

UNSHAKABLE FAITH: WHEN TROUBLE COMES

Sermon written by Martha-Jean Fitch

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TEXT: Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:8

How many of you remember that old story of the Three Little Pigs? I think most of us do.

Mother pig sent them out; it was time for them build their own houses. Pig number one built his house of straw. Pig number two built his house with sticks. Pig number three built his house out of bricks.

Along came the wolf who demanded entrance into their homes. He wasn't invited or solicited. He just decided that he wanted to come into the lives of the little pigs.

He first went to the house of straw and wanted to come in. Pig number one said, "Not by the hair of my chin-ee-chin-chin."

So, the wolf huffed, and he puffed and he blew the straw house down. Pig number one's world had fallen apart, so he hurried over to pig number two's house.

The wolf followed him and knocked on the door of the stick house. He said, "Little pig, little pig, let me in." Pig number two said, "Not by the hair of my chin-ee-chin-chin."

So, the wolf huffed and puffed and blew his house down. Now, both pig #1 and pig #2 were devastated. So they went over to see pig #3.

Now, pig number three built his house differently than the others. Pig number three built his house of bricks so that it would stand the test of time. The wolf tried yet again, "Little pig, little pig, let me in." Pig number three said, "Not by the hair of my chin-ee-chin-chin." So, the wolf huffed and puffed and blew and blew but he could not blow the house down. At last, he was so out of breath, he had to stop and rest and think a bit.

Well, finally the wolf decided he would come down the chimney and get into the house that way and eat up all three little pigs. Well, while he was climbing on to the roof, the little pig made up a blazing fire and put a big pot full of water to boil. Then just as the wolf was coming down the chimney, the little piggy pulled off the lid of the pot and plop! In fell the wolf into the scalding water. The little piggy put on the cover again, boiled the wolf up, and the three little pigs ate him for supper!

Now, what does this whole story have to do with us? Well – you will notice that the wolf comes to all three houses. Trouble comes and it huffs and puffs and tries to destroy each home. And that is really true for all of us, isn't it? From time to time, all of us can face troubling times. They often comes at us unexpectedly – and catch us off guard. And they can vary in intensity and duration, can't they?

Trouble can be like having a flat tire when you're running late – or losing your car keys. Hopefully those times are short lived! But then there is trouble that hits us harder – and sometimes lasts what seems like forever. Times like when your health fails, or you lose your job or you experience the death of a loved one.

Troubles can come to all our homes. But the big difference in our story above with the Three Little Pigs is the reaction that happens when trouble comes. If you have built your life on the things of this world like the straw and sticks, when stuff starts to blow, and life starts to shake – you will crumble and fall apart. You won't have hope and strength to keep going on. But if you have built your life on the brick unshakable kingdom that has been built by Almighty God, it doesn't matter what is falling apart around you, you won't be falling apart with it. Because you see – the kingdom of God is a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Our focus for this new year is that all of us will have this incredible, unshakeable faith – a faith that is growing and getting stronger each and every day. A faith in God that is so confident and bold that the storms of life cannot destroy it. A faith, built on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ – that will stand strong when the wind blows, and the floods come.

If there is one story in the Bible about someone who faced troubles galore – and yet held on to his faith – it is that of Job. Job is definitely one who built his house out of bricks. He was a righteous man who loved God. And he was blessed. He had a loving wife and children, land, wealth – everything a person could want.

When the book of Job opens, we hear God and Satan having a discussion. Satan tells God that it is no wonder that Job lives a righteous life – because God has a hedge of protection around him and God has made him to prosper. If everything was to be taken away from him, Satan is confident that Job would curse God.

So, God says, “Ok, you may test him – but don't take his life.”

And that's when all of Job's troubles begin. Satan strips Job of everything: his children, his livestock and wealth and even his health. The only thing he has left is his wife and 3 of his “so-called” friends. His friends tell him again and again that it must be something he did that was wrong – and that he just needs to repent and turn back to God. And his wife tells Job to “curse God and die”.

And how does Job respond? Much like all of us do. He wonders, “Why is this all happening? I didn't do anything wrong. What is God doing? And where *is* God, anyway?” Well, one thing Job did *not* do was to curse God, as his wife had suggested. But he did ask a lot of questions. And I think it is important to realize that it is never wrong to ask questions – to express your doubts and confusion to God. That is a part of our faith! In fact, that is how our faith grows.

Stephanie Hertenberg, in an article in BeliefNet, has said that not having questions in your faith is like a “*tree that grows where the weather is always gentle. They may stand tall but their roots are shallow.*” But someone who questions their faith and digs deeper is “*like a tree*”

that survived many storms. Each answered question leads them to believe in their faith even more. Their roots grow deeper and stronger.” And then - think about what happens when one of life's storms blows in, which will tree will stay strong: the shallow rooted tree that was never truly challenged or the tree that has been tested and grown deep roots?” We need those deep roots in faith to be unshakeable in the our faith.

Well, Job did ask many questions – and grappled with his faith. But he didn't get answers for all his questions – because he came to understand that some things we just don't have the mind to understand – but it is in the mystery and knowledge of God. Some things we have to leave in the sovereign hand of God and trust that His ways and purpose are always for the best.

In our text today from the 19th chapter of Job, Job is pretty angry and frustrated. He feels like God was persecuting him and plunging him into darkness. Of course, we know that it is was Satan who was attacking him – not God. But even in the midst of Job's frustration – he still has faith. Amazing, unshakable faith – really.

One of Job's greatest declarations of faith comes in verses 25-27. Job says ⁵*I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.* ²⁶*And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;* ²⁷*I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. Oh how my heart yearns within me!”*

Job believes in his Redeemer – that will one day God would redeem him and save him – even though he was going through so many trials. He knew God – His Redeemer – would one day get him out of the mess he was in – even if it wasn't until the day of his death. He had faith in God's promises and knew there was still hope! He could see past his trials and look forward to that time He would see God with His own eyes!

This passage interestingly became a focal point in the wonderful oratorio Handel's Messiah – where we hear this passage interpreted to refer to the wonderful message of Jesus – our Redeemer – who defeated death and lives again – giving us the hope and promise of the resurrection!

Somehow or another, I have heard these verses a lot as I have grown up – probably most often while listening to Handel's Messiah. But I was surprised how much they would one day mean to me. Back in 2015, I went into the pain center at Rush University Hospital in Chicago for a pain procedure. Immediately after that was over, I went to have lunch, at a restaurant there in the hospital. While we were eating, I started to feel kind of strange - my stomach was bothering me and I kept sneezing. Thankfully, we didn't get on the highway to go home - but waited for a bit to see how I would feel. All of the sudden my eyes started to swell. So, we decided I better go get checked out in the ER. I didn't know what to expect would happen there, but all of the sudden I found myself taken to the critical care unit of the Emergency Room. I was in trouble!

Without going into a lot of medical detail – I will sum it up by saying that I was having a severe allergic reaction – from which they never really discovered the cause.

The whole time I was in the ER, for some reason the Scripture verse that kept running through my mind was, *"Yet in my flesh shall I see God."* Not a verse that I have ever thought was a favorite of mine. I think I was being reminded that God, my Redeemer, was there. I could feel His presence there in the ER with me, and I knew His peace. He would get me through that very scary time – whether on this earth or in heaven above. In my flesh I would see God!

And then while in the ICU afterwards, not knowing what the future held, another Scripture that really helped me was our theme Scripture from Psalm 16:8. *"I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken."* What I have learned is that if I keep my eyes on my pain and how lousy I feel, I am very shaken and very discouraged. But if I keep my eyes on God, He is the lifter of my head and I won't be shaken. He will carry me through, no matter what happens!

It is a promise that is repeated throughout the book of Psalms that we can claim. Psalm 55:22 says: *"Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will not let the righteous be shaken"*. And Psalm 62:2 tells us, *"God only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress, I shall not be greatly shaken!"*

You see the way to have unshakeable faith when trouble arrives in your life – is to do what Job did – as did the psalmists of old – and that is to claim the promises of who God is! God is our Redeemer – He can take the bad that is happening and redeem it. He can help us find a way out of the mess we find ourselves in! And He is our Rock and our Fortress. We can cast our cares on Him and trust that He will carry us through our trials – sustaining us and giving us the strength we need.

Beth Moore says it this way: *"Faith is not believing in my own unshakable belief. Faith is believing an unshakable God when everything in me trembles and quakes."* We get through times of trouble by placing our faith in our unshakeable God and hanging on to His promises.

And then relying on Him to give you wisdom and help you through it all. As it says in James 1:7 & 8: *"if in the process any of you doesn't know how to meet any particular problem, you only have to ask God who gives generously wisdom to all - and you may be sure that the necessary wisdom will be given you. But when you ask God for wisdom, you must sincerely believe and expect Him to answer without doubting Him."* He will give you the strength and wisdom you need – right when you need it – if you just surrender yourself to Him and rely on Him through it all.

And then – instead of asking, "Why is this happening?" – ask God: "What do you want me to learn from this crisis, God?" and "How are You going to use this?" You can be assured that the Evil One only wants to destroy you during times of trouble – to fill you with bitterness and defeat. But God wants to redeem those times of trouble and use them to develop you – to help you grow and yes – to fill you with comfort and peace. Turn to God and let Him change your crisis into a time of blessing and growth.

So, the question remains – how are you going to build your house? Will you build it on the solid rock of faith that stands unshakeable even when trouble comes? Will you allow God to teach you and help you through those days of trouble, giving you strength and peace and hope?

As we close, I want to lead you in a simple prayer for the facing of these days...a prayer perhaps you can say right now. Let's pray: Dear Jesus – you know every trouble that we have ever faced, and you know what trials each of us are facing right now. Some of them are trials so immensely personal to us – and then there is the trouble we all seem to be in together with the world-wide pandemic. Lord, please help us to respond to these trials by relying on You and hanging on to Your promises. Please give us your wisdom to guide us in the days ahead. Come into our lives Lord and replace our fears with Your love and Your peace! We need you Lord – and we love You! In Jesus' name we pray, AMEN

INVITATION

The Savior is waiting to enter your heart. Why don't you let Him come in? There's nothing in this world to keep you apart – no trouble, no trial, no doubt or fear. If you take one step to the Savior, you'll find His arms open wide, full of love and grace for you. Make today the day you make a decision for the Lord: confess your faith in Him for the very first time OR rededicate your life to Christ – and become part of this church family. Won't you come now, as we stand and sing?

RESOURCES

¹ Stephanie Hertenberg, "*Why It's Okay to Have Questions about Your Faith.*" <https://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/why-its-okay-to-have-questions-about-your-faith.aspx>

²Beth Moore, [Praying God's Word: Breaking Free From Spiritual Strongholds](#)