

Begin Being Like Him

by Vance Havner

The sermon emphasizes the importance of appreciating God's blessings and not taking things for granted, and warns against the dangers of familiarity and the need for revival in the church.

Duration: 29:13

Scripture: Joel 2:15

Topics: "Living Like Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by expressing gratitude for the ability to see and enjoy God's blessings. He emphasizes the importance of not taking things for granted, such as sight and hearing, and shares personal experiences of being in the hospital and witnessing the suffering of others. The speaker encourages the audience to appreciate the power of God's word and not become complacent or indifferent to its message. He also highlights the need for a renewed understanding of the love and sacrifice of Jesus, urging listeners to be awakened to the truth and not let it become mundane or routine.

Transcript

I arrived about, well, about eleven, ten-thirties, and it has been quite a while since I was here. I used to come about every other year for oh, I don't know how long. I must confess that as I walked across the familiar old trail from over at the hotel this way, I thought about many of the men of God that I had known through these years and who are now with the Lord.

A saddening and a gladdening thought, in many ways. Last year, I don't know what was the matter with me, I don't know yet. They took me to the hospital and they finally said it could be tolamine, could be one day flu, and in that good old word, virus.

What would we do if we couldn't fall back on that? That's the word they sweep everything under. But I'm here and I'm glad, and I want to make the most of this time by asking you to think with me about something in the book of Job, chapter 29, chapter 30. The first verses of each chapter, because there's quite a switchover from the 29th to the 30th.

This old patriarch was reminiscing about his earlier prosperity and lamenting his present distress and talking about the good old days all the way through chapter 29 when he was rich and respected and the young men regarded him and the elders rose when he went by. Then, after saying at the beginning of that chapter, Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me. You move over to

chapter 30, but now, you see times have changed.

But now, those that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. He was thinking about the good old days, and distance lends enchantment to the view, of course, always. They always look better than they were, and distance has something to do with it.

I heard of a man who wrote to a magazine and said, Your paper's not as good as it used to be, and he replied, It never has been. Job never had it so good, but now everything has changed, and he sums it up in that second verse. Oh, that I were as in days past, a remembrance.

Oh, that I were as in days past, a regret. Oh, that I were as in days past, a request. He didn't know what he had until he didn't have it.

You never miss the water until the well goes dry. Think with me for a few moments about the sin of taking things for granted. We need more preaching on Psalm 103, verse 2, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

I thank God for the beauty of his creation. This earth's not as beautiful as it was at the start, and it's not as pretty as it will be. When God gets through doing it over, because he's not going to let the devil get away with it, there's going to be a new heaven, a new earth.

We're not going to bring in the millennium, of course. He'll bring it when he comes. I heard of a fellow who tried to have a little mini-millennium in the backyard.

He got some animals together. He even got hold of a lion, a lamb, and various other creatures. And a little later, somebody asked the old caretaker, How are you getting on with the millennium? He said, Well, pretty good.

He said, How about the lion and the lamb? Well, he said, We're having a little trouble there. He said, The lion's doing all right, but we have to throw in a fresh lamb every morning. See, the time hasn't come yet for that.

But I thank God for the beauty of his creation. It was wrecked by sin. But it's still lovely in spots, and one day the beauty will be restored, because I believe in the redemption of creation, according to Romans 8. And I believe in you, according to Isaiah 11.

And nature shall be at peace. But there is beauty here now, if we have eyes to see it. I think of a lumberman I used to know.

He spent every day out in the woods, but I don't think he ever really heard a bird sing, ever watched the sunset. The only thing that crossed his mind was how many feet of lumber here and how much will it bring on the market. He was engaged, they said, in the lumber business.

I don't think he was engaged. I think he was mad to it. That's all they live for.

And how few there are in this space age. You see the glory of God in the heavens and his handiwork in the firmament. Teddy Roosevelt has been one of my favorite presidents through the years.

He loved the outdoors. If you've ever been to Sagamore Hill, the old home, there were a lot of it around there. We had a visitor one evening, and they got out in the front yard looking up at the skies for a while.

And then Teddy Roosevelt said, Well, I think we're down to our right size now. Let's go back in the house. We need a little more of that these days.

I don't want to take America for granted. One way to learn how to appreciate this country is go to some other one and make a visit. When you come back, that Statue of Liberty looks pretty good.

Ask the POWs. You saw them when they came back. Some of them kissed the ground when they got off that ship.

I know there's much wrong with this country. It's the best there is. At least they're all trying to get in over here and trying to get out, or some of the others.

My country, right or wrong, may she always be right, but right or wrong, my country. Some people say they don't like that. I think any true parent would say, My boy, may he always be right, but if he's wrong, he's still my boy.

I like it here personally, and I've been here a pretty good while. And these folks, these folks who like it better somewhere else, I'd like to load them all up on boats and get out there in New York Harbor and wave after Mrs. Farr. I can see them there.

My heart with rapture fills and thrills with that of those. Gerald Johnson, the columnist, said, What we need is not a flatterer who tells the American citizen what a wonderful thing he is, what a wonderful thing it is to be an American. What we need is a challenger who will tell him what a difficult and dangerous thing it is to be an American, for the American doctrine was devised by brave men for our brave men.

If all we've got left today is to tell the world that America is a place of two chickens in every pot and three cars in every garage and a fairyland of plastics and gadgets and deep freezers and giveaway shows with every other hand stuck out toward Washington for a handout, if that's all we've got, we're out of bait. We've got more than that. We ought to tell what it really means to be an American and the price our forefathers paid in blood and sweat and tears to make this the land of the free and the home of the brave.

George Washington and his foot sore soldiers did not stain the snows of Valley Forge with blood to create a politician's paradise over here. And Abe Lincoln didn't rope the floor night after night there in the White House just to pass away the time. Every young American is a foreigner here to live from somewhere, and you ought to learn that it costs a plenty to purchase this freedom, and it may cost more to keep it.

And this is no time to despise our American birthright and make light of our liberties. It's about the only spot where you have any liberty anymore, anyway. I want to thank God this afternoon for the ability to see and enjoy some of God's blessings.

If you had never seen sky and grass and trees, and one day your eyes were opened, you'd never take sight for granted. If all your life you'd never heard the song of a bird or the voice of a friend, and one day your ears were unstopped, hearing would never be a matter of course. And if you've lain flat or you're back in the hospital for weeks and weeks, well, I remember 18 years ago I was knocked out for five months, and I sat in my room and envied anybody able to walk down the street what I would give for just one little stroll, and I had taken all that for granted.

I spent six months in 1973 in a hospital at the bedside of a dying wife, listening to the groans of others sick and dying. That'll cure anybody of taking health for granted. And lesser benefits, like sleep.

You never appreciate a thing like sleep until you can't. You go to bed and go to sleep. That's just one of those things that you don't think about until you cannot.

And I went through two years of it a long time ago, and I learned to appreciate being able to sleep, just sleep. And when sorrow came my way four years ago, I thought, oh, my soul here, it'll start all over, I'm afraid. And the doctor gave me some Valium and said, take that, and that's all right if you need it.

But I took a few, but I put the bottle up on the shelf, and I said, Lord, I don't want to get into this. He giveth his beloved sleep. I'd like to get through some other way.

And I committed my way unto the Lord, and I want to testify to his glorious afternoon. And I've been able to rest since. And I think about that old bishop who sat there at two o'clock in the morning, couldn't sleep a wink, opened his Bible and said, he's the king of Israel, so neither slumber nor sleep.

He said, Lord, if you're sitting up, I'm going to bed. Good night. I'm not taking it for granted.

Don't take your dear ones for granted. You don't know what you have until you don't have it. I don't go home these days.

I'm like Robert G. Lee. Dr. Lee, who's 91 now and trying to recover from a very serious heart attack, said, I never tell folks I'm going home, I tell them I'm going back to Memphis. So next Monday, God willing, I won't be going home.

It takes two to make a home. I'll be going back, God willing, to Greensboro. Thank God I never took my dear one for granted.

We appreciated each other and told each other so. But some of you this afternoon know what I mean, and you don't know because you've been there. There was no way I always tried to comfort people, but I didn't know what to say until I'd been down that valley.

And you come to the day that you give every blessed thing you've got for just one day in your day with that dear one. And it sort of affects me a bit that the last time I was here I was not alone. That makes a difference.

When Dr. Lee and I walked into his home sometime ago, he had a big picture of Ms. Lee there. He said, it doesn't get any easier. Time, they say, takes care of things, but it must take a lot of time.

I say to you, husbands and wives, tell them now what I mean to you. Don't take them for granted. I don't want to take the church for granted.

A lot of people who wouldn't live where there are no churches, but they live as though there were no churches. We have today a Christless church entity, I know that, in some quarters. Then we have a churchless Christianity.

We have these folks who say, I love Jesus, but I don't love the church. Jesus loved the church and gave himself for it. He is the head and the church is the body.

I don't believe in a headless body and a bodyless head. He is the groom and the church is the bride. I don't believe in a groomless bride and a brideless groom.

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, our Lord. She is his new creation by water and the word. From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride.

With his own blood he bought her and for her life he died. He loved the church. I'm not taking the church for granted.

I don't want to get to where just because I'm a preacher and have been into it for quite a while, I don't want to take the gospel for granted. I'll trouble, beloved, you folks who are Bible-reading people. I know where I am up here.

I've been here many times in the moody and all through this. And the Bible belt's up here, you know, now. But there's such a thing as hearing it so much and getting so accustomed to it that some of it loses the power of truth and lies bedridden in the dormitory of the soul.

What used to make our fathers shout in the aisles puts us to sleep in the pews. I heard of a man over in Korea who had given a message one evening and the people were dismissed. He went to bed, but they didn't leave.

And he got up and dressed and came out and said, Friends, the meeting is over. You may go. And they said, We can't go.

You've told us that God so loved the world that he gave his son and that if we'll trust him we can live forever. How can we go home and go to bed after hearing that? How can we sleep hearing that? Bless my soul, we'd go to sleep listening to it here in America. And I think one trouble is we're used to it.

You remember Ezra touching the ark and dropping dead. Now, why did God strike a man dead for just trying to steady the ark? What was involved in this transgression? Well, he was the son of Abinadab and the ark had been in his house for a long time. And I think he'd gotten used to it anyhow.

It was a piece of furniture. It had become a box. And he crossed his regard for the sacredness of it as a symbol of God's presence among his people.

And old Matthew Henry said perhaps he affected the show before this great assembly how bold he could make with the ark having been so long acquainted with it. And then he goes on to say, Familiarity even with that which is most awful is apt to breed content. It's a sad day in the church when the ark becomes a box.

And we're so familiar with scripture and worship and the ordinances that we lose the reverence. Alexander McLaren said the trouble here was a lost sense of awe. Nothing is so delicate as this sense of A-W-E-Awe.

Trifle with it ever so little and it disappears. There's far too little of it, he said, in our modern religion. Well, what are you going to have to do to find that out from listening and watch the average congregation on a Sunday morning? You don't see much awe out there.

What you see is not awe. What you see is awful. And we talk today all about relevance.

We need to recover reverence. The tragedy of the church is that Sunday morning Christianity takes for granted what our forefathers died for. And what began, as Dr. Phillips says, as an experience has become a performance.

We pay church staffs to do church work and then we come out on Sunday to watch them do it. And after the meeting we say in our hearts, I move we accept this as information and be dismissed. One of our religious leaders, I'm not his disciple, but what did wake him up was that he was in one of these dull, dead, dry, dismal, desolate meetings one time.

And he said, this can't be it. Jesus didn't pay for this with his blood. He purchased more than this.

He just couldn't stand to see a smug congregation take the gospel for granted. And that's what bothered Joel. Blow the trumpet in Zion.

Sanctify a fast. Call a solemn assembly. Gather the people.

Sanctify the congregation. Assemble the elders. Gather the children and those that suck the breast.

Let the bridegroom go forth in his chamber and the bride out of her closet. This is not a youth revival. This is everybody's revival.

Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach that the heathen should use a byword against them. Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? There was a man who was bothered over the fact that the world was going by saying to God's people, What have you got? Where is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob? There was no reality there. One thinks of these fountains.

We sometimes see in public squares where the water gushes out the mouth, but they never taste it. We sing songs that have lost their meaning and recite scriptures that don't stand for anything to us. Grace no longer appears as precious as it did the hour we first believed.

Like Samson, we wish not that the spirits departed. Like Sardis, we may even have an aim to be alive when Jesus says, You're dead. A mortician can make a dead man look better than he ever looked while he was living.

And some church experts can do that. And you don't know the difference, but God knows the difference. Luke 1. Jesus prefers a cold church to a warm church.

Had you ever thought of that? I'd let you be cold or zealous, bawling, but not lukewarm. Donald Ray Barnhouse used to say, the trouble with this lukewarm business is that if you're cold, you may get so cold you'll hurt a fire. But if you're lukewarm, you're comfortable.

And that's the besetting sentence today. We are comfortable. Revivals don't start with comfortable people.

A warm church is nauseating to my Lord. I'm about to spew you out of my mouth. One of our biggest problems is a block of middle-aged, older church members settled on their knees who need to be emptied from vessel to vessel.

Fallow ground that resents the plow and wares across the face almost works, sometimes we say, on motel room doors. Please do not disturb me. The Wesleyan Revival broke all that up in its day because one man

had an encounter with Jesus Christ.

It's been that way down through the years. The Welsh Revival did it. Athletic events sort of played out.

Nobody went to them. Nobody was up preaching against athletics or sports. That wasn't the point.

Jesus Christ had become so wonderful that everybody wanted to hear about him. Even cultural events were neglected. Now, I don't say that that ought to go on all the time, but I do say it would be a blessed thing, and I think we're going to have to have that sort today.

The pendulum may swing too far in the eyes of some before it ever regains equilibrium. I'm not taking Jesus Christ for granted. When Jesus is important enough, you'll be at church.

I found that out here at Founders Week in this miserable weather last winter. I found it out in Fort Worth where I just preached to between 8,000 and 10,000 Southern Baptist preachers. There they were in that wretched weather.

It had come out of it in New Mexico. I said, people go where they want to go, and any kind of weather is church-going weather if you want to go. And that's all there is to it.

That's it. My old daddy out there in that little old country church, the weather was bad sometimes, and he felt badly sometimes, and the preaching was poor sometimes, but always he was there and he would go up to light that wood-burning stove on a cold winter morning, and even in the summertime, then the saints were beginning to depart, but not like they do today. A. W. Tozer used to say that God's army is the only army on the face of the earth that takes a three-month furlough in the middle of a war, and we get along the best we can.

There will come a day when the benefits of the gospel will not be available. The Spirit and the bride say come, let him that heareth say come, let him that is athirst come, whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. But that won't last forever.

The rich man in hell didn't miss the water till the well went dry, and he did not ask, mind you, for a drink, he asked for a drop. Let him keep his finger in water and put it on my tongue. Lazarus begged for crumbs of bread, divies begged for drops of water.

So you don't believe in hell. What difference does that make? I'll take my Lord's word for it, I remember an old infidel, my pastor a long time ago, said you preach too much on judgment, on hell, I want to hear more about the meek and lowly Jesus. What he didn't know was that most of the information I have about hell I got from the meek and lowly Jesus.

He saw the future abode of the wicked as an endless horror beyond the great gulf, forever fixed. He took the last verse of Isaiah and the garbage heap outside Jerusalem and mixed them into an awful picture of a time and a place where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. I wish I didn't have to believe that a lot of people are going to that place, but my Lord says it, and he painted the most lurid picture of anybody in the Bible.

I don't want to take salvation for granted. I don't know how many years it's been since any father or mother has come up to me and said, my boy, my girl is lost. They used to say that.

I don't hear it anymore, and yet that's the kind of folks Jesus came to seek and to save. Lost. You hear it.

Look, Johnny's a good boy. So was the rich young ruler. He was a good boy, but he wasn't God's boy.

Men once feared the judgment for it was grace that taught my heart to fear. Grace, my fears relieved. No wonder that grace appeared precious in the hour that I first believed.

We're not told to celebrate the birth of Christ, but to memorialize his death. If he hadn't died, his birth wouldn't have meant anything. He lived to die, and he died to live.

I almost have chills sometimes when I watch Sunday morning crowds of nonchalant churchgoers sing to the old rugged cross, its shame and reproach gladly bare. I wonder. I wonder how many are ready to do that.

Some years ago, when diamonds were plentiful in South Africa, a traveler chanced upon what looked like some small boys playing marbles. And he drew near and shunned if they were playing marbles with diamonds because they were plentiful. There is such a thing in Christianity today as playing marbles with diamonds, handling the coinage of God's word without really examining it to see whose image and superscription may be thereupon.

God forgive us for our coarse familiarity with holy things, for taking God for granted. God give us a new Gideon's band, a master's minority, who will live as though Jesus died yesterday and rose this morning and is coming back tonight. If we could recover that, I just wouldn't tell them what would happen.

And if we could see what God has prepared for them that love him, and that includes the life to come, more than that to be sure, but it does include that, it would take the lines out of faces and tears out of eyes, take fear out of hearts and fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory. I believe it was one of our southern ministers who said, trying to show us what lies out yonder in the next world for us, God hasn't told us an awful lot about it. And I'm glad he hasn't.

Because, this preacher said, it would be like a small boy trying to eat a bowl of spinach with a chocolate cake sitting right in front of him. What a rough time he'd have. I went up to Minneapolis in 73 to speak at Billy Graham's Christmas supper.

And that is right after my sorrow. And dear Bev Shea came in and saw me there in the crowd. He was putting on a concert that night.

Came over to me and gave me a hug. And then went up and sang. And now he can sing it with a new appreciation.

If we could see beyond the day as God can see. If all the clouds should roll away and the shadows flee. Oh, present grief we wouldn't fret.

Each sorrow we'd soon forget. For many joys are waiting yet for you and me. I hope this week will help us all to remember some things that we are in danger of taking for granted.

And above all to know how to sing afresh King of my life I crown thee now. Thine shall the glory be lest I forget thy thorn crowned brow. Lead me to Calvary.

Lest I forget Gethsemane. Lest I forget thine agony. Lest I forget thy love to me.

Lead me to Calvary. There may be some preacher here this afternoon who you're getting used to it. I dread to get with a dear man who's been in it a long time and he's just coasting now.

Not looking for anything much to happen. I exhort you if you're here this afternoon or listening to me otherwise you don't know what God's got for you. I want to testify that the last three or four years while they've brought sorrow and tears have brought me a new dimension and a new note and a new blessing that I never had before.

There remaineth much land for you to possess. God didn't call me to preach till I was 65. He called me to preach period.

So I've gone on past retirement age. 5, 10, 15, now on the next batch. Brother, I don't want to get used to being a Christian.

And I don't want to get used to being a preacher. And I don't want to get used to what I'm talking about this message. I can't do it as well as some of them can but I want to do it the best that I can.

I'm going to keep it up by the grace of God as long until they have to build a ramp to get me into the pulpit if necessary. And I hear a lot in response from a statement like this if you're a little down as a young or old or a preacher or a Christian you may have the next chapter may be the best. So forget not all his benefits and be prepared for some more.

God bless you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/9/SID9595.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/vance-havner/begin-being-like-him/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net