

Never Shaken

During the months of February and March the "Weekly Meditation" verses all taught that we *will not be shaken*. Some translations use other phrases: *will not be moved*, *will not stumble*, or *will not be overwhelmed*. One version removes the negative concept and translates the phrase: *will stand firm*.

In the original Hebrew, the word for "shaken" is used to convey the simple idea of *losing one's footing*. We might picture someone on a hiking trail and stumbling on a rock or tree root. This image is not one that really alarms us. We are not overly concerned about a slight loss of footing. Most of us would be able to easily recover from a minor slip. At worst we might imagine a sprained ankle, or scrapped knees and hands from a not-so-serious fall.

The word *shaken* certainly includes the stumbling and slips that occur in our spiritual lives, but it had a much broader meaning.

Have you ever experience an earthquake so that you *lost your footing*? Have you ever *lost your footing* on a steep incline and fallen off the path? Have you ever *tripped* on a staircase with nothing to grab hold of? These are more accurate images of what we read in the Psalms. Being shaken is the idea that you have lost your footing but there is nothing to help you regain your balance; you fall! You are *shaken up* pretty badly; a near catastrophe.

In the Psalms God promises that we can have lives in which we will not be shaken. He does not promise that there will be no earthquakes in life; he does not guarantee that the path of life will always be smooth, wide and even; he does not say that there will be no obstacles, no enemies, or no temptations. However, he does promise that we will not be shaken. Psalm 15:5 literally says that "he will not be shaken, forever."

God is not presented as some sort of spiritual rope, or walking stick, or handrail. Certainly he is there for us when we fall. But in the "meditation" verses God is presented as the one to make us surefooted. He makes our feet secure so that we do not stumble. It is true that we want God to help us if we fall, but even better is the promise that we will not fall at all.

So, how is it that we can have this kind of surefooted assurance in our lives? How can we withstand the obstacles without stumbling? How can we stand firm through the spiritual earthquakes of life?

It is because the Lord is my counsel; he is always in my thoughts; he is next to me. (Psalm 16:7-8)

It is because of the continual love of the Lord toward me and my trust in him. (Psalm 21:7)

It is because God is my strength, my rest, and my salvation. (Psalm 62:6-8)

It is because God's attention is trained toward the righteous. My righteousness does not keep me from stumbling, but God remembers his righteous ones, and he will make me surefooted. (Psalms 15:5; 55:22 and 112:6)

David declares a great truth in the first Psalm. He declares blessings from God for the one who avoids the path of sin and evil. He declares blessings from God for the one who enjoys meditating on the instruction of the Lord. He says:

He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in season
And whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.
(Psalm 1:3)

We want to be that deep-rooted tree that withstands the storms of life year after year. To have such strength we must, like the tree, be nourished so that our roots can grow deep. We must continually nourish ourselves with the refreshing word of God and

Learn the value of trusting in the Lord;
Gain confidence in his strength;
Experience his kindness, his rest, his salvation; and
Grow in righteousness.

Then we will bear the fruits of the Spirit . . .

And when the storms and earthquakes in life occur,

We will NEVER BE SHAKEN!

Mark Stinnett, Minister
Ellisville Church of Christ
Ellisville, Missouri