

Resilient: 1 Peter 5:8-11, 9/6/20

There seems to be an endless supply of survival shows on TV these days. Alone, Life Below Zero, Naked and Afraid...but my favorite which has been around for a while is **Man Versus Wild** with Bear Grylls- The basic premise is they take this guy and drop him off in extremely harsh environments- deserts, mountains, jungles, glaciers and he has to figure out a way to traverse his way to an extraction point within a couple days. He has to creatively figure out how to get down cliff faces, hack his way through brush and protect himself from wild animals. Inevitably, he has eat something disgusting: a half rotten carcass, rats, Yak blood... you know the typical. Now, the majority of us would not do well in this scenario- we would eat something poisonous, maybe curl up in a ball, or see if our iPhones can call 911. But Bear Grylls is former British special forces. He has been trained, mentally and physically, to not only survive but be resilient in a hostile environment.

Title Slide Maybe in our chaotic world today you feel a bit like you are on a survival show. Like you've been dropped off in a harsh environment and you have to figure out how to make it through alive instead of curling up in a ball and hoping it all goes away. Some of us are experiencing the hardest year of our lives- Over the last 6 months I've spoken to many among us who are dealing with levels of fear, anxiety, stress, depression, anger, disillusionment and doubt more than they ever have before. All the stresses of COVID-19, social distancing guidelines, isolation, staring at Zoom all day, virtual school, and all the division it causes people on both sides. We are also in the middle of a Woke Movement that has taken America by storm after the murder of George Floyd. Protests, riots, police brutality, calls to defund the police, BLM and the counter-response of Blue Lives Matter and counter-protests. Some of us are all in on the woke movement, some of us see this is one big Marxist agenda... and then there are a lot of people with reservations and concerns on both approaches and are frustrated by the whole thing. And to top it all off- one of the most contentious, high stakes elections coming up in November that our country has ever seen. Some feel like they are fighting to keep their freedoms, their values, the constitution, democracy and capitalism, fighting for the sanctity of life...others feel like they are fighting to redeem evils of their society- environmental abuse, oppression, systemic racism, police brutality, corporate greed and inequality. And then a bunch that feel like neither end has the answers...And on top of all this- we have the everyday challenges of living life- relationships, health, finances, work. Do you feel that pressure?

The disciples that Peter is writing to knew what it meant to feel spiritually, physically and emotionally in survival mode. They were Christian exiles in a spiritually and politically hostile land. They were under the thumb of an emperor they didn't choose, they experienced oppression, alienation, and completely different worldviews from their neighbors...except they had no voice and no representation. I think that is a helpful reminder when we are tempted to think life is too hard. Throughout the letter Peter is teaching them how to be resilient disciples of Jesus in a hostile land. Here in this final charge from Peter in chapter 5, I believe to be an incredibly powerful and relevant word for us today. We will see **Three Keys to becoming a Resilient Disciple of Jesus: Recognition, Resistance, Reliance**

Recognition: Recognize the Roar of our Enemy

1 Peter 5:8

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Peter wants to make sure the disciples recognize that there is a great enemy behind all the hostility and the battle is primarily spiritual. He goes by many names- the great serpent, the prince of the power of this world, the god of this world, the Evil one, Satan...here he is called your adversary the devil. But by any name- He has one mission: Like a hungry lion- **looking for someone to devour**. Same as Jesus warned in John 10- His mission is to kill, steal, and destroy. He wants to devour your faith, devour the church from the inside out and its impact in the world, devour your marriage, family, he wants to devour truth, devour hope in the Lord and devour love.

And so Peter says, **be alert and be sober**. You say well that's good it's only 10 in the morning, hopefully none of us are drunk. Sober isn't the opposite of drunk here. It's the opposite of aloof and ignorant. It's the opposite of distracted. The opposite of lazy. Alert and sober is battle language. Being prepared, equipped and watchful. Do you know we are in a spiritual battle? As much as you may think we are in a political and cultural war- and that is true...the true battle is spiritual. **Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.** Do you know you are in a spiritual battle?

I've shared with you before about a safari my wife and I were on. We rolled up in our jeep to a **lion stalking wildebeest** around a watering hole. Surely, we thought, these wildebeest have no chance against this lion. Their heads were down in the water- but there was one wildebeest whose head was up, on the alert- watchful and spotted the lion in the tall grass. One by one, through some signal, all the wildebeests began lifting their heads. Every step forward the lion took was a step backward from the wildebeest. After 30-40 minutes, the lion gave up- knowing that it wasn't going to be able to devour its prey. Why? They had their heads up. They were sober, alert. Battle stance. Church, we've got to have our heads up. This isn't the time to be spiritually lazy, distracted or aloof.

How do we keep alert to recognize our enemy? There are several but let me share one critical way: **We need to filter EVERYTHING through the Word of God.** What did Jesus do when he was tempted by the devil? He filtered truth from deceptions through the Word of God! This story is here to show us a pattern. Scripture will smoke out schemes of the enemy. It will filter out half-truths, clever tricks, things that sound good on the surface but at its roots are evil. It will filter out what is novelty theology from what is time-tested and biblically sound. This is called biblical discernment. The Holy Spirit, using our study of the Word of God as a filter. Living alert and sober means that we apply the Word of God as the first and primary filter to everything that comes into our ears or out of our hearts. Things that come in like news outlets, what are friends are saying, our social media feeds, politicians and celebrities...and things that come out of our hearts- our own biases, agendas, desires, habits and beliefs. And we ALL have them. Let me give

you a test case: When you read the story and saw the video of the police shooting Jacob Blake in Kenosha. What was the first filter you used to discern what happened? Was it- “What is the conservative or liberal response to this?” or “Does this advance the BLM movement or undermine it?” or “How should my blackness or whiteness, or my maleness or femaleness, or privilege or underprivilege filter this information?” or “Does this support or go against my biases and feelings of what I want to be true?” Being sober and alert means that we first ask- “What does the filter of God’s Word, a biblical worldview, tell me about what I am reading and seeing?” I fear that we fly to our favorite political sites or fly to Twitter to tell us how to feel instead of flying to the Word of God, and flying to God himself in prayer, grief, lament and asking God for discernment. Now- that doesn’t mean that there aren’t lots of other questions that are valid or that we shouldn’t read different perspectives. Hear me on that. But we are people of the Book, not the people of Facebook- you see what I’m saying? We must filter everything through of the Word of God if we are going to recognize the enemy and the way he wants to attack.

Resistance: Resist the Schemes of the Enemy.

1 Peter 5:9

Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Once we recognize the lion, we need to resist him by standing firm. Now it wasn’t a lion, but my wife and our sons along with their cousins recently had an encounter with a bear in the Poconos. As they were walking along a path in the woods, they heard someone say, “watch the bear!” And instinctively they panicked and ran as fast as they could in the opposite direction.” Now- if you have read what you are supposed to do when you see a bear, it’s the opposite- park rangers will tell you something similar to Peter- stand firm! Thankfully they were fine and the bear wasn’t interested in a game of chase. We stand firm- not in our own strength or our power-but in the faith. “The faith” is an all-encompassing phrase that means everything you know to be true about God, salvation and the power we have in Jesus Christ. Paul says something similar but expands on it in Ephesians 6- stand firm- putting on the full armor of God- faith, the Word, salvation, righteousness. Standing firm in the faith is standing firm in our training gear of the gospel.

Now the enemy will use schemes that are uniquely suited for the weaknesses in your armor. There are areas of our lives where we are prone to fall and easily tempted: for some it could be anger, the need to be right and going off on other people as a keyboard warrior, for others it could be lust and pornography, for others it can be control, for others it might be insecurity, fear, lying, trying to project an image, or it could be the weakness of escaping reality through binging on TV, gaming, or fill in the blank. Whatever that is, and you know what those areas are, you have an enemy who also knows what those areas are. The way to resist is to stand firm in the faith. We see the attack- we recognize it for what it is and we defend against it with our faith training. For example: You discern that the enemy is trying to tempt you to lash out, or be passive aggressive with someone who offended you. What has your gospel training armor prepared you to do? Apply the gospel, Love, confront, forgive.

Peter also encourages resistance against the schemes of the enemy through the community of faith. *because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.* Just as those wildebeests stuck together to resist the lion, so to must we stick together. That lion was hoping just one of those wildebeest would want to stay behind a little longer at the watering hole and get isolated. Friends, we isolate ourselves we get devoured. It's that simple. There is a bolstering of our strength, our courage, our resilience when we know we aren't doing it alone. I know these last many months have made that extra difficult. There has been an imposed isolation to some extent. But we have to fight to stay connected. If you don't feel that you can't come to small group, or church on Sundays due to health issues- make phone calls, get on zoom, meet outdoors, but don't forsake meeting together in whatever form that takes. We are going to continue to prioritize prayer. *Each month we will have a zoom pray gathering.* I want you to be there because it is essential to resisting the enemy, aligning our hearts with God and seeing His hand powerfully move.

But nothing replaces in-person gathering. As you know- we are turning the faucet back on for in-person gatherings and the reason is because we are *prioritizing relational discipleship.* We believe that happens most effectively in-person. So we will be offering children's ministry and student and adult ministry this Fall. We are being responsible CDC and DE guidelines and taking precautions that are using good judgment and common sense. Thankfully, Delaware numbers of cases are down, and the death rate for COVID is extremely low. I want to encourage you to come back in-person if you don't have a health issue. Is it a little uncomfortable wearing a mask? Sure, but the Christian life isn't a call to comfort but to community! We worship together, we encourage each other and after the service many hang out after on the steps and our parking lot catching up with each other. Please consider coming back and bring your family!

Reliance: Rely on God's Grace.

1 Peter 5:10-11

¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

The God of all grace: what a great way to end on. Chances are you haven't resisted perfectly. You haven't been resilient at times. You haven't trusted God. You haven't been sober and awake and alert. But the story isn't about you and you getting this right all the time, it's about Him and what he has accomplished for you! Jesus did all those things for you. Listen, as vicious a lion, as brutal a lion as the enemy is, he's only a second-rate lion.¹ He roars a lot, he sounds so intimidating, but he's a second-rate lion. There's another Lion- Jesus Christ is called in Scripture the "Lion of the Judah." And John sees him in the book of Revelation, he said, "I looked and saw the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed." That lion roared from Calvary. That lion devoured sin and death on the cross. That lion defeated Satan and will one day render him powerless. Jesus told his disciples- in this life you will have troubles. We will suffer. But take heart I have

¹ Thanks to Pastor Skip Heitzig for this idea.

overcome the world! The ultimate reason we will be resilient disciples is because Jesus Christ is the lion for us. He will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast! And that is why he deserves our worship.

Title Slide Friends- this is going to be a rough Fall. Chances are, things get uglier, chances are there are more police shootings, riots, leading up to the election things are going to get nastier and more personal, there is going to be more hate and horrible things said on Facebook. My exhortation: Be alert. The enemy is on the prowl seeking to devour you. Filter everything through Scripture. Resist his Schemes. Stand up for what God values: advocate, get involved, but do it with conviction and compassion. Rely on God's lion to fight your battles. Finally- remember: we may suffer a little while- we just passing through this life. Our ultimate citizenship is in heaven, and our king is coming!