

Decision Indecision - Lot

by Vance Havner

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living simply and following Jesus, and the payoff of being a Christian is eternal life, inheritance, and the present experience of the fellowship of the church.

Duration: 40:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 10:28-30, Colossians 3:1

Topics: "Lot"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reminisces about his childhood in North Carolina and the monthly sermons at Old Corinth Church. He describes how his father would stay up late talking to the preacher, eager to learn about the things of God. The speaker emphasizes the importance of knowing what we are committing to when we serve the Lord and urges listeners to count the cost before embarking on their spiritual journey. He also highlights the need for believers to have a strong faith and live as though Jesus died yesterday, rose this morning, and is coming back tonight. The sermon concludes with a touching moment when children from a children's home sing a song about their transformation from outcasts to beloved children of God.

Transcript

Mark, the tenth chapter, beginning with verse twenty-eight. This same incident is related in Matthew 19 and Luke 18, with some slight variations. This follows the incident of the rich young ruler.

Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now. Now, in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands with persecutions, and in the world to come, eternal life.

But many that are first shall be last, and the last first. Somebody has said that Peter was the most American of all the disciples. About everything that he said in the four Gospels was a mistake.

Let us build here three tabernacles, this shall not be unto thee, thou shalt never wash my feet, I will never deny thee. He hit the high water mark with the great confession, but a few verses further down, my Lord was saying to him, Get thee behind me, Satan. He fell all the way from the mountain peaks of confession to the swamps of contradiction, within a few words.

No wonder the Bible says, And Peter said, not knowing what he said. In this case, the rich young ruler had turned down the challenge of our Lord. I think Peter's keen eye took that in, and he is saying, in effect, Now, Lord, we haven't done like that.

We have not acted like that fellow. We have left all and followed thee. A few nets and an old boat, I don't believe I'd have said anything about it if it hadn't been him.

What's the payoff? What do we get? He is not the first one who got out a patent pencil and tried to figure out what the fringe benefits of being a Christian might be. Our Lord answered with a marvelous statement that avoids two extremes that are very popular today. There are some Brethren today preaching a gospel of prosperity.

According to them, you'd think God wants every Christian to be a millionaire. It's hard to find that in the New Testament. The Savior had nowhere to lay his head, it's a straight and narrow way, we're exiles and aliens, not many rich, wise, mighty, and noble have been called.

The Apostles were the scum of the earth and the spectacle to the world for the scandal of the cross. How many volunteers do you think I'd get today, trying to ask people to volunteer to be called the scum of the earth, and a theater, a laughing stock, a spectacle to the world, for the reproach that we so glibly sang about, its shame and reproach gladly bear. And then there are others who preach a gospel of adversity, as though all Christians are supposed to go around garbed in gunny sack.

We're not sanctified triumphs with no reward this side of heaven. My Lord made it plain in this very passage that there are some compensations to being a Christian here and now. It's not all pie in the sky.

And so I like to call this, all this and heaven too, and in the world to come, eternal life. Now, I know there's such a thing as the fellowship of his sufferings, and I'm afraid most people have only the vaguest idea of what that could possibly mean. We've heard it all our lives.

Paul wanted just three things in his life that I may know him and his. Three hisses, the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his suffering, and conformity to his death. The trouble with us is what we want is something from me and mine.

When you get away from me and mine, get around to him and his, you're getting somewhere in Christian experience. All I want is him and his, and one of those is the fellowship of his sufferings. Now, that doesn't mean that we have any part in the atoning death of our Lord, no.

He took care of that once for all. But if you are a true disciple, you are an heir to a legacy of persecution and reproach. Peter speaks of the partakers of Christ's suffering, and Paul uses that very same statement about filling up what's behind of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, a very strange passage.

But if it's not a gospel that measures on prosperity or adversity, it's a gospel that pays off here and hereafter. You know the old saying that prosperity was the blessing of the Old Testament, and adversity is the blessing of the New. But this was spoken, don't forget it, to a certain group, not just every Tom, Dick and Harry indiscriminately.

People get in a lot of trouble when they read the Bible if they don't check to whom this or that thing was said. You can't just pick up every portion for yourself, necessarily. I think of Colossians 3.1, If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, or Christ did it on the right hand of God, and the rest

of the book of Colossians is only for people who are risen with Christ.

Just anybody couldn't claim these two chapters, it's for a certain group of people. And in Luke 14, my Lord had quite a crowd on one occasion, and the average preacher would have been quite excited, there went great multitudes with him, and he turned and said unto them, Here's another if, and he gave them three cannots in a row. Now what kind of an approach is that? That's negative to begin with.

If any man come to me, now this sounds like what the Lord said to Peter, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, in his own life also, cannot, number one, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple, that's number two. And then he gives two little illustrations, for which of you, intending to build a tower, and I want you to notice that the Holy Spirit, twice here, puts in this little phrase, Sitteth not down first.

You ought to know what you're doing. God wants us to know what we're up to when we pledge ourselves to serve the Lord and to do his will. Sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he hath sufficient to finish it, lest happily, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it, begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth him, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand, or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace, and now cannot, number three. So likewise, likewise, whosoever he be of you that, per se, hath not already asked, he cannot be my disciple. Now, Dr. A. T. Robertson, the great Greek scholar, says that this is the language of exaggerated contrast, but he said, Don't water it down till you lose the point.

We have a way today of sort of smoothly dismissing this rather harsh demand. Hey, father, mother, and so on, I know the explanation we preachers give, that you must love Jesus so much that all other loves are his hatred and compassion, and that's true, but sometimes I think we take the punch out of that, and we take the sternness of that demand, because it is stern, and sometimes there is an actual loss of friends and position and finances and family, and if that loss is not actual, it ought to be attitudinal, one of the two. Now, in the case of most of these early Christians, it was actual, and there are many Christians in this world who have suffered the loss of all material things to follow the Lord Jesus, but if it's not actual, it's attitudinal, and that's in 1 Corinthians 7. This is the blessed passage about living as though.

This I say, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none. It's all right to have a wife, but to be as though they had none, they that weep as though they weep not, it's all right to weep, but you must be as though you didn't, and they that rejoice as though they rejoice not, there's a time to rejoice, but be as though you didn't, and they that buy as though they possess not, there's a time to buy, but be as though you didn't, and they that use this world as not using it to the full, abusing it for the fashion of this world, pass it away. It must be one or the other.

Some have the actual loss, Job lost everything he had, God gave him back twice as much. Paul said, I have suffered the loss of all things. They really knew what this actual loss meant.

Now today, we Americans don't usually have to suffer this sort of actual loss of everything, but you must be as though you didn't have it. That's what poor in spirit means, and that's why so few rich people ever get to heaven. Jesus himself said there wouldn't be many rich people in heaven.

He made that very point. God's got nothing against rich folks, but it's so hard to be poor in spirit as though you didn't have it, and that's what this means. I get a little bit amused and sometimes a little worried about the way Sunday morning congregations can sing so glibly to the old rugged cross, I'll never be true.

It's shame and reproach gladly bear, neither in actuality nor attitude. Have most of them gone to him without the camp bearing his reproach, suffering the loss of all things? They might as well be singing Mary had a little lamb, as far as meaning it when they sing. I think we tell more lies behind hymn books sometimes than almost any other way that I can think.

Now, Peter was right. They had really left everything for Christ's sake and for the gospel. And Peter said this after the young ruler went away limping on his crutches, his money.

The contrast is pretty sharp, and Peter saw it immediately. The early church knew what it meant to give up everything for Christ and the gospel. They lived in constant danger of persecution and imprisonment and death.

They were despised, they were scorned. They were pilgrims to an unfriendly world. Why did Jesus say, if you've done all that, you'll have in this world, and we're not talking about heaven, you'll have in this world mothers and sisters, brothers and fathers, lambs, in this world.

Well, when they gave up everything for the Lord, they found a new world. They entered the fellowship of the church. And they found that family you were just singing about, the family of God.

And when you get into that family and you know what that family is, then you have become wealthier than you ever were in the old crowd. The early Christians really believed that. They met in homes, they didn't have churches.

They had love feasts together, they had new fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters. Didn't my Lord say, whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same as my brother and sister and mother? Didn't Paul write to Rufus, or say in Romans, greet Rufus his mother and mine? I didn't mean my mother, he wasn't talking about his own mother, but Rufus' mother is a mother to Paul. Paul had a mother in that godly woman.

Ever since I've been a Christian, I've found a new family of mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers all over this country. I've been on the road a long time, I've been 63 years in the ministry, and I started out as a boy, and I remember there were blessed homes in this country where I was just taken in as a member of the family. I remember one in South Carolina where I would stay weeks and weeks, never knew when to leave.

They had a terrible time getting rid of me, because I was just one of the crowd. And that's what this means, I belong to the family of God. When I couldn't speak at Winona Lake a month ago, I got sick in Chicago, I was taking a bag, I got around 200 cards and letters from those dear people around Winona and Moody.

And I have never had so many precious messages since my wife died three years ago. It was the family of God warming up to me in a time of trial. Now that's what it ought to be all the time.

You see, it says here, lands and goods. What does that mean? I haven't got any property, yes, I haven't got ten acres of land where I grew up, I still hang on to it for sentimental reasons, but that's not much. But

what does this mean? Lands and goods.

Well, bless your heart, the meek are going to inherit the area. That's not ours yet. Somebody said the only way they'd ever get it is inherited.

Well, we're going to get it, it's just the same because the Bible says so. I have a time when I get in some of these fancy places where they've got a sign, keep out, keep off the grass, and so on. And I say, that's all right, you can have it now.

It's going to be mine one of these times. And you know when my Lord comes down here to rain and take over, I hope he gives me the job of pulling up all those keep out signs. Oh, we're going to have a bonfire like nobody's business, aren't we? But we haven't come there yet, you know.

Don't get excited. Don't go out and try to claim it too soon. But it's ours.

It's going to belong to the people of God. I believe this present earth is going to be redeemed this way. That's not the final, new heavens and new earth, but you see, the devil messed up this planet, and God's not going to let him get away with it.

God's going to fix it up, yes, for his own people. I read of a prophecy fellow going off a little on eschatology, and he got a little wild in his ideas, and he was going to put on a display, sort of a mini-millennium. So he had the thing all fixed up, and he had one section over here that was going to have the lion and the lamb in it, you know, that was going to lie down together.

Well, he managed to get a lion somehow or other. He got a lamb, and a few days later somebody asked the old caretaker, said, Well, how's the millennium getting on? Well, he said, pretty well. He said, How about the lion and the lamb? Well, he said, We haven't let it trouble there.

He said, The lion's doing all right, but we have to throw in a fresh lamb every morning. You see, we're not there yet. So you've got to wait on some things, but it's going to be ours.

I believe that with all my soul. Oh, Paul said, Having nothing and possessing all things. Do you know that you can have nothing and everything both at the same time? I don't try to figure out the mathematics of it.

That's scripture. Paul had all that. And you can't do anything with a fellow who's got everything and nothing both.

The devil will say to him, I'll give you this and I'll give you that, and he says, You can't have got everything. Then the devil says, I'll take this away and I'll take that away. And he says, You can't.

I haven't got anything. What are you going to do with a fellow like that? You can't hit him off if you take off his head. There's no way you can stop a fellow like that.

And Paul said, I have suffered the loss of all things. And the very next expression along that line, All things are yours, and therefore it is. Paul, Cephas, Apollos, the world, life, things present, things to come.

He had everything. He had nothing. The early church was a happy family.

The most wonderful fellowship this world has ever known. Oh, I know they ran into problems right at the very beginning. We're people.

We're human. They're still running into problems. But you ask any sinner who has come out of this world into the fellowship of the Saints, and he's ready to sing, I'm glad I'm a part of the family of God.

I've been washed in the fountain and cleansed with the blood. Joined as with Jesus as we travel this earth. For I'm part of the family.

The family of God. And I like that verse. You'll notice we say brother and sister around here.

It's because we're a family and these folks are senior. When one has a heartache, we all share the tears and rejoice in each victory in this family of senior. When I was a boy growing up in the country in western North Carolina, and the old country preachers came out to preach at Old Corinth Church, we only had one sermon a month, the fourth Sunday morning.

That's all the preaching we had, one sermon a month. Some of them were long enough to last a month, but only one sermon a month. And my daddy would sit up till midnight talking to that preacher.

My father loved to talk about the things of God. That preacher earned his bed and board. I tell you, disseminating information.

My father sat there gathering all the information he could. And he'd let me sit before the fire on a winter night and listen. And it did more than all television could have done.

It laid a foundation the world of flesh and the devil couldn't shake. And deposited a sediment of conviction in my soul that remains to this day. He loved to talk about the things of God.

And you never called that preacher by his first name. And he never called us by our first name. My father was always Brother Hebner.

And my mother was always Sister Hebner. Well, that's something like the family of God here. I belong to the First Baptist Church of Greensboro, North Carolina.

We've only had two pastors in the last 63 years. The new pastor said, I feel like I'm starting a life sentence. Dr. Clyde Turner was there 38 years, and Claude Bowen was there 25.

And Dr. Turner wrote a history of the church, and he said 100 years ago, members of this church were hissed for their convictions. And the preacher was laughed at. Because it costs something to stand up just a little over 100 years ago.

Now, it doesn't. Oh, I guess about 3,600 members in all this wonderful setup of buildings and what have you. I preached there two Sundays ago, and I called her attention to that once in a while.

Something's happened. A lot of good people yet. But you don't feel the cost like once they did.

Now, you do see what I'm talking about when great revivals break out. You see it on the foreign mission field. You see it in new churches.

You see it in new movements. You see it when Christians love each other, and they know how to sing, Blessed be the tie that binds. When you're a brand-new Christian, you feel this.

You know, the happiest fellow in the world is a brand-new Christian before he's met too many Bible scholars. Doesn't know any better. Just loves the Lord.

I was in a meeting in Richmond, and a fellow joined church there on Sunday morning, brand-new Christian. He didn't know any better than to come every night that week. Half of the deacons didn't make it, but he didn't know that, you know, and he thought, this is the place to be.

And I felt like, when I'd see him back there, I felt like saying, Lord, don't let him catch on. You know what I mean. And he hadn't got over it.

May he never get over it. But Ephesus leaves his first love, and Laodicea becomes rich and increased in goods, and Balaam gets into Pergamum, and Jezebel gets into Thine power, and Sardis has a name to be alive and is dead. We've lost that blessed fellowship.

I like the feel of it here. It does me good to mingle with God's people. This section of the country, I'm so sorry I missed Winona, because there's another great gathering of the dear saints around Chicago.

And some of them, we've known each other for 40 years, just like some of you dear people have been telling me about a long time back. When? In some of my meetings? Well, that's the family of God. We've borrowed the world's methods and its machinery and its motives, and we've lost that simple faith.

We need to bring it up to date. We need to update it today. You give me a bunch of people who live as though Jesus died yesterday and rose this morning and was coming back tonight.

They'll turn the world upside down at this very hour. I remember in Florida last winter, we had some children from a children's home. They came out and sang the same song.

Those little fellows, I got a lump in my throat as big as an apple when they sang from the door of an orphanage to the house of the king. No longer an outcast, a new song I sang. From rags to riches, from the weak to the strong, I'm not worthy to be here, but praise God I belong.

I tell you, those little fellows, they weren't orphans because their dads and mothers were living, and that's worse, in the broken homes today. But they had been thrown out, and I just sat there and practically bawled watching that bunch of kids sing. They knew what this means.

I'm so glad, though, that my Lord said, I won't leave you comfortless orphans. Thank God we're not orphans. We belong to the family of God.

We need to recover that happy fellowship. Some people don't like church suppers, and I do think in some of our denominations, I'm including my own, I tell them we overdo it sometimes, but the church supper is a carryover from the old love feast of the early church. And if you can keep it in the spirit, that's all right, but if it becomes something like the Rotary Club and the PTA and the Country Club and all the rest of it, that's too bad.

I go from church to church and I find strife and divisions and contentions and petty squabbles. I know there aren't any perfect churches. There aren't any perfect families.

There was Corinth and Ephesus and Pergamum and Thyatira and Sardis, but there were also Smyrna and Philadelphia. Don't forget that. It is possible to be that good a church.

Do you belong to Smyrna? Do you belong to Philadelphia church? I don't mean the big city now. Or do you belong to Pergamum or Ephesus where they've left their first love and Sardis where they got a name to be alive and dead? Maybe you wouldn't like to tell. And one real trouble is we've got too many church

members who are not members of the family of God.

That's the bottom of a lot of your trouble today. You're trying to do God's work with some folks who are not God's people. And then the trouble may not be in the relationship, it may be in the fellowship.

Where a new race and a nation within a nation and a chosen generation and a royal priesthood and a peculiar, that doesn't mean queer. Some of the saints are queer, but that's not what this means. This means they purchased people.

God made a ring around you. That's what it means when he says he made a ring around you. You're one of his purchased people.

And we were never meant to be assimilated. You see the Jews, God's chosen people, and you can't assimilate a Jew. They're all over the world.

They've never been assimilated. They're in practically all the nations of earth, but they're still Jews. And Christians ought to be like that.

I said here yesterday that there's no culture, never has been a culture since Christianity started, where a real Christian can feel at home in this world. If you feel at home, that's where you belong. If you'd rather be at that crowd than God's crowd, that is your crowd.

Jesus told us in John 17, we've been saved out of this world, we're still in this world, but we're not of this world. We've been saved out of this world to go right back into this world, to win people out of the world, and that's the only business we have in this world. Now, if you can get located on that fringe, you're going somewhere.

That's what he said. We're just pilgrims. I was at Hampton Institute three springtimes ago, that great black college in Virginia.

I was there three days. I don't think I saw but two white folks all that time, and the strings are between four and five hundred black preachers. I tell you, I had the time of my life.

I preached so hard I lost one of my cuff links and never did find me. And the last night, they all sang farther along, we all know all about it, that great congregation. I sat there and patted my foot and bawled.

I didn't cry, I just bawled. They sang about 20 verses, and I wouldn't have cared if they'd sung 50. Over and over they sang.

They were pilgrims. They belonged to the family of God. I felt it in that meeting.

Now, it wasn't just the peculiar, blessed way our black friends can sing, great as that is. I felt they had some sermons there by preachers that were terrific. We were in the family.

Bless God we're not tramps. We know where we're going. Lord, I am with you.

He is. That's what makes the service. Every once in a while when I'm in meetings, some deacon gets up and prays, Lord, be with us this morning in this service.

I haven't asked God to be with us in 25 years in the service, because he is. Where two or three gather in my name, I'm there. And I thank the dear brethren and aunts.

Lord, make us aware of thy presence, or conscious of thy presence. My soul, if we could feel his presence tonight as well, I don't know when we'd ever get out of this place. Evan Roberts, the great Welsh revivalist, that boy from the mines that God used so wonderfully.

It got to where, though, the people were looking for Evan Roberts, and they didn't think they could have a good meeting if they didn't have Evan Roberts. And so one night there was this great throng, and he came in. Now the meeting was ready, and he got up and said, Do you believe there were two or three who gathered the Lord there? Amen! Do you believe he's here tonight? Hallelujah! Well, he said, You don't need me then.

He put on his hat and coat and left. That was a dramatic way of driving home the truth. The thing that matters is that God's here, and the Lord's here because he said he would be.

And it's not just a pretty phrase to roll under your tongue. If that's not true, beloved, nothing matters. If it is true, nothing else matters.

This is what really matters. And that's why we have so many droll meetings today. I believe that everything ought to be alive in our service for the Lord.

We're dealing with divine electricity, and I believe everybody ought to get a charge or a shock, one of the two. When you get a blessing, they'll go out charged, and if they didn't like it, they'll go out shocked. Mad, maybe, but anything's better than nothing.

Just going out, Lord, deliver us from that. I heard of a preacher who met one of his delinquent members down the street. He said, I haven't seen you for some Sundays.

No, he said, you know how it's been. Children have been sick, and it's rained and rained and rained. The preacher said, well, it's always dry at church.

Yeah, he said, that's another reason I haven't been here. It ought not be dry. Now, it says here that you'll have persecutions.

That goes into this deal. Have all this other with persecutions. Now, why did they throw that in there? How much persecution have you had on account of Jesus? All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, not some, all shall suffer persecution.

How much have you had? It doesn't mean just opposition. It doesn't mean just criticism. It doesn't mean ordinary trouble, because everybody has trouble.

It means the trouble that you have that you wouldn't have if you weren't a Christian. How much trouble have you had that you wouldn't have had if you hadn't been a Christian? Some people, every time they have a headache, they say, I'm bearing my cross. Well, an aspirin tablet will kill that.

That's not your cross. In the world you shall have tribulation. It's an odd word there in the original, flipsis.

You can hardly say it. And we've got a lot of flapsified people today, if you believe me, pressurized saints, under pressure. If we could get back to this blessed fellowship, along with the persecutions, what they started with, we'd discover that we're not beggars.

My Father is rich in houses and lands. He holdeth the wealth of the world in his hands. Though exiled from home, yet still I can sing all glory to God.

I'm a child of the King. All this, thank God, and heaven too. And in the world come eternal life.

Now, if you've been born again and filled with the Spirit and you're in love with the Lord, you're not a citizen of earth trying to get to heaven. You're a citizen of heaven trying to get through this world. And if only we were more conscious of the presence of a blessed Holy Spirit, it would transform every one of our meetings.

My friend Dr. Paul Rees has a winsome illustration about a boy's camp where each morning the fellows had to line up and recite the Apostles' Creed first thing in the morning. Each one was given one item in the Creed. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Jesus Christ his only Son, so on down the line.

One morning it started off as usual, but bulked up about halfway down the line. The thing came to a dead stop. And finally one of the boys said, The boy who believes in the Holy Ghost is not here this morning.

I'm afraid that's true of a lot of churches. I'm afraid we don't really expect him to be there and believe that he is. And see, we've got two extremes today.

The church is swinging all the way from St. Vitus to rigor mortis. One of the two. Some freeze and some fry.

And if it could only come to that blessed happy medium. How many of you folks ever heard Billy Sunday? Well, you're getting thin out there, I tell you. Few survivors yet.

Well, if you ever heard Billy Sunday describe the average midweek prayer meeting, you'd never forget it. Now, you don't know what you missed, but you didn't. So the thing started 15 minutes late to begin with.

And he called it the weekly, W-E-A-K-L-Y, weekly prayer meeting. About to die, really. No wonder it's a weekly prayer meeting.

And he said they start 15 minutes late and somebody gets up and says, Well, somebody please play the piano. And after what seems 10 minutes, some dear lady feels moved upon to play the piano. Takes her about 15 minutes to get down there and 10 minutes to twirl the piano stool up and another to twirl it back down.

The old stand-up and sing throw-out-the-life line. And he said they didn't have strength enough to put up a clothesline by all accounts. And then the leader gets up and says, Friends, I'm sorry, but I didn't have time to prepare anything.

He said, You didn't need to have said that. You could have told after you started, you hadn't prepared anything. Then they stand up and sing, Day is dying in the West.

He said, That's not the only thing dying. Oh, it maybe isn't quite that bad, but it shouldn't be anything like that bad. The great Welsh revival, the great Wesleyan revival.

Somebody said John Wesley came along at a remarkable time. The Puritans had all been buried and the Methodists hadn't been born. Well, that was a good time to come.

And when he got going, there was a man, oh, not long ago, I was in Brunswick, Georgia, in meetings. And right across that water there is the great campground where Wesley, who actually preached, came over there to convert the Indians, you know, and hadn't been converted himself. He was a pre-Odersgate preacher at that time.

But when he really had a confrontation with Jesus Christ, said all England, singing, Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise, they found out what they had in Jesus. And in the world to come, thank God. There's a little phrase in Hebrews in that chapter where everybody gets to arguing about eternal security every time they read it, and they forget some other good things in there, where it tells about those who have tasted the powers of the age to come.

Now, friends, you can taste a little bit of heaven before you ever get there. That's what the Bible says, the trees bend over the wall and you can pluck a little of the fruit. Now, that's what Fanny Crosby meant.

Blessed assurance, oh, what a foretaste of glory divine. You don't have to wait till you die. I remember preaching out in Texas.

The preacher who was with me was teaching the book of Job, and I preached on foretaste of glory one night, and then we started in his car for the hotel. And about halfway over there, all at once, we hadn't said a word, he began to sing that blessed line out of that dear old song, The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets. Before we reach the heavenly fields or walk the golden streets.

Now, marching to Zion, all right, but you don't have to wait till you get there to start enjoying some of it. And remember that you don't die before your time if you're in the will of God. I hear it said so and so, untimely death.

You don't have an untimely death when you're in the will of God. Somebody said the pay in God's service may seem rather small, but the retirement benefits are out of this world. That's the payoff, dear friend.

And think of that family reunion over there. If you can't get excited about that. Now I know that even the best of Christians are always a little old when you begin to think about the world to come.

We're on the verge of it, beloved, all the time. Just a few heartbeats, just a few breaths. And you're there, and you're human.

And since you don't know what's over there, and the Bible hasn't told us an awful lot about some of the details, there's an instinctive drawing back sometimes. But have you noticed how homey my Lord made it on that awful night when his enemies were ready to break in and drag him off to that horrible crucifixion? He could stand and say, let not your heart be troubled. In my Father's house there are many mansions, and I'm going to get them ready for you.

Well, that's just as homely as it can be. That's like going over to Grandma's Thanksgiving or Christmas. God's getting everything ready over there.

And one of these days we're going to have a marvelous family reunion of that family of God. The Father's house. Remember this, please.

I don't know where heaven is. It's not just the state. It's a place because Jesus went to heaven in a body.

He was somebody when he went up. And we're going up in bodies. People argue about, well, what about the, I know, those who have died in the Lord are spirits now with the Lord.

Disembodied, you say. But Alexander McLaren says if God can locate a spirit in a body, I suppose he could locate one without a body. There must be some form of manifestation.

And we'll be resurrection bodies one of these days in a place. Jesus was visible when he rose. He was touchable.

He talked. He ate some fish. He wasn't a ghost floating around for those 40 days.

We're going home to the Father's house for an eternal reunion. He's coming to get us. He came back at the resurrection.

There's a sense in which he comes when the saints die. But best of all, he's coming back, oh, glorious day, to receive the family of God. So we're headed for a great reunion.

Last Friday I went with two of my relatives up to a little mountain deep in the Carolina mountains, Burnsville, a little bitty town. They had an annual festival there. I never saw such a crowd of people and as much barbecued chicken and all the rest of it in my life.

And everybody was having a good time. It was orderly. It took me back 60 years to when I was a boy and used to go to the old reunions at the little courthouse county seat there in North Carolina.

And then I got to thinking, well, bless God, I'm headed for another one. One of these days we're going to have the great family get together. My Lord said, I'll come and get you.

Now, there are a lot of questions that rise. I want to talk one time before I leave here and give a message on why. It's not a great sermon.

I don't have any great sermons, but the Lord has blessed it. There's hardly a person here tonight who doesn't have in your life a why. Something's happened that you can't figure out.

Why, why, why? And I wish I might be helpful. So tell some other folks about it. Probably Sunday night.

I don't know why. But people say, why did this have to happen to me? And what's it like to babies grow up over there? Will we know each other? Foolish question. Do you think we've had less sense over there than we have here? Will we all just be alike and one won't be any more important than another? Because Jesus said over there they don't marry.

Well, he didn't mean by that that there wouldn't be a special love if you were married in the Lord here. I certainly sanctify the Lord. He's not going to dash it to the ground at death.

There is a spiritual continuity of all of this. I don't think we're going to look like a crate of eggs over there, everybody just exactly alike and won't make any difference. God's a God of variety.

Everything's not dull, flat, uniform. Everything's different. There wouldn't be so many beautiful colors.

That's not true. And when you went to grandpas and grandmas a long time ago, or maybe lately, but it's stationary.

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