

Undaunted in Shaky Times

We live in crazy times! We've had riots all over the country this past year. We have major political divisions which have enraged passions of people on both sides. We have big tech rising up to make themselves the gate keepers of thought, policing what they find to be objectionable.

On a personal level there are many people struggling financially due to the pandemic and government's reaction to it. There are people struggling emotionally because of the forced isolation and sense of being unable to go about life's normal routines. There is still a sense of fear and dread about what will happen next. How will this all turn out? There has been a lot of loss in the past year, who's number shall no longer be mentioned.

I was seeking the Lord for what message, what word I could bring to his people and I felt he wanted to bring a message of comfort and hope. He wants you to have courage and faith that he is bigger than the things going on, and greater than the enemies that surround us. Physical enemies, emotional enemies, spiritual enemies. We are living in a time of great shaking – on par with the shaking of the late 60s, though probably not as great as the 30s and 40s. Yet these are shaky times.

Personally, I know at times I feel totally overwhelmed with just my own life. Work and responsibilities can make us feel like we are underwater or surrounded. But God is calling us to be strong and focused in these times.

Point 1 – God does the shaking, but he calls us to be undaunted

But when the times are shaky, God's people aren't. If we are built upon the foundation of God's word as Reijo spoke about last week, we can stand while all else falls.

Heb 12:25-29

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."

When we see everything shaking around us, we have to remember who is doing the shaking. We see in this scripture God shakes things to remove what can be shaken so that what cannot be shaken may remain. God shakes things up to consume what doesn't last, leaving behind what does.

Janet Kinsley brought forth the word "undaunted" a few weeks back that the Lord had spoken to her. It comes out in the amplified version of John 16:33

"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace. In the world you have tribulation and distress and suffering, but be courageous [be confident, be *undaunted*, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world. [My conquest is accomplished, My victory abiding.]

Undaunted - What a great word! When I consider what that word means – not intimidated or discouraged by difficulty, danger, or disappointment – I am surely not that. I often am rather daunted by life. The pressures of life, the fears, the desire to control things myself cause me to respond and react rather than to stand undaunted with my eyes fixed forward, looking to Jesus to move on my behalf. But that is what God desires, and what he has provided us the ability to become.

This is my first point this morning – though we live in a time of great shaking, God has called us to be undaunted (not intimidated or discouraged by difficulty, danger, or disappointment), confident, filled with joy.

Point 2 – how to become undaunted, biblical examples

I want to look at some biblical examples this morning of how to face shaking times. As I mentioned to start, we can often feel surrounded or overwhelmed. And that idea of being surrounded by a crowd or enemies can be a visual for how we may feel during times like these.

Example 1 – Jehoshaphat

King Jehoshaphat was facing a huge Army, actually 3 armies coming against Judah.

- He proclaimed a fast for all of Judah
- He cried out to God and sought help from God
- 2 Chron 20:12
O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you."
- God responds:
2 Chron 20:15-17
This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. 16 Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. 17 You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.'"
- Jehoshaphat put the worshippers out in front of the Army
- God caused a confusion which resulted in the 3 attacking armies to destroy each other

Example 2 – Hezekiah was surrounded by the Assyrian army

The story takes place about 170 years later, toward the end of the time of Judah, when king Hezekiah found himself surrounded by the army of Assyrians, a brutal and powerful army. (As a side note, there is a tremendous amount of correlating historical info from the Assyrian side for this period of history. Some fascinating stuff to see/read.)

- Sennacherib started a campaign against Palestine, conquering 46 cities leading up to Jerusalem

- When the campaign started Hezekiah began preparations by digging what is now called Hezekiah's tunnel. A 1750 foot long water tunnel through rock so that water would pool inside the city's walls. Hezekiah also stopped up the water sources outside the city.
- He appointed officers over the people and told them:

2 Chron 32:7

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him.

- Sennacherib mocked God and sent a letter to discourage and break the heart of the people
- Hezekiah goes to God in prayer:

2 Kings 19:14-19

14 Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. 15 And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: "O LORD, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 16 Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God.

17 "It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. 18 They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by men's hands. 19 Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God."

- God responds:

2 Kings 19:32-36

"Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria:

"He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here.

He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it.

33 By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD.

34 I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant."

35 That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning-there were all the dead bodies! 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

See the pattern? When threatened, **they turned to the Lord, and the Lord did the fighting. They also prepared what they could.** Note, Hezekiah also did much to prepare. The tunnel, and apparent food preparations as attested by many large food jars found in the area from that time period showed that Hezekiah and the people also worked hard to prepare for the onslaught. God will call us to be wise in how we respond to the present situations. Note also there were 170 years between these two events. We tend to compress biblical timelines and wonder why these things don't happen everyday but we

have to be patient and wait for the Lord. Also imagine how long and hard it was to dig a tunnel 6 football fields long through rock. It didn't happen overnight.

In the New Testament we don't see the physical parallels of armies at war, but we see the persecution of people.

Paul was often surrounded –

2 Cor 11:32-33 In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. 33 But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

But he kept on task – to finish his race.

Acts 20:24 I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Steven was surrounded by executioners

Steven was one of the first deacons of the church. A man full of the Spirit of God who boldly proclaimed the truth of God. Those who opposed God brought him before the council to accuse him. After he recites the history of the Jewish nation and their sins against God they begin to become furious at Stephen, to which he replies:

“Look, I see heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God!”

And at this point they stone him to death.

Ever wonder why was Jesus standing, as opposed to being seated as it normally says?

As a witness – it was customary for a witness to stand up to give testimony. So Jesus was possibly rising up to bear witness that Stephen was telling the truth.

As a judge – In Matt 12:41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it;

Ps 68:1 May God arise, may his enemies be scattered

Some equate this scene as the final judgment on the first covenant, marking the end God working through the nation of Israel and the formal start of the church age. Physical judgment later being poured out on the nation in 70AD.

So we can't say for sure, but certainly there is a significance that indicates God was aware and that he was going to take care of Stephen.

How did Jesus respond to being surrounded?

We have to recognize the sometimes the pressure comes in different forms. Consider how Jesus responded to crowds.

For example, Jesus asked the disciples what the crowds thought, but that wasn't really his concern -

Luke 9:18-20 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" 19 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." 20 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Jesus didn't care what the crowds thought.

Jesus was sometimes surrounded by those who would make him king –

John 6:14-15 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." 15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

He did not get caught up in what others had intended for him.

Jesus was sometimes surrounded by those who wanted to kill him:

Luke 4:28-30 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. 30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

His time to leave this earth was set by his Father, he was not fearful of what man could do.

Jesus felt surrounded by the fear of the cross before him:

Matt 26:38-41 Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." 39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." 40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. 41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Jesus was undaunted, his best earthly friends were not. They couldn't even stay awake to be there for him. Often – you will be alone.

Ultimately, Jesus had a singular purpose that he kept his focus upon.

Luke 9:51 – When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Looking at these five examples we see their approach. They turned to the Lord and set their face to the task before them.

My first point was – though we live in a time of great shaking, God has called us to be undaunted (not intimidated or discouraged by difficulty, danger, or disappointment), confident, filled with joy.

My second point is this – we become undaunted by turning to the Lord, letting Him deal with threats against us, and setting our face firmly on the task God gives us.

Finally, let us remember what the goal is in our journey.

I want you to know that I love this country. I remember the pride I felt as a 12-year-old boy celebrating our nation's bi-centennial. I know this nation has had its short-comings and failures, but I also know that America is the most blessed nation on the earth and has been a blessing to the world.

My heart breaks over what has transpired over this past year, a year whose number will not be mentioned. Our nation stands on the brink of disaster as we trifle with economic laws of nature and live like law and justice are optional and only apply to some.

Yet – America is and always was temporary. We aren't in the city whose architect and builder is God, but we look forward to that. We look toward the heavenly Jerusalem which will one day come down from heaven and be set upon foundations of the new earth. But even that city isn't our prize, or our goal. It is God himself. To be face to face with Jesus!

Phil 3:7-14

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

My final point is this – Jesus and his Kingdom are our destiny as believers. Nothing we do apart from that lasts, or matters beyond this life.

Action Points

I want to be clear here, I am not saying to give up on the things of this world, nor to just hunker down and wait for Jesus to come back. Hezekiah turned to the Lord, and God gave him the wisdom to prepare the way he did. Many lives were spared because Hezekiah was godly and wise and in your circumstance God will use you to bless others if you respond in this way. But ultimately the short-term goals of this life will not matter in the next. So where should our focus be?

Let's take a moment and reflect on what God may be asking us to do.

1. What is one concern or threat you are worrying about that you need to turn over to the Lord?
2. What is one temporary thing keeping you from setting your face on what God is calling you to do?
3. What is God calling you to do now, to become undaunted?