

Unshakable Hope in Shifting Times

Hebrews 12:25-13:1-6

Introduction:

On September 7, 1940 a hellacious bombardment **began** over London that would not let up for more than 9 months. With the dual motivation of retaliation for British bombing of Berlin and the hope of breaking the British will to fight, forcing a truce, surrender, or opening for invasion, Adolph Hitler unleashed his vaunted Luftwaffe on military and civilian targets alike. For **57 straight nights**, London and other cities were decimated by incendiaries without mercy. For 57 nights, the people of Britain would huddle together, in the dark, with sirens blaring as a reminder that death was coming.

Author Erik Larson, after studying and writing on the subject, stated that the population would hide at night and go to work during the day. The first few nights were terrifying, replaced by fear, and then resolve. This resolve was replaced by a type of **fatalism**, where people were resolved that if the bomb was going to get them, it was going to get them.

In the midst of this, the clarion voice of **Winston Churchill** broke through the quiet desperation to offer a somber hope. A master of motivating oratory, Churchill had the unique ability to speak truthfully about the reality of a situation, give tangible steps to move forward, and then an inspiring charge to keep going, to never surrender. "***Never was so much owed by so many to so few.***" What's fascinating about Churchill was that he had morality but no great view of God, His sovereignty or purpose, yet could rally a nation forward in the midst of *uncertainty, pain, and loss*. This hero was actually voted OUT of office by the end of the war. He could offer a **somber hope**, but not a lasting one.

Churchill offered stability in the midst of uncertainty, a voice that said "MOVE FORWARD" when everyone was retreating. We need something **unshakable when everything shifts around us!** The truth as we sit right now in history is this: *life has ALWAYS BEEN SHIFTING, we are just keenly aware of it right now.* The thing we thought were solid have proven to fade as quickly as yesterday's sunset. We need something **unshakable, unchangeable, immovable. And we have it in Christ!**

The book of Hebrews: *Jesus is Superior, Preeminent, or Better*

6:9 - Better things in regards to our **salvation**

7:19 - Better hope through which we draw near to God

7:22 - Jesus is the guarantor of a better covenant

8:6 - Jesus mediates a better covenant enacted on better promises

9:23 - Jesus is a better sacrifice

10:34 - We have a better possession (offered in the future)

11:16 - We are offered a better heavenly country

11:35 - We can accept persecution - since we are risen to a better life

11:40 - God provides something better than can be found here

12:24 - Jesus' blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel

What God gives us through Jesus is something better. But how is it better? In Jesus we are given something that is **unshakable, eternal, and immovable.**

The Difference between Sinai and Zion:

The writer of Hebrews compares the experience of the nation of Israel at Sinai, where they received the Law (Exodus 19-20) to what God did at Mt. Zion (or Jerusalem) through Jesus.

Sinai (Heb. 12:18-21):

- **Began to establish a Covenant** (an Old Covenant) - God offered a special relationship with the people He chose. He would be their God and they would be His people to reach the world. They had special access to Him **if they kept the Law.**
- **The Law revealed sin, and created terror** - When Moses went up to receive the Law, if even an animal touched the mountain they would die. This created terror from Moses and the people, since sin created a barrier between man and God
- **God instituted sacrifices as outward acts of inner repentance** - Each time sin created a barrier, a sacrifice would have to be made. This would have to be done over and over, incessantly, day by day, month by month, and year by year. Even the **priest** could not sit and rest, since he would sacrifice for the people and himself.

This meant a relationship with God was not settled, that fear led to a negative trembling, and there was no final payment for sin

Zion (Heb. 12:21-24):

- **City of the Living God**
- **Gathering of the Redeemed and angels**
- **Jesus, the mediator of a NEW COVENANT** - His blood was spilled once for all (Heb. 10:10) and as our High Priest, He offered Himself as a sacrifice and then **SAT DOWN** (Heb. 12:10), signifying it was done, was enough, and was accepted.

Why is this comparison of mountains so important? Its the difference between life and death, from Law and Grace, of earning vs. receiving, of saving myself to the salvation Jesus gives. In the new covenant, there was one sacrifice given by Jesus, where God poured out His wrath for sin on Him, so when Jesus died, rose, and sat down, everyone who puts their faith in Him, asks for forgiveness and turns from their sin to serve Him will be saved. This moves us from the **shaky ground of self-earning to the rock solid ground of salvation through Christ alone**. Though we may fail and sin, He does and will not. But there is more:

God shook the ground at Sinai in such a way that people were terrified (Ex. 19:18), including Moses. He promised to do it again (Haggai 2:6, 21):

*At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, 'Yet once more I will **shake** not only the earth but also the heavens.' This phrase, 'Yet once more', indicates the removal of things that are **shaken** --- that is, things that have been made -- in order that the things that cannot be **shaken may remain**.'" (Heb. 12:26-27)*

There will come a day in the future when God will **shake this world** one last time, There will be a day when the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed (2 Pet. 3:10). When that shaking comes, the things that are NOT eternal will be dissolved, and what remains will last into eternity. So the writer goes on to say:

*"Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a **kingdom that cannot be shaken**, and thus we offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire!" (Hebrews. 13:28-29)*

We have the promise of a future kingdom that **cannot and will not be shaken**. It will not be destroyed (Dan. 4:24), it will stand forever, it is eternal, unchangeable, immovable. Our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept, and guarded, to be revealed in the future (1 Peter. 1:3-5). In a time questions without answers, we have **stone cold answers to our questions of the future**. Those who have been washed by the blood of Jesus, have their sins forgiven, have put their faith in Christ and graciously repented of their sin, have absolute certainty of life, healing, peace, safety and joy. Far from **fatalism**, **this allows us to LIVE differently in the present**.

The Bible always has implications, always informs us how we are to live. Notice the implications:

- **Grateful** - We could not earn this kingdom, we simply return the praise of thanks
- **Acceptable Worship** - Notice that at Sinai, the people were terrified, the type of terror a young child feels when confronted by a huge barking dog, the type

of fear that moves away. But acceptable worship is rooted in **reverence and awe, in respect and fear, recognizing that God is still a consuming fire**. The difference is that now that we are part of the family that owns that junkyard dog, and now that same fierce dog defends us and we wrestle and get licked when we see him. Same fierce dog, different relationship. We seek to worship God not because He is no longer a terrible force, but because we have been brought near Him by Christ! We get a relationship that is protected, both now and into the future, knowing that whatever happens to me materially in this world, nothing will be taken away in the future.

This means we can now function:

- **Show brotherly love** - The word "*Philadelphia*" means brotherly love, which could have either referred to Jewish Christians loving their Jewish brothers or fellow believers. Both are possible. Notice the command is to **let it continue**, since we are taught by God to love (1 Thess. 4:9). We must look for ways to let love continue among us and those who are unbelievers. Again, love intuitively moves us toward each other, and now love compels us to keep distance. Paul knew this very well as he wrote his letters to people who were dear to him, yet physically were far apart.
- **Hospitality to strangers** - This one is tricky but important. Typically hospitality entails opening up ones home to strangers. That may be an impossibility in the short run. But the question we should ask: *how do we continue to bless the world around us*. **We've been asked by the hospital across the street to provide \$10-15 gift cards to fast food places in town**, since the ER has become the place our homeless go now that churches are down. Some have left gifts on doorsteps, or have offered to get groceries for shut-in neighbors. All of these are valid, and that's the point of "*some have entertained angels unawares*." Its not to figure out which of the people we serve is Michael Landon (That's a reference to "Highway to Heaven".....anyone), but that none of this is insignificant. One of the **best remedies to anxiety and depression** is to focus on others and get our minds off ourselves.
- **Remember those in Prison** - This was a real issue during the time the church was persecuted and literally had property and life taken away. But since we suffer from "out of sight - out of mind" disease, remembering those who are captive or shut in is imperative. We ask that if you are watching this and have needs, PLEASE let us know. If you have the desire and means to help, let us know. We remember through ministering to needs, sending correspondence, and praying for those who we cannot see.
- **Practice Purity** - The marriage bed should be a place of honor and purity. In times of crisis, separation, and lack of routine, certain habits of sin creep in and take over. The stats are in, as pornography usage has skyrocketed since the stay at home order was given. This makes sense, since more time gives

more opportunity, and most are looking for some way to control their circumstance. Let the time that we have, that is different, be a time of purity and holiness, not an excuse to sin.

- **Settled Contentment** - In the midst of economic uncertainty, our level of contentment is being revealed. Not only have we all lost money on paper if we retirement, but the things that we used to be able to pick up anytime we wanted are no longer available on a whim. Our love of money is not simply a love for the amount in our bank account or portfolio, but what we are able to leverage and buy. *Why can we flee the love of money?*

I will never leave you or forsake you

Originally given to Joshua, this was the basis of a type of courage that was willing to face the unknown gladly, boldly, and lead others into uncertainty. *Why can we trust God in the midst of financial uncertainty?* Because God provides? Sure. But more than that. He is there, and won't leave.

- **Fixed Confidence** - Notice that because God will never leave us, we can have **confidence**, so we can proclaim **Psalm 56 and 118**: *"The Lord is my helper; I will not fear, what can man do to me?"*

Why can we do all of this? Because we have a fixed confidence in a God who called us to be a part of an **unshakable kingdom!** We are a part of that kingdom to be revealed one day because Jesus is better, His death was final, His sacrifice sufficient. We can live out these realities as worship, knowing God protects and empowers us.

Discussion Questions:

What are areas of life in things IN life that people find comfort and confidence in (apart from God)? What happens when those things get taken away? What would be different about our life if we were TOTALLY confident in Christ?

What are ways we can wisely but tangibly show loving hospitality to strangers during this shutdown?

How do we remember those that are shut in and cannot come out in public or receive us in their home?

What would be different about our lives if we were content with what we have?

How is Jesus better than everything else this world can offer?

Ways to Pray:

Spend some time giving thanks for the Person and Work of Jesus Christ

Spend some time remembering the promises that we have in Christ (maybe make a list before you start praying)

Spend some time praying for your neighbors and those on your "Pray-Plan-Risk" cards

Spend some time praying for those who are shut in, as well as those working in hospitals

Spend some time praying for the marriages in our church as well as the purity of our church

Spend some time praying that we will all live confidently & courageously in Christ