interlinear Text

Βλέπετε	μὴ	παραιτησάμενοι	τὸν	λαλοῦντα·	εἰ	γὰρ
See	not	that ye refuse	G3588	him that speaketh	if	For
G991	G3361	G3868		G2980	G1487	G1063
ἐκεῖνοι	οὐκ	ἔφυγον,	τὸν	ἐπὶ	τῆς	γῆς
they	not	escaped	G3588	on	G3588	earth
G1565	G3756	G5343	G1909		G1093	that ye refuse
						G3868
χρηματίζοντα	πολλῶ	μᾶλλον	ἡμεῖς	οἱ	τὸν	
that spake	much	more	shall not we	G3588	G3588	
G5537	G4183	G3123	G2249			
ἀπ'	οὐρανῶν	ἀποστρεφόμενοι				
that speaketh from	heaven	escape if we turn away from him				
G575	G3772	G654				

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 8:5 (Parallel theme): Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

Hebrews 11:7 (Parallel theme): By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Proverbs 13:18 (Parallel theme): Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

Exodus 20:22 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

Zechariah 7:11 (Parallel theme): But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

Proverbs 1:24 (Parallel theme): Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

Proverbs 1:32 (Parallel theme): For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

Exodus 16:29 (Parallel theme): See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.

Deuteronomy 30:17 (Parallel theme): But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

Joshua 22:16 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the LORD?