



More Than Survivors – Fix Your Eyes on Eternity with Jesus

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Introduction:

Billy Graham tells a story about Albert Einstein, who was going on a train to an out-of-town engagement. The conductor stopped to punch his ticket. The great scientist, preoccupied with his work, with embarrassment rummaged through his coat pockets and briefcase to no avail. He could not find his ticket. The conductor graciously declared, “We all know who you are, Dr. Einstein. I’m sure you bought a ticket. Don’t worry about it. Everything is okay.” The conductor walked on down the aisle punching other tickets. Before he moved to the next car he looked back and saw Dr. Einstein down on his hands and knees looking under his seat trying to find his ticket. He came back and said, “Dr. Einstein, please don’t worry about it. I know who you are.” At which the great Einstein looked up and said, “I, too, know who I am. What I don’t know is where I’m going.”

That I am homesick for a home I’ve never seen would be preposterous if I had no glimpse, no foretaste of that home. The home I seek is not here, yet in the hearth fire and the freshly made bed, I feel pangs of homesickness for a home beyond my experience. I can’t describe this home, but the seeds of recognition are planted within me.

We’ve come to our final Sunday in our series of being *More than Survivors*. We’ve seen that those who are more than survivors:

- **practice making soul-conscious choices (Moses)**
- **flee all-too-convenient evil (Joseph)**
- **rally support to shine for God (Esther)**
- **rebuild sacred walls that protect (Nehemiah)**
- **reference the culture to share God’s love (Paul)**
- **stay alert to self-diminishing compromises (Daniel)**
- **risk everything for God and his people. (Ruth)**

This morning, we want to focus on the last principle for what it takes to thrive spiritually. Those who are more than survivors fix their eyes on eternity with Jesus. Hebrews 12:1–2; 14, 27–29). There are three key thoughts that speak to us this morning who want to do more than survive, but wish to thrive.

I. Those who thrive will get rid of every sin that hinders their progress. Verses 1–2 – **“Strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. . . . Run with endurance the race that God has set before us . . . keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish”** (NLT).

We are not going to get very far in our race, and thrive if we are weighed down with sin. Sin will hinder our progress. If we allow it in our lives, sin will bring us to a place of death. I think of the story of Lot’s wife. Her problem was that she was looking back at what she was leaving, when God wanted her to be looking forward to where she was going. Too often we are looking back at the pleasures of sin we have given up for God. Too often we are caught looking back to the places of sin that God has delivered us from, and if we want to thrive, we have to look forward to where God is taking us, not back to where we were. God’s will is not that we simply survive, but that spiritually we thrive.

II. Those who thrive will attempt to live in peace with everyone. Verse 14 - **try to live in peace with everyone, and seek to live a clean and holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord”** (NLT).

There is so much that needs to be done during this lifetime. We have this life to work on getting it right. I know there are difficult people who live in this world. Some of them are ugly, some of them are mean, some of them are small, and yet we are encouraged since this place is not our final home, to attempt at living in peace with everyone. Remember these three things about people – everyone you meet in life has a need. Everyone you meet in life has hidden pain. Everyone you meet has potential. We usually don’t know that needs, pain and potential people have in their lives. If we keep these things in mind when dealing with people it might be easier to live at peace with them regardless of how they may act toward you and me.

If we want to thrive spiritually, we are also encouraged to live a clean and holy life. Those who are not holy will not see the Lord. That is a pretty sobering thought. The reward of living a life that is pleasing to God here on earth will be seeing the Lord face to face. There are things we have to remove ourselves

from or remove from our lives that will enable us to live holy lives, and also will enable us to thrive.

If it wouldn’t please God, it shouldn’t please us. Get rid of it. Let it go.

III. Those who thrive keep the perspective that Christ is coming back to take us home. Verses 27—29 (NLT). **“The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’”**

Jesus is coming back to take us out of this world. He has gone to prepare a place that is better. It is better looking, better smelling, purer, more peaceful, on and on I could go. He has promised to come back for us. So then, how should we live? We should live as aliens in a foreign land. We should live with eternity’s values in view—holy lives—keeping our eyes on the glory of the Lord and being alert to his coming.

Paul says in **Colossians 3:1–2: “Seek those things which are above. . . . Set your mind on things above.”** Why? A harvest is coming. In Galatians 6:7 he writes, **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”** (NKJV).

We have the opportunity to do our planting in the fields of fleshly or worldly concerns, or to do our planting in the fields of faith and righteousness—“this world only” thinking vs. eternity’s values. Either way, we will reap a harvest and stand accountable. We need to sow with the idea of reaping a spiritual harvest, that is spiritual fruit.

Jesus described it this way (read Mark 8:34–38). Further, he admonished his listeners to “seek first the Kingdom of God” (NKJV). The rich young ruler had a problem, not with being religious but with having the right spiritual priorities, with eternity’s values in view.

Paul focused all his energies on Christ, for he said: **”Forgetting what is behind . . . I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus”** (Phil. 3:13–14).

Eternity is what we need to keep in view. The writer of Ecclesiastes said, “He (God) has planted eternity in the heart of man” (3:11). Hebrews 10:34 teaches us that those who persevere “[have] better things waiting for [them] in eternity” (NLT). Jesus taught, “I am going to prepare a place for you. . . . I will come and get you” (John 14:2–3, NLT). In so many words he says, “I want you to be with me.”

An old cliché goes: “The best use of life is to invest it in something that will outlast it.” The best approach to life is to live it with what the old-timers called “an eye single to God’s glory.” Our application for this final day of the Adventure is “Eye the Prize.” This is living with eternity’s values in view. Jesus did more than just survive. He eyed the prize of eternity that awaited him and persevered in doing his Father’s will. He never forgot that his real citizenship was in heaven; thus, he thrived spiritually on earth.

Conclusion:

All that we have belongs to God. We are stewards. Whether in the realm of material possessions or other investments of life, we face daily the matter of how we should use those resources. To choose goals is a dangerous thing, because most of us will probably come close to reaching them. Therefore, we should be certain they are worth the effort. Aims in life that are worthwhile are those related to the advancement of God’s work in this world. Eventually, this world will crumble; only God’s kingdom will last. When we feel uncertain about our culture, our “alien” status, and our future, we can take comfort and put our confidence in Hebrews 12:27–29: “The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’” We live and have our future in that which is eternal. This is living with eternity’s values in view.

In his book *The Magnificent Defeat*, Frederick Buechner describes with grace and beauty the longing we all have for the prize that awaits all faithwalkers.

“Like Adam, we all lost Paradise and yet we carry around inside us in the form of a longing for, almost a memory of, a blessedness that is no more, or the dream of a blessedness that may someday be again.”

The story is told of the missionary who returned home at the end of her life after having spent years serving the Lord in a foreign country. She kept thinking, as the train on which she was riding approached her town, “Is there anyone here who even remembers who I am?” The anxiety caused by this question began to mount as she counted on one hand the people still alive from the community church that had helped to support her during the many years of her service. The financial support had been steady, but the letters and visits from people who knew her as a young woman had dwindled through the years.

As the train approached her town, she had another uncomfortable thought. Though she had wired ahead, would there be anyone to meet her at the station? However, as the engine slowed, she could see a large crowd gathered on the platform. A band was playing a rousing march. “Welcome Home” signs bobbed over everyone’s heads, and children chased each other around, waving banners.

The missionary’s heart began to pound. Was this all for her? She couldn’t believe it! Quickly, she gathered her few things and, as she was making her way down the aisle, she heard a huge shout go up from the gathered throng. A distinguished middle-aged man stepped down from her car, waving his arms and smiling broadly. The missionary later learned that he was a local boy who had made good, had become a successful national politician, and was visiting his family as he journeyed to another part of the country.

Disappointed, the elderly woman sat down again on the edge of her seat, trying to catch her breath. She could hear the band playing and the people cheering. How foolish, she thought, to believe that anyone, any group of people that size would come to welcome me home. At that moment, she heard the inner voice, the one she had come to know so well through her decades of service—through dangers and toils, through loneliness and hard-won, rarely celebrated successes. “My dear,” it said. “You haven’t come home yet. You haven’t come home.”