

Survivalship

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the principles of survivalship in the Christian life, focusing on balance, acceptance, and the importance of community.

Duration: 24:46

Scripture: Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Hebrews 4:2, Hebrews 4:10-11

Topics: "Survivalship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of learning to be heard in our Christian life. He shares a story of a young man who made a mistake that resulted in a plane crash and the emotional struggle he went through. The speaker highlights the need for believers to use the weapon of thanksgiving and praise in spiritual warfare. He also discusses the importance of discipline in various areas of life, such as food, time management, and media consumption. The sermon references Bible verses, including the Sermon on the Mount and Romans 8:28, to support these principles.

Transcript

I want to share something with you that's very much on my heart. Over the past 23 or 24 years, involved in Christian work and spreading the gospel in many countries of the world, I've noticed that Satan attempts to get dedicated Christians into extremes or into some kind of tangent or secondary road. And through this, I've received a great burden from the Lord to speak on the subject of spiritual balance.

Coupled with this, I've seen that oftentimes, when people go off balance, Satan manages to destroy their testimony. For many years, I continually preached on the subject of commitment, and I still do, and discipleship, and that is still a very basic message on my heart. But in the past two years, the Lord also has given me a message on the subject of survivalship, and I'd like to speak to you about survivalship at this time.

I'd like to read from 1 Corinthians 9, where Paul says, starting at verse 23, And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be a partaker of it with you. Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize. So run, that ye may obtain.

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore, so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. Paul had a program for survival. One of his greatest goals was to run the race right to the end, and I'm sure this is one of the goals that you also have in your Christian life.

A. W. Tozer said that often it's the more keen, the more enthusiastic Christian that is more easily led astray, and I've seen that this is true. And I think sometimes it comes through an overemphasis on commitment, dedication, and all of the important truths along that avenue, without emphasizing some of the other truths that bring all of this into balance. It's not God's plan for us to just live a few years totally committed to Him, and in any case, total commitment is a constant process, and we're constantly committing to God new things that are being revealed to us from our subconscious.

But it's our desire to be able to run the race to the end. I've been greatly inspired by men like Oswald J. Smith, now 80 years of age, still running the race, and many others, and this is why I want to share with you on the subject of survivalship. Satan is out to destroy us.

The Word of God says, be not ignorant of his devices, and I believe these principles of survivalship will enable us to stand against the fiery darts of Satan. The first principle is that we need to know that we are accepted and we are forgiven. We need to have the reality of accepting ourselves.

Ephesians 1.6 says that we are accepted in the Beloved. This must not just be something that we have in our head. It must be something that we are experiencing in our life.

We know that God has accepted us. This will be tested, especially when we are rejected by people. This will be tested during times of failure, when we will be tempted to reject ourselves, and to belittle ourselves, and to run ourselves down.

This is not the way of true spirituality, and it's not really humility either. It's just one of those more subtle forms of self-love. God wants us to know the reality of really accepting ourselves, and yet at the same time knowing that God has accepted us, and God has forgiven us.

Our message is a message of forgiveness. The great danger of many churches, when they have begun to move into a message on commitment, and into a message on discipleship, is that they have gone too extreme into legalism, and the process is destructive. People are hurt.

People are destroyed. We build up a terrific level on where we think people should live, but then we fail to minister to people in the process, so they are destroyed by the very standard that they set, or that we set for them, supposedly from the Word of God, by especially taking verses out of context. Remember, we can prove almost anything by taking verses out of context.

And even as I share this message with you, I hope you will not just accept what I have to say, but search the Scriptures to see if these things be so. The second principle of spiritual survival is the principle of casting every care upon the Lord. Now, how easy it is to say that.

We all know 1 Peter 5, 7, casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you. But are we doing it? Am I doing it? How easy it is to cast a care upon the Lord, and an hour later to pick it up and try to carry it again along life's road. I want to recommend John Hagjai's book on how to win over worry.

I'm convinced that worry is doing more harm to Christian workers than even such heavy problems as immorality or bitterness. And of course, they're pretty big problems as well. We're told not to be anxious.

And the Word of God is clear that worry is sin. If we think it's just some kind of problem or a personality difficulty, we're not going to be able to deal with it effectively. It's when we realize worry is sin, and we repent and really cast it on the Lord, that we're going to discover greater victory.

I find that a great cure for worry is thanksgiving and praise. And we're going to emphasize that later on. The third principle, the third principle of spiritual survival, is making God your goal.

There's a great danger, especially for those of us who are activists, to make the work we're involved in our goal. We've got to do this, or we've got to do that. We've got to reach another million people, or we're going to plant a church, or we're going to accomplish something.

This often can be a dead-end street, a cul-de-sac. Our goal is God. This is one of the reasons that we have been emphasizing the writings of A.W. Tozer, because this man emphasizes that our goal is God Himself.

J.I. Packer, in his book *Knowing God*, brings this focus back into view, and we need it. We see this also in the amazing book *Destined for the Throne*. By Mr. Bilheimer.

Our goal is God. We have been created to worship Him. When our goal is God, then difficulties in the work, misunderstandings among our co-workers, problems in the church, do not destroy us spiritually, because our eyes are on the Lord, and our joy comes from the Lord.

If we put our eyes on other people, often we will be disappointed. If we put our eyes on the circumstances, we will easily get discouraged. And if we put our eyes inward into ourselves, in operation introspection, then we'll probably eventually get depressed.

Let's learn that great secret of spiritual reality and spiritual survival. Making God our goal. DeVerm Fromke has some unique books on this subject that you may want to read.

The fourth principle of spiritual survival is learning to be heard. Learning to be heard. You say, well, that sounds rather strange.

Well, it's one of the most important lessons we can learn in our Christian life. I remember way back in grammar school, in high school, the football coach telling the team and telling some of us it doesn't really hurt to be heard. Some of life's greatest lessons are only learned through trial, misunderstanding, being neglected or being hurt in some way.

And we must learn this. It's an important lesson. It's a hard lesson.

But it's God's principle for spiritual survival. This is especially emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount about blessing those who persecute us. And seeing this in its right focus, realizing also the truth of Romans 8.28, that all things work together for good for those who love the Lord.

Fifthly, we need to learn the reality of praise and thanksgiving. In 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 16, we're told to give thanks in all things. How many of us are actually doing that? Giving thanks for the problems.

Giving thanks when things go wrong with our bicycle or our vehicle. Giving thanks when great mistakes are made. I recently read the story of a young man in an Asian country who because he made a mistake, a serious mistake in repairing the engine or doing the maintenance work on the engine of an airplane, that missionary plane crashed and seven people were killed.

When he found out that it was his fault, it was an overwhelming emotional struggle that I think very few of us have ever been through to that degree. And yet by God's grace and the love of other people, he bounced back and was brought to a place of praise and thanksgiving and victory. All of us who live for Christ are going to be tested to the very fiber of our spiritual being.

We have not been called into an evangelical game. We have been called into a spiritual warfare and we must learn to use the weapon of thanksgiving and of praise. There are times when it's not appropriate to praise the Lord out loud, but we can praise Him in our heart.

There is a place and a time for legitimate sorrow in the life of a Christian. We weep with those who weep and we rejoice with those who rejoice. But the fruit of the Spirit is joy and as Christians we must learn what it is to spend more time in the Psalms praising the Lord.

I find it a great blessing to go off into the woods or to go anywhere alone and just spend time singing the Psalms and praising the Lord. And a renewed interest in praise throughout the church today is a wonderful thing. I hope you're experiencing it not only in the church service but in your own life.

Praise is one of God's remedies for all kinds of difficulties in the Christian life and one of the basic principles of survivalship. It's what I entitle knowing the reality of the rest of faith. In Hebrews chapter 4 we read these words.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest he also hath faced from his own works as God did from his. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

We're told also in the earlier part of that chapter that the message preached in verse 2 was of no value because it was not mixed with faith. I believe this is important as we think of all the promises of God which we must learn to draw upon if we are going to survive in the spiritual warfare. It's important to realize that faith is the key and we need to learn to exercise faith.

Some people are wanting to be great men of faith and to have great answers to prayer and yet they've never exercised the little faith that they already have. There are different interpretations of Hebrews chapter 4 but I believe whatever interpretation you look at you see that it is God's plan for the Christian to know something of a restful lifestyle. This will be worked out in different ways and in different people.

Some people are slightly more active even in some cases physically speaking more nervous and yet may know in their inner being more quietness and more peace than someone who appears to be very peaceful. The Bible says man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart. It's God's plan for us to know the rest of faith.

Some people seem to enter into this by a crisis experience. Others seem to just progressively move into a more restful walk with God. I am convinced that God works in different ways in different people.

I think that's so important if we're going to be able to really understand people and understand ourselves. God may bring a crisis in your life but that crisis without a process will probably become an abscess and you must avoid that at all cost. The seventh principle of survivalship is realizing that God is easy to live with.

Some of the strongest statements I have ever read apart from the word of God are some of the statements by A. W. Tozer about the church, about the Christian life, about many aspects of our spiritual pilgrimage. And yet this same man who spoke so strongly said that God is easy to live with. He went on to say how God knows all about us and yet loves us still.

I believe the victorious life does not just include knowing how to maintain victory. It includes knowing what to do when you fail. Our burden is not to sin.

We're told that in 1 John 2. But in the same verse we're told what to do if we sin. No one is going to walk for Christ in the long run if he does not know how to handle sin and failure in his own life. I'm convinced God loves us as much when we've fallen flat on our face as when we're zooming along having just led five people to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must learn how to bounce back from failure. We must learn that God operates with us on the basis of mercy, on the basis of forgiveness. And this is important if we're going to become strong and stable believers.

God is easy to live with because He loves us. Because our sins are forgiven through the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is important to remember.

Number 8. We need to understand God's growth pattern. Lane Adams has written an amazing book *Why Is It Taking So Long?* He speaks very honestly in this book about his own struggles and his own failures. And this is good.

And we need to be able to do this as well. Different people depending on their background will grow and proceed in their Christian life at a different speed. We must not be discouraged with our own spiritual growth.

If you went out to a nearby forest and found someone standing next to a tree and you asked them well what are you doing? And they said well I'm watching this tree grow. You'd probably have question about their sanity. And if we are going to be strong Christians often times our spiritual growth will be more like a tree.

It will be slow. It will be steady. We will not be able to see it.

A weed grows much quicker but it doesn't last very long. We need people today who are going to understand God's principle of spiritual growth. They also therefore are going to refuse to judge others who may be having problems and difficulties in their Christian life because of some struggle maybe they've had from their own background.

Of course generally speaking someone from a stable home is going to grow quicker in his Christian life than someone who has not experienced any stability in his home background. These things do affect us though they are never an excuse and we are responsible for our own walk before the Lord. I love Philippians 1.6 which we've all heard many many times.

That which the Lord has begun in us he will continue to perform or to do. The ninth principle of spiritual growth is the freedom of a disciplined and ordered life. Shelly Taylor has written an excellent book on the subject of the disciplined life which I want to strongly recommend.

Billy Graham speaking many years ago at the great crowd who gathers at Urbana. Many of us have heard this tape. Clearly shared that if we didn't learn the disciplined life we could never live for Christ.

We may experience a great blessing. We may love the Lord but if we don't know something about discipline. Discipline in the area of food.

Billy Graham has accused us of being a generation of gluttons. Discipline in the area of time and the use of time because the word of God in Ephesians says redeem the time for the days that are evil. Discipline in the control of the television knob.

I think the problem today are not the evil programs that Christians perhaps easily tune out. So many good programs which often rob us of time that could be used for better things. Christians are not going to know the reality of discipleship until they can discern the difference between the good and the best.

And if the world is going to be reached for Christ, we need more people who are going to get involved in the best even if it means sometimes sacrificing the good. Discipline does not bring bondage as some people would teach us. Discipline brings freedom.

We're told that we are called on to liberty in the book of Galatians but not to use the liberty as an occasion for the flesh. But to use that liberty to serve one another. One of the reasons we named our second ship Doulas is because our greatest burden for those coming on OM is that they would learn to serve.

This is basic to spiritual growth and discipleship. The tenth principle I want to mention to you is the principle of learning how to refuel and relax. Different people relax in different ways.

I find it very easy to relax even on a train or a quick walk into the woods. Some people seem to take almost days before they can unwind and really relax and be able to refuel. For some a change is as good as a holiday but for other people it's not quite that easy.

Some people can lie down in their bed at night and within five minutes they're off to sleep. That's generally my situation. Others can toss and turn for hours and suffer from insomnia or lack of sleep.

This is why it's impossible to categorize God's people or to label God's people or to classify them especially after we read this book or that book. There's such a wide range of people and God is working in different ways in different places and we need to learn to relax. It's true we're in a spiritual warfare but our finger is not on the trigger of the weapon all of the time.

There's got to be the refueling. In my life music has played an important role in enabling me to relax and refuel. And there's nothing like getting out, at least for me, on the tennis court for an hour or two.

Some people have even classified such things as worldly. But I think if we study church history we'll discover that men and women who do not have a form of recreation, who do not have an outlet of that time often end up in all kinds of nervous tension and other problems which they may not even be aware of. But others around them soon know the difficulty.

And then the eleventh principle I want to mention is learning what it is to have real fellowship. Real fellowship is really opening up with people. Learning to relate to people.

James chapter 5 verse 16 tells us to confess our faults one to another and pray for one another that we might be healed. We can be over protective of our reputation and therefore fail to share areas of trouble

and difficulty. I'm not saying we parade our sins or we stand up in public meetings and bring out all kinds of details.

This doesn't edify God's people and love must be the rule. But each one of us should have someone we can really share with and really be open with and then we can pray for one another. I have a relationship with some that if neither one of us are in a heavy temptation about something we can even call one another on the phone and pray immediately for the victory.

Satan has many methods and if we are going to stand against the fiery darts these days we need each other. There may be times when we can't get fellowship from others and we're alone in a prison and at that time God will give special grace. But before that time we need to know the fellowship of his people and what it is to walk in the light and to really share.

And then the twelfth principle is keeping a positive attitude and a positive lifestyle. Philippians 4.8 emphasizes this, thinking on that which is lovely, that which is pure, that which is a good report. This is so essential.

It's so easy to become cynical in our day. So easy to be negative. There's so many problems.

And the church emphasizes this, thinking on that which is lovely, that which is pure, that which is a good report. This is so essential. It's so easy to become cynical in our day.

So easy to be negative. There's so many problems in the church and out of the church. And I believe unless we develop a positive attitude we're going to find that the judgment we give is the judgment we get.

We point one finger at someone else but three fingers are pointing back at ourselves. We need to learn how to believe the best about God's people and maintain a positive attitude in the midst of a negative world situation. Only through this are we going to become Christ-like victorious individuals who will stand against all the resistance.

Philippians 4.9

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