

Stability in a Fragile World

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By Bobby Schuller

Today as I was praying about today's sermon, I felt as though I should preach in a different style today. Normally I come and I preach as a teacher in the way that I was trained and when a teacher teaches, the congregation learns, right? And if it's a good teacher, right? Mr. Miyagi said there's no such thing as bad students, only bad teachers. So if you didn't learn anything, it's my fault.

But today I want to speak in a prophetic voice. And when a prophet speaks, you receive. You don't just learn. And so what I want to say today is I'm going to say some things about you. And you may say well that's not me and I want you to reject that voice in your head. Today will be something I'm actually speaking over you; a gift, not from me but from God. That in Jesus' name, if you respond with faith to what I say today, I think your life will be changed.

And so I just want to begin there. I want to begin by first saying and acknowledging that life is hard. Life is hard for all of us. For some of us, it's harder than others, and life is hard in seasons, and many of us are here today and we're carrying these big, big burdens: financial burdens, health burdens, relational burdens. Sometimes things are going great in our life and yet we just feel empty, alone, lonely, broken, and in

the midst of all of these trials that are the suffering of life, God is faithful to carry us through, and there is no suffering that in the kingdom of God will last forever. I've never known a storm to last forever, and I've never known somebody who trusts in God to not have ultimate victory over the things in their life, and that's what you're going to have today.

In Jesus' name, you are a rock. You are a tree. You are filled with the very person and spirit of Jesus Christ. And you are given the authority to overcome every burden and break every chain in Jesus' name.

Today, we're going to talk about the monastic virtue of stability. Stability is the idea that I'm not going to slink away, I'm not going to be afraid, I'm not going to hide, I'm not going to procrastinate, I'm going to face life head on. Why? Because I have the power within me to do so. That within me is the person of Jesus Christ and Jesus does not take a knee to cancer, to death, to illness, to suffering; Christ within me endures and Christ within you endures.

And so today I want to talk about being a stable person and that is what you are. Being a stable person and that is what you are. There is nothing more refreshing in our crazy world. It's moving at a million miles an hour. Everything is changing. Everything is fluctuating and there is nothing more refreshing in a world like that than stable people. People you can depend on; people that are true, that are faithful, that are loyal, that you can count on, and that's you. You are a stable person, you are a

rock, you are someone that people look to for encouragement in the storms of life. You are a lighthouse. You are a shelter to people who are hurting. You are stable. That is what God has given you. And that is what God is like. When we suffer and when we're going through trials, we run to him and he gives us shelter in the difficulties of life.

Is there someone like that in your life? Perhaps you've known someone in your life, maybe it was one of your parents or an aunt or uncle or grandparent, or a teacher that there was somebody in your life that you always knew when you ran to them they'd be there for you. And you always knew that they'd maybe have a word of wisdom or a gentle hug, or just the right attitude or the right healing presence. You are that for someone else. You may not know it, but you are someone that people can run to. You are a stable presence because Christ lives in you. Can you say amen? That's right. If you believe it, take it and receive it.

You know one of the things that bothers me is this idea that there are certain attributes that are effeminate and there are certain attributes that are masculine, but it's always bothered me the idea that affection is a feminine attribute. Affection is not a feminine attribute. Affection is a human attribute. You should see my dad and my grandpa and me with my kids! You've never seen more affection in your life. And I just want to say that sometimes we think stability and strength is a masculine virtue. It's not, it's a Christian virtue. That if you have Christ within you, you have all the power to be a stable presence in a violent, chaotic and

fragmented world. And you are a stable presence in a violent and fragmented world. And you are a rock, and you are like a tree.

You know a tree is a great descriptor. It's one that Jesus uses often to describe the life of the disciple in our bizarre world. The tree is an amazing thing. You never want to hear that somebody hit a tree with their car. It's going to be like tree one, car zero, right? I mean it's amazing. When a car hits a tree, the car practically explodes and you look in the tree, it barely has a dent in it. And the amazing thing about the tree is that the closer you get to the base of the tree, the stronger it gets. The top of the tree bends in the wind. It's flexible. And as storms come, it may break off branches and it may blow its leaves away, but in the end, when you see that trunk, you see something that is strong, something that is stable.

An amazing thing about the storms is that when the wind blows through the tree, it actually pulls on the root system ever so slightly and you know what's happening to that tree? It's literally getting a work out. It's actually getting stronger. That if the tree endures a storm, and they always do, that tree is actually getting a stronger root system, and a stronger trunk, and that is you. Every storm you go through, you will endure because Christ lives in you. Everything you face, you will press through as long as you don't give up, curl up and die. You are going to endure with faith, not with fear because Christ lives in you. And every

time a storm comes, you are only going to get stronger, and you're going to be more prepared for the next storm that comes in your life.

And you ask why are so many storms coming in my life? Its cause the enemy sees what your future is. Look I believe more than anything people that have great destinies on their life are attacked spiritually by the enemy. And if it's a spiritual attack, then we know who the king of the spiritual world is, right? And he will carry you through and he has the authority. Endure. Don't give up. Be stable.

And the main thing that makes a tree stable is that it's nurtured. You know those roots they go into that soil and they receive nourishment. And those branches, they go into the sun, that tree does not get up and go watch TV and then come back to the river. That tree it is always there. It is stable. It is fixed. It is rooted. It is planted. And the longer it is planted and the longer it's there, the stronger it becomes. And it bears fruit in its season.

You know a tree doesn't have to try harder to bear oranges. A tree doesn't manufacture oranges. Simply by being nourished, by being stable, by being established where it is planted, it bears fruit in its season, and that is you. You may be in winter, you may be in a cold season, but God is preparing your life to bear tremendous fruit. Amen? Do you want that? Receive it with faith. God is making you stronger, God is making your roots deeper, God is making your branches wider; God is making your fruit richer. Endure the storm, be stable.

You know one of the big reasons to be this kind of person, to be a tree, to be a rock, is not for you. It's for the people around you. In our broken, fragmented, scary world people need brave people like you. People of faith like you. People that can be trusted. People like you. People that are loyal, and you are loyal. And you are faithful. And you are true, and I'm proud of you.

You know, this passage in Ephesians that we read from today is so encouraging because for the Christians in the early church, it was hard to be a Christian. Various seasons Christians were hunted, and when they weren't hunted, they were looked down upon, they were seen as prudes, they were seen as no fun. Very often they were outsiders because they weren't of the normative religion of the Roman Empire. And they lived in a chaotic Roman Empire where everything was about Roman life and that wasn't their world. Their world was the kingdom of God. Do you ever feel that way as a Christian, as a believer? Do you ever feel like everything is changing? Maybe not even as a Christian. In our world with technology and everything that is going on, it can feel scary to live in this world, but guess what: it doesn't matter. The world will constantly change but the word of God stays the same.

The book of Ephesians 4 verse 14 says, "Then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching, and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love we will grow

to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head that is Christ. From him the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.”

You are no longer going to be tossed back and forth by the winds. You are no longer going to be deceived by the craftiness of people. You are no longer going to be blown about and rocked by the waves. You are going to live the truth, speak the truth and advocate for the truth in everything you do because you are a stable, rooted person. No longer are you going to be broken by the storms. No longer are you going to be afraid. You will be confident. You are confident because you have faith in the only living God in Jesus Christ.

Our fragile world needs stable people like you. Our world needs you! Our world needs you with your truth, and with your strength, and with your enduring, and with your confidence. Our world needs people like you.

We live in a world of truthiness. Stephen Colbert; I heard so if it's not true.. I heard that Oxford allows people to vote on one word to be added to the English dictionary every year and apparently Stephen Colbert got his whole television audience to vote in a new word to the English dictionary – truthiness. And I love that he did that because it's obviously a caricature, but that is the way people view truth today. But that doesn't mean they're right. Nothing drives me crazier than the

phrase 'your truth and my truth.' If you ever use that phrase with me, I will start crying or laughing hysterically. Just don't say it.

Someone famous tweeted out something to someone and it was a very nice thing to say. Someone said so and so called me a pig. And this woman responded, and it was a kind thing to say but it was wrong – she said that's their truth. Your truth is that you're beautiful and that you're great. I'm like no, no, no, no, it's not their truth and your truth. They are wrong and you are right. You are beautiful. Beauty is not held in the eye of the beholder. Something is either beautiful or it isn't.

Truth is not created, truth is discovered. You learn the truth. You don't make the truth. And although all of us have perspectives, and all of us have to be humble in order to learn the truth, and all of us have to realize that we don't have the whole truth, we must recognize that things are either true or they are false. Seek what is true. Live out what is true. Proclaim the truth in everything you do. Truth is the roots of the stability of our society. There is no your truth and my truth. And this, by the way was what Pontius Pilate was implying, the opposite, when he said to Jesus 'what is truth?' Anyone who asks what is truth is usually trying to evade the truth. Amen? They don't want to know it. They don't want to hear it because sometimes the truth hurts.

And of course not only is truth under attack in our day in age in this sort of post modern world, and this is just a part of our culture with cheap travel and with ability to fly and see the world, it's amazing thing,

people are always on the move. Used to be people had one career and now most people have something like 15 careers in their lives. I don't know if that's necessarily a bad thing, but I know at some level there is an exchange in which people don't always feel established. As a parent, I don't know that I'm going to be around my kids. What if they move away? And what does that mean for my grandkids? And maybe that's even you. You know your kids have moved and there's nothing evil about that, unless you're a grandparent then it certainly feels evil, doesn't it.

But there is the transitory nature of our society. Everybody's always moving. Everybody's always changing. Everybody wants a thousand relationships. Everybody's always on the move. And although there's some really good things with that, there's some harsh things that that does to the soul. I mean you love somebody and then they disappear. You're building a relationship and they vanish. You are going to be stable in a world that is fragmented and broken.

And people you know are becoming less and less loyal. You know I had one of the unique experiences of pastor'ing a very old church and a very young church about three years ago when this wasn't one church, it was two and it was Tree of Life and Crystal Cathedral. And as that was happening, I was blown away by how awesome and faithful old people were. I know that sounds derogatory, it's not. You know if you've ever pastor'd or been a part of a young church, you can pretty much count on it. If you have 15 people, young people, sign up for say a homeless

outreach, you can count on about a third, five or six actually showing up. The day of, when everybody's supposed to be there to make pancakes for homeless kids, most of those people would rather sleep in than make pancakes for homeless kids. So half of the people that don't show up are going to send you a last minute text, another half of those people are just not going to show up completely. They're just not going to arrive. They're going to be like oh I'm sorry I didn't know, effectively lying. That's my truth.

And the last third are the same third that always arrive. They're the faithful ones and there are many faithful young people. But the younger a generation gets, it seems in this world, the less faithful and dependable they are. And one of the amazing things is that when we did the same thing if we'd 15 people sign up from the Crystal Cathedral, we'd have 17 people show up. It was the opposite.

You know I remember once with Tree of Life, I literally had a guy say he had a flat tire and he texted me a Shutter fly picture of a flat tire. Like he couldn't see it on his phone, but when it came up on my computer.. do you know what Shutter fly is? When you steal an image from the Internet it has a watermark on it, so somebody pulled a fake image from the Internet, didn't see the watermark, sent it to me, said I have a flat tire. I'm sorry I can't make it this morning. Peace be upon you. What do you do?

But I was blown away when we had some kind of an outreach we were supposed to do with people from the Cathedral, older people and some lady wasn't going to make it and a week before, she called me to let me know she wasn't going to make it. And then in the end, changed her plans and came anyway. Like who are these people! They're called Christians.

In truth, in a world like this, especially if you're young, no matter who you are, that's not you. Right? I mean the fake, undependable. You keep your word. You are loyal, you arrive, you deliver because you're stable and you are strong and I'm so thankful for people like you.

You can be trusted, you are a rock, you are focused, you will be an example, you will keep your word. You will face life head on. That is what it means to employ and live by the Christian virtue of stability.

You are going to face life head on because life is going to face you and it's going to hit you, and when it hits you, you're going to hit back. You're not going to stop because of unmet expectations, or because of change, or because of illness, or because of death, you will endure because Christ lives in you and if Christ lives in you, you will never fail as long as you walk by faith.

For others, not even just for you, you will be braver than you've ever been. You will be more courageous than you've ever been. You will be an example of what it means to stand up to evil, to stand up to fear, and to stand up to tragedy. You will be a tree under whose branches

young people will sit and take refuge and take shelter from the storm.

You will be the tree that bears fruit that nourishes people who are afraid and hurting because you are stable, you are loyal, you keep your word, you are faithful and you are dependable because Christ lives in you.

Amen.

And so you will never freak out. Can I just get an amen to that?

You will never freak out. You're done freaking out.

There was a study that showed that the fear of pain is worse than pain itself. Don't be afraid. That's the greatest and most common command in the scriptures is don't be afraid. Did you know that? Of course you do. You come to our church.

Never be afraid. Relax. Be calm. Be patient. Endure. You are not in control but neither is evil. God is in control and he likes you a lot. And you know enough now to know that God is faithful. You don't have to worry. He's given you the evidence you need to trust in him and depend on him in every aspect of your life. So today, you can smile gently and relax and trust in the faithfulness of a good God.

So you're never going to freak out. You're also going to stop withdrawing. Do you know what it means to withdraw? You know many people in our world when they face heartache and difficulty they turn to the thing that they've always turned to. For some of you, it's eating. For some of you, it's substance. For some of you, it's shopping. For some of you, it's working. For some of you, it's substance. For some of you, it's

alcohol. For some of you, its depression. Just going into a room, closing the door, crawling into bed, checking out. You are not going to withdraw anymore. You are not the kind of person that needs to withdraw. When you face heartache and trial and suffering, acknowledge it and pray. That's how we respond, that's how dependable, stable believers respond to challenges.

And you say I've prayed. Keep praying! Never stop. Always pray. Always seek God. Never withdraw. When you face hardship, talk to someone about it, someone that will feel empathy, someone that will encourage you and somebody that will get on their knees with you and pray. Pray. Never withdraw. Always pray and rest and trust.

So we're not going to freak out, and we're not going to withdraw and we're going to pray. And you know what else we're going to do, or not do? You're never going to quit. Never quit. Always endure. You know science has proven the number one quality to a successful person, you know what it is? Willpower. Willpower sure sounds like trying harder. And I want you to know I'm not saying try harder, I'm simply saying sink those roots down into God's nourishing soil and pray, and meditate, and gobble up the word of God, and become the kind of person that is rooted and nourished in the kingdom of God. Then you don't have to try harder. God will try harder for you, and he'll win. Don't quit. I know it's hard, but finish well. You'll be so glad you did.

You know if you've ever run a race or a marathon, what's the hardest mile? When does it get the hardest? It's the last mile. And what's the hardest hundred feet? It's the last hundred feet. And what are the last hardest steps is that.. well the last one feels pretty good, doesn't it when you cross that finish line and you know you're done.

Look – if you're in a marathon, if you're in a race, it doesn't get easier as you go along, it gets harder. You knew that when you started! Don't quit. Endure. My grandpa used to say this great thing – inch by inch, anything's a cinch. Mile by mile: you don't know the second part? Mile by mile life's a trial. Yes! Inch by inch anything's a cinch. It's the idea that sometimes when you're in the heat of it, and you need to endure, sometimes just go another inch, just go another step. You don't have to look at the big, big thing when things are hurting. Just go inch by inch. Any time you've built something great or done something great in life, it is taken time, it is taken energy, but its especially taken endurance, and when you look back you remember it was just about sometimes keeping one foot in front of the other and deciding I'm not going to quit, I'm going to endure, and I'm going to trust that God will be faithful. And man will it feel good when you cross that finish line. Besides, you're not a quitter. You're not a quitter. You're not a quitter.

Shel Silverstein, the great prophet of all children of the 80's. Does anybody know who Shel Silverstein is? He was my personal Jesus when I was a kid. I know that pastors aren't supposed to say that, but Shel

Silverstein was my.. I mean I had a bible and I had *Where the Sidewalk Ends*. And Shel Silverstein was a children's poet, a brilliant man, and I think he's the one that coined the phrase "eat a whale one bite at a time," but I'm not sure. But he was also an illustrator. Do we have that picture? I love this picture. I'll never forget it, okay. Brings back some warm memories, doesn't it, for all three of you that know who Shel Silverstein is.

And this poem says: "have you ever heard of Melinda May who ate a monstrous whale? She thought she could, she said she would, so she started in right at the tail. And everyone said you're much too small, but that didn't bother Melinda at all. She just took little bites and she chewed very slow just like a little girl should. And in 89 years, she ate that whale because she said she would." It's good. How do you eat a whale? One bite at a time.

So you will not freak out, you will not withdraw, you will not quit, and you will stop procrastinating and that is because procrastination is the heartbeat of instability. If you want to know how to be a more stable person, it means you're done procrastinating. Procrastination big or small is based on fear. It is your desire, because of fear, to not face life. To not face life. But that's not what you do. You are not a procrastinator. You do things today. You do them now. Mark Twain.. have you guys ever heard of the phrase eat the frog? In business school, they taught us to eat the frog and it was the best bit of advice I ever learned. It's based on

this weird thing Mark Twain said. He said “eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day.” And the idea is that eat the frog essentially means do the worst thing right now. Stop waiting to talk to that person, to confront that person, to get going on that project, stop waiting, do it now. Don’t procrastinate. Procrastinating is the heartbeat of instability. Look if you get the worst thing done now, everything’s downhill from there. And you can be restful, and you can be stable, and you are stable, and you are noble, and you are trustworthy, and you are faithful, and you keep your word, and you’re strong. You’re a tree. You’re a rock. Christ lives in you and so never, never give up because you’re greatest enemy is you.

If you want to endure this, you will. Christ has given you everything you need in Jesus’ name.

Let’s pray: Father, I ask as a pastor of this congregation and of those watching on television that this would be received. That this would go into our hearts. We are strong. We are enduring. We are faithful. We are loyal not because we’re trying harder, but because you have given it to us and we thank you for that. And I pray that heaven’s peace and glory and life and joy would fill the heart of everyone within the sound of my voice. Oh Lord, that you would overflow us with your joy, in Jesus’ name, amen.