

# O Glorious Day

by Vance Havner

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of faithfulness and perseverance in ministry, and the need for old-fashioned preaching that sticks to the plain gospel.*

**Duration:** 30:22

**Scripture:** Psalm 66:16-20, Proverbs 3:5

**Topics:** "Faithfulness To God", "Eternal Salvation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on his 64 years in ministry and shares his observations. He emphasizes that despite advancements in technology and knowledge, the core truths of sin, judgment, salvation, and eternity remain unchanged. The preacher encourages the audience to pursue a closer walk with God, but warns that the devil will oppose and bring trouble. He shares personal experiences and quotes from influential Christian figures to emphasize the importance of preaching the plain gospel and staying faithful to God's calling.

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## Transcript

I want to express my appreciation to this church for this gracious occasion and for the extra feature of making my books available. I do not sell my books and do not push them. I'm not ashamed of them.

They're half of my ministry, but I never have had much to say about them. I'm getting to where I'm a little nervous about having written so many. I'm reminded of the author who asked a friend of his, have you read my last book, and he said, I hope so.

But I'm not sure I've written my last one. One never knows. But several years ago you had the most gracious day here for me, and I haven't forgotten that, and I treasure the memory of it.

This church has some remarkable characteristics. I don't know many that have had such long tenure for pastors as you have for the last two before the president, and I hope he'll last as long. I think Dr. McEachin said that he felt like he was beginning a life sentence when he came here after the long terms before him, but I hope he makes it.

You know, you have to live a long time to last through two pastors at this place. I came in under Dr. Turner and lived through the Bowen administration, but I don't know how far I'll get in the next one, but I'm still here anyhow. I've been an awfully delinquent member.

I'm sorry I'm gone so much, and when I'm here I try to hide usually. You know, you just have to once in a while when you're goldfishing the bowl all the time before the public, and I think you folks have been very understanding. I was just saying for Brother Ray that I can't help saying now, and I know he may want to pull my coattail and make me sit down, but I appreciate any man who can stay this long at the church, and it speaks well for him and for you too.

Sometimes, you know, folks get tired of each other even in the marriage relationship. I heard of an old couple in a rest home that she couldn't hear not well, and he was trying to make her feel better, and he said, I'm proud of you, and she said, hey, and he said, I'm proud of you, and she said, I didn't get it. He said, I'm proud of you, and she said, I'm tired of you too.

Sometimes it works out like that, but I don't find a lot of that here in the pastorate. We're having too many two-year preachers these days, and I like to see men that can stay with it in the pastorate and on the staff, and it speaks well, and I think it glorifies God. Now tonight, if you don't mind, I'm not going to preach a regular sermon.

I think sometimes we like for a man to tell us what happened to him, if anything did. We don't just want his opinions. I don't care a lot about what this man thinks about this and what he thinks about something else, but I do find myself saying, has anything happened to you? Tell us about that, and I'd like to leave with you a testimony, and I don't know of any more appropriate text than Psalm 66, beginning with verse 16.

Come and hear, O ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extoled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me, but verily God hath heard me.

He hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me. After 64 years in the ministry, I feel like I'm entitled to make a few observations, maybe.

I think I'm entitled. I'm going to make a few, whether I'm entitled or not. With your kind indulgence, I'd like to reminisce just a little.

At my age, we're supposed to be in a rocking chair drawing our Social Security and reminiscing about the good old days that weren't so good, after all. But you know a distance lends enchantment to the view. It always looks better some other time.

Somebody wrote to a newspaper editor and said, your paper's not as good as it used to be, and he answered, it never has been. And you feel that way about the good old days sometimes. But my memories begin not too far from here, an old home which I still hold on to, on top of a hill between Hickory and Shelby, with a view at night of the lights at Hickory, Newton, Conover, Maiden, and Lincolnton like footlights around the stage on the east.

On the west, as a boy, I could see Table Rock, Grandfather Mountain, and all the peaks of the Blue Ridge standing like silent sentinels along the western skyline. And it had an effect on me, I think, looking both directions, to what man had done in the east, and what God had done, and what was far more permanent on the west. The period before 1914 was called, in one of our newer books, the good years.

Some of you remember that. But America turned a corner in 1914, World War I began, and we've never been the same again. Something happened.

God was giving us some signals, I think. Mordecai Ham used to say that one of them was the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. That was such a strange thing.

It was a ship that couldn't sink, and the only thing it ever did was sink on the very first trip. It was a strange tragedy indeed. They had all kinds of folks aboard.

They had millionaires, and at least two couples of them went down, man and wife, together because she said, I've been with him all these years and I won't leave him now. I'm not going into the lifeboat. As it went down gradually, the band kept playing something I'm afraid they hadn't rehearsed much, nearer my God to thee.

The strange thing about it was that it did the very thing it wasn't supposed to do, and all on account of a plain old hunk of ice out in the middle of the ocean, as though God used the simplest thing to teach us a rebuke to our proud pride, when we thought we had overcome all the dangers. All types socially were aboard, from the millionaires to the poor folks down in the steerage, but disaster was no respecter of persons. I felt that with Dr. Ham that God was trying to tell us something, but whatever it was we didn't learn it.

I never did know the day that I did not feel called to preach. I don't know how you work that out theologically, but that's your problem. At 12 I stood in old Corinth Baptist Church and asked them to license me to preach, and those farmers didn't know what to do with a 12 year old wanting to start preaching right away, and the Bible said lay hands suddenly on no man, and that meant with regard to this sort of thing.

But they did, and I started out as a boy. I didn't know anything. I really didn't know anything.

I didn't even suspect anything in those days. I didn't get out a pad and pencil and figure now what will be my fringe benefits by being a preacher, and will I be appreciated for what I'm worth, which wouldn't call for much appreciation anyhow. A call to preach in the old days settled it.

You either did or you didn't. Peter got out pad and pencil, you remember, when the rich young ruler walked off from Jesus in the great refusal. I think there's a connection there, because this is the next incident recorded, and Peter saw him go away, and then it says, and Peter said, Lord we haven't done like that.

We have left all and followed thee. What do we get? Now that's a poor question to ask. I started out without social security, without financial security, but thank God I had eternal security.

I remember that the first time I tried to speak away from home was in the First Baptist Church of Hickory in 1913. They asked me to come over and speak at the midweek prayer meeting. They didn't have paved roads, and Hickory was 12 miles away.

My father secured the services of a farmer who had an old model Ford, the kind with the bulb horn and 30 horsepower and 20 of them dead. We started to cross those dirt roads, and the closer we got to Hickory the more frightened I was because I hadn't been to town much in my life. It got bigger as I drew nearer, and when we came to the front and looked down, I looked like a mile to the pulpit.

I went forward and stayed at the back. They put me in a chair, and Dr. Bradshaw stood on one side and the pastor of the church, J.D. Hart, stood on the other. I did the best I could.

I've been trying to do that ever since, and that's all God ever asked of anybody, to be faithful, just plain faithful. I often think of old Amos when he went up to Bethel to preach. He didn't follow the beaten path.

No ministerial committee had ever invited him. He hadn't sent his manuscript on to headquarters where some scribe in a swivel chair, who never had done any preaching, went through it with a red pencil to make sure there wasn't anything in it to disturb the status quo. Dr. Kyle Yates used to say his time had not been spent in the divinity school.

He was unwilling to be classed as a member of the guilds who made their living by bowing to the wishes of people and preaching a pleasing message that would guarantee a return engagement. Amos wasn't looking for a return engagement. The fact of the business is he wasn't invited up to Bethel the first time.

He certainly didn't get invited back, but he declared his soul. He didn't take the teeth out of his sermons in Tekoa and then gum it up at Bethel. When he came up there to preach, they said, what do you mean with such boorish, rustic preaching? You ought to be back in the backwoods.

We never had it so good here. He knew better because he had a hotline to heaven and God had assured him that judgment would fall. Dr. Amaziah said, where are your credentials? Amos said, I'm not a prophet by profession.

I'm not the son of a prophet by parentage, but I'm a prophet by providence. The Lord took me, and that's the only credentials you need to preach anyhow. He didn't go to Bethel to make his preaching acceptable.

He went to make it available. He didn't go up there to make them like it. He went up there to see that they got it.

Billy Sunday used to say, my, what a man, and a few of you still remember Billy Sunday. I got to know Moe Sunday right well at Winona Lake, and she let me look through his sermon outlines, double, quadruple-sized type, because he didn't stand behind the pulpit. He went back and forth all the time.

He had to have something he could see in a hurry when he went by. So I looked at these notes. What a man.

What a man he was. But he said, they tell me I rubbed the fur the wrong way. I don't let the cat turn around.

I found that when the cat is going the right direction, I'm stroking the cat. We get along fine. It's just when the cat's going the wrong way that we have trouble.

My first pastorate was near Elizabeth City. One of your fine men here, Harold Pritchard, was one of my flock back in those days. I hope he won't dislike my setting a sort of a little age tag on that by what I said.

But I remember that World War I had ended and new ideas were going around. The scopes trial came to pass with Clarence Darrow on one side, William Jennings Brown on the other. I think it is an index to the times we live in that today this world applauds Clarence Darrow and scorns William Jennings Brown, which is not to our credit and no discredit to Mr. Brown.

Harry Emerson Fosdick was coming in to notice. I was impressed with what looked like the new reproof. I thought the gospel ought to be adapted to the modern mind, which I didn't know then.

It was not very modern and not much mind. But I started out to try to adapt it anyhow. The Lord closed the doors in my face.

I had nowhere to preach. I remember that when Rory Angel came, it was his first pastorate by the way, married his wife in that community. He was preaching there and I was there at that time.

I won't forget it was during that meeting that I ran across a poem. I don't remember the last of it and I wish I could find the rest of it. All over this country I asked, do you know it? Nobody ever does.

It had these two lines and they spoke to my heart. How sad will be the days in store when voice and vision come no more. And that was my plight.

I didn't have anywhere to preach because God didn't like the way I was preaching. But he called me and he knew my frame and remembered that I was dead. Several things touched me, however, Dr. R. A. Torrey, that mighty man of God saying to me one time, young man, make up your mind on one thing and stay with it.

And then that book by the great Presbyterian Gresham Machen on Christianity and Liberalism. And it was made clear to me through that book. And God spoke to my heart and said, if you will get these newfangled notions out of your head and go back and preach the plain gospel as you did when you were a boy, I'll make a way for you.

And I took him up on it. I did and he did. And the first thing I had to do was to go back to Salem Church and preach it straight for three years.

And to this good hour, I've never lacked for a message or a place to preach it. You see, I was out in the novelty shop and I needed to get back in the antique shop. The old truths of God's word.

We don't need something new today half so much as we need something so that it'd be new if anybody tried it. They say, well, he didn't tell us anything new. No, I don't.

I won't be doing that next time. And I started out preaching this way. The devil said, you will start to death at that.

And from the way I look, you may think the devil is right, but I'm getting along all right. Thank you. I'm having no trouble because God kept his word.

I thank God for old fashioned preaching. The sun's old fashioned, but no substitute has been found as of now. Air's old fashioned, but without it, you gasp and die.

Water's old fashioned, without it, you go mad. No substitute. Don't you get excited just because we've split the atom and gone to the moon and talking about DNA and all the rest of it.

Sin's as black as ever and hell's as hot and judgment's as certain and eternity's as long and salvation's free and nothing important has changed. I say that again and again to youth today. Nothing important has changed, just little superficial things that have changed.

Living he loved me, dying he saved me, buried he carried my sins all the way. Rising he justified freely forever. One day he's coming.

Oh glorious day. That's what I'm preaching. But if you think that getting right with God is going to make it peaches and cream from then on, you've got a lot to learn.

The minute you start out for a closer walk with God, the devil is aroused and you can look for trouble and plenty of it. The devil hates that sort of thing. The average church member is not causing the devil enough trouble to even get his attention.

But you take somebody who does and the devil gets active. I remember in 1938, I was preaching across the state of Iowa, a night at the place. I could do it in those days, or I thought I could, but about the middle of that trip I preached in Creston, Iowa.

Went to bed that night, couldn't sleep, next night couldn't sleep, and for two years I was plagued with sleeplessness and depression. I couldn't account for it. All the time God was opening doors for me and I didn't feel that I could do it.

No doctor would have told me to undertake a work where you sleep in a different bed every week, change water, climate, and all the rest of it. But I finally said, Lord, I can't figure this out. It's a lot easier to preach a sermon on guidance than it is to get it sometimes.

But I said, Lord, I'm going to make the venture and if I'm wrong, stop me. And I started. My first date was in Grand Rapids and I got as far as Chicago and came down with the flu and they put me in a hospital.

And the devil sat on the foot of the bed and said, now what are you going to do? You don't have a church, you can't do this. I'd been invited down to Florida Bible Institute for some messages and I turned it down. The doctor said, get out of this country.

After all, any southerner who will go to Grand Rapids in January to preach, there's something wrong with him anyhow. So we're going back down to Florida. I went there and met two people that have meant a great deal to me.

A long, lean, lanky North Carolinian wandered in a student one day and said, I'm Billy Graham from Charlotte. I didn't know who I was talking to. And a young lady there we met and she took pity on me in my sad condition, prepared soup that I could eat and would bring it to the door and tap on it and get away before I could open the door.

She took mercy on me and she was willing finally to risk traveling with a half-sick preacher with not much money who didn't know whether he could do what he started out to do or not. And I owe more to Sarah Ulrich than any words will ever be able to express. Took off on December 14, 1914 for 33 years.

We covered the country. God knew what he wanted me to do. I had started North, he turned me South.

The Lord knew which direction I needed to go in. There I was, half-sick, trying to preach four and five times a day. I don't know what makes preachers do that, but I did.

Trying to arrange a preaching schedule in California and planning to get married. That's too much for anybody all of a sudden. But God was with me.

I remember that the last meeting I had at that time there was a radio program that every time I finished speaking it had a headache powders ad and it always came on immediately after my sermon. You can always snap back with standby right after my sermon. And the preacher that week when we were married

sent me a telegram and after wishing me every good thing he ended up, and remember, you can always snap back with standby.

Now all I can say is all the way my Savior leads me. What have I to ask beside him? Can I doubt his tender mercy who through life has been my guide? It was in 1973 that my helpmate went to heaven and we thought that God might heal her. We'd heard of people who had been healed and God does heal some people, but not always.

And I remember in daily light that one morning my reading was this sickness is not unto death but that God may be glorified. And I laid hold of it. I said I'm going to take that for my verse.

I told Dr. Bowen that. But God didn't heal Sarah. And then I began to look into it a little more and I said now what does this mean? Then I remembered it was about Lazarus and God didn't heal Lazarus, let him die.

But of course he raised him and God will raise all that are in him. But it said this sickness is not unto death but that God may be glorified. And so I wrote that little book, the only one that I ever referred to or had until that time though I walked through the valley.

And I've never had such response to all these years from people in trouble, sad, bereaved, beset. I never realized there were as many lonely people. I went to Travis Avenue Church in Texas and that great church to the Single Adults Bible Conference.

They met over in the country club. They had plenty to make them happy, but they said we want you to talk about loneliness one day. We've never had more entertainment.

We've never had more amusement we have today. And yet we've never had more loneliness. And even teenagers they set a record last year for suicide.

And you'd think they'd be enjoying life too much for all that. And if you call that progress I disagree. So I wrote the book.

Oswald Chambers when he was near death he got hold of that same verse and thought God would heal him but God didn't. But Mrs. Chambers took his messages and put them in books and they've gone around the world. My utmost for his highest and all the rest of them.

And then I found in Psalm 84.6 about the man who walking through the valley of Baker makes it a well. There's a song out, Leave a Well in the Valley. I've never heard it yet but I've seen it.

I believe that when God sends trouble our way we ought to dig a well for the next traveler instead of bemoaning everything and pitying ourselves. I think of Fanny Crosby if anybody had occasion to grumble at God she did. Why did they put the wrong poltergeist on her eyes when she was a baby and blind her for 90 years.

Couldn't she have fussed with God but instead of that she started digging wells. To God be the glory blessed assurance redeemed how I love to proclaim it all the way my savior leads me draw me nearer Jesus keep me near the cross he hideth my soul Jesus is tenderly calling savior more than life to me when Jesus comes to reward his servants rescue the perishing someday the silver cord will break I shall know him pass me not oh gentle savior. That's just a few of the wells.

And there's not a Sunday goes by but that somewhere in America we're singing we're drinking from those wells. And I think of that dear man who was staying at home alone while his wife and two daughters had gone on a trip to Europe and then came that awful telegram from his wife I have been rescued in the shipwreck but the girls are lost and he sat there transfixed numb he couldn't move for a few moments and then his hand reached out for pad and pencil when peace like a river attendeth my way and sorrows like sea billows row whatever my lot thou hast taught me to say it is well it is well with my soul. That's getting victory over you.

And so I thank God through these years I'm back where I started more or less but I remember Dr.

Lee bless his heart I wonder he's very very ill right now I hope he's what a man what a man I had lunch with him about three years ago and when he walked in the door there was this picture of Lady Lee there on the wall he said well it didn't get any better doesn't get any better but what a man he said I never tell people that I'm going home I'm just telling I tell them I'm going back to Memphis in the loneliness but my times are in his hand thank God no man can pluck us out of his hand we are graven on the palms of his hands I call that having the situation pretty well in hand and one day when life's last picture is painted and the tubes are all twisted and dried when we reach the other side we shall know him but the print of the nails in his hands I'm on my way home some years ago a long

time ago I had a meeting in Norbert Pennsylvania in the First Presbyterian Church little church that young pastor has gone up and up until now he's pastor of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian in New York City he's written a book Home Before Dark it's a wonderful title and it reminded me when I first looked at that title when I grew up in the country my dad and I had an understanding that I was to be home as a little fellow by Sunday we didn't argue about it we didn't discuss it not then we didn't have much dialoguing back in those times when father stated it that suddenly he believed he was the head of the family the rest of us were inclined to agree with him and so I saw to it and I have found myself in these latter years praying again and again Lord I want to get home before dark this is old

Henry's town and the last thing he ever said on earth was I don't want to go home in the dark I don't know what he meant but I know what I mean I have found myself saying Lord if it's all right with you I'd like to go before I lose my faculties while I'm still able to carry on I can't dictate that some time ago I was down in Birmingham and I went to see Carl Gears who used to be pastor of First Church Chattanooga and then went to Tremont Temple in Boston and then down to the church where I was in preaching in Birmingham when I walked in the room I'm afraid my face betrayed my shock this man such a rugged specimen I never thought he'd come to where he'd appear like that look like that they'd take him to church and he'd cry like a baby and I've said Lord I don't understand things like this

but I'd like to when thou seest that my work is done let me not linger on with failing powers a worthless worker in a world of work and then I found myself saying I'd like to get home before dark because I might make some great mistake the last mile of the way nobody's safe you're saved if you're saved you're saved for keeps but you're not saved as far as spoiling your testimony till you get home you can make a blunder the last mile of the way and they'll all remember the blunder and forget every blessed thing you did back up the road because that's human nature and so I found myself praying Lord I'd like to end well Anthony Eden was England's prime minister following Churchill he was a brilliant man but he made a mistake in the Suez matter and you ask an Englishman today about Anthony

and you say ah yes too bad about Suez they forgot all the other things I said Lord spare me that and then I found myself saying Lord I'd like to get home before the lights go out in this world and they're going out fast falls the even tide the darkness deepens Lord with me abide and it may get darker before it ever gets any brighter but I saw a sign in a churchyard some time ago the lowest ebb e-b-b the lowest ebb is always the turn of the tide it's when the when it lowest it's getting ready to be fullest and that happens sometimes in life and I pray it may be so in the matter of revival we may be in the darkness that precedes the dawn either of revival or of the Lord's return

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