

Faith and Confidence

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Bible Text: Isaiah 36

Preached on: Sunday, October 17, 2010

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I would like to invite you to look with me in Isaiah chapter 36. I want to speak with you today on this subject of faith and confidence.

Here in Isaiah 36 and verse one:

Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field. Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiyah's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him. But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar? Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? the LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall. But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with

you? Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern; Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.¹

What we have here in chapter 36 is really the historic context of everything that has been going on to this point as we have been reading through the book of Isaiah. The Assyrian nation had been raised up to power and because of the idolatry of the nations of Israel in the northern part, God had already delivered them, those 10 tribes into the hands of the King of Assyria, Sennacherib. And now they had their sights set on Jerusalem. The Assyrian army was a very powerful army in the day and had very wise captains. What they had done was actually circle all the way around the capital city of Israel, Jerusalem, and took out all the nations first in which these had been used to trusting. That is why when Rabshakeh was speaking about them even looking to Egypt he said, "Don't bother looking there, because we have already taken pharaoh. So now who are you going to trust?"

And what we find in this entire chapter is a mockery of the God of Israel, even to the point where Rabshakeh said that if you even confide in your Lord God, he is the one that has given us the power to come to your doorstep and take you out. So who will you trust in?

So what we see here is a very key portion of Scripture that deals with when men stand against God. Wherein does the faith of the Lord's people lie? Wherein should they look? Hezekiah was a king that the Lord raised up to bring about change in the nation of Israel. He is the one you can read about the book of Kings. And much of what we are reading here, if you go back to 2 Kings chapter 18 and 19, is recorded there in greater detail.

¹ Isaiah 36:1-22.

Look at 2 Kings chapter 18. When the Lord raised up Hezekiah and also 2 Chronicles chapter 32 is another chapter that rehearses this particular portion here. But you will notice in 2 Kings chapter 18 how Hezekiah began his reign. It says in verse two that he was:

“Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah.”²

And it says in verse three:

“And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.”³

And here is the very first thing we read about him, verse four.

“He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made.”⁴

You think about all the years before that had come since the time that Moses made that brazen serpent in the wilderness. They brought it into the land with them and what did they do with it? Well, they were worshipping it. They were offering incense to it. They had made an idol out of it as it says here.

“...for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.”⁵

Now Nehushtan means a piece of brass. It is like people today that make something of the symbols of the cross. They will cast it in gold. They will put precious stones around it. People wear it on their necks. They put it up on the wall. They have made an idol out of something that God never purposed that people worship or to be a symbol. The cross was nothing but a piece of wood on which our Lord Jesus Christ hung and to try to shape any kind of image and have people hang it in places of worship is the same sort of idolatry. It needs to be done away.

I know people argue, “Well, we don’t worship it.” Well, why do you have it hanging in the place of worship? You know, what is the purpose of wearing it around your neck? That is in men’s nature to make an idol, make a religious symbol even paintings of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, that, in essence, mislead people. If the Lord had intended a picture of himself, a visible, visual picture of himself to be left for his disciples to follow, wouldn’t he have gotten an artist in his day and designed it and drew it? But these are things that over time men have come up with, these ideas. And, you know, it is all false worship.

² 2 Kings 18:2.

³ 2 Kings 18:3.

⁴ 2 Kings 18:4.

⁵ Ibid.

So when you ad those chapters—and I would encourage you to read them when you have time, 2 Kings 18 and 19 and 2 Chronicles 32—this is the history. This is the historic background of what we are studying here and was a reality in Isaiah’s day.

But coming back to Isaiah 36 what we have here is a distinction that is made between, if you will, man’s honor and God’s glory. And those that are the Lord’s wherein they must stand, even in the face of men’s mockeries, even in the face of men’s conquered nations. But here in chapter 36 and verse one we see the King of Assyria making his attempts at the city of Jerusalem. He has already destroyed all the defenced cities around and now he has his sights on Jerusalem and verses two and three of Isaiah 36 we see this ambassador, these three men that were sent out by Hezekiah to meet the king and yet very specifically they were given instruction—as we read in verse 21—to hold their peace.

Sometimes we think that the best way to answer those that mock the Lord and mock his ways is to debate them and to argue. I have been challenged to such debates. I have been invited to radio broadcasts where they want to put opposing people against each other and to hear what you have to say. And unless trapped into it—I was at one time on live radio. I didn’t realize that it was actually a trap, but other than that, I have always refused, because these are not things to debate. These are not things that we are going to answer men and they are going to see and know and understand. As Lane said in reading Philippians three, this has to be revealed. It has to be revealed in the heart. And that is really what we have there in verses four through 10 of this portion of Scripture, Rabshakeh’s railing and blasphemous speech. And the whole purpose of it was designed to frighten Hezekiah into submission and persuade him to surrender at his discretion, at the enemy’s discretion and also to frighten the people as we see in verses 11 through 20 when they said, “Speak in your language, not in the Jew’s language,” they said, “No, we want to speak in the Jew’s language, because we want the people on the walls to hear what we are saying and to persuade them to leave Hezekiah and force him to surrender.” And then in verses 21 and 22 we see the report that they came and made to Hezekiah and the story continues on into chapter 37.

But here are some thoughts that I want to leave with you regarding faith in the face of trouble and distress. That is really where faith, God given faith shines brightest. It is not when everything seems to be going well and there is no opposition. Faith, you know, trial and tribulation don’t produce faith. Faith is something that God gives to his people, but trial and tribulation reveal it. They reveal of what character it is. It is one thing for us to know that we need to trust God in all things and when everything is going well we tend to feel like we are doing a pretty good job of it. But then all God has to do is put one little roadblock, something that is not even life threatening and we act like unbelievers. You know, we cast away our confidence, our profession in a second were it not God keeping us. And if that is the case in the small things of life, can you imagine in things eternal if God did not keep us? Wherein would be our strength and our health? It has to be the Lord giving it. It has to be the Lord keeping it and causing us to be kept in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Imagine Hezekiah right here during this time when there was some success. He had started off burning that brazen serpent. He brought out the law and caused it to be read again and just, if you will, at a time where it seemed that the Lord was prospering him, now the enemy comes and seemingly puts a halt to these things.

You say, “Why does that happen? Why does God test his children? Why is it that he would test you or me? Why is it that upon, given that grace to believe on Christ everything is not just paradise?”

Well, we know that in this flesh we would become presumptuous. We know that left to ourselves we would become prideful. And so I believe that the Lord does these things that our confidence never be in the flesh. It is a pruning of the tree, if you will. It is a chastening of the rod that causes us to look away from ourselves. And so we should not question or wonder that as we look to the Lord and even are blessed in reading his Word and hearing it preached, given hearts to look to Christ that God would send afflictions to do nothing more than to quicken us in ourselves, to look away from the flesh and to cause us all the more to cry unto the Lord. If any situation we face does cause us to cry unto the Lord it is a mercy.

So better a good hope. Better a faith that is God given and tried and true than a false hope. There are many that ... whose faith is a false hope and when trials come they... it is of no consequence for them to run to another God or to seek a temporary relief.

You have heard the story about the man in a rain storm when it was thundering and lightning and that ran in under a store front where there was an awning and he stood there while the storm beat down. And then what happened? When the storm past, he wrapped his cloak around him and headed back to his real home. That was temporary refuge. That wasn't his home.

There are a lot of people that profess God even profess Christ. And when the storm arises they tend to get religious for a while. They tend to run to a congregation. They tend to run to a preacher. They tend to run to a profession. They say, “I need to renew my relationship with the Lord.” And yet when the storm passes, they go about their way. There is no root. There is no God given faith. The faith that looks to the Lord, the faith that rests in his sovereign hand, the faith that even as Hezekiah instructed these holds its peace and I see that as Aaron, the Lord took his sons because of their apostasy offering a strange fire unto the Lord. These are Aaron's sons. But there was no respect shown because they were Aaron's sons. God took them. And it says he held his peace, Christ being his peace. That is who is the peace of the Lord's people. But that faith is not something that is worked up within us. It is not something that we learn by some spiritual exercise. It is a faith given of God that causes one to look to Christ and Christ alone. Those that are the Lord's live by it. They stand in it and they are upheld by it.

If you look over in Galatians chapter two and verse 20 it is not that we cannot be moved. We could be left to ourselves. But it is Christ keeping us. And it would be sooner a

reality for Christ to be moved off the throne and away from the Father than for us to be moved if he has died for us.

Paul said this in Galatians two and verse 20. He said:

“I am crucified with Christ.”⁶

What is the foundation of faith? It is that body of truth in connection with Christ and his death that if Christ died for me I cannot be moved.

“There is therefore now no condemnation.”⁷

And when Paul says that:

“I am crucified with Christ...”⁸

You see, this is the faith by which he lived. It took the death of Christ. But when he says:

“I am crucified with Christ...”⁹

It means that when Christ died, he died. It was a judgment rendered. When Christ rose again, he rose again. And so he says:

“...nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”¹⁰

See, it is substitution, satisfaction. There was no way in history that Hezekiah could be removed at this time. There was no way in history that that tribe of Judah be wiped off the map. Why? Because it was already purposed that Christ should come. So all of the railings of Rabshakeh against Jerusalem and against Judah, all of his threatenings of destruction of the people were but vain arrows being shot, because God had purposed already that in a few centuries his Son the Lord Jesus Christ would actually come and live and die to give up his life as a sacrifice for his people there and then.

So this is the faith by which we live. You know, faith is not just some sentimental feeling that we have, well, you know, keep the faith, brother, like some say. What if you are a drowning man? What are you going to hold on to? You know, every time you go down and bob back up, ok, take another breath. You will be all right. How long can you do that? But for the rock, but for the Lord Jesus Christ keeping you. This is the faith by which we live. It is the faith by which we stand.

⁶ Galatians 2:20.

⁷ Romans 8:1.

⁸ Galatians 2:20.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

If you look over in Ephesians six in verses 12 down to verse 18, well, begin verse 11.

“Put on the whole armour of God.”¹¹

All that is in Christ is that armor.

“...that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood.”¹²

That is not our issue, men.

“...but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God.”¹³

You can take that whole phrase and translate it, “Wherefore take unto you Christ.”

“...that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”¹⁴

It is like Rabshakeh trying to shake these people’s confidence, trying to shake Hezekiah the king’s confidence. Hezekiah as a type of Christ stood as a representative of that people. He would not be moved. He would not be shaken.

Stand therefore. When you consider in the face of the accusations of Satan or even your own flesh knowing yourself to be a sinner and rightly deserving condemnation, but given eyes to look to Christ to stand knowing that if he died, I live.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.”¹⁵

This is not a righteousness that you have worked out. It is a righteousness he worked out. And you bear it. If he worked it out for you, he has put it to your account.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”¹⁶

There can’t be any greater peace established than that which the Lord Jesus Christ earned by his life and his death for his people. What enemy is there that is going to stand against

¹¹ Ephesians 6:11.

¹² Ephesians 6:11-12.

¹³ Ephesians 6:12-13.

¹⁴ Ephesians 6:13.

¹⁵ Ephesians 6:14.

¹⁶ Ephesians 6:15.

you if you are his? That is why we hold our peace. That is why Hezekiah said, “Don’t even answer.”

Maybe on one sense they had some reason to think that they were in danger, because Rabshakeh was recounting all the other nations that trusted in their gods that the Assyrians had conquered. And now they were knocking at their door. Who is your God?

Rabshakeh didn’t know the God of the universe. He didn’t know the God of Israel. He was about to find out. And as we read on that army was defeated in a miraculous way. God brought about the victory just by them standing still, just like Moses said to the children of Israel. Stand. When they are facing the Red Sea and mountains on either side and Pharaoh’s army bearing down for the battle. He said, “Stand still and see the deliverance of the Lord.”

“Above all, taking the shield of faith.”¹⁷

What is a shield but a defense. You can’t have any greater defense against the accusations of conscience or sin or Satan or the world than the Lord Jesus Christ, that faith concerning Christ and his death. And he says:

“...wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”¹⁸

If Christ died for you there is therefore now no condemnation. Why would you look anywhere else? Why would you be shaken out of that confidence to try to put your confidence in a man or in a ceremony or a profession or some work of your own?

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.¹⁹

You see, that is what it is to stand. But then to be upheld, not only live, to stand, but to be upheld in this faith.

If you look over in 1 Timothy chapter four, you know, verse one of 1 Timothy:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.”²⁰

We live in a society where people feel it is a politically correct thing to include all faiths, none excluded. I know it sets you against men’s opinions, but, dear friends, the Scriptures

¹⁷ Ephesians 6:16.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ephesians 6:17-18.

²⁰ 1 Timothy 4:1.

know nothing of a multi faith denomination or a multi faith cooperation or fellowship. You know, that is a compromise. There is the faith. Notice here:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”²¹

If your faith does not stand in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the lone, whatever faith you believe you have is called here a seducing faith or a doctrine of devils. Pretty strong language, but many are deceived. You know, I have sat through those philosophy classes. I have listened to people philosophize about how it is we can get close to God. But apart from the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from that obedience that he worked out, apart from his shed blood you stand condemned. It is just that cut and dry. And this is the faith that upholds those that are taught of the Lord. This is that common faith of salvation, 1 Timothy four beginning with... well, let's look at verse eight. Verse seven says:

“But refuse profane and old wives' fables.”²²

That is what men's philosophies are. They tell you to look here for help or look there other than to Christ. Even Rabshakeh wanting them to confide in him saying, “Now if you will just compromise, if you will just come over to our side, you will live to see the day when you can still eat of the fruit of the vine, but we will come and take you into our land and then you will really see, you know, a land that flows with milk and honey.”

It sounds a little like Satan's deception of Adam and Eve in the beginning. Hath God said that you shall not eat of every tree of this garden? There was that delusion from the beginning that if I just do something, if I just look for a better way that somehow life will be better. It is all nothing but a condemnation. And it is profane and old wives fables. Here it says:

“...and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.”²³

Godliness meaning a reverence of the true God and what he has revealed concerning himself in the Word.

Verse eight:

“For bodily exercise profiteth little.”²⁴

When it is talking about bodily exercise it is talking about in the context about all of the different things that men make you do, stand up, sit down, fall down, all of these things are so-called worship.

²¹ Ibid.

²² 1 Timothy 4:7.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ 1 Timothy 4:8.

“...but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”²⁵

Godliness. In other words, worshiping God in the way that he has declared that he should be worshipped. And that is through the blood sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. It is that faith in which Abel stood even against the oppression of his brother Cain to the point of being killed. God gave him that faith upon which he lived, upon which he stood and which upheld him even unto death that he would rather die in this life than compromise.

When the Lord gives you that faith you know it is of the Lord, that you won't follow men, that you won't be easily dissuaded with their arguments, but that you continue to look to Christ. Here it says in verse nine:

“This is a faithful saying.”²⁶

A faithful saying is worthy of trust.

“...and worthy of all acceptance. For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men.”²⁷

There is only one Savior, regardless of the nation. Even Rabshakeh was accountable to Christ though he knew him not.

“...but specially of those that believe.”²⁸

In other words, given eyes to see. That is who they look to. He is their deliverer. He is their redeemer. He is their rest.

Well, this is the faith that the Lord gives his people to live by, to stand in and by which they are upheld. And certainly that was the faith that Hezekiah had, even in the face of grave danger for he and his people. His answer was: Answer him not. We have no answer for men, but Christ.

I had somebody tell me that some night. I said, “Don't you have any other argument than just to say look to Christ?” No. I don't. You know, it is not by the philosophies of men. Don't you have any other argument besides what he accomplished there at the cross? No, I don't, because that is all of my salvation. And so we answer them not. We hold silence.

But that is why God brings trouble and distress that we might not presume in this flesh, but rest wholly in the work of Christ.

²⁵ 1 Timothy 4:8.

²⁶ 1 Timothy 4:9.

²⁷ 1 Timothy 4:9-10.

²⁸ 1 Timothy 4:10.

If you come back here to Isaiah 36, let me just give you one other point to consider, some lessons that we can glean from this and that is that faith and confidence will remain unchanged in the face of trouble and adversity. If it is faith of God then it cannot be moved. You know, we in our flesh sometimes become weak, but we are not of those that fall back into perdition.

If you look over in Hebrews chapter 10 we are going to be tested. And as I have said to you before, in these tests that come from men who have their hope and confidence in their works and their flesh and their righteousness and their strength, like Rabshakeh, having an army of men around and he felt pretty safe and secure until the Lord took him out. But, you know, our confidence is going to be in the Lord Jesus Christ, one whom men can't even see.

Someone said at one point, "God plus one of his own is a majority." It doesn't matter how many stand against you. If you are in Christ that is all the defense you need. It is not how many. I have had people throw that up in my face. Well, how many do you have attending your congregation? What difference does that make? You know, there are many that are deceived. Broad is the way that leads to destruction. But there is people that are so deceived that that is the way they pick out a church, the one with the most cars in the parking lot, the one with the biggest building. I heard yesterday there is a congregation in Dallas that is ... they have gone in. They have so much money they are going to put up a 22 million dollar building right downtown where, in an area where they are talking about just wiping out everything around it and they are going to establish that as a center of worship so-called. There is a lot of money to be had in false religion. There are a lot of people that are deceived, but where will that confidence be in the day where they stand before a holy God? None of that is going to matter.

As we sang before I got up here, "Nor silver, nor gold have attained my redemption." Unless you are in the Lord Jesus Christ, unless he is the object of your faith, there is going to come on you a day of trouble like you have never seen unlike anything you have ever experienced in this life, given even the strongest army in the world bearing down on you, that will be nothing compared to the arrows of God's justice and his holiness and you with nothing but your own works to stand before such a holy God. I wouldn't want to be in your place. I wouldn't want to be there. I ought to have Christ.

But here in Hebrews 10 this is the exhortation. Regardless of the persecution and opposition that we may face in this world because of men and because of their antagonism to Christ and to the message of grace, none of that, all of that pales compared to falling at the hands of a living God. Look at verse 31.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.²⁹

²⁹ Hebrews 10:31-32.

I never knew persecution like I did when the Lord began a work in my heart. And I thought everybody would rejoice to know what the Lord had done. And to see people one after another go away, walk away, disassociate themselves from me, because you would not bend, because you would not bow, you would not give credence to their profession. You wouldn't give credence to their trust in their own works.

As some men say, "Well, I know it takes Christ, but we have got to furnish an effort, too."

Well, you have never learned of Christ then. It was not just that Christ is important. He is vital. He is all. Called to remembrance.

And you will face opposition over it. Verse 33.

"Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions."³⁰

That is what was going on in Hezekiah's day. The Assyrian king sent Rabshakeh to make them look foolish, to be a gazing stock with reproaches and afflictions.

"...and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used."³¹

You see, their whole lot as a city under Hezekiah's rule was thrown together. They weren't going to do anything apart from Hezekiah giving the command, much as we are. Our whole lot stands or falls with Christ. But what a blessed lot it is.

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.³²

And so as we see here in Isaiah 36 there were these that wanted to make this a public matter to debate it and to bring the people into subjection under their devices, but the Lord caused them to remain silent, verse 21.

"But they held their peace, and answered him not a word."³³

³⁰ Hebrews 10:33.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Hebrews 10:34-39.

³³ Isaiah 36:21.

We have no word to answer to those who oppose, but Christ. And may that be our faith and our confidence.

All right, brother Mike.