

Founders Week Conference 1974 - 02

by Vance Havner

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking a closer walk with God, trusting in His sovereignty and provision, and glorifying Him in all things.

Duration: 38:30

Scripture: Genesis 15:1, Joshua 1:9, Psalm 46:10, Psalm 48:14, Psalm 73:25-26, Psalm 127:2, Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Philipians 4:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, Hebrews 11:6, Hebrews 12:6, 1 Peter 1:8

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of seeking God above all else, while still acknowledging the need to fulfill our earthly responsibilities. He references the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, where Paul encourages believers to live as though they have no wives, no sorrows, no joys, no possessions, and to use the world without abusing it. The preacher explains that living 'as though' helps believers navigate difficult situations. He also highlights the paradox of having nothing yet possessing all things, which frustrates the devil. The sermon concludes with a reminder to focus on seeking God's kingdom and will, rather than being consumed by material desires.

Transcript

Dr. Hefner knows that he's loved here. He has many friends, not only in this auditorium, but listening. And as you know, these days he's passed through this loss of losing his wife, and he asked if he could just talk to us today.

We're just thrilled he's here. Come and share with us, Ben Hefner. Now, doctor, you're going to get me in trouble here with all this talk.

Thank you for that precious song. Amen. When I get under the juniper tree once in a while with old Elijah, when he said all the good folks are gone but me and I'm not feeling so well myself, I think about Moody Institute and then I cheer up.

You've done me a world of good already here. I tell you, I don't know of any place in this country where you can go and get your batteries recharged just by the sight of so many fine young people training for the work of the Lord and so many fine men and women to lead them. I thank God for these 50 years of memories and association with this place.

I like to think that you pray for me, and I want to take this opportunity just to thank you and bless your heart from everywhere who sent me all those cards and letters in these weeks past. I couldn't possibly answer them. You know that.

I never had the secretary in my life who didn't know how to dictate a letter. If I started, I couldn't think of anything to say. Writing them all myself.

But from the bottom of my heart, I deeply thank you for the way you've shared. So many dear people wrote in and said, I've been through that valley. I lost a husband.

I lost a wife. I know you've been there, and you don't know that you have been there. I always tried to comfort people through these years past who had had such an experience but just didn't know, couldn't help it.

Of course, you can't either if you haven't been that road, but you have to be there to appreciate it. And yet so many more wrote me about how they were praying for me, and it has meant so much to me. In Hebrews 11.6, we are told that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

And in Genesis 15.1, he said to Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. At the beginning of last year, 1973, I was considerably exercised in my heart about a closer walk with the Lord. I wanted the last years to be the best, and in 60 years of preaching, and 34 of them on the road, I'd had very little trouble, no accidents, very little sickness, and I marveled at it.

Then I remembered the verse, whom the Lord loveth and chasteneth, and that without chastening we are bastards and not sons. And I wondered why so little of this evidence of sonship had come my way, because I'd had it pretty good through those years. I wanted God to bring me to himself alone so that I could say, and not just sing, once earthly joy I craved sought peace and rest, now the alone I seek give what is best.

You'd better mean it when you ask God to glorify himself in you at any cost. You'd better think before you pray that prayer, because he'll take you up on it, and you don't know what the price will be. You remember that on one occasion my Lord said, Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Then he said, Father, glorify thy name.

If you ever get to the place, and you will if you haven't already, where your soul is troubled and you don't know what to say, here's what to say. Father, glorify thy name. And the way it was with me, it meant five months by a hospital bed of a dying wife, wasting away with a disease I had never heard of.

Her loveliness distorted and disfigured, and even personality changes. In the last two days, with her completely unconscious and only that beep of the monitor registering her heart, I held on to her hand by the side of the bed and said, Lord, help me to remember her as she used to look, and as she will look, thank God. I don't understand it.

There were a lot of things that I don't have any clever answers for, and when I meet some brother who has smug and forthright quick answers for some of these problems, I say, Brother, bless your heart, you're not for me. You know too much. I don't understand some things that I can't go into this morning, but I accept it, and I agree with Old Spurgeon when he said, When we cannot trace God's hand, we can always trust God's heart.

I haven't lost her, of course, because I know where she is. You haven't lost anything, and you know where it is. But I've come through the darkest days of my 72 years, shipwrecked on God and stranded on omnipotence.

I said that at Ben Lippon's conference, and Billy Graham, who was just a few miles away in his home, heard it over the air and sent a note next morning and said, I heard that, shipwrecked on God, stranded on omnipotence. That's what I want to be when God calls on me. I've learned, for one thing, the difference between God the rewarder and God the reward.

Somebody said the difference between Patrick Henry and the average American today is that Patrick Henry said, Give me liberty, give me death, and the average American today just says, Give me. We make a Santa Claus out of the Lord sometimes. We want the gifts, not the giver.

We want the blessing more than we want the blesser. We need to get over the gimmies. In Christian life, we ought to follow the pattern of the Lord's prayer.

You know how it begins. His name, his kingdom, his will, and his will. This is our daily bread.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Our Lord emphasized that if we are to follow him, we must hate father and mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, and our own life. I know how we explain that.

We've all done it. We say it's relative, that we ought to love the Lord so much, that all these other affections are as hatred and compassion. Well, yes, but Dr. A. T. Robertson, the great Greek scholar, said it is the language of exaggerated contrast.

But don't water it down until the point is gone. Our Lord is making a terrific demand here, and there isn't much of a way to soften it. We ought to mean it when we sing, Jesus is all the world to me.

That's a very easy song to sing and a hard song to live up to. We're usually unconscious when we sing anyhow. I've noticed that all over this country through these years.

I think if we were perfectly honest, some of us would choke up on the first verse and never make it through the chorus. God's purposes are not achieved, beloved, until our delight is in him. Dr. Torrey gave us a statement about the purpose of prayer, the best one I ever read.

He said the chief purpose of prayer is that God may be glorified in the answer. The chief purpose of prayer is not to get what you want, but that God may be glorified whatever you get. Now sometimes our dear ones are taken and sorrow comes and fails to drive us to God himself.

It was in the year that King Uzziah died that Isaiah saw the Lord, but there's another little word that I left out. The death of Uzziah was a national calamity. He'd been a good king, although he went out under a cloud.

He had done a lot of fine things for the country. And then he went out in darkness and tragedy, and I'm sure a lot of people must have said, well, dear me, if Uzziah can go out like that, what will I ever do? And Isaiah, that patrician prophet, was stunned by it. But the difference between the rest of the folks in Isaiah was that while they were all bowled over by the tragedy, it was a terrific minus, but Isaiah had a plus.

I saw also the Lord. Now you're going to have a lot of minuses, but may God help you to find the plus there somewhere and see the Lord. Sometimes it's a little hard to tell when trouble hits you real hard, whether it's divine chastisement or a devilish attack.

It can be both. It was with Job. God was trying out Job, and the devil was working on him, too.

It was true with Paul. God was teaching Paul that his grace is sufficient, but that thorn in the flesh was a messenger of Satan. And you remember what my Lord said in Luke 22, 31, 32, to Peter, Satan has desired to have you, but I, and look at the contrast, thank God for it, the devil wants you to sift his wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.

Double action there. When God calls us to seek him alone, that doesn't mean that we're not to have any other concerns, whatever. Paul cleared that up.

This I say, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away. He begins that statement and closes it with the time element, the time is short, the fashion of this world is passing away. He doesn't say you're not to have wives, but be as though you had none.

He doesn't say you're not to weep, but as though you wept not. You are to rejoice, but as though you rejoiced not. You are to buy, but as though you possessed not.

You are to use this world, but as not using it to the full. We must learn to live as though, and if you can learn to live as though, in the light of this passage it'll help you over some rough spots. And then you remember Paul said in that paradox of 2 Corinthians 6, 10, having nothing, possessing all things.

And you just can't do anything with a man like that. The devil says I'll give you this, and I'll give you that, and the Christian says you can't, I've got everything. That makes the devil mad, and he says I'll take this away, and I'll take that away, and the Christian says you can't, I haven't got anything.

What are you going to do with a man like that? You can't hit him off if you take off his head. What are you going to do with a man like that? My Lord was not trying to make a beggar out of the rich young ruler, he wasn't trying to make a pauper out of him. He was simply trying to get him to give up everything so that he might have everything.

I heard of a dear old lady who was quite feeble, and they said to her, well, the doctor says he's done all he can, you'll have to trust the Lord. And she said, my soul hasn't come to that. Now a lot of people come to that in that sort of fashion.

Well, beloved, it does come to that, it always comes to that. Why don't you start with that? Might as well. Comes to that anyhow.

When God is our portion, we have nothing, we have everything. And Job got through to more than he ever had. He had the divine confrontation, and I don't know of any book in all the world ends with a happier ending than the book of Job.

It doesn't mean that when you shut up to God that you sit in lonely isolation and sanctified solitude. Doesn't mean that at all. Peter said, Lord, we've left all and have followed thee.

Peter never did quite get it right a lot of times. And no wonder the Bible says, and Peter said not knowing what he said. Somebody said he was the most American of all the disciples.

And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake and the gospel, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecution and in the world to come eternal life. I think that's a pretty good deal myself. When you get all that back.

Oh, some folks say that's for the kingdom. I don't care where you put it, it's there for your friend. The principle holds and you come out a winner.

You can't lose from winning. I want to say this morning that I have learned beloved in darkness, what I never would have learned by day. I introduced Dr. Paul Reese the other day to a meeting in North Carolina and that matchless preacher quoted a poem.

He didn't know where he got it. And I said, I must have that just two little verses of it. Many a rapturous minstrel among the sons of light will say of his sweetest music.

I learned it in the night and many a rolling anthem that fills the father's throne sobbed at its first rehearsal in the shroud of a darkened room. I don't know who wrote that. The English of it is matchless, but the meaning of it's far beyond all that.

There's a silly little song on TV. I heard it the other day, kind of a hillbilly thing. If tears were pennies and heartaches were gold, I'd have all the money my pockets could hold.

Well, I feel kind of like that in heaven in the last month. And thank the Lord it didn't lose a sense of humor. You Christian don't ever lose that as you go through dark.

God gave it to you. It has its proper place. God is able to transmit the coinage of sorrow into the currency of joy.

It changes trouble into treasure and gives beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. I've learned how to weep with them that weep. Somebody sent to me that tape of Dr. Culbertson's last message.

And I was going through Deepwaters and I sat there and just bawled. I don't apologize for it. There's a time I didn't just weep.

I bawled as I listened to this good man say in the course of it. I don't want to criticize old David for saying, oh, that I had wings as a dove so that I might fly away and be at rest. Because Dr. Culbertson was going through the valley and facing and with terminal illness facing the end of this road.

Oh, I sat there and wept because I felt a kinship. I've wept more in the past six months than I have in 72 years, but I thank God for a prospect. My Bible tells me that God is not going to appoint angels to dry our eyes.

He is going to give that his personal attention. It says God shall wipe all tears from our eyes. Now I think it would be right nice to have an angel to do it.

But God is going to take care of it. And oh, my friend, don't take your blessing for granted. There's an old saying, you never miss the water till the well goes dry.

I never took my beloved for granted. I have no regrets about that. But let me say this morning to you husbands and wives, don't take your dear one for granted and assume that because you told her a long time ago that you loved her that she still remembers it.

Don't take her for granted. Tell her, tell him, because if you fail a bit, or even if you do tell her, the day will still come. Because rarely ever do both go at the same time.

The day will come when you give everything you can to have one day, just one day. Tell her. Of course, I do it a little cautiously.

They're not used to it and might have a heart attack. I'll never forget it, the first Founders Week I ever attended. I heard a preacher tell a story that even made Dr. James M. Gray fly in the crowd and said, the preacher's right.

And tell the missus how much I thank her. He prepared a masterpiece. I tell you he had words in there that never had been on land or sea.

When he walked into the kitchen she was busy with the housework and he took off on this flight of fancy. Then he posed to catch his breath. She looked at him and said, well, just catch the climax.

I broke one of my best plates this morning. I've had a splitting headache all day and now you've come home drunk. So watch it, watch it, but do it.

Take a chance. Tell her, I, I've learned in a new way, beloved. I've learned in a new way that God is a very pleasant help in trouble.

When I went into the first of this, I wondered whether I would be able to rest or not. I've always been a poor sleeper. I remember two years of my life when I was smitten with insomnia and I've always pitied any poor mortal who has problems along that line.

I was preaching through the state of Iowa. Went to bed one night, crouched an hour, didn't sleep a wink. Next night didn't sleep a wink and for two years I wrestled with that problem.

It's one of those things you take for granted. You just go to bed and go to sleep, but when the time comes that you seek for it as men for hidden treasures, you learn not to take things for granted. And I began to wonder, I said, oh dear me, I hope this doesn't come back on me in all of this.

And the doctor gave me a bottle of red medicine and a bottle of pills and he said, these are my, I'll take them and they have their place, don't misunderstand me. And I took a few, but one night I said, Lord, you give your beloved sleep, it says, and I'd rather depend on you. And I want to say that from that night to this, I've been able to roll my burdens on the Lord and been able to sleep.

And that I cannot account for any other way except to say the Lord took it over. And I'm like that old bishop who had trouble and got up at two in the morning, hadn't slept yet and got his Bible out and he said, he

that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. And he said, Lord, if you're sitting up, no use me sitting up good night.

I've learned another thing, beloved, that weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning. God doesn't want us to sit up with the dead. This is my servant is dead.

God said to Joshua, now what? Weep for months and months over Moses. Arise. He didn't talk to you about that this month.

Mr. Lloyd George, England prime minister was out playing cricket one day and he and his friends went into a pastor and closed the gate or worship. The Lord George thought and came back. It nearly killed him.

I came to the field after he had gotten himself fairly well in hand. We sat one evening discussing and then we got on the subject of sleeplessness. And he said, well, I've learned one thing.

When time comes to go to bed, I go in my room and I, he didn't mean the door to the room. You must learn to do that dear heart. If you're listening to me and you have trouble, some things you have to fight through and some things you circumvent.

J. Smith, when he started out, the priest didn't have much education, you know, and he said these big words in the Bible bothered me. He said the way I handled it when I saw a big word coming these days, God's going to reshuffle between the companionship of yesterday. And he said to us, don't forget that you're the Lord's lamb and don't become a billy goat.

I'm saying, Lord, what's going to happen to me? Who's going to pay all these bills? Who's, you didn't know you had a prize winner. Some of you are in jail, walking near a precipice, slipped and he thought he was going over and he grabbed the book and held the gateway. And he's a real enemy to me.

A few inches from the mat or the throne. I stand in him complete country. The book salesman used to come by several pages.

And some of the pictures page eight and the next page didn't many times sensitive sort of whittied your appetite for the read just enough down here. All we could understand that thing to whet our appetite for what he has for us. So we taste the pot to taste and you're on the program for taste of glory in this car.

And all of a sudden he started saying in that verse, but it said the hill of Zion before we reach the heavenly fields or walk the golden streets, you don't have to wait. You get to heaven. You can take some of it now.

That's the earnest of our inheritance. That's what Fannie Crosby meant. Oh, what a film B. Oh, if we can see what God is for the future, of course, much more.

It would take the lines out of our faces and the cares out of our eyes and the fear out of our hearts, fill us with joy, unspeakable and full of glory. This old world has never been less attractive to me than it is this morning. And the next has never been more inviting.

There are a lot of questions the Bible doesn't answer about the hereafter. There are a lot of details with his eyes on that explained all this to us. What's ours becomes to be with me.

Appreciate it. Once in a while, you contain three. They can sing with me, lead us in three verses.

We're going to disarrange them because I want you to get getting ready for verse year older, every page.

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