

Prepared to Survive

Introduction:

1. I hear a lot today about survival.
 - a. Gloria Gaynor wrote a song entitled "I Will Survive." You might know it best as sung by Aretha Franklin. It is about being "afraid" and even "petrified" when "you did me wrong." One line says, "I will survive, as long as I know how to love, I know how to stay alive."
 - b. Hank Williams sang about survival. He sang that Country Boys Can Survive.
"I live back in the woods, you see
A woman and the kids, and the dogs and me
I got a shotgun rifle and a 4-wheel drive
And a country boy can survive
Country folks can survive"
 - c. After 9/11 he rewrote it and it became America Will Survive
"We live back in the woods you see
Big city problems never bothered me
But now the world has changed and so have I
And American can survive, America will survive!"
2. There are reality shows about survival. Some involve an individual dropped in by helicopter to a remote region with only his "survival" knife and picked up a week later.
3. Surviving is about enduring difficulties and getting through them, anything from physical abuse, terrorism, heart disease, government unrest, racism, torture, sexual abuse, divorce, abandonment, loss being able to live through tragedy marks one as a survivor. Resilience is a mark of surviving.
4. It seems that some people come through hardship more successfully than others. Somehow they do not just survive, but thrive on the other side of their tragedies. What equips them to do so? What equips them to get through circumstances where others might have given up in despair? How can we use what they used to not just survive, but successfully negotiate and even grow through the tragedies of our lives?
5. I believe Scripture gives us much insight into the idea of being resilient in difficult circumstances. I believe that God has given us the resources that make us resilient and it is not the anger and hatred, and the "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" image that characterizes the world.

Discussion:

I. Resilience in Scripture.

- A. 2 Cor. 4:8-9.
- B. 2 Cor. 12:9-11.
- C. James 1:2
- D. Heb. 10:32-39.
- E. Heb. 11:36-38.
- F. Rev. 6:9-11.
- G. Etc.

II. What allowed them to respond in this way? How were they equipped to not become despairing, to not draw swords on their persecutors? They had learned not just to survive, but to thrive in the midst of pain and difficulty.

- A. They had learned it through Jesus Christ (Heb. 5:7-8).
 - 1. The Lord God offers us the opportunity for a new beginning.
 - 2. To become new creature.
 - 3. There is hope!
- B. They had learned to draw on the strength of the Lord.
 - 1. Phil. 4:13.
 - 2. Immediately we think of praying to God for help. Paul did too (2 Cor. 12:7-8) but learned that his expectations and God's plan for him were different (2 Cor. 12:9-10).
 - 3. Strength is available from the Lord, but it does not always come in just the way we expect. We may pray, "God deliver me from this difficulty." God's answer may be I will walk with you through it (Psa. 23:4).
- C. God has given us relational connectedness.
 - 1. In the church (Rom. 14:19; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24).
 - 2. In our families (Eph. 5:29; 6:4).
- D. He has given us shepherds.
 - 1. First, the great shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (Jn. 10:7-15).
 - 2. Second, shepherds of the flock (James 5:13-16).
 - 3. Sometimes when we are experiencing difficulty we disconnect from the very resources that God has designed to make us thrive. Sometimes we disconnect even before we encounter difficulties. "I don't need this."
- E. Sharing with others empowers us (Heb. 10:33).
- F. God has provided us encouragement and hope through the Scriptures (Rom. 15:4).
- G. Sometimes God has given us particular strategies with which to respond to our difficulties (ex. Rom. 12:14-21). In order for us to thrive and grow through the difficulties we must give God control rather than using our weakness. It is a matter of faith!
- H. There is great emphasis on faith in the Scripture as a force of deliverance and survival (2 Tim. 3:10-15; Psa. 34:19-22).

Conclusion:

- 1. God has provided for us that we not just survive but that we thrive through difficulties.
- 2. He has not promised us ease, nor immediate relief from our suffering. He has not promised that there will be no "valley of the shadow of death," but He has promised that "His rod and His staff" will comfort us through the valley.
- 3. He has promised that He will never desert us, nor will He ever forsake us (Heb. 13:5).
- 4. Our response needs to be faithfulness even when we are called on to lay down our lives (Rev. 2:10; 6:10).
- 5. Our resilience is not like that "tough" image that characterizes the world, but a resilience that tapes into the resources granted us by God.

