

# Survival of Christianity

by Vance Havner

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of accepting Jesus Christ on his terms and being willing to give your life to him in order to be a true Christian.*

**Duration:** 28:31

**Scripture:** Luke 9:62, John 3:1, Revelation 1:8

**Topics:** "Christian Living", "Discipleship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of one's relationship with Jesus Christ. He highlights that worldly possessions and achievements hold no value in God's eyes if one does not know Jesus. The preacher also criticizes the lack of dedication and commitment among Christians compared to athletes and musicians who give their all for their craft. He concludes by urging listeners to reflect on their priorities and ask themselves how they are aligning their lives with Jesus.

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## Transcript

I saw a book recently titled, Survival of Christianity. It did not mean the survival of Christianity because there isn't any question about that. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, and that doesn't mean that the church will stand the onslaughts of hell.

It means that hell won't stand a chance before the onward march of the church. The church militant will become the church triumphant. We're not a beleaguered garrison in a besieged fortress waiting to be rescued.

Like a mighty army moves the church of God, the only trouble is you wouldn't know it sometimes. The summer slump is coming. It won't be long now, and we're the only army on earth, the army of the Lord, that takes a three-month furlough in the middle of a war.

Bishop Arthur Moore used to say that the Lord's day had become the weekend. I get a lot of amusement out of these weather reports. They're all geared to the mountains and the seashore.

You'd never think anybody went to church on Sunday. I go to churches for meetings, and sometimes I haven't been there but a day or two until they say it's a bad week for the revival. When was there ever a good week for a revival? The circus will be here on Monday night, and the sons and daughters of I will arise.

We'll have a little get-together on Tuesday night. Then the ladies' garden club meets to discuss how to grow African violets, and there'll be bowling, and on Friday night whatever kind of ball there is. I wonder if there ever was a good week for a revival.

We need a new breed of Christians if we're to survive, but we're not here just to survive. We're here to surmount, and we're not here to endure the world or to enjoy it but to overcome it. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

If we're to have a faith that will not shrink though pressed by many a foe, we must develop a new church within the church, a sort of a Gideon's band and a master's minority like the remnant in Malachi and the any ones in Revelation who will hear his voice and open the door and live in fellowship with the risen Christ. If we don't get hold of God's revival kit, we'll never make it as victorious Christians in a vicious generation such as this one. What is the issue anyhow? What's it all about? The greatest issue of all time has never caught the attention of the news media or of Congress or the UN or the universities or the scientific centers.

It was stated a long time ago by Pontius Pilate when he said, what shall I do then with Jesus who's called Christ? This is the crisis, John 3.19. It says there this is the condemnation, but the word in the original is crisis. The only difference is it's spelled with a K. And what is the crisis? That light has come into the world and men love the darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. I wish people knew John 3.19 as well as the new John 3.16 because this is what it's all about.

God has visited this world in the person of his son and we're all on the spot because everybody must do something about Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as doing nothing about Jesus Christ. He that believeth is not condemned and he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of Jesus Christ.

He himself said he that is not with me is against me and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. When Jesus came to earth he faced two forces, paganism on one hand and phariseeism on the other. And his worst trouble was not from paganism but from organized religion because the spearhead of that movement that put him on the cross was people who read the bible, went to church, prayed in public, all of them tithers, lived separated lives, tried to win others and never knew Jesus Christ.

And he himself said to them the publicans and harlots are going to the kingdom of God before you. And yet out of that very phariseeism came the greatest gospel preacher of all time who called himself a pharisee of the pharisees and on his way as you've just heard read a moment ago to put the church out of business because he was under orders of the religious order of his time. He met Jesus Christ in a head-on collision and spent the rest of his time putting churches in order.

That was the way it turned and it came out of phariseeism, converted phariseeism. If the issue is Jesus Christ and it was because I read that he was baptized and began to preach that he is the son of God. The issue is who is Jesus Christ.

There are only two questions. Who are you Lord and what do you want me to do? Who is Jesus Christ? He himself asked the question who do men say that I am and they say well some say you're a prophet but then he asked who do you say I am and Peter said thou art the Christ the son of the living God and Jesus said to him you didn't get that by reason you got it by revelation flesh and blood does not reveal this unto you but my father in heaven and upon this rock I build my church. At the temptation the devil said if thou

be the son of God command these stones to be made bread.

John 9 35 the blind man who was healed was asked thus thou believe on the son of God that was the test of it. The mnemonic in Mark 5 7 what have I to do with thee thou son of God the most high. The Ethiopian eunuch said I believe Jesus Christ is the son of God and they baptized him immediately.

John 19 7 when Jesus was put on trial his enemy said he ought to die because he made himself to be the son of God. That's what it's all about. Is he who he claims to be.

C.S. Lewis said a man who is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level with a man who says he's a poached egg or a devil of hell. Either this man is the son of God or else he is a madman or something worse.

We can shut him up for a fool spit at him kill him as a demon or else fall at his feet and call him the son of God but let us not come to him with this patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that option to us. He did not intend to.

That is the statement that led Elton Trueblood who has preached in this pulpit to make a turnaround in his own theology according to his own biography and Cook Coulson said either he is God or a very less rejecting him altogether than to remake him into something he wasn't or something he isn't. Thomas Jefferson made himself a new testament out of the sayings of Jesus what he liked about him and Jefferson said the sum of all religion is expressed by its best teacher love God and thy neighbor and contains no mystery. I wonder if he had never read great is the mystery of godliness God was manifest in the place justified of the spirit seen of angels preached among the nations believed on in the world received up into glory and Jefferson also said Jesus never believed that he had any other than human excellence because of course Jefferson was just a theist a deist.

America started with a double heritage we got half of it from the pilgrims and the puritans and out of the reformation and the other half from Thomas Jefferson and Tom Paine and the enlightenment and the perfectibility of human nature and to this day we're divided in this country but between the two crowds the one crowd the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man crowd and the other the gospel and the church of the born again crowd. The devil is delighted to have people settle for Jesus Christ the mark they're satisfied with the paragon but not with the propitiation. When Jesus hung on the cross his enemies said let him come down from the cross we'll believe him certainly they would they would today it's not necessary they say to be washed in the blood and regenerated by the spirit just be a positive thinker and realize your great potential that's the new note you cannot quibble down Jesus Christ to your own little image of who you think he is.

When the rich young ruler came to him and said good master my lord said there is none good but God and the preachers have argued about that ever since what did Jesus mean well he simply meant are you calling me good or are you calling me God we must take him on his own terms there aren't any other options Jesus Christ is not standing with his hat in his hand like a markdown bargain on an auction block to be accepted by us at our terms but at his terms when the early church was having so much trouble you remember that Gamaliel stood up and made a speech which i used to think was quite a good speech but i decided later that he was the greatest compromiser of his day he said we've had insurrectionists and troublemakers before we had Judas and we had Judas and this will all blow over so let's

see what happens but Jesus Christ is not Judas and Judas you don't compare Jesus Christ with anybody no mortal can with him compare among the sons of men fairer is he than all the fire that fill the heavenly train it's fashionable these days to call God in for special occasions political campaigns ballgames business advantages it's always a good thing to be a church member looks good on your obituary after you're dead but Jesus Christ is not on call to lend a religious aura and put a halo on human endeavor we have a new word we haven't had many years additive we everything has an additive today but Jesus Christ is not an additive to what you already have your education your personality your prestige that was the trouble with Nicodemus Nicodemus said now i'm a teacher of the law and if i

can just add what he has to what i have i'll have it made but Jesus said i'm not a new chapter in your book we begin a new book you must be born again and may i say to you this morning if you're what you've always been you're not a christian the christian's not what he's always been something has happened the rich young ruler was beset with this same trouble he said i've been a good boy i have marks to my credit now i'd like to find out how to get eternal life and if i can add that to what i already have i've got it made Jesus said you sell out what you already have we start over and then loop nine when those three disciples or prospective disciples said they wanted to follow him you remember the second man said i must go bury my father well his father wasn't really dead but it was the

custom to stay around until the father passed away and attend to those matters but Jesus said let the dead bury their own dead you go and preach that's the way one of our new translations has it and it's exactly what he said because if he had gone back home to stay till his father died he would have gotten over the inspiration the glory would have faded and he never would have followed and the same the next man said i'll follow you but i want to go bid the family goodbye well what's wrong with that but Jesus said no man having put his hand to the plow and looking back's fit for the kingdom of God if you go home to mix with the family they'll tone you down and they'll say don't get excited over this new preacher this will all blow over if you forget everything else that i say this morning

remember this Jesus Christ never comes next he is alpha and omega he's the first and the last but he's not playing second fiddle to anything he's not an additive there are two absolutes today the written word of God in the scripture and the living word of God and the savior they're not additives they're absolutes now there's a corollary to that if Jesus Christ is who he claimed to be i must accept him on his terms about himself and on his terms about myself lord what would you have me to do not only what he claims to be but what he requires me to be we cannot settle for a modified abridged watered down christian life that leaves out what i don't want to do and what i don't want to be and lets me be my kind of christian he didn't give us that some people tell us today now i don't want to

get too deep in this religion business i don't mind being baptized and joining the church and paying my church dues and going when i feel like it but i'm not going too deep in this religion business and may i say to all search if you're not going all out you may as well stay out i'm not marking down the price of discipleship to get a lot of half-hearted half-time fair weather followers jesus didn't i'm not wasting my time recruiting that kind of volunteers no dictator ever demanded what jesus christ demanded charlemagne caesar hitler no dictator ever demanded what he did but the difference is he has a right to love so amazing so divine demands what my soul my life my all that just about takes it all in doesn't it and he does love so amazing deny yourself take up your cross follow me i've

read of a grandfather who had a habit of taking his young grandson with him on little trips around the place one day he asked the youngster to go along and the boy asked where are you going granddad took off

without him when he came back the youngster asked why didn't you take me he said you wanted to know where you were going if you had wanted to go with me it wouldn't have mattered where i was taking you may i say this morning if you really want to walk with jesus christ you're ready to sing anywhere with jesus i can safely go anywhere he leads me in this world below complete sellout lock stock and barrel jesus christ doesn't want compliments he wants commitment not smiling condescension to accept him we always use the term accept christ i can't find it in the new testament i find come

receive believe follow the big question is will he accept us thank god he will because he said him that cometh unto me i will in no wise cast out if jesus christ is who he is it follows that his disciples must be a different breed from the rest of the human race because paul said that the preaching of the gospel is foolishness moronic really that's where you get the word moron moronic to this present world and if you believe this moronic doctrine as the world calls it if you believe it the foolishness of god and the foolishness of preaching not the preaching of foolishness but the foolishness of preaching as paul called it that will automatically make you in the eyes of this world a fool because they go together billy graham said jesus never promised that believers would be anything else

than a minority swimming against the stream of the world's thinking those who really mean business refuse means a lot more than glibly singing to the old rugged cross i'll ever be true it's shame and reproach gladly bear and then we feed on tv garbage oh we can return next sunday to saying jesus is all the world to me christians are a persecuted minority scorning the values of this world and living by stringent and disciplined there's never been a culture since christianity began in which a christian can feel at home because we're exiles and aliens pilgrims and strangers we are not citizens of earth trying to get to heaven we're citizens of heaven trying to get through this world but you say but i can't live that kind of you're right you certainly can't there's only been one christian

life lived and jesus christ lived it but he lives it again in anybody who will let him who will say make yourself at home in my heart and be yourself in me christ liveth in me to live his christ and that doesn't make you a robot it doesn't make you an automaton it doesn't make you a zombie you still can decide for and against you are you it doesn't change you as a personality with the power of choice hudson taylor called it first the unchanged life and then the changed life and then the exchange life some time ago somebody said to a great musician after his concert i'd give my life to be able to play like that and the artist answered i did that's right if you're going to play that well it's got to be your life chris everett has disciplined her mind so that she makes a an isolation booth

of her mind with only one thing where where to put that ball that's dedication when i think of how this world how musicians how athletes give their lives everything for it and then think of the way most christians today give what they feel like it i remember years ago as at wichita falls texas with landrum level in a meeting and the great concert pianist van cliburn came to church that morning and played the offertory for us and i had a chat with him after the service he autographed my bible a fine young man what a master everybody would like to play a piano like van cliburn but they wouldn't want to practice like he had to and has to because once you get up there you still have to do it to stay up there your fingers your thumbs and everybody finds it out pretty soon this whole business

is more than a creed or a code or a ceremony it's christ in you i'm sorry we ever used the wrong pronunciation and called it christianity it ought to be christianity and a christian ought to be a christian because that's what we are and the in stands for i am nothing if you ever meet jesus christ and fall in love with him you can't be an average person again you can't sit nonchalantly in church while he's being

bragged upon from the pope i don't remember anything else i saw in the movie that came out about jesus of nazareth i mean it was on television i saw a little of it on that but i won't forget what matthew said to pete he said we can't go back we've had a taste of something that we'd never be satisfied going this way that's right if you've ever walked with me you don't have to wear a

big button that says i'm a christian on it and carry a bible as big as a sears and roebuck catalog around to impress people with your christianity just be one i remember when i came to jesus as a country boy up in catawba county and i remember how that afternoon i was trying to sing for my own edification although i didn't understand much about the plan of salvation i don't understand it all now i could there wouldn't be much to it i don't understand all about electricity but i'm not going to sit around in the dark till i do and i didn't understand all about the plan of salvation but i came and i found myself singing jesus i my cross have taken all to leave and follow thee destitute despised forsaken thou from hence my all shall be that was before this new preaching about the gospel of

prosperity got started god wants every christian to be a millionaire and if you have any trouble there's something wrong with you if you have any sorrow suffering so on and in those days and the christian life was not a picnic it was a pilgrimage it was not a frolic it was a fight it was not an excursion it was an execution death to self and that's why i could end up that verse by singing perish every fond ambition all i've sought or hopes are known yet how rich is my condition god and heaven are still my own and after 64 years of preaching i can still sing it in my heart to the glory of god who is jesus christ what does he want me to do some people seem to have the idea it doesn't matter much what you do about jesus christ i have a young preacher friend up in the suburb of boston who is

a coming young preacher and he sends me his sermon every week and he expressed himself the other day by saying it is difficult for a person today to catch a good case of christianity we have vaccinated so many people with a strain of spiritual serum as a result the souls of such people contain a high level of spiritual antibodies that will resist almost any case of infectious faith i think that's terrific i think he's got something there i think all over the country we've been inoculated with a pseudo christianity under we've almost been immunized against the real thing i'm afraid we badly are in danger of accommodating ourselves too much to the status quo in the spirit of the times we started out as a poor and persecuted sect we were regarded as the scum of the earth the old scouring of

all things we rose in judgment against false doctrine and worldliness we had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but turned the light on them dr turner says in his history of this church that less than a hundred years ago the first baptist church was left at and its pastor hissed when he woke down the street a lot of waters run under the bridge since that day we're no longer in the wilderness we're in the promised land of success and prospect prosperity like a cat drowning in cream we're no longer the gideons 300 and david's band in the cave of adulim i stood in park street congregational church in boston the church where they sang america for the first time and i said to them you can't keep a baptist down you ran william scraven up in new england he came to charleston

started the southern baptist convention i was pastor of that old church five years in charleston uh not at the outset because it started in 16 and 83 that is a little remote from it but i was steeped in the history of that thing we paid a price for what we believed they say that the history of any movement can be traced it begins with a cave and ends in a cathedral we'd better do some thinking in these days like the israelites of old we're tempted to say my power and might have gotten me this and the danger is we become like laodicea have you ever stopped to think jesus said he'd rather have a cold church than a warm church he

said so i'd rather you were cold or boiling but not lukewarm the trouble about lukewarm is it's comfortable and laodiceanism is comfortable christianity when i'm in

the restaurant and the waitress comes around to refill my coffee and i haven't drunk but half of it i said no and pour that out let's start over because if you put hot coffee what i've got we'll have laodicean lukewarm coffee neither cold or hot well she didn't know what laodicean coffee was but that's what it is we we're rather proud of ourselves today and we'd better watch it humility never hurt anybody but pride can sometimes i think we ought to have one of our conventions in los angeles they've got a lot of smoke out there i think we could blow it out in three days we're too much impressed with things as they are but the world passeth away in the lust thereof but he that doeth the will of god abideth forever we are not out to make jesus christ acceptable to big business and to

the press and to the world of sports and to modern education we are not diplomats arranging a truce we are prophets declaring an ultimatum it's always been that way we'd better let this world know that christians are pilgrims and strangers on the old s and n the old straight and narrow straight is the gate and it's still straight and narrows the way and it's still narrow and it doesn't get any broader as you go along that great black preacher from los angeles dr hill tells how he spoke to one of the ladies of his congregation one sunday said how are the children doing oh they're doing fine they've each got a good job making money you got a split level house and two cars and getting along well he said how about church well now she said you know how these kids are they they don't i don't go

to church man he said i said to her they're not doing well anytime you ignore jesus christ and put him in the background you're not doing well you can have the biggest house on the main drag have a pool big enough for a herd elephants to swim in and drive a gold cadillac like elvis and have a yacht as big as the queen mary used to be but if you don't know jesus christ you are a flat failure in god's book i think of that old preacher who was visiting one of his wealthy members out on a big farm and he said as far as you can see this way it's all mine as far as you can see that direction it's all mine in that direction the old preacher said how you fix this direct it's about time we asked ourselves that today there's coming a day that will show us all up and it won't matter whether you

lived in the backwoods or on the boulevard whether you drove a limousine or pushed an apple cart through town whether you bought your diamonds and wool works or tiffany's the only thing that will matter is what did i do about jesus christ the news media today has conditioned us to thinking in terms of three categories for against and undecided adlai stevenson when he went to the union as our delegate said i've learned a new word since coming here the word yo wow he said what does that mean well it means yes or no that's a good word for politicians and for a lot of other people too but jesus christ declared plainly that there are no undecided people about jesus christ he that is not with me is against him he that gathereth not with me scattereth the broken i ask you this morning do you

ascend to all that he claims to be and do you come sand to what he asks you to be but thou shall confess by thine mouth jesus is lord and believe in thine heart god hath raised him to the dead thou shalt be saved and that confession ought to be visible before men it ought to be audible with the mouth so that people can hear it and it ought to be credible with the heart for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth with the mouth out loud confession is made into salvation i hope you don't accept this as information and the next thing to do in your mind is simply to be dismissed i'm not asking you to make a decision you've already made one for or against but if you have made a decision against christ by not making one for him you make one against

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