

# Aaron Vance Send Off Service

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. I remember reading years ago in the life story of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and he would always have these missionaries that came by his church, and they would come by before they left, and they would always have special prayer for him.

Now, he did have a megachurch in the days when there weren't megachurches. He had small rooms in the basement of what they call the Metropolitan Tabernacle, later called Spurgeon's Tabernacle. He had small rooms for 1,900 downstairs.

Upstairs, he had a larger auditorium, 5,000, 6,000 could get in it, and all these missionaries would come by. When you read the stories of the missionaries going by, you're like, wow, Hudson Taylor came by for prayer, and he was greatly supported by all the work everybody ever hears about.

Charles Spurgeon's church had a great deal to do. George Mueller was a buddy of them and hang around with them together. All those stories, the same thing, and so our church always has the privilege of missionaries we support coming by.

One of those is on his way. You leave in 14 days, I suppose. 13 days. 13 days they will be in Columbia. They already speak Spanish, and they're ready to go to work, and I'm glad to have Brother Aaron Vance with us.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] You come and preach, Brother Aaron, and I want you to love this man, and you already support him, and I just want you to pray for him tonight as he leaves with his family. Go in and sit up in another country with a lot bigger stress than you think, and so we want to pray for him tonight.

It's a great honor to be here. Thank you so much for having us. Thank you so much for your support, for standing with us as we go to Columbia. Very excited. Amen. We've seen God do many things in our lives, but every day seems just like he's opening up new doors, and he's teaching us new things and making us more like himself, and I'm just excited to see where he's going to take us.

Amen. If you have your Bibles, let's go to Hebrews chapter number 12, please. Hebrews chapter number 12. I'd like to share something with you that's been a blessing in my life. I don't know if it'll help you as much as it's helped me, but if you all let the words of the Scripture sink in your hearts and let the message that the Lord has for us today just really permeate through your mind and through your lives, I believe it'll make a big difference in the Christian walk that you have each day.

I believe it'll make a big difference in your desire to serve God. I believe it'll make a big difference in every aspect of your life. You know, Hebrews 12 comes right after Hebrews 11. Obviously, they taught me that in school.

12 comes after 11. Amen. Well, Hebrews 11, the whole chapter, talks about some of the great people of the faith all through since the days of Adam all the way through and goes in great, a little bit of detail and just kind of outlines the lives of some of those people.

[ 2 : 3 3 ] It talks about how Adam had faith and how his son had faith and how his son had faith and how his son has faith and all the way down through Moses and all the way down through even just mentioning Samson and King David and Samuel.

Toward the end, it just starts to blur them all out. It says, and we don't have time to tell you about all these, but as Brother Gardner preached in the summit, I think it was, he preached on those last few verses, and I remember so distinctly that one of the main things that stuck out to me was that those people did not attain the promise.

They all had faith in the Messiah that was going to come, faith in Jesus, but they never saw the promise. They died having not received the fulfillment of that promise.

But then look at verse number 1 of chapter number 12. The Bible says, Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, referring back to those men and women of the faith in chapter 11, it says, Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which thus so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joys that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and then sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Lord, I pray that You'd bless the reading of Your Word.

[ 3 : 58 ] I pray that You'd help me in this time to speak Your words, Your message. Lord, I pray that You would do a great and mighty work for Your glory. In Your name I pray. Amen. Today we need to realize that God has placed us in a race.

Amen. God has given us a purpose here in this life. After we were saved, it's not just get saved and then we're done, but we're just really getting started. And every day we take one step closer to Him, one step closer to what He has for us.

And this is nothing new for a lot of y'all, but I think sometimes we really forget that we are actually in a race. We really kind of get comfortable and satisfied here in this life with wherever we're at at the moment.

We get kind of focused on things all around us. And honestly, the Christian life can be tiresome and weary for a lot of people. And I know I've found myself there sometimes. As we get to doing the Christian life, even being a missionary, being in the ministry, pastoring the Spanish church before we were in missions, sometimes it can just become a little bit monotonous.

Sometimes you wonder, well, Lord, what are You doing right now? What are You doing in my life? What do You want me to do here, God? What is Your purpose? We need to realize that He's placed us in this race. And there's this great cloud of witnesses that's kind of cheering us on.

[ 5 : 11 ] But even beyond them, I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is just kind of rooting for us up there in heaven. And He knows that He has a purpose for us, for this church, for Vision Baptist, for our family, the Vances, and for every church around here, every believer, He has a purpose and a will.

But as we run, a lot of people quit. A lot of people get weary and tired. Look at verse 3, if you will. It says, For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.

Look at that last phrase, Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. And when we quit the race, that's really where it starts. It starts in our minds. We start to think of all the lies that the devil tells us.

We start to believe those things and meditate on those things. And we start to believe, well, maybe we're not really good enough to do this. Or maybe we think, well, maybe others will do this. Maybe we think there's more important things in life right now.

Or I've messed up and I don't think God can use my life anymore. We hear these lies of the devil and that's where He begins to stop us in this race. That's where people fall off.

[ 6 : 18 ] I hate hearing about people that begin well. People that maybe accept Christ, get baptized, join in the church, and get excited about the Lord and then eventually just kind of fall off.

But I believe in these verses here, these short verses we've read, there's a few reasons that people fall and a few things we can do to keep from falling out of the race. We want to finish the race that God has set before us.

We want to cross that finish line standing before the Lord Jesus Himself and hearing Him say, well done, thou good and faithful servant. Well done. Well done.

I want to hear those words so badly. I know it's not of what I do. It's not of my merit. But I want to please Him, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5. I know we're justified under the blood and we're saved and He's reconciled us and there's no record of my sin or transgressions, but oh, I want to please Him.

When I hear what He wants for my life, I want to please Him. I want to finish the race. How are we going to finish this race? Look at verse number 1 once again. It says, Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, look at this phrase, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us.

[ 7 : 31 ] He says, Let us lay aside every weight. If you want to finish the race today, number 1, relieve yourself of unnecessary burdens. You know, there are a lot of things that you weren't meant to carry.

Amen? Sometimes we pride ourselves on how much weight we carry in life and the burden of our load and we pride ourselves on maybe taking a step with a great stack of burdens that honestly, we weren't meant to carry in the first place.

The Bible mentions two things. Here he says, Every weight and the sin. Every weight. You know, I believe that goes back to some of those lies that the devil tells us. It goes back to maybe worrying and worrying about things that we're not supposed to worry about.

Taking thought of how we're going to do certain things. I know as we go to Columbia and this road of deputation, especially toward the beginning, it was like, Lord, how are we going to pay the bills this month? Lord, we don't have any support coming in at the beginning especially.

Lord, we don't have any support and we were just starting to schedule meetings and I had just quit my job and quit the pastor in the Spanish church, turned that over and there was nothing coming in and I said, Lord, you're going to have to do something big and Lord, I don't know.

[ 8 : 35 ] I tried to work it out on paper and I tried to figure it all out and there was a burden on me. You know what? We weren't supposed to carry a lot of those burdens. The Bible, the Lord expects us to work, to work diligently, but not to worry about all those things.

Not to take thought of all those things. And when we carry those, it's like taking a whole row of chairs and stacking them up and trying to carry them and then run the race. We can't do that, folks. We can't run the race carrying these burdens.

It talks about the sin. You know, I wonder if this sin that mentions is the sin of unbelief. You know, since it just, chapter 11 talks about all the people that had faith, had faith, had faith, and had faith.

And without faith, it's impossible to please Him. Without faith, it's impossible to please Him. We have to have faith. We have to have faith. We have to have faith. He says, now lay aside those weights and that sin. You worry about things and you're not having faith.

Is that you tonight? Is that you tonight? You go about your life just with a constant worrying about everything, about whatever the burdens are, financial issues, health issues, or me.

[ 9 : 40 ] Man, I think about the ministry. Lord, I want to build a ministry. I want to raise support. I want to do this. And Lord, it's just not happening. You know, He expects us to work and trust Him.

Just trust Him. And lay aside those weights. He said, come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy laden. I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you for my burden is easy and light.

Something like that. I think I misquoted it. Y'all know it. Amen. He says, lay aside those weights that you weren't meant to carry. And then I believe it's also talking about some of that other sin in our life.

Well, we weren't meant to practice sin. We weren't made as Christians. We've been made free from that sin. That doesn't have bondage over us anymore. And the reason you have a tendency to want to quit maybe is because you're carrying that sin in your life.

Just turn it over to God. If you're a believer today, if you've placed your faith in Him, realize that He's paid for that sin. He's reconciled you from that sin. He's made you free and set you free from that sin.

[ 10 : 40 ] Just lay it aside and say, Lord, you've got to help me. But I want to run this race. Lay aside those weights. Lay aside that sin. Your worry is just a lack of faith. Let's let that go.

Amen? Look at verse number 2. The end of verse number 1. It says, let us lay aside. Then later on it says, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

If we want to finish the race today, number 1, relieve yourself of unnecessary burdens. Number 2, run the race. You've got to keep on running. You've got to keep on running. I think some people sign up for this race and they get to the starting point and then they think that's it.

They've arrived and they forget that they're actually supposed to run. They forget that God's actually still doing a work in their lives and they forget that every day is one step. One step at a time.

You know, today I'm not going to be where I should be next year. That next year I'm not going to be where I should be years from now and I shouldn't be where I was yesterday. It's a continual progression of knowing Christ and making Him known of being more like Him.

[ 11 : 43 ] Amen? Oh, we've got to keep on running. The Christian life isn't a sprint but it's a marathon. We are in this for the long haul. Amen? Some expect to finish the race but they stopped running years ago.

How long has it been since you cracked open the Bible and learned something from His Word? How long has it been since you've grown in grace and grown in knowledge? How long has it been since you've grown in your witness and gone forward?

Amen? I love what Paul says in Philippians 3. He says, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being made conformable unto His death. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after.

That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended for Christ Jesus. Listen to this. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. If the Apostle Paul could say that, I think I could probably say that too.

We haven't arrived. Amen? But look at what he says. Listen to what he says. But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

[ 12 : 54 ] He says, I've got to keep running. I want to be more like Christ. I want to know Him more. And I haven't gotten there yet. I want to be made conformable into His life and even to the point of His sufferings.

And he says, I'm trying every day to keep on being a little bit more like Him. I have to press. We have to press. We have to keep on running. Amen? And it says, run with patience. And I think that's something I battle with.

Don't y'all? I battle with patience sometimes. I get an idea of something and I kind of want it done now. I want to do it now. That's not God's idea for our lives. He's in this constant molding and making progress.

I think of what Jesus told His disciples when He walked by Peter and Andrew that were in their boats. He says, as they were there in their boats, He said, come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men.

He didn't just say, I will make you fishers of men. That's how I always heard it in my life. But the Bible actually says, I will make you to become fishers of men. It's not an instant thing.

[ 14 : 01 ] He has to do a work in our lives. He had to teach them a lot of things along the way. He had to teach them about first who He was. He had to teach them that this is God. He had to teach them how to do the ministry and how to deal with disappointment, how to deal with persecution, how to deal with things that we don't know how to deal with in our flesh.

He says, I will make you to become. We've got to relieve ourselves of unnecessary burdens. We've got to run the race. And look at verse number 2 of our text. Looking unto Jesus.

Amen? Let me say that again just in case you didn't get it. He says, yeah, you've got to lay aside some stuff. You've got to keep on running. But listen, if you don't get this point, we might as well quit today.

He says, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. In other words, He started it and He's going to end it in our life too. He's the one that enables us.

He's the one that empowers us. He's the one that inspires us. He's the one that keeps us running. He's the one that motivates us. He says, you've got to renew your focus of Jesus.

[ 15 : 02 ] Number three, renew your focus of Jesus. He says, when you start to look at other things in life, you're going to be disappointed. When you start to look at the waves as Peter did as he stepped out of the boat in the Gospels and he saw Jesus walking on the water and he asked Him if He could come out also and there He was stepping out of the boat and walking on the water.

Jesus bid him come. Isn't that awesome? But then those waves started to come. They started to hit His ankles and His feet and they were in the middle of a storm, mind you. You know, He started looking at those waves and He started to sink.

Why? Because He lost His focus of Jesus. We've got to renew our focus of Jesus when we look at any other direction we'll fall and we'll faint. We'll fall and we'll faint.

If I focus on myself I'll get too self-reliant and self-conscious. I'll think, man, I'm doing a pretty good job here. Amen? If I look at the ministry I have or maybe you have a Sunday school class or you work in the nursery or you clean the building or you work out on visitation or you're just serving God where you're at and you think, well, I'm doing a pretty good job in my ministry or even in your secular life if you're out in the workplace and God has maybe prospered you and He's given you a good job and a good salary and maybe some things you start to look at those things and trust in those things and put your hope in those things and eventually they'll all vanish and they'll all be gone.

Amen? And you will be disappointed. You will fall out of the race. Why? Because your focus wasn't on the one who gave you those things. Who entrusted you with those things. Your focus wasn't on the one for whom those things were made, were given to you.

[ 16 : 40 ] If I look at others, if I focus on others, I get too prideful or discouraged. There's two sides to that. I think, well, I'm doing better than them or I think, they're doing a whole lot better than me. If I look at this side or the other, man, they raise support better for the missionary.

That's what we're thinking. Or, man, they have a bigger ministry. Or maybe you're thinking, well, they have a better singing voice or they do this or I do. We start to have all sorts of problems in our mind that will cause us to stumble and trip because our focus needs to be on Him.

Amen? Our focus needs to be on Jesus. If I look at the difficulties, I get fearful. But if I focus on Jesus, I can finish the race. He started the work. He'll finish the work.

Look at what it says in looking at Jesus, it says, who for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. He despised the shame and He was set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Who for the joy set before Him. You know, He is our joy. We ought to realize that. We ought to make Him our primary joy. We want to be with Him. We want to know Him. We want to make Him known. We want to worship Him.

[ 17 : 46 ] We want the nations to worship Him. That's our desire. That's our heart as the song goes. We want for Him to be our joy. But it says, for the joy set before Him.

What was that joy? It was us. That blows my mind. We were His joy. We were His joy. As He set out to die on the cross, it was a plan that was made long before this world was ever made.

He knew that man would fall. He knew that man would stumble and turn our backs on Him. But He wanted to redeem us to Himself. And the only way was to give His own life. As we celebrated tonight in remembrance, the Lord's Supper as He gave His body, as He gave His blood, He endured the cross and He despised the shame and He sat down.

But why did He do that? How did He do that? Later it says, for consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. How did Jesus do that? For the joy that was set before Him.

For us. If He's willing to do that for us, Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians 5, for the love of Christ constrain us. When I think of His love, my goodness, it just holds me captive.

[ 18 : 57 ] It makes me want to go a little bit farther. Amen? When I think of the sacrifice of Christ, we've got to renew our focus of Jesus. He was able to endure such difficulties because He focused on the joy.

We can endure every struggle, every little bump in life if we focus on Him, if we focus on our joy, on being with Him, on pleasing our God.

He went through so much more than we ever will. Verse 4 says, ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. He says, y'all really haven't suffered as much as you think you have.

Just keep your eyes on Jesus. My God isn't dead. He says He's still on the throne. Amen? He's sat down now. That inspires me. Let me ask you today, what burdens do you need to cast off to keep on running?

What burdens are you carrying that you shouldn't be carrying right now? What's the next step in the race before you? He says, keep on running. Run with patience. And how is your view of Jesus? Is He king in your mind?

[ 19 : 57 ] Is He an almighty God or have you made an idol out of God? Let's keep our eyes on Jesus. Amen? Let's finish the race that was set before us. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia.

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