

# What Can the Righteous Do?

by Vance Havner

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*The righteous can stand on the truth of God's word and trust in the power of Jesus Christ to overcome the problems of the world.*

**Duration:** 24:00

**Scripture:** Isaiah 66:24, Matthew 5:20, Matthew 7:21, Luke 13:3, John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 6:10, Revelation 21:8

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher highlights the current state of the world, describing it as a hopeless mess in various areas such as government, law observance, morality, and family life. He emphasizes the dependence of mankind on simple things like the sun, air, and water, despite the advancements in technology. The preacher expresses his concern about the shift in focus from God to worldly pursuits and the disregard for moral values. He also criticizes the idea of progress without acknowledging the consequences of sin. Throughout the sermon, the preacher refers to the Bible and its commandments as a guide for righteous living.

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## Transcript

What can the righteous do? First Corinthians 3:11, for other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Years ago, in the first democratic convention that nominated William Jennings Bryan for the presidency, some of the old-line Democrats were considerably put out about it because Bryan wasn't well known at the time. Somebody found one of the disconsolate Democrats out in the corridor and asked him, are you still a Democrat? And he answered, yes, very still.

And I feel like him as I make my way through a world that has gone crazy with the inmates trying to run the asylum. I feel like saying in the midst of all this bedroom, no comment. My wife and I were on a bus trip some time ago in the mountains, and the bus broke down right in front of a typical hillbilly grocery store.

There was a mountain woman there who apparently had never been anywhere else. And my wife said, I don't believe she knows what's going on in the world outside. Well, I said, don't tell her.

Let the poor soul die in peace. I wouldn't want her to know what is going on. But we must not keep silent in an evil time, and so I speak to you now as an individual and not as representing any clique or group or movement.

I'm an American by birth and a Christian by the second birth and a Baptist by conviction. I'm not interested in theological fads that change like women's fashions, and by which spiritual adolescents and the immature are carried away with every wind adopted. I'm tired of neo-Orthodoxy and neo-Evangelicalism and neo-Romanism and neo-everything else.

I'm tired of Putin and your religion, that new brand of Christianity whirling us under church auspices by which pagans will not feel so embarrassed to join the church. I'm tired of Batman and the Beatles and the beatniks and the new morality and existentialism and situation ethics and the latest theological aberration out of Germany. I'm tired of hearing that God's dead.

If my faith was so weak that a professor down in Georgia could shake it, I'd get some other kind. I'm tired of hearing about the New Deal and the Square Deal and the Fair Deal and the Raw Deal and the Great Society. I'm tired of Supreme Court decisions that outlaw prayer and dignify Communism and enhance the status of infidels and pre-fiddlems like Jaffa Deals.

I'm tired of hearing that our denomination must get away from its humble beginnings and shake the hayseed out of our hair and come of age. I hear a lot about grandstand feasts and glory, but I don't hear much about the baptism of his suffering. We're wearing a lot of medals these days, but not many scars.

I'm tired of all modern efforts to force a counterfeit kingdom of God on an unregenerate society. I'm tired of all these schemes to bring in a millennium through education, legislation, reformation by which we sweep out the house and seven devils return, and the last state of that house is worse than the first. I'm tired of bragging about how sophisticated we are in America.

Actually, we're the most gullible generation that ever has come along. We've bought more gold bricks than white elephants than any crowd that ever has lived since Adam. I'm tired of the new freedom that throws the Ten Commandments out the window and doesn't know the difference between love and lust.

My Bible still says, Thou shalt not commit adultery, but now we have situation ethics and immorality, and the Churches of England took a stand lately that led Billy Graham to say, I never thought I'd live to see the day when church leaders would make it easier for young people to deny the moral law of God. I read in my Bible, Thou shalt not steal, and yet over Christmas, six hundred million dollars of shoplifting took place in this land. I heard of a family on a picnic some time ago in the summertime, and a boy stole a watermelon out of a patch nearby, and his mother said, Now, don't you get another one.

You don't know what they've been sprayed with. See what I mean? Nothing about stealing, nothing about the Ten Commandments. Love does not annul the Ten Commandments.

Love obeys them. Love has no other God, makes no graven image, does not take God's name in vain, keeps the Lord's day, honors father and mother, does not commit adultery, steal, kill, bear false witness, or covet. You can't break the law of God anyhow.

You can break yourself against it. You jump off the Empire State Building, you don't break the law of gravitation. Break your neck, but not the law of gravitation.

You might as well attack your brother with a pop gun as to attack the moral law of the universe under God who rules in righteousness. I'm tired of little professors who brainwash young students into disbelieving the Bible. I'm tired of popular commentaries that either doubt or deny all the miracles.

I'm tired of hearing the stars and stripes being dragged in the dust and maligned, and the great heroes of the past smeared in patriotism, drunk in favor of an internationalism which is part of the program of antichrist. I'm tired of calling sin sickness. Everybody's sick today.

Alcoholism is just a disease. The only one I know of that we're spending 350 million dollars a year to spread. We're trying to conquer the rest of us.

Our Bible does not say no leper shall inherit the kingdom of God. It does not say no paralytic shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. It does say no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.

I'm tired of hearing about criminals just being sick. We are more sympathetic with the criminal now than with his victim. A liar is just an extrovert with a lively imagination.

A murderer is just a victim of a traumatic experience. His mother wouldn't let him push the oatmeal dish off of the tray when he was little, so now he pushes his wife off Brooklyn Bridge. We recognize adultery in the slums, but not in Hollywood.

Illegitimacy has become respectable and desubsidized by the welfare state. I'm tired of experts who know all the answers when they don't even know what the question is. I'm tired of all this excitement about living on the moon when we've never learned how to live on earth.

We are not going to last long enough morally to do what we're going to do spiritually. I'm tired of this artificial wealth with America riding to the poorhouse in the Cadillac. I got along pretty well in the depression of the 30s, but I'm having a rough time in the prosperity of the 60s.

I'm tired of this joke that we call progress. Oh, I know we've learned how to lengthen life, but we don't know how to deepen it. You'd have to live twice as long to live half as much as your father did.

It has been said birthdays tell how long you've been on the road, but they don't tell how far you've traveled. Oh, I know we have wonder drugs. Take them and wonder what's going to happen next, but they're misuse and long range effects raise problems as great as they solve.

I know we've licked smallpox. Now everybody's going crazy, moves up to the head where there's more room, I suppose. I'm tired of wading through secondhand tobacco smoke from a generation of lung cancer prospects while the surgeon general warns the nation and pulpits keep silent.

I've heard a lot about I'd rather fight than switch. What bothers me is this crowd that would rather die than quit instead of abstinence just to please the cocktail set and the church congregation. I'm tired of the stupidity of our smartness.

We've polluted the very air we breathe until we wheeze our way through smog. We've polluted the waters until our rivers have become sewers. Our cities, and especially Washington of all places, have become jungles of crime until no decent woman walks the streets at night.

We live in a madhouse of ear splitting noise that has become a national problem. The experts tell us that soon city residents will have to wear gas masks and hearing aids. When automobiles came out, Ray Standard Baker said it'll be almost as quiet as a country lane now.

All the crash of horseshoes and the rumble of steel tires will be gone. Now we have a problem of traffic that has no answer. I'm 65 years old, bought my first automobile this week.

I'm just a little bit behind the times. My wife's going to drive and I'm going to pray. Brother, you'd better pray because you're safer on a battlefield than you are on a highway.

Before World War I, you, O Dwight Hill, have said laws are becoming more just, rulers more humane, music sweeter and books wiser, homes are happier in the individual heart, more just and gentle. And then came the first World War. When we make the world safer, democracy, you remember, it hasn't been safe for anything since.

Of all the illusions and the phantasms and the farces of human history, the biggest is the mirage we call progress. Just because we split the atom and are headed for the moon, we've given God his walking papers. But sin has gotten us into more trouble than science will ever get us out of.

The scriptures tell us that history will end in catastrophes, abounding lawlessness and abating love, perilous times in a world that's lost its way. There is not one area today, you name it, there's not one, government, law observance, common safety, the new morality, the national debt, Vietnam, world peace, family life, art, literature, theology, you name it, there's not one area that is not in one hopeless mess where we have boxed ourselves in and locked the door and lost the key. Even so, come Lord Jesus, we've invented TV.

But what is there worth telling us? We have computers to do our thinking, but who's thinking? We've got more leisure than ever, but have you looked around lately at the way we use it? Men used to have visions of God, now they see another world only when they eat a sugar cube of LSD. I'm tired of a lot of things, but thank God there are some things I'm sure about. What can a man be sure of? And my friend, I'm not dead sure.

I don't believe in being dead sure about anything. I believe in being alive sure, and I'm alive sure about a lot of things. I agree with Josh Billings, who said, I'd rather know a few things for certain than be sure of a lot of things that ain't so.

I thank God for a few things for certain. I believe the Bible is the word of God, every word of it. I don't understand all of it, but I stand on all of it.

It does not need our vindication, although the archaeologist's faith digs up evidence every day to shut the mouths of critics. They've buried the old book long, many times in the past, just as they tried to bury God, but somehow the corpse always comes to life in the midst of the infirmity, shallowly of all the pallbearers. We're hearing a lot today about myths, myths, myths.

The creation story is a myth. The resurrection is a myth. The second coming of Christ is a myth.

If I had to believe that, I'd be mystified and mistaken and miserable. What more can he say than to you he hath said? I believe Jesus Christ is the son of God. I believe he was born as a virgin Mary, otherwise he was born out of wedlock, and I'm not interested in that kind of a statement.

Some people say the virgin birth recorded only in Luke. I don't agree with that, but even if it were, how many times does God have to say it before we believe it? I believe the record God gave of his son, and on that rock I stand. I believe Jesus Christ died for my sins.

He did not come down here merely to teach, to be an example of the dire martyr. He came to do something about our main problem, which includes all other problems. You'd never know it's the main

problem today.

Nobody in Congress is going to stand up and say the trouble's sin. Nobody in the U.N., nobody in the universities, nobody in the scientific laboratories, nobody in the world capitals. We're all trying to sweep out the cobwebs, but we never do anything about the spider, and that spider is sin, and Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and on that rock I stand.

I believe Jesus Christ rose bodily from the grave. I'm not worshiping a ghost. The world knows he died, and the church knows he rose, and such books as the Passover plot to the contrary not resent.

He could have appeared to Herod and Pilate and put on a demonstration in Jerusalem and created the greatest sensation of all time, but he revealed himself only to his disciples. We have the greatest secret, and the church is the greatest secret order in all the universe. I accept the fact of his resurrection.

I've entered into the experience of it. I'm living in the power of it, and I'm awaiting the final fulfillment of it up from the grave. He rose, and upon that rock I stand.

I believe Jesus Christ is coming back personally and visibly to reign on this earth. It could be any day, and the sooner the better. When Jesus came the first time, neither the Roman world of government or the Greek world of culture or the Hebrew world of religion would receive him.

When he comes back, neither government, culture, nor religion will hang out a welcome sign. Why, even the church is so busy purring around down here that she scarcely lifts her eyes toward heaven to pray, even so come Lord Jesus. Wouldn't you think that it would be on all our lists and the subject of many a happy conversation? But you try bringing it up with a group of church members even, and see how suspicious and hesitant and embarrassed some of them look.

The Lord's return is the unwanted stepchild in the family of church doctrine, but on that rock I stand. I believe the church, the true church, is the good, not the great, but the good society of all people who've been born twice. I'm not talking about that ecclesiastical octopus, the world church, which along with the world state is shaping up before our eyes and will end under Antichrist and will be the only church officially recognized in that day.

I'm talking about another church whose statistics are in heaven, whose scholarship is in the spirit, whose faith is in Jesus Christ, and on that rock I stand. There's a remnant of humble, hard-working, good Christian people still left in America who are longing for old-fashioned preaching. Some of them don't speak out on some of these issues.

They're afraid of being identified with off-band groups they wouldn't be caught dead in. Well, the devils believe there's one God and tremble. Now, that's one place where I agree with the devil, and I'm not going to quit believing there's one God because the devil does.

Nor am I renouncing any of the old simplicities because some crackpots twist them to suit their purposes. I believe Jesus Christ is the answer to every problem, f-a-i-c-h, for all I take him, for all he is I take him, for all my need I trust him, and for all his blessings I thank him. I believe that all who trust him have everlasting life, and that all who reject him will live in conscious torment forever.

When I had a country church a long time ago, an infidel in the congregation said, I don't like this preaching on hell. Why don't you preach more about the meek and lowly Jesus? I said, my friend, most of the

information that I have about hell I got from the meek and lowly Jesus. He took the last verse of the book of Isaiah and the garbage heap outside Jerusalem and put them together in a blood-curdling, hair-raising, spine-chilling picture of eternal torment.

I've read books and sermons trying to say that my Lord's belief in hell is an accommodation to the ideas of his time, but no amount of exegetical sleight of hand can change the fact that Jesus Christ saw the future abode of the wicked as an endless horror beyond the great gulf forever thick. I believe there's a hell because he did, and on that rock I stand. I believe there's a heaven.

Long ago, when I was a little country boy, I carved one day an inscription on one of the outside bricks of the old-fashioned chimney back home. It read, Heaven I hope to win. I'd been told about a beautiful city at home and in Sunday school.

I'd read Pilgrim's Progress and how through all his trials and tribulations he crossed over the river into that heavenly home. I used to swing under the old oak tree and look towards the distant mountains and try to sing, There is a land that's fairer than day, and by faith I can see it afar. I made up my mind to go to that place, and I headed heavenward.

I wanted to get off to an early start. I visited that sacred spot a few weeks ago, a few months ago. The little old house and the chimney still stand.

There came to me the memory of that inscription I carved on it over half a century ago. I looked for it, and I found it. Fifty-odd years of wind and weather had battered it.

Most of it was erased by the rains and the snows and the steady erosion of heat and cold, but it could still make out two words, heaven and hope. I, too, have stood the gales and the summers and the winters of all these years, but the ravages of life's seasons have not removed the hope of heaven from my heart. It's embedded there tonight, dear friends, more securely than my boyish fingers ever carved it under that old chimney.

The infidels have blown their blankets. Bible critics, even in pulpits and some seminary chairs, have tried to dim that hope. There was a time when, as with the poet, heaven seemed farther away than when I was a boy, but tonight that hope burns brighter than ever before.

Some of the dearest in this world have taken up their residence over there. When I carved out on the old brick chimney, most of my loved ones were living here. Now most of them are living there.

The population's shifted, and I'm more interested in another world. But I've got my Savior's word, folks. If it were not so, I would have told you.

Thank God he'd let us know. Hellish every fond ambition, all I've sought and hoped and known, yet how rich is my condition. God and heaven are still mine.

Now, you say that's awfully old-fashioned. Yes, sir. The sun is old-fashioned, but without it, men grow up in darkness.

Air is old-fashioned, but without it, men gasp and die. Water is old-fashioned, but without it, men go mad. How dependent we are on these great simplicities for all our gauges.

The other day, back in the summer, a thunderstorm knocked out the lights in our apartment. There we sat, victims of gadgetry. The food might thaw, the ice cream might melt, the clock wouldn't run, the TV wouldn't work, the electric stove was out.

Now, when I was a boy, a thunderstorm wouldn't have made a bit of difference in the world. Why, the milk was down in the spring, and the meat was salted down, and we wound up the clock, and we didn't have television. How we ever did without it, I don't know, but we managed.

They had a power phaser in New York State, in that part of the country you remember, and there sat all that city just waiting for the sun to rise. Just as simple as that. They had a big smog out in Los Angeles, and there was a great city waiting for the wind to blow.

Just the wind. They had a drought, and all the meteorologists and the agricultural experts were just waiting for it to rain. So, today, for all his science, and all his gadgets, and all his gimmicks, man's a helpless poor creature still dependent on sun, and air, and water.

And still dependent, if he's to get to heaven, on the old-time religion and the only thing that he's good enough. The greatest hindrance to many a man's salvation is not his badness, his goodness. The good that's not good enough.

Jesus said, except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and pharisees, you won't get to heaven. Well, it would have to be pretty good. They went to church, they read the bible, they prayed in public, they were tithers, they were separated from the world, they tried to win others to their beliefs, but it wasn't good enough.

Education's good, but it's not good enough. Moral character's good, but it's not good enough. Reformation's good, but it's not good enough.

Church membership's good, but it's not good enough. But, there is a green hill far away without a city wall, where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all. There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin.

He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. Long ago, Joseph Parker, that great English preacher, preached a mighty sermon on the stupidity of the specialist, and his text was, the stone which the builders rejected. The builders, mind you, of all people, the experts, the specialists.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. We're living in the day of the experts, the day of the builder. That may be the cause of most of our trouble, but our civilization is crumbling because the experts have rejected the only foundation that will endure, and all other ground is sinking sand.

If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do? Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ, and the perpetrator, Christ.

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