

# Eternal Life - Ours Now

by Vance Havner

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of forsaking all for the sake of Christ and the present benefits of following Jesus, including a new family and a new home.*

**Duration:** 30:27

**Scripture:** Matthew 19:21-29, Mark 10:28-30, Mark 10:32, Luke 18:29-30

**Topics:** "Eternal Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the sacrifices and challenges that come with following Jesus. He emphasizes that while believers may face ridicule and persecution in this world, they gain a new family and a new life in the church. The preacher also shares a personal anecdote about braving the snow to illustrate the determination to live life fully. He references 1 Corinthians 7:29 to highlight the temporary nature of worldly possessions and relationships. The sermon concludes with a mention of Simon Peter's contradictory actions, including cutting off an ear in the garden, reminding listeners that even in the midst of important tasks, God cares for the smallest details.

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## Transcript

I read from Mark 10, and you have a similar passage in Matthew 19 and Luke 18, beginning with verse 28 of Mark 10. This follows immediately in the record, the incident of the rich young ruler and the great refusal. And I think that Simon Peter must have noticed that when that young man went away, and he sang in effect here, Lord, we didn't do like that fellow.

Then Peter began to say to him, Lord, lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And elsewhere we read that Peter said, What shall we have therefore? 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 gospels, but he shall receive an hundredfold 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. For many that are first shall be last, and the last first.

Peter has been called the most American of all the disciples. Yet everything he said in the gospels was a mistake. Let us build three tabernacles, this shall not be unto thee, thou shall never wash my feet, I will not deny thee.

No wonder it is, and Peter said not knowing what he said. But he did hear them out and talk one time, and he said, Thou art the Christ, son of the living God. And Jesus said, Now Peter, you didn't get that out of your head, flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee.

It didn't come by reason, but by revelation. But just a few verses further down, the same Lord who had said flesh and blood has not revealed this, says, Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. That's how quickly you can follow in a few verses, all the way from the mountain peaks of confession to the slumps of contradiction in a few verses.

That was Simon Peter. And in the garden, you know, he lopped off an ear of one of the servants of the high priest, and on an occasion like that, with a whole world to save, my Lord had to take time out for a repair job, right there in the garden. And even after Pentecost, he wavered in Antioch and was publicly reproved by Paul.

And that tells me that not even Pentecost, not even being filled with the Spirit and the gifts and all the rest of it, is insurance that you aren't going to make a big blunder later on somewhere. I'm glad I have some degree of agreement here. I think Peter noticed that rich young ruler walking away, and he said, Now, Lord, we haven't done like that.

What do we get? Got out his pad and pencil and started figuring on the fringe benefits. And our Lord answered with this marvelous statement that I've just read. And he says here, and I never hear much preaching about this, that we're not only going to have eternal life.

That comes in the last part of this statement. But before you get around to eternal life and the world to come, he says, In this life, right now, you're going to have a payoff. This is not pie in the sky.

This is present benefits. Now, what does it mean? It is spoken to a certain group. Not every Tom, Dick, and Harry.

You have a similar passage over in Luke 14, where our Lord said, verse 25, When great multitudes went with him, and he turned and said unto them, and gave them three canots. Now, that's a strange approach, but he used it. If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

And then number two, whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Then he gave two little illustrations, and there's a phrase in each of them that we don't seem to notice when we read over it. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost? Whether he have sufficient to finish it, lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, he 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 war against another king, sitteth not down first? God wants you to know what you are doing. Think it over. And consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand, or else, while the others are yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

Then canot number three. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Dr. A. T. Robertson, the great Greek scholar, said, Now this is the language of exaggerated contrast, but don't water it down until the point is gone.

That's a good warning. I know how comfortably we preachers explain this, and the way the saints take it. Jesus means we say that we should love him so much as all other loves, or as hatred in comparison.

Well, that's all right. But I think sometimes we take too much pleasure in getting through with it that quickly. There's a lot wrapped up in this.

Peter said, We've left all. Well, I believe if I'd been him, I wouldn't have bragged about it. All he gave up was an old boat and a few nets.

Lord, look what it's costed us to follow you. Now, sometimes it does cost a lot of temporal things. In some lands it has cost loss of family, and friends, and position, and possessions.

And if not actually, it must be attitudinally, you must lose it. Because I read in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 29, that this I say, Brethren, the time is short. It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none.

Now, this is the as though chapter. And they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it or using it to the full, for the fashion of this world passeth away. God may not ask you to give up these things, but you must be as though you didn't have them in relation to your relationship with Jesus Christ.

There must be that much difference. Jesus himself plainly said that not many rich people are going to heaven. There's no way getting around that.

Now, how hardly should they be rich. God hasn't got anything against rich people, but it's mighty hard for a rich man to be poor in spirit and be as though he didn't have it. That's the entire emphasis.

Now, the early Christians knew what it meant to give up everything for Christ in the gospel. They lived in danger, persecution, imprisonment, faced death. They were despised and scorned.

They were pilgrims in exile, strangers and aliens in an unfriendly world, the scum of the earth, a spectacle to the world for the scandal of the cross. How many volunteers would I get today for those three essays? Are you willing to be called the outscouring of all things, the scum of the earth? A theater, the word isn't the original, a laughing stock to this world for the scandal of the cross. Oh, he sang it easily enough to the old rugged cross, I'll ever be true with shame and reproach, gladly barren.

I get a little nervous when I watch a congregation of Americans on Sunday morning saying that's a glibly. What did Jesus mean in this life you're going to be paid off? Well, these early disciples found that while they lost this world, they gained a new one, not only in the hereafter, but right now. In the church, they found a new family in the Lord, and they met in homes.

They didn't have any church buildings. They had their love feasts. They found new fathers and mothers in the Lord, new brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Jesus said in Matthew 12 50, Whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and there's your family. And Paul said, give my greetings to Rufus and his mother and mine. I didn't mean his mother, but Rufus' mother had been like a mother to Paul.

So he had a mother in that godly woman. I know what this means. I started out as a youngster to preach.

I was a teenager, and homes, godly homes, opened their doors to me, and I was practically made one of the family. I'll never forget it. What an encouragement it was.

I remember one home where they had a house full of girls, and they wanted me to sort of be the boy of the family. And I guarantee you, I did not hesitate to join that family. I have found beloved in Jesus Christ the new family, mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers, and I have sons and daughters in the gospel.

I get letters from all about across these years, 63 years of preaching, reaps a harvest, you cast your bread on the waters and it comes back, and I have a whole flock of namesakes. I wish I could get that bunch together. I guess I'll never do it, this side of glory.

But every once in a while, I'll run into a new vant somewhere, said my parents, read your book, or we're in a meeting somewhere or something. Well, you know how it was a year ago. You folks, and I want to say a great big thank you right now, those folks listening in and you, because when I got out of the hospital after I got back and spent a few days there and got back to my apartment, there was a stack of cards and letters all over the floor from you wonderful people, and I want to say a great big thank you for that.

It came from the family, just from the family writing to me. I've been strolling around this place, been a long time since my first visit here, and as I've said already, the first little walk I took over this way thought about the great giants of God that I knew back then, and preached here, and now they're in glory. Went down to the Billy Sunday home, thought about when I went there and looked over his outlines, and Mo Sunday gave me one of his neckties, and I've got it yet, but you have to have more than Billy Sunday's necktie to preach like Billy Sunday, I can tell you that.

And then down to Rainbow Point for my dear friend Homer Rodeheaver, had me as a guest so many times, and Sarah was with me some of the times, and one summer when she was quite ill and not able to be with me, and her birthday came that week, and bless my heart if he didn't call her up long distance, that's just like Rodian sang happy birthday, my my she never got over that. She told about that everywhere she went the rest of the day. You see, we've got a lot right here friend, you have to wait till you get to glory to start enjoying this, and well you say how about houses and lands, and we don't get into real estate on this deal do we? Well, now wait a minute, when the home is thrown open to you, and over this land I've been said now this is just make this your home, it's just like your home, that's part of it.

My Bible says the meek shall inherit the earth, somebody said that's the only way they'd ever get it, well we're going to get it because it belongs to us, that's what it says. Sometimes when I get to a new place I stroll around, I get into some of these fancy dwelling areas, you know, residential districts, and I run into signs keep out, keep off the grass, and all the rest of it, and I say that's all right, you can have it now, but it's coming to me one of these days. I say friend, you've got the lease, but I've got the deed.

The meek shall inherit the earth. We've got a great preacher, I don't know whether he's ever been up this way, a mighty man in Texas, I believe, has known one conference with me, and that's when this God is dead business is going around, and he said if God's dead, why wasn't I notified? I'm one of the family, and yet, strangely enough, you have nothing and you have everything, that's what Paul said. Did you know you could have nothing and everything both at the same time? I don't worry trying to figure that out, mathematically that's the way it is, and that puts you in a wonderful spot.

The devil can't do a thing in the world with a person that's got all that and nothing. You say I'll give you this and I'll give you that, the Christian says you can't, you've got everything, and makes you mad, says I'll take

this away and I'll take that, the Christian 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 over his head, what are you going to do with a fellow like that? Paul said I've suffered the loss of all things, and then he turns right around and tells us what we have, and of course if we had it, he had it, all things are yours.

Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life, death, things present, things to come, everything's yours but one thing, and that's you. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Now the early church was a happy family, the most wonderful fellowship this world has ever known, still is when it's living right, and it ought to be, I know it has problems, always has had, they had them in the New Testament.

But you ask any brand new Christian who's just come into all this, why he hardly knows how to control himself with the joy of being in the family of the Lord. I remember a meeting in Richmond where a fellow got saved and joined the church first Sunday morning, and he came every night. He didn't know any better.

Some of the deacons didn't make it, but he was right there. He didn't understand, you know, and in my prayers sometimes I'd say, Lord help him not to catch on. You're supposed to enjoy.

I'm so glad I'm part of the family of God. I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by the blood, joined as with Jesus as I travel this sod. I'm so glad I'm part of that family of God.

Then he goes on to say in that song, you'll notice we say brother and sister down 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 this year.

I grew up in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains away out there in the country and we had a little church about a mile up the road and my father was the preacher's right arm. When the preachers came in those horse and buggy days, we only had one sermon a month on the fourth Sunday, just one sermon a month. Some of them were long enough to last a month, but we only had one sermon a month and they always stayed at my house, our house.

And father would keep that preacher up for midnight trying to get information about the things of God. I tell you that preacher earned his bed and board staying at our house because father worked him for all he could find out. But do you know those preachers never called my father Mr. Hattner, never called my mother Mrs. Hattner, his brother Hattner, sister Hattner.

That's about gone out these days, but it could stand a revival I think. The church needs to get back to that happy fellowship. Some folks fuss about church suppers.

I know you can overdo it. I've heard about poor as a church mouse. I don't know of anything getting fatter than the church mouse is these days.

I know you can overdo it, but actually when the church gets together for a supper, it's a carryover from the love feasts of earlier days. I go from church to church now and I find strife and divisions and contentions. Some of them started out as a melting pot and have turned into a pressure cooker.

And my, how they need a revival. And I feel like they ought to have some kind of a love feast around that place. I don't know any perfect churches.

I don't know any perfect families. Sometimes folks in the family don't act like they ought to. I heard of an old couple in a rest home and she couldn't hear well and he was trying to cheer her up.

And he said, I'm proud of you. She said, hey. He said, I'm proud of you.

She said, he didn't get it. He said, I'm proud of you. Oh, she said, I'm tired of you too.

No, it ought not be that way. It just ought not be that way. And it ought not be that way in the church either.

Oh, we've got something to be happy about. You see this in every revival. You see it in every new church.

Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love. The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above. That's it.

Before our Father's throne, we pour our ardent prayers, our fears, our hopes, our angels, on our comfort and our cares. We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear, and often for each other flows the sympathizing care. You know what that means.

This is family life, the church family. And when we ascend apart, it gives us inward pain and we shall still be joined in heart and hope to meet again. We've lost it to some degree in some of the fellowships.

We need to get it back. I don't think we're as aware of the presence of the Spirit of God. I heard of a boy's school where they lined up the youngsters every morning and they had to recite the Apostles' Creed before they could have classes.

And they gave each one one segment, I believe in God the Father Almighty and so on down the line. Well, one morning they stopped dead in the middle of the Apostles' Creed. And the silence was profound.

One boy spoke up and said, the boy who believes in the Holy Ghost is not here this morning. I think I've been in a lot of churches where I'm afraid some of them didn't believe in the Holy Ghost. I think it ought to make us happy.

I thank God for that old country church. I sat there as a boy and wondered. Those were farmer folks, praying people.

It would have scared them to death to make a talk. But when they got there on the ten o'clock service hour or in the evening and began to realize whose they were and whom they served, they got so happy they lost their inhibitions, went over the place, shaking hands with each other and thanking God for each other. I've been doing that in some of my meetings lately.

I've tried a new thing. I was in a church the other day that has a wonderful history. One of the buildings, all of it burned down a few months ago and they had to meet in other buildings except one building where Thomas Jefferson used to play fiddle.

And I didn't know whether these folks would like this sort of approach or not. But do you know, losing their church had melted them together. And out of tragedy had come a new kinship and I said, now I want you to go around over the club, forget about the song.

We're going to start out singing, blessed be the tie of bond. I don't know what's going to happen to the song. But tell folks what they mean to you.

Tell that person that they just mixed all over the place, going to the preacher, to me and to each other. I saw men hug each other in thanksgiving to God for fellowship and women and young people. Well, I know these things have been neglected and sometimes they can be overdone, but my friend, we are a new race in the holy nation and a royal priesthood.

The Jews were God's chosen people and they were not meant to be assimilated and they haven't been to this day. That's a miracle. All through these centuries and it's because there's still a future for them under God, nationally as I believe.

And Christians are God's purchased people. The word means to make a ring around. When God saved you, made a ring around you and you belong to him.

And as such, well, to make the most of it, my dear wife loved good music, the best music, but her favorite song was a little thing the quartet sang, This World Is Not My Home, I'm Only Passing Through. And she lived like that. Oh, I was down in Hampton, Virginia at that great black college about two years ago.

They asked me to come and preach for three days to between 400 and 500 black preachers. I had the time of my life. And yet to preach myself to death.

I tell you, I preached so hard, lost one of my cuff links, never did find it. And that last night when that great congregation sang Father Alone, we'll know all about it. I tell you, I sat over there and patted one foot and just bawled.

I didn't cry. And I could have thanked myself for not having my recorder along. I'd give anything in the world if I had.

They sang about 15 or 20 verses of it. It was over and over and over. And I wouldn't have cared if it was sung 50.

We're going somewhere, folks. I hope you're not stuck. I hope you're in motion.

And then it says, In the world to come, eternal life. I haven't got time to go into another close here with persecutions, but remember that's part of this deal. Have you ever suffered any persecution for Jesus' sake? And in the world to come, eternal life.

And you talk about a homecoming. We're going to have one. We are all a little awed by the thought of death, even Christians.

This is the only world we've ever known, and you can't help sometimes wondering, well, now when this body goes out of business, what's going to happen to what's left of me, my spirit? What will the next five minutes be like? I'm sure you think about that sometimes. That's only natural. You don't need to get bothered about that.

But my dear Lord, may it sound so homey. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. I'm going to get a place ready, and then I'll come back and get you.

But where I am, well, he was on earth when he said that, but that's home. Where I am, there ye may be also. It's a place somewhere.

It's not a state of mind. It's a place. We're going to be there in bodies.

Jesus went home in a body. He didn't go to heaven, a glorified ghost. He could eat.

He could talk. He had a body. You could touch him.

Would it be like that in the Father's house? Our spirits shall be with the Lord? You say, well, what's that like? I don't know. Disembodied. I don't know what all that means.

But old Alexander MacLaren said, if God can locate a spirit in a body, I suppose he can locate one without a body. And I think that makes sense. I think the Lord didn't tell us an awful lot about the future state, because he knew we couldn't take it in now.

You've not got the paraphernalia to comprehend that right now. So he told us all we could stand, and I thank God for that. And I think we ought to in a way, in the best sense of that phrase, take it for granted that everything's all right, and on the basis of what we've been told, and that the judge of all the earth will do right, because I read 1 Corinthians 15, 22, now we see through a glass as in a mirror, as in a riddle.

But then, we'll know as we're known, the riddle and the reality. Now it's a riddle. It's going to be a reality.

And we'll be bodies in a place, and we're on our way to our family reunion. Some of you remember in the old days when Grandma stayed around, you know, they didn't put her in a rest home. We went home to Grandma's.

Do you realize, my friends, that today there are kids by the thousands and thousands and thousands in this country who will never get to go to Grandma's? Those kids don't even know who Grandma and Grandpa were, and thousands of them don't even know who Dad and Mother were. Now, we've got a new generation on our hands. I was down in Florida a winter before last, and one night a bunch of kids from a children's home came to sing.

They gripped my soul. They sang that other verse out of this, from the door of the orphanage to the house of a king, no longer an outcast, the new song I sang, from rags and the riches, from the weak to the strong, I'm not worthy to be here, but praise God I belong. And those little youngsters sang that song, and at that for all they were worth, and I got a lump in my throat as big as an apple as I sat there listening.

Well, I'm glad my Lord said, I will not leave you orphans. That's what the Greek says, and I'm glad it says that. Because it's a mighty big family, that's what Ephesians 3.15 means, the family, and God the Father, after whom the whole family in heaven and earth, for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

Some of them over there, and some of them down here. Don't worry about some of these things we don't understand yet. People say, well, I don't.

How it be that Jesus said, in heaven and earth, married and are given in marriage, and some folks have trouble about that, because they think that raises complications, especially with that woman that had, how many husbands was it? Well, anyhow, they get a little uneasy about that. Well, my friend, if your marriage is in the Lord, and whatever is in the Lord is going to be preserved, you may be sure of that. Dr. Broder said, there is nothing here to forbid the persuasion that the relations of the earth and the life will be remembered in the future state, the persons will be recognized, and special affections will be cherished with delight.

And I believe that with all of my soul. Last winter, I even don't like to bring up that winter, by way of memory. But I got out one day, even down in North Carolina, it was rough, and I took off for a walk in that snow, and they said, you better not go, you might fall or break a hip.

I'm not going to spend the rest of my days just because I'm over looking out the window and everything. I'm going to get out. So I got out.

I had a fall, but it didn't break my hip. And I found myself saying, with prettier yet love will dream, and faith will trust, since he who knows our need is just, that somehow, somewhere meet we must. Alas for him who hath not learned in hours of faith, that truth to flesh and sense unknown, that life is ever lord of death, and love can never lose its own.

I believe that with my heart. And eternal life, all this, and heaven too, friend. I hope you realize what a plutocrat you are this morning.

But let me say one thing. That eternal life doesn't begin over there. It begins here.

If you don't have it here, you won't have it over there, and if you don't have it now, you won't have it then. You don't have to die to get it. You lose it if you die without it.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. And so I'm thankful. And I'll see you at the reunion, when we all get together on that great getting up morning, put on our Easter outfits, and meet we must.

For Christians never meet for the last time. Now stand. Thank you Lord, thank you Lord, for what we have now and what's coming.

We thank you in Jesus name. Amen.

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