

Forget Not His Benefits

by Vance Havner

Vance Havner's sermon emphasizes the importance of embodying Christ's nature and living authentically as His followers in a challenging world.

Duration: 30:18

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 10:34, John 3:16, Acts 17:6, Romans 12:2, 1 John 4:17, Revelation 1:18

Topics: "Healing"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the verse 1 John 4:17, 'as he is, so are we in this world.' He emphasizes that John, as a New Testament writer, has a unique ability to convey profound truths in simple terms. The preacher breaks down the verse into three divisions of three words each, highlighting its simplicity and importance. He discusses how Jesus, as the same yesterday, today, and forever, calls for believers to live in the reality of their identity in Christ and not treat it as a fairy tale. The preacher also emphasizes the need for believers to be actively engaged in the world, sharing the love of Christ and winning others to Him.

Transcript

The, uh, text is found in 1 John 4, 17. As he is, so are we in this world. Of all the New Testament writers, John states the greatest truths in the simplest terms.

He closes profundity with simplicity. This text is a fair sample. As he is, so are we in this world.

You can't say it in any shorter words, and you can't say a greater truth in any words than that. Now, this is only part of a passage that has many glorious, uh, applications, but I'm going to lift these nine little words out of the context, and they fall apart into three divisions of three words each. And you won't have any trouble remembering it, and I hope you will apply it.

As he is. It doesn't say as he was. Between the eternity of yesterday that never had a beginning, and the eternity of tomorrow that'll never have an end, stands Jesus Christ the same.

There's only one thing that Jesus ever was. I am he that liveth and was dead. Behold, I am alive forevermore.

He died, but he's not dead now. After they buried him, I think Pilate and Herod and Caiaphas must have rubbed their hands and said, well, that takes care of him. But it didn't, because he could take care of

himself.

They had put a big stone in front of that sepulcher, put a seal on it, and soldiers around it, but neither stones nor seals nor soldiers amount to anything when a mighty angel comes down from heaven. And that's what happened. And I read that the angel rolled the stone away, and I like what the Holy Spirit adds.

It says he sat on it. Then he climbed up there and said, now look who's in charge around here. Oh, I thank God for the way this is described.

Jesus is the eternal contemporary before Abraham was. I am. John saw him in the flesh, and then John saw him in his resurrection body, and then he saw him in his glorified body, and that knocked him out, fell flat.

And Jesus said, fear not. I am he that liveth and is dead, and am alive forevermore. Don't be afraid.

I was here before there ever was anything to be scared of. You'll be here after everything that you are scared of is gone, so there isn't anything to be afraid of. I think sometimes on a Sunday morning, in any church, if we could have just one little glimpse of the glorified Lord, it might knock us out.

And that might be good for us. And I guarantee you we'd go out of church that morning talking differently from saying the silly things we sometimes say the minute we get out the door. Jesus said to him, poor old John sitting out there on that rock in the water, and the only apostle living, he said, now John, I'm going to give you a preview of the future.

What's to happen? Well, that's spending a while over there on Patmos to find that out and to see it. And so he was ready. And all he had seen for years was water, water, water, not a drop to drink, sea everywhere.

And Jesus said, now here's my preview of what's coming. And the last chapter in it was the new Jerusalem. It comes down from God out of heaven.

And there was no more sea. I think John must have said that's the best thing you've said yet, Lord. No more sea.

I've seen all the sea I want to see. I don't want to see any more of it. Thank God for that.

All the Messiahs of this world have died and they've been buried and they're still buried. And they make pilgrimages to some of their tombs, but we don't visit the grave of our Lord for that purpose. He's not in it anyhow.

They have a sepulchre. Therefore, some think he was buried. I don't know.

I don't think anybody knows. But he's not in it. No mortal can with him compare among the sons of men.

Fairer is he than all the fair who fill the heavenly train. The infinitudes of Jesus Christ see to it that he's never in the past tense. He forever is.

He forever can say, I am. As he is, so are we. The next three words.

You mean us? Folks like us? Yes, thank God. If we're Christians, if we've been born again, if we have the new nature within us, so are we. Like him? Yes.

Not in degree, but in kind. And if we are partakers of that divine nature. Doesn't say here, as he is, so should we be.

Doesn't say so may we be. Doesn't say so shall we be. It says we are.

To me to live is Christ. We are both beings and becomeings. We are a new creature and we're saved, but we're constantly becoming, I hope, more like our Lord.

And our position is fixed, but our condition ought to improve. I know what some of you are saying. You say, but I don't see many folks that bear the slightest resemblance to him.

Well, now, hold everything a minute. Maybe you've been looking at too many ordinary church members that never have been born again. Or others that are just babes, never have grown any.

You see, every church has two nurseries. Has one for the babies. Then they ought to have one for the 40-year-olds and over.

200-pounders and over. That causes more trouble than all the babies do. Fussy, fussy, fussy.

They've been spoon-fed so long. When a new preacher comes along, they say, I don't like him. He changed my formula.

That's just like a baby. I read in Galatians 4.19, My little children, of whom I travail in birth, again, until Christ be formed in you. Potentially we're like him, but some of us are stunted, and that's our fault.

Oh, if we'd only be what we are. You are the soul of the earth. It doesn't say you should be.

We are the light of the world. Why don't we decide one day to get down to business about being what we are in the sight of God? As he is, so are we in this world. You mean here? This old rat race? This Sodom and Gomorrah? Yes, not just that church on Sunday.

Anybody can look pretty pious then. We wear our church mask sometimes on Sunday, and to look at us, you'd think we were ready to sprout wings and take off to the angelic realms above. But we don't live up to it sometimes, do we? It doesn't mean in some pious spot, some Shangri-La, far from the maddening crowds of the ignoble strife, but right in these old salt mines down here, right now, we are as he is.

And that's a goal, but it's also to be a reality. Jesus lived in this world, and he had nowhere to lay his head. In the 17th chapter of John, he got us located down here.

And if you'll ever read that high priestly prayer carefully, you'll find out we've been saved out of this world. We're still in the world, but we're not of the world. But we've been saved out of the world to go right back into the world, to win other people out of the world.

And that's the only business we've got in this world. Now you get all that together, and you'll know where you are. But most of our folks haven't done that.

They haven't done that. They're too much like it. I grew up out in the woods practically.

Some folks think I would never have come out. But I said, let me walk in the fields. He said, no, live in the town.

I said, there are no flowers there. He said, no flowers but a crown. I said, but the sky is dark and there's only noise and din.

But he wept because he sent me back. There's more, he said. There's sin.

And because there is, I've got to be out there. I don't like it sometimes. I like the solitudes and the quiet places.

But as he is, so are we in this world. There's a song that you know, but it's got two versions. And I've been much concerned about it.

So send I you. Now down south in our baptismal book at my church, we've got the other version. And I'm not criticizing it.

It's nice. It says good things. But this word of John Peterson is classic.

I think it's the best thing he ever wrote. And I asked Cliff Barrows the other day down in Florida. I said, Cliff, how come we've got one of these in our book and up north they've got the other one in their book? Well, he went in, I forget just how he accounted for that.

But I asked Martha Branham who was from First Church Dallas who was singing in Virginia Beach in my meeting there. Martha, how is that? And she ventured a suggestion. But I think at the bottom of all of it is that while the other version's all right, the original one's a little bit too strong for some of us weak Christians these days.

So send I you to labor unrewarded. Who wants to do that? To serve unpaid, unsold, unknown. To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing.

To toil for me alone. So send I you to bind the bruised and broken. Or wandering souls to work, to weep, to wait.

To bear the burden of a world of weary. So send I you to suffer for my sake. That's easy to sing, but who wants to do that? So send I you to loneliness and longing with heart a-hungering for the loved and known that are now gone.

Forsaking home and kindred, friends and dear ones. So send I you to know my love alone. And this one, I used to go down to Hampton Du Bois Academy in Florida a lot.

It was a home and a school for missionaries' children back in the old days. And in the days before I traveled, when the missionaries had to go to Africa or elsewhere in a boat, they'd bring their children there and leave them and not see them again until they were half grown. And you talk about a heart twister.

That was it. Now they can take the whole family along a couple hours and they're over there. Now we still have some who are living up to this.

Don't misunderstand me. But it's difficult today to get the spirit and the tempo of this thing. So send I you to hearts made hard by hatred.

To eyes made blind because they will not see. To spend though it be blood. To spend and spare not.

So send I you the taste of character. You see, this is the day of Horatio Alger of Christianity. You older folks used to read the Horatio Alger books.

They don't know anything about them now. But this boy starts out and works for the boss and marries his daughter. He and his wife live happily ever after and everything works out just fine.

That's wonderful. And I used to think, oh boy, that's terrific. But I found out that we are not all Horatio Algers and it doesn't end up with everybody a millionaire.

But we've got a new kind of Christianity being preached over the country. Be a Christian, you'll get rich. Have a big car, live in a big house and everything will be just wonderful.

Peaches and cream. You make Jesus Lord. Now, this old version is almost incomprehensible to a crowd of church members today.

Just like it is when they stand and sing so carelessly to the old rugged cross I'll ever be through. It's shame and reproach gladly there. And I say, Lord, help us.

Do we know what we're doing? I wonder about it. Well, you say God wants us to succeed. Yes, if you know what success is.

George Truitt said success is finding out the will of God and doing it as best you can. That's simple. But that's what success is.

A lot of people never do that. And then these positive thinkers today, bless their heart. I believe in positive and negative thinking.

The old book's double barrel. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, that's positive. Make not provision for the flesh, that's negative.

We need both of them. I don't believe that sort of business. Doesn't come that easy.

The Lord didn't say to Paul, now, Paul, you've been faithful, and we're going to let you retire now on a salary. We're going to let you get your cottage on the Riviera and write your memoirs over there. I don't even think about that in the book, sat in the jail waiting to have his head chopped off.

And the five leading characters in the New Testament, with the exception of one old-eyed violent Debs, my New Testament doesn't read like some of the things I'm hearing now. Have you ever asked yourself, how much am I like Jesus in this world? There's an article by a Methodist preacher, you know, some years ago, they celebrated Alder's Gate. And he wrote a piece, and for one of that crowd, and speaking as bluntly as he did, I was charmed by it.

What happened to Alder's Gate? He said, no, the trouble is, we're saying if we can find a reasonable facsimile of Alder's Gate today, something that'll correspond to it, we can do as big a job as Wesley did. No, you're not looking for a reasonable facsimile. You've got to have what he had, a meeting with God in reality.

And that shook the world. He came along when the Puritans had all been buried and the Methodists hadn't been born. That was a rough time.

But when he started out, he knew something in his heart. His heart was strangely warm. Now, I get bothered about this these days.

We've got a generation of church members who want all the medals, but they don't want any scars. Amy Carmichael says something about that. I can't remember the poem, but the Lord is quoted there as though he were saying, the crowd that follows me has got feet that are bruised and battered, and yours are whole.

Can he have traveled far who has no wound and no scar? If you haven't got some scars, you haven't been down the road very far. I can appreciate what I've been hearing lately, a good deal from different sources, about that dear pastor who got up one Sunday morning to preach and look down at the order of service, same old 6 and 7, doxology invocation number 25, so on all the way down there, bowed his head and said, Lord, Lord, give us something this morning that's not on this program. I feel that way with all my heart today.

One of the leaders, one of the great religious leaders, I don't agree with everything that he said, but what turned him around was one day he was in one of these dead, dull, dry, dismal, desolate meetings, and it got him. He said he couldn't help saying, Lord, this can't be it. Jesus Christ didn't die for this.

He didn't come down here to give us nothing any better than this. That works on me sometimes. I say, Lord, this thing's a farce.

I'm like that little kid. Maybe I told you about it before when I was here. I don't worry much about repeating on things like that.

But he was at church, and the preacher was through, but he wouldn't quit. And this kid had looked through the songbook, and that wasn't exciting. He'd drawn all the pictures he could think of, and that wasn't exciting.

He said, Mama, what's that flag up there in the pulpit over on that side? Well, that's the American flag, son, you know that. What's the other one? Well, that's the Christian flag. What's that little one with all the stars in it? That's the service flag for those who have died in the service.

He said, the morning service or the evening service. I don't blame him. I felt that way myself.

I know that I'm an old man and supposed to be sort of grandfatherish, although I don't have any grandchildren, and I'm supposed to be taking everything. I can't take it easy in a time like this. And if I get to where I can, I hope I'll have sense enough to be converted or quit or do something about it because I'm supposed to be in my rocking chair drawing my Social Security.

I don't know how much longer I'm going to get it. But anyhow, drawing it now. And I'm not going to worry about the thing because I'm in better hands than the U.S. government.

I'm in the hands of Almighty God. And I'm not afraid of the giants of the land. Oh, I get a lot of encouragement out of Caleb.

He made it to 85, you know, when he said this, and I'll soon catch up with him. He said, I want a mountain. I don't want a molehill.

Give me a mountain. And they said, you don't want that mountain. They got giants all over the place.

And they were so fierce that when we saw them, we were as grasshoppers in their sight and so were we in our own sight. That's right. If you think you're a grasshopper, everybody else is going to second the motion.

You can be sure of that. He said, I want to go and take it. Moody came back from his first campaign in England.

They said, how did all those big preachers, what did you think those great preachers, you haven't had any education, and the greatest Scotsman and the greatest Englishman in the preaching line were there. He said, they looked just like grasshoppers. Now, he wasn't throwing off on them.

He had in mind Caleb. He meant when you team up with the Almighty, why the VIPs and everybody else don't take on too much significance. Oh, I thank God for that.

I think of that meeting in Korea where the missionaries preached and then said, now you can go home, get your rest. And they wouldn't leave. The missionaries said, the meeting's over.

And they said, we can't go. We couldn't sleep tonight. You've told us that God so loved the world that he gave his son that if we believe in him we can live forever.

How can we sleep tonight and know that? My soul, we'd go to sleep listening to it over here. What's it going to take to wake us up and bring us back to acting as though these things were true and not a fairy story? You say, well, but Jesus, when he was here, went about quietly and didn't disturb things much. I don't know where you are in the crowd, but if you're here, where have you been? Because Jesus Christ caused more turmoil than anybody else who ever has walked through this earth.

He was a stumbling stone and a rock of offense and said, I didn't come to bring peace with a sword. And he created a crisis and a commotion. And people had to take a stand one way or the other.

Does this offend you, he said to them. He offended the Pharisees. And they were offended in him.

This is the crisis that light has come into the world. And men love darkness rather than light. We're on the spot tonight, but we've heard it so much, we're so used to it, it doesn't shake us much anymore.

Christians need to recreate the crisis. It's already there. I was pastor for five years of the oldest Baptist church in the South.

They're getting ready to celebrate their 300th anniversary. And back then, the pastor who followed me was telling me about George Whitefield. Visited Charleston a long time ago and preached.

Wesley came through, 1683. It's a long time back. I was not pastor at that time, of course.

But my successor said the bishop wouldn't let him preach in the Episcopal church, which was his church. He was Church of England, practically, when he came. But he said, you get outdoors and preach.

And he did. The bishop's name was Alexander. And so, Alexander got up on Sunday and preached and said, They that have turned the world upside down have come here too.

That was his take. Old Whitefield got up and preached on Alexander the Coppersmith hath done me much evil. I tell you, they had some whatever it takes in those days.

And they went about it and did earnest. A.J. Gordon had a great church in Boston. God made it over by the Holy Spirit.

Some of them called it the Saints' Everlasting Rest at the beginning before this upheaval happened. And then Moody came and pitched his preaching place right close to that old moss-covered place. And sinners began getting saved.

And some of them wanted to join over there. And it gave that church a blood transfusion. And they came to life.

It had never been the same sin. We need some of that today. It's too dull and dead and dreary.

Jesus had a hard time here. But this world is not our home. But we're in it.

My dear wife's favorite song. She loved good music. But her favorite was that little quartet they sang so much.

This world is not my home. I'm only passing through. And Jesus said, and it's the only verse I know.

It's in John. John said more about this world than anybody else in the Bible. John 19, five times in one verse.

Did you know that? If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you're not of the world, but I've chosen you out of the world, therefore you're popular? No. Therefore the world hates you.

It's about time we got located. And if you're under any illusions and saying, well, but the world is more kindly disposed toward Jesus today. Where'd you get that? You try being a New Testament Christian for a week today.

Really. And you'll make a discovery. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world.

Please remember this. I don't have time to go into it. His friends are our friends.

And who are his friends? You are my friends if you do what I tell you to do. It's not a sentimental thing. It's a matter of obedience.

Of course, there's love with it. But let's get the thing straight. And ask yourself, how am I doing in relation to this text? Am I an advertisement of Jesus? Lord, help me to live like it, for as he is, so are we in this world.

Lord, we thank thee that thou didst get us established in a verse like this, and we find out whose we are and where we are and what to do. Now may this word not go in one ear and out the other of any listener here, but may we seriously do something about it. To the glory of God and the good of men we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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