

## **SERMON: STABILITY IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD**

### **Acts 20:24a**

**But none of these things move me.**

#### **Introduction**

We live in an unstable world. Just about everything is in a state of flux. Just about every aspect of our lives seems like a roller coaster ride, but life is not an amusement park. One comedian said he was trying to support a friend by giving credence to one of his lies. He knew it was wrong, but he was trying to save his friend's job. He was unsuccessful because the friend kept changing the details of the lie. He came to the life-altering conclusion that liars cannot be trusted. He quipped, "What is this world coming to? You can't even trust liars anymore." In a serious way, even Christians have asked, "What is this world coming to?" There are wars, political unrest, corruption in government, and even in the church – not Antioch-Lithonia. Then there is the phenomenon of artificial intelligence. People use AI, but are still leery of it. Sometimes it seems as if we are walking on a tight rope. We are walking at a high level, but we feel we could lose our balance at any time and fall to our detriment. Some of us have six-figure jobs, but constantly entertain the fear of being laid off. We are healthy, but still have uneasy feelings about the next physical examination. I will stop at this point; I think you get my drift. We don't want to turn this sermon into a pity party.

The question still remains: How do we remain stable in this unstable world?

The Apostle Paul gives us the answer. His whole life gives us the answer. His epistles prove he had the answer. Our text proves he had the answer.

Paul was at the end of his third missionary journey. He was a tireless ambassador, who would not give up. He was a sick man in constant need of medical care. He bore in his body the marks of the physical abuse to which he had been subjected time and time again. He traveled 5,580 miles on foot through the Roman highway system and traveled 6,770 miles by sea, often in danger of storms and frequently shipwrecked. As recorded in Acts, he covered 12,350 miles to tell people about Jesus. (That was a lot, since there were no automobiles, trains, or planes.) Now, he is on his way to Jerusalem. He is carrying gifts of money donated for the poor saints in Jerusalem. It was donated by the Gentile churches, which he had planted. His traveling companions gave him many reasons why he should not travel personally to Jerusalem to present the gifts. Paul was resented by the Jews because he had "turned Christian", and to them, he had abandoned their faith. He was also resented and distrusted by some of the Christians in Jerusalem because, before conversion, he had persecuted the church and had brought

Gentiles into the Christian faith. Foremost, among the reasons not to go, was a rumor that he would be killed in Jerusalem. Paul was determined to complete his mission. The threats on his life did not deter him.

Now, I must fast forward and tell you how the story ended. Then, I will come back and pull some spiritual truths from our text. He did go to Jerusalem and was mobbed in the temple courts and had to be taken into protective custody by the Roman authorities. This began a long period of imprisonment, first at Caesarea and then at Rome. After his Roman citizenship was known, he was treated “somewhat” respectfully by the officials. During this time of imprisonment, Paul was able to witness to many prominent individuals, including Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa. Paul wrote many of his greatest epistles while incarcerated. Sunday School students, Vacation Bible School students, and Bible Class attendees know how the story ended on the earthly level. Paul was executed on Nero’s chopping block. Now, let’s get back to our text.

Paul was determined to complete his God-ordained mission. He said, if I may paraphrase, “All of these negatives will not make me change my mind or my mission. They will not make me lose my psychological or emotional balance. I will not run scared or go crazy. My mental stability is intact.” Now let’s pull a few spiritual and practical truths from our short text.

## **Exposition**

### **1. Perceive, Process, Pray, Perform, But Don’t Panic.**

(You Have To Know What’s Going On.)

(Process Information Through The Filter Of Faith.)

(Pray About Your Response - If You Make One At All.)

(Don’t Let Your Response Be Irrational.)

### **2. Remember, God Can Pull Good Out Of Every Situation.**

(Water And Rocket Fuel Are Composed With The Same Two Elements.)

(Hydrogen And Oxygen.)

(Just In Different Ratios.)

(God Can Change The Ratio And Turn A Mess Into A Miracle.)

(God Can Turn Trouble Into Triumph.)

### **3. Remember, Nothing Can Separate Us From The Love Of God.**

(One Roman Battle Tactic Was To Divide And Conquer.)

(The Evil One Uses This Tactic, Also.)

(The Power Of God Neutralized This Tactic.)

### **Closing Statements**

The evil one locked Paul up numerous times, but did not shut him up. He preached in Jerusalem, the religious capital of the world. He preached in Athens, the cultural capital of the world. He preached in Rome, the political capital of the world. Nor could the evil one stop him from writing. Today, the evil one must be furious with himself for putting Paul in prison and giving him the time and the incentive to write the Christ-exalting letters of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. Page after page poured from his pen, and the world and the church are forever indebted to Paul for these letters. Thank God that Paul would not be moved.

Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

### **End Notes:**

1. There are many ways to translate our text from the Greek. I still think The King James Version of 1611 does the best job of translating the denotation but also the connotation. It expressed Paul's divine defiance. It is what linguists call translating the "dynamic equivalent," in which you translate not only the facts, but also the feelings.

2. As, you know, our physical balance is maintained by the proper functioning of the organs of our inner ear. When our inner ear goes awry, we lose our sense of balance and even experience vertigo. Just as there are procedures to maintain the health of our inner ears, there are also procedures to maintain our spiritual balance, such as prayer, daily Bible reading, and private and corporate worship. We have a spiritual inner ear – we must do all we can to keep it healthy.

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