

GREATER THAN

a study of Hebrews

Sermon Discussion Questions

Greater Endurance - Hebrews 12: 18 - 24

- The writer contrasts Mt. Sinai and the fearsome distance of God with Mt. Zion and the gracious welcome of God. How do we see both of those realities united in Jesus Christ?
- Look at the images of Mt. Sinai - fear, danger, judgment, warnings to stay back. Why would God speak to his people that way?
- Look at the images of Mt. Zion - joy, acceptance, peace, celebration, security, hope, the invitation to draw near. On what basis does God speak to his people like this?
- Think back on times you have felt either closer to or farther from God. What made you feel closer or farther? Was it based on your perception of your 'performance' (holiness or obedience), your circumstances, your success, or your failure? What does this passage say is the real basis for our closeness or distance from God?
- How would you describe the way you believe God thinks about you? What does his "voice" or message to you sound like? On what is it based?
- Review the law/religion and grace/gospel chart below. Ask God to help you live out of what Christ has already done for you in the gospel.

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Where do you live?

Law/Religion (Mt. Sinai)	Grace/Gospel (Mt. Zion)
"I obey; therefore, I'm accepted." Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.	"I'm accepted; therefore, I obey." Motivation is based on grateful joy.
I obey God in order to get things from God.	I obey God to get more of God - to delight in and resemble him.
When circumstances in my life go poorly, I am angry at God, myself, or others; I believe that anyone who is good (like me) deserves a good life.	When circumstances in my life go poorly, I struggle, but I know all my punishment fell on Jesus. God allows this for my growth and he will exercise his Fatherly love within it.
When I am criticized, I am furious or devastated, because it is critical that I think of myself as a "good person." Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.	When I am criticized, I struggle but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." My identity is not built on my record or my performance but on God's love for me in Christ.
My prayer life consists largely of petition, and it only heats up when I am in a time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of my circumstance.	My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration and occurs both regularly and spontaneously. My main purpose is fellowship with God.
My self-view swings between two poles. When I live up to my standards, I feel confident - but then I'm prone to be proud and unsympathetic to failing people. When I'm not living up to my standards, I feel humbled but not confident.	My self-view is not based on my moral achievement. In Christ I am both sinful and broken, yet accepted and loved. I am so bad that he had to die for me, yet I am so loved that he was glad to die for me. This leads me to deep humility and confidence at the same time.
My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work, how moral I am, or how smart I believe myself to be - so I look down on those I perceive as lazy, immoral, or foolish.	My identity and self-worth are centered on Christ. I'm saved by sheer grace, so I can't look down on those who seem not to "perform" as well as I think I do.

Adapted from Dick Lucas and Tim Keller