

Trendists or Transformist

by Vance Havner

Vance Havner's sermon challenges Christians to resist societal trends and embrace transformation through the renewing of their minds in Christ.

Duration: 40:44

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 15:7-8, John 8:32, Romans 12:1-2

Topics: "Trends"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of Christians marching to the beat of a different drummer and not conforming to the ways of the world. He shares a personal experience from his time as a preacher during World War I and highlights the dangers of money and the pursuit of fame. The preacher also warns about the trends and characteristics of the last days as described in 2 Timothy. He encourages believers to consider the direction and ultimate outcome of any issue or trend, rather than just its current state. The sermon references various Bible verses, including John 8:32, Romans 12:1-2, and Matthew 7:13.

Transcript

I said something last night about this business of taking a text that begins with the word and, which is really a mistake, because that tears it out of context. Mention the one, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free, which is rather incomplete for a text, because it starts with the word and, and therefore you have to get an earlier start, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Here's another one you've all preached from it, Romans 12, 1-2.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and you want to get a good start in verse 1 of it. Not enough just to preach separation from the world, and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. The devil goes about as a roaring lion, but he does far more harm as an angel of light.

We're not to be ignorant of his devices. One of his most effective weapons, I'm going to call by a new term which I had to invent because I couldn't find it in the dictionary. When I can't find a word I want, I make one.

I've got as much right as anybody else to make a new word if I want to. And this word is trendism. And by trendism I mean this business of studying and following the trends of the times, getting with it, drifting with the drift, swept along by the current carried about us every wind and dust, following the craft.

Trendism is the order of the day, and we're a generation of trendies. When Paul wrote to Timothy, he wrote about three trends and warned him appropriately regarding each. In the first epistle of chapter 10, verse 11, money is the root of all evil.

There is the trend with regard to fame. Not money, not the making of money, but the love of money which is the root of all evil. Money is dangerous in the pleasure of procuring it.

It's dangerous in the pride of possessing it. It's dangerous in the peril of what you can purchase with it. It means fame, and a man's life consists if not in the abundance of the fame which he possesses.

Then in 2 Timothy, the third chapter, he warns him with regard to the trend in the times. We have that formidable list of the characteristics of men living in the last days. You know it very well, in the last days perilous times shall come.

And then follows the catalog. It reads pretty much like Romans 1, where you have the depravity of the human heart in one case, and the degeneration of the human race here in the other. There's a man that has to be blind in both eyes and bereft of his brains not to be able to read this downward trend on the front page of a newspaper every day.

Then the third trend you find in the fourth chapter, where the time will come, and they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust shall they heap to themselves features having itching ears. That has to do with the truth, things and the times and the truth. They shall turn from the truth to fables, and the word there is myths.

And of course, everybody knows now about the demythologizers, and these fellows who say that the virgin birth, the resurrection, and so on, are not historical events, didn't necessarily happen, but they teach us certain lessons. The demythologizers, if I have to believe that these precious things were just myths, then I am certainly going to be mystified, and I'm going to be mistaken, and I'm going to be miserable. We reigned over a generation that cannot endure sound doctrine.

When our Lord expounded the scriptures to the Emmaus disciples, you remember that they developed a holy heartburn. But here we have men who have itching ears. The tragedy of the Church today is we've come all the way from heartburn to ear itch.

That's the degeneration of the times. And each time that Paul deals with the trend, he turns right from the trend to Timothy, and he uses to the Lord, but thou. And I like the New Translation that says, but as for you, the law of the money is the root of all evil, but as for you, O man of God, flee these things, and in the last days perilous times shall come, but as for you, continue in the things which thou hast learned, and the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but as for you, verse 5, watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

The man of God is not here to test the spirit of the age. He's here to condemn it, to correct it, and to introduce another spirit into it. He's not a chip swept along by the current.

He's supposed to be a rock that jerks out into the stream, and around which the waters boil, as boil they will, because he won't be moved. We're not to be trendists, squeezed into the mold of this age, but if I may invent another word, transformists, not just non-conformists, but transformists by the renewing of our minds. I want you to think for a moment of the trickery, the treachery of trendism.

The classic example, I think, is back there in the Old Testament, when Ahab decided to go up against Raymond Gindy, if you remember, and he had scripture for it. But you have to have something besides the verse of scripture for adventure. This is a case of a bad man trying to do a good thing the wrong way, and he told him Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat was a good man, but easily swayed, and they have put on a banquet. That's about all it takes, you know, a kick-off supper is about all it takes to get these Jehoshaphats in on almost any kind of a thing. They decided to go up against Raymond Gindy, and Jehoshaphat said, Well, let's have a word from the Lord first.

Now, it's a little late to be saying that, after they'd already decided to go. That's what we do. We decide to go and then ask God to bless it instead of asking God what to do.

So they decided to go, and they called in 400 preachers, and any time 400 preachers can talk before two kings, why, they'll all be there. And they all replied unanimously, Go on, Jehoshaphat! That sounded too unanimous to Jehoshaphat. I've said many times that whenever 400 preachers agree, something's bound to be wrong anyway.

So he said, Is there not a prophet of the Lord here besides? I like that. Hadn't we got an oddball in the outpost? Hadn't we got a squire? And they had said, Yes, we've got a fellow by the name of Micaiah, but I hate him. That's the best recommendation that old Micaiah ever had.

So they sent out, you remember that prophet among the 400 who took horns of iron and waved them and said, Jehoshaphat! He had a little dash of Hollywood theatric. Bad enough to be a false prophet when you're a ham actor beside. That's really felt.

Well, they went after old Micaiah, and have you noticed what that eunuch said to him? He did not say two kings have decided to go up against them again. He said the prophets have been noticed. The clergy recommend it.

And not the devil can ever get the clergy to recommend anything. Victory's won, they think. But old Micaiah said, What the Lord saith unto me, that will I see.

He was not a trend in that case. The trend was toward Raymond Gilead, but Micaiah was not getting told in it. You have there institutional religion on one side and the voice of dissent on the other.

Elijah on Carmel, Amos at Bethel, John the Baptist out in the wilderness, our Lord, and the Pharisees. The trend is always toward institutionalism. Judaism started out with a glowing experience of God, wound up with institutionalism.

The Reformation started out with an experience, wound up with a performance. It stayed true. That's always the course.

And one of the leading theologians in my own denomination, Dr. Finley Edge, a beautiful seminary, says he thinks we Southern Baptists are at least halfway around in the circle. The trend toward institutionalism, they didn't realize how far gone the state of religion was around Bethel until Amos showed up. It takes an Amos to reveal the situation.

They didn't realize how low Judaism had sunk until our Lord appeared and gave his opinion to the Pharisees. Now, when the prophet warns of the trend, he's resented always by those who belong to the trend and don't want their status quo disturbed. Barclay says the subtle ministry began to resent the intrusion of wandering prophets who often disturbed their congregation.

The subtle ministry always tends to resent the itinerant event. Now, this is not Havner talking, this is Barclay. You understand, that's what he said.

Trendism is treacherous, and sometimes it looks so good that you dare not lift up your voice against it. Beloved, we are in danger of being carried off our feet today by trends, and the test of any issue is this. Not what it is in itself, but which way is it headed? What is it a part of? Whither does it tend? What ways is it riding? Not what is it right now, but where is it going, and where will I be if I go on with it? I think that would solve a great many problems about specific issues today.

Now, you can argue about smoking and dancing and Sunday baseball and TV and all the rest of the things until the end of the age. The real test of all these things, as far as I'm concerned, is to see them in their context. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.

Wide is the gate that leads to destruction, and many go in thereat. There are things that are not evil in themselves when taken out of their context. Mead offered the idols.

It wasn't evil in itself. Mead has no moral quality, but Paul saw the context. He said, I will touch it.

I believe you can apply that principle to other things today. We have to see the thing in the light of what it is a part of. You take the trend with regard to worship that you mentioned here a while ago.

You know very well the trend is away from experience to performance. Sunday morning Christianity can be a hateful thing in the sight of God. It can be a part of the trend of the times from reality to ritual, and I-D-O-L, idol worship in Africa is no worse than I-D-L-E, idol worship in America.

I used to be thrilled over a church full of people on Sunday morning, and of course I still try to remember every time I face it. I'm glad they're here and not somewhere else. I thank God for the opportunity of preaching the word of God to them, but I'm purposely frank with you.

Sometimes I am depressed instead of delighted by some Sunday morning congregations in church. I can't forget the first chapter of Isaiah, for one thing. I can't forget God thundering in those days, saying, I'm fed up, I'm sick, I'm tired of all this.

I was over in Ashland, Kentucky, some time ago, in a Bible study, and the editor of our own paper there, and I only mention this because all you have to do is put your crowd in the same, in the space here, our editor said the only difference between 8th century D.C. Israel and much of 20th century A.D. Baptist is the date on the calendar. We think we please God when we go through prescribed and accepted church activities, whether or not we are new persons through an experience with God. We delight in beautiful music, orderly worship services, precise and clever sermons, attendance records, and oversubscribed

budgets, but often leave the church house without ever really hearing a word from or saying a word to God.

This kind of worship by the Israelites was actually condemned as a sin by God. It's possible that there are cases where it can be a sin to go to church. God hated their solemn services and turned the deaf ears of their father's songs because their manner of life was ungodly.

That disturbs me, beloved. You said I despise your solemn meetings. You're very fond of it.

You bring your tithes. So what? When Amos goes up to Bethel, come to Bethel and transgress. Multiply transgression.

You bring your tithes. This you like to do. You're fond of it, but God despises it.

You say, well, that's all the Old Testament. Well, how about Matthew 15, 7, 8, where our Lord quotes from Isaiah to the religious people of his day, who went to church, read the Bible, prayed in public, were all tithers, were moral folk separated from the world. Well, honor me with your lips and your mouth, but your heart is far from me, all such worship is vain.

And worse still, it's downright evil, and instead of being glory means ought to be repented of. We'd better wake up, beloved. We're deceiving nobody but ourselves, even the world, since there's a difference between a force and a part, and certainly God's not not.

And then the trend today is toward the homogenization and the amalgamation of all mankind into one faceless mass. Black and white have been smudged into indefinite graves. Light would have communion with darkness, righteousness with unrighteousness, believers with infidels, a temple of God with idols.

And we would establish concord between Christ and Belial. And concord is the Latin-ish form of the word in the original from which we get the musical term symphony. There is no symphony, no harmony between Christ and Belial.

I've heard of the unfinished symphony. This is the impossible symphony. There is no symphony between Christ and Belial.

Now, according to the new pitch, Martin Luther should have had a summit meeting with the Pope, and the Martins died in fame. Wycliffe, Kramer, Huss, Savonarola should have been diplomats instead of prophets. We're living in the day of Erasmus, not the day of Luther.

You remember that Erasmus was a contemporary of Luther, and he was a smooth fellow. They said he could doctor up notes, and it sounded like yes, and he could work on yes, but it sounded like no. I think I've heard a few of these.

And the trend is toward a genial, amiable, good-onionism, and the old-fashioned head-on collision between Christianity and this world has been toned down to pleasant peaceful coexistence. One thing is certain, beloved, the new policy is not working. It can't work.

Lawlessness abounds, and love abates, as Jesus said it would, as the world hurtles on to disaster. Christianity is popular. We're the lan crowd now.

We're no longer the disinherited. I preached some time ago at the Church where I belong, Greensboro. We have a lovely church there.

We had 38 years of powerful gospel preaching under Dr. Clyde Turner, and he wrote a history of that church, and he said less than 100 years ago the members of this church were laughed at, and the pastor was hissed when he walked the streets. So some time ago I said they're not laughing at us now. Nobody is hissing at us now.

How come? They say times are better. No, you don't believe that, not if you're intelligent. How come? I know how come.

We've got a degenerate brand of Christianity that does not bring on the opposition of the world, as it did in those days. We have settled in Sodom. We've joined the affluent society.

We are rich and increased with goods that don't need anything. We've forgotten that we're strangers and pilgrims. I used to hear people talk about being homesick for heaven, but I don't hear anybody talk about that now.

Why, you've got Social Security, you've got Medicare. Who's homesick for heaven? I heard of a preacher marrying a couple the other day, and he said, When you stand by this man in sickness or health, with or without Medicare, why, we've got everything! We've got everything! I tell you, beloved average Sunday morning congregation that I face now is in no mood to sing in the sweet by-and-by. Have you ever tried the average church congregation today, living out in suburbia, have you ever tried to get a rise out of that crowd on a tent or a cottage, twice your back peg, or build a mansion for me over there? You try that if you want to throw a chill over the meat and make it that.

We have merged into the old age. Now, this age is a pretty good place to build Christian character. After all, you can't sharpen an axe on a pound of butter.

It takes a grindstone. But a grindstone will dull an axe or sharpen an axe, depending on how you hold the axe. My daddy used to have an old grindstone, and I was the official crank-turner.

Any crank can turn a crank. He put me to turn in the crank, and he would hold the axe so, if you held it so, it'd sharpen, but if you held the axe down, it would dull it. This age is going to do something to every preacher, to everybody else, depending on how you go at it and how you rub up against it.

I'm afraid that more people are being dulled than sharpened by this age today. Of course, our Lord said, as the Father sent me, even so send I you. We're supposed to get out there, yes.

But on the pretext that the end justifies the means, we are not only in the world, but sometimes we're of it. We join its societies and enter into its culture, and what a lot of people think is the world becoming more Christian is just Christians becoming more worldly. Christianity made its greatest strides when it was poor and persecuted.

Dr. Campbell Morgan has said that the Church of England fared better in the persecution under Queen Mary than the patronage of Queen Elizabeth. He said the Salvation Army got along better when it was pelted with sticks and stones than when its general was smiled upon by a king. He said Methodism fared better under scorn than when its leaders were received into court.

This pringism reaches out in all directions, the Supreme Court ruling on prayer in the schools. I'm not a lawyer. There may be legal and constitutional justification for it, but the trend in our national life is away from God.

And this ruling, as well as all attempts to remove the name of God from coinage and the national anthem and elsewhere, just to please a few incidents, is part of that trend. And anything that aids and abets that trend should not have been supported in Christianity. You see the trend, of course, toward anarchy that we talked about here last night, lawlessness still abounding because it does the love of the majority, it really says, to wax cold.

You see the trend toward universalism. They tell us now that everybody's saved, they just don't know it, and it's our business to tell them. You know that Dr. Moricara and others are saying that, and you see how it cuts the nerve of missions and takes the fire out of evangelism and the urgency out of preaching.

The trend is toward the secularization of the sacred. With regard to the Lord's Day, for instance, our statement in that regard, and one of our great Church bodies, says the Lord's Day should be observed by rest from secular employment with two exceptions, works of mercy and necessity. Now, there are other things today that are being accepted which are neither works of mercy nor necessity.

You see the trend in our Church music. They tell us that if an African convert wants to express his religion in jazz, let him bring his bongo drums to church. Maybe rock and roll can be made to praise the Lord.

So we have Duke Ellington in Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York. He used to take the Church to the jungle, now we bring the jungle to the Church. He used to say that he sings in minors and only the gospel in major, and we won't be hearing that anymore, the way things are going now.

You see Hollywood portraying the Bible, and I soon listened to a gangster lecture on honesty. They have no business portraying the Bible. The Church in the show business, Christian nightclubs, Christian theaters, Christian church-a-terps to match the discotheques today.

Spurgeon was invited by the showman Barnum to come over to this country and lecture and was offered an eye-spat fee. Now today I know what we'd say. We'd say, well, the devil's had that money long enough.

Go over there and preach, maybe you can do him some good. You know what Spurgeon said? He sent back that Reed Act 1310. You know what that says? This was from Mr. Barnum.

Thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Evidently, Spurgeon was not a tringer. Then you have the trend in professionalism in the ministry. Preachers once fell to cold priests, and now the temptation is to drift with this computerized age, pro-life, politics, know the right people.

After all, I'm not Elijah, God's not sending ravens to feed prophets anymore. I've got to look out for no more. Maybe that's why some prophets become propheteers.

Something happens to the soul of a preacher when he feathers his nest in this world. The eagle in him dies when he moves from the crag to the cave. Spurgeon said, I'd rather be a lean bird in the woods than a fat bird in a cave.

We're getting tired of old-fashioned preaching. They are telling us now that the preacher has been at the center of the stage too long, that he ought to retire into the wings now and let the layman take the center of the stage. Well, I believe in the equipping ministry over there in Ephesians.

It's been there all the time. I haven't gotten too excited. It's been there, just like a lot of other things that some folks seem to have discovered just later.

But it's been there all the time, and I think it's the business of a preacher to equip the saints for the work of their ministry. Yes, but there are other functions of a preacher, and you must not forget that. And while he is an equipper, God also called him to be a prophet.

And nobody can take the place of the prophet in the pulpit today. How shall they hear without a preacher? It doesn't say how shall they hear without a brass band. How shall they hear without a preacher? And don't let any preacher ever forget that part of his mission, whatever else he may be called upon to do.

We revise church discipline. I am discovering that a lot of church covenants are being revised these days, and they omit all references to such things as dancing and drinking and so on. They say, well, we believe in dealing with principles, not particulars.

Well, I do too. But the worldly element in the church uses that argument to erase all lines of demarcation between the church and the world. The trend today is toward the breaking down of all of these disciplines in the home and in the government and in the church, and anything that relaxes our standards is part of that trend.

Somebody wrote to Billy Graham the other day and said, I'm interested in a certain church, but they are very Puritanical, and I don't know what to do about it. And Billy said, you'd better join that church. He said, one thing is certain, that whatever mistakes Puritanism may have made in Puritanism will never save us.

And that is well said. Now, they say, don't name anything today. Well, that's not the way Jesus went about it.

The woman at Jacob's well, he talked about where's the best place to work it, and that's a good church, and the water of life, and that's a good church. She didn't get into conviction until he named the trouble. Go call thy husband.

She'd had too many of them already. That was the trouble. And she said, you must be a prophet.

The business of a prophet is to specify. Then he had a sermon on how to preach to us to convert nobody. He said, preach on sin, but never name any of the sins of your congregation.

And I'll go out and shake their heads and say, sin's terrible, but they won't do a thing, and they'll worry about it. But just name something, and then things will start happening. Now, there are some things that are all right in himself.

All things are lawful, but there is the rule of expediency, enslavement, edification, example, and the doubtful thing. Five things, I haven't time to go into it. And if that questionable thing can clear those hurdles, it's all right.

But we want to be careful also not to cause to stumble these little ones who believe anybody who causes them to stumble is better off with an earlstone around his neck cast into the depths of the sea. When

people ask what's wrong with this and what's wrong with that, they're already off on their own foot to begin with. They're asking how near the precipice can I walk without going over? How worldly can I be and still be a Christian? Why don't they ask how much like Christ can I be, and how little like the world? It's exactly backwards when they put it that way.

I've been in this thing a long time, and I have never yet had a born-again, Bible-reading, spirit-filled Christian submitted to Jesus Christ as Lord whoever asked this question, because they're past all that. And I don't think we're spending a lot of time today dealing with issues that are really not the issue. I heard of some preachers some time ago discussing their church problem.

One said, Our church is just too close to the lake. Another one said, We're the same distance from the lake, but that's not our problem. Our problem is we're not close enough to the Lord.

Now, you get close enough to the Lord and the lake won't make any difference. And we worry about TV and Friday night ball games and all these other things, but that's not the main problem. If people love our Lord, these things won't matter much.

And we need to beware not only of the treachery but the tyranny of this thing. If you don't go along with it, you're an oddball. A dedicated Christian is always out of step with the times.

He's not a conformist, he's a transformist. This tyranny goes all the way up even to the clothes we wear. Why, there are people today who are wearing clothes they wouldn't be caught dead in if they weren't to start.

And I don't think that you have to look like something to get dragged in, but the New Testament does have much to say about modesty and dress as well as deportment. But who dares touch that with a forty-foot pole today? My good wife dresses neatly and I'm proud of her. And she says many a time, I go to the dress shops and I wonder what in the world can a Christian woman do today about this problem of where the folks are wearing clothes.

Well, you say it's not the clothes but the heart that matters. Yes, but the world doesn't see your heart, it sees your clothes. Well, you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.

I do know one thing, I'm glad when fall comes and the Saints get back in their clothes, if not in their right minds. But anyway, there is no worse thing in the world than the bondage of creedism, a generation of rubber stamps, even teenagers talk about being different. They look alike, dress alike, think alike, talk alike.

Now, my text does not say be not conformed, period. I'm not preaching mere nonconformity. As I said, the first words end, go back up in the first verse.

The Pharisees were nonconformists. Some of the most unreflective, un-Christlike people I've ever known, were fundamental evangelical and free millennials, sound as a dog, theological, and separated from the world ethically, straight in creed and strict in conduct, saying, I'm dwelling in Beulah Land. You couldn't see any pigs in the farm grass anywhere in the neighborhood.

I hate to hear a fellow saying, I'm dwelling in Beulah Land, all he's got to throw for us is crab apples. Not just nonconform, but transformed by the renewing of the mind. Now, the tragedy of creedism is this, the times cry out, and in such a time we make a great mistake of not tackling these things in their insipid

stages.

Churchill says that communism should have been strangled at birth. That's where we missed it, 1933. Recognize those gangsters as the decent government.

Then when it started in China, sent a delegation over there and said it's just an agrarian reform. And then when we had victory in our hand, Korea called MacArthur home. Should have been strangled at birth.

If we wait, until these Koreans become tolerance, it's too late. Whether in one's own personal life or in your church, nip it in the bud. Don't let the little snake become a bore constrictor.

But nobody wants to warn today against earlier symptoms of theological and moral malignity. Because they'll call you a witch hunter if you do. They'll call you a pessimist, a calamity howler.

And the only time to deal effectively with evil in our lives and in our churches is when it starts moving. Not after it gains momentum and runs wild. Better still, overcome evil with good.

I heard of some small boys in a parade. One of them was out of step, and they checked and found that he had a transistor radio inside his coat, and he was marching to music from a thousand miles away. Well, that's the way a Christian ought to be, as he marches through this world.

We're out of step. We're in step with another drummer. Now, you may be saying, well, you're getting old.

Listen, beloved, these convictions were settled in my soul as a young man. They are true to scripture, true to history, and true to my own experience. At the end of the First World War, I was a preacher.

Woodrow Wilson had gone to Paris to start the League of Nations. It looked like we were going to have the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Things were looking rosy.

Boswick had just written his three meanings, and Parks Cadman had just started preaching over that strange construction known as a radio. And I caught the fever. I thought my preaching ought to be adapted to the modern mind, and not very modern, not much mind.

But I started adapting it to the modern mind. You know, that church filled up with sinners because they never got any conviction. They liked that preaching.

It greased their consciences. And I'm sorry to say some of them went to hell under that kind of preaching. And then one day God knocked all the props out and closed all the doors, and I had no word to preach.

And I came back to my old home down here in Catover County, on top of that high hill. My father died that winter, a bit disappointed, I think. And my mother was left, and we had only a grocery store.

And one night, somebody robbed it and burned it to the ground. And I had nowhere to go and nothing to do. And the good Lord spoke to my heart and said, if you will go back and preach what you did when you were a boy, I'll take care of you.

I'll spare the trash. You couldn't have argued me out of that. He's alive, you know.

They're all alive, and they're arguing about those things. Couldn't have argued me out of it. I sat in a blackberry patch in the red direction of Mason's Christianity and liberalism, saying he didn't want to wake me up in anything else.

I owe a lot to that president. Well, I took God up on his offer. And the very first thing I had to do was go back to that church and for three years stand in that pulpit and preach it right.

That was the first thing I had to do. And from that day to this blessing, I have never left for an open door. Now, how do you explain that otherwise? There's no other explanation.

I didn't know what to do. There wasn't a thing on earth I couldn't do. I've never lifted a finger for a date from that time to this.

I have no organization. I don't even have a secretary. I have written my books this way, typed them off.

I have nothing. And yet through these years, if the letters would quit coming, I'd have to quit going. It's just as simple as all that.

But the Lord has done it. The devil tried to scare me. He said he won't stand for that kind of preaching.

I said, you start to do it. Now, from the way I look, he may think the devil is right, but I'm getting on my way. I'm doing fine, thank you.

And you don't have to wait for some talent scout to find you. The man who will give God's message will always have a place. I believe that.

I'm getting out of the point where I'm supposed to sit in a rocking chair and wait for my Social Security and reminisce about the good old days that weren't so good, some of them, after all. I'm not about to quit. I've been praying for the Lord.

I've been praying with old Hezekiah for an extinction of time. I've been praying with old Jabez for an enlargement of coasts. I've been praying with old Elisha for an end to human power.

You know, six years ago, they thought I was going to die, lay in a hospital in Greensboro, point of death. A fine Christian nurse, head nurse, who is here this week, said I'm going to take his case that night, spoke to her yesterday. And I looked out from that old oxygen tent, and when she wasn't watching me, she was praying.

And you like to have somebody like that around at a time like that. I stuck out my hand and said, I haven't got breath enough to pray. You pray, and we'll claim the promise that the two of us agree, and we did.

And I'm frank to say to you, I believe God touched me because you don't get over what I had in a few days, and I was home just shortly thereafter. They were praying for me all the way from the Holy Bible Institute, down to the Baptist Adventists who come from Jacksonville, Billy Graham's team in Miami. Billy called up my wife that night and said, Ruth and I have just been praying, and I think the Lord is going to raise his hand to get up some more sermons for the rest of us to preach.

I lay there fluttering my back, and old Billy sent me the letters that I used to affirm the last Sunday over our decision. He said, I had a little trouble getting your 45 and my 22, but the Lord blessed it. And I testify to you today, beloved, that I'm just having the time of my life on this postscript that the Lord has given me.

I don't know how long it's been alive. It's six years of it now. But you know it sort of changes the picture when you've got a postscript and you're living on a postscript.

It's like looking through the other end of a telescope. It sort of changes the perspective of everything. But I may outlive you, and so I beseech you, beloved, in the fact of it.

But where the trend is, and I walked that old hill down there in Catoba County when I was a boy, and as I've told you, I slipped from it temporarily. But I said, Lord, and you tell me what to say, and I'll try to say it. All in God's world, if he ever has seen one of these, be faithful and take care of the rest of it.

You know what a picture it is. The first time I ever went out to preach, they asked me over there a phrase from the country. And I mean phrase, from the country, to preach.

My daddy and I got hold of an old model Ford, got a neighbor who took us one of these with the bulb horn, you remember? Some of them, 30 horsepower and 20 of them dead. And I got over there and looked down the aisle, looked like a mile to the pulpit, and my daddy said he'd stay back there and pray, and I'd go up there and talk. And the pastor stood on one side and the state evangelist on the other, and that was my first try.

I did the best I could, and I've been trying to do that ever since. And that's all God ever asks of anybody, be thou faithful. And at the last day when I'm no longer here as well, I'm now good and not green, not successful, but faithful.

And finally let me remind you there is one trend that I'm in step with, that divine far-off event toward which the whole creation moves. And I don't think it's far off either. My Lord's coming back.

Paul Harvey said it is the Christian conviction that Christ will return and take over when mortals have made a hopeless mess of self-governing. Well, then he ought to be here just any time, because we've made the mess. He may show up any day.

That's the way God's moving. And our biggest responsibility is to find out which way he's moving, get going that direction. That's history within history.

Let's get in the stream of God's purpose, not be trendiest, but transformeth, not mere non-conformist, but transformeth by the renewing of our mind.

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