



SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL

Last Tuesday, at 11:42 A.M., the usually relaxed Southern Californians were rudely shaken by a mild (by California standards) earthquake. Jec and I didn't actually feel it (we were crossing a street in Laguna Beach); but we saw people (mostly tourists) running out of stores, excited and looking nervous at the same time. We would learn later from radio news reports that the epicenter was not very far from our home. So, we started wondering if we sustained any damage at our house and at our church facility.

All the way home, we reminisced all the California earthquakes our family had been through. Our first experience with temblors was the Sylmar earthquake, which caused much destruction in San Fernando Valley (wrecking the Veterans Hospital). Then there was the Whittier Narrows earthquake; which caused moderate damage in the San Gabriel Valley and Pomona area. The last one (the Northridge earthquake) destroyed many buildings in San Fernando Valley (it also wrecked part of Santa Monica Freeway and some freeway overpass bridges).

Although we didn't sustain any significant losses from any of these earthquakes, we have developed a healthy fear of earthquakes (like most Southern Californians). Earthquakes come without warning or early signs. After every earthquake, we are reminded that Californians live on major geologic faults. We are told, once again, that these faults have built up pressure through the decades and that it has to be released through shifting and earth movement. Southern Californians know that a devastating earthquake is to be expected from the great San Andreas fault. We have lived in the shadow of "the big one." There is no question about whether it is coming; the question is when?

One earthquake that really had a major impact on our family didn't occur in Southern California; it happened in Northern California. The Loma Prieto earthquake (its epicenter was in the Santa Cruz area) destroyed many structures in the City of San Francisco (including a transition bridge to the Oakland Bay Bridge) during the World Series. Our daughter, Joannie, was attending Law School in San Francisco at that time and she lived on the ninth floor of a 24-story building in the downtown district. Our son, Jon J, was attending a boarding school near Watsonville (next to the earthquake's epicenter). When the earthquake struck, I was in Utah; driving between Provo and Salt Lake City, after visiting a client. My wife was at her job back in Los Angeles.

As I listened to the radio news reports, I suddenly realized that both of my children were in harm's way and I couldn't do anything about it. I had no way of knowing what was happening to them. I remember thinking that it would be several hours (or days) before I would know what happened to them. I have never felt so helpless

in my entire life. I was going through one of those rare moments when I knew in my soul that nothing in the whole world really mattered to me than my faith and trust in God. He is really all we have when darkness overwhelms us and everything becomes hopeless. He is the only One who can help us in our desperate times. He is really all we need and He is all we want.

When I got back to the hotel, I had a message to call Jec at home. She informed me that Joannie had called her immediately after the earthquake (before the telephone lines were clogged up by callers) to tell her that she was fine. Jon J was also safe (he had watched the ground moved in "waves" on the front lawn of their dorm). I was in tears as I offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the Lord's loving care and protection over my family.

Today, as I write this piece, I think about another kind of earthquake that we should all desire and not fear. It happened to the first Christians in Jerusalem (**Acts 4:23-31**). The work of the young church faced threats from the Jewish religious leaders. Peter and John had been arrested and jailed for preaching about Jesus and the Resurrection. After they were released, Peter and John gathered the believers in one house and "they raised their voices together in prayer to God." They didn't asked to be spared from imprisonment and persecution; they asked to be given "great boldness" to speak God's word. They asked for power to be able "to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders" in the name of Jesus.

What happened that day? *"After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."* (**Acts 4:31**) There was an earthquake! But I'm not certain whether the entire neighborhood felt the shaking. The shaking was God's answer to their prayer for boldness and power to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The earthquake was exclusive to them. This physical shaking was a manifestation of the anointing of the Holy Spirit that gave the young church the boldness and power to do its work.

Christ didn't intend for His church to sit in comfort and safety; asking for physical and material blessings and protection. It is His plan and will for His church to be bold and powerful in preaching His Gospel. The reason why He promised His church the Holy Spirit is for it to shake and rattle the status quo. The church of Jesus Christ was not established to be a place of comfort and security. It was to be an agent of change and transformation. It was not to be part of the "business as usual" mentality. It was to be a disturber of the peace.

You and I were meant to be an earthquake in our community. So get off your safe, comfortable seats! It's our time to shake, rattle and roll!