

# How to Build Your Church - Slovakia Conference 2003 (Slovakian/english)

by Gary Wilkerson

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*The central message of the church is the cross of Jesus Christ, not the benefits of the cross.*

**Duration:** 1:09:00

**Scripture:** Isaiah 59:19, Matthew 6:33, Luke 9:23, Romans 6:6, 1 Corinthians 2:2, 2 Corinthians 5:14, Galatians 6:14

**Topics:** "Conference"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the cross and the message of Jesus Christ. He questions the lack of conversation about Jesus in a meeting where plans and desires were discussed. The speaker shares an example of visiting a slum in Brazil and the poverty he witnessed there. He challenges pastors and Christian workers to be determined and resolute in their focus on the cross of Jesus Christ in their ministry.

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## Transcript

If I had a friend, where would I go, when I feel happy? Where would I go, God, on my knees, where would I go? If I had a friend, where would I go, when I feel happy? Where would I go, God, on my knees, where would I go? Who can teach me the broken ocean? Who will open my blind eyes? Who can heal the heart that is full of love? I don't know where to go. Where can I decide? We can't decide anything. to us very richly.

Weren't you just excited about what Jesus said to us in the last hour? Turn with me, if you would, in your Bibles, please. 1 Corinthians 2. While you turn there, I'd like to pray and ask God to touch us now, today, and speak to us once again through His powerful Word. We invite you once again, Holy Spirit.

Father, we thank You for sending Your Son, Christ Jesus. We thank You for what You said to us today. We're asking for the Word of God once again to penetrate our hearts.

Speak powerfully into our lives. Give me Your Messenger words. Words from heaven.

Words of life. Touch us, Jesus. We're hungry still for You.

We thank You for all we've received from You. But we're not ashamed to ask for more. So we say to You, Jesus, come again more.

Give us more of You, Jesus. More of Your Word. More of Your Spirit.

More of Your life. More of Your glory. More of Your anointing.

I thank You, Jesus. Amen. We've been telling You all along that we don't have any how-tos about building a church.

But today, I want to go back on that just a little bit. And I want to tell You how to build Your church. This is my only how-to message.

And it's a very simple message. It's a very clear message. And yet, at the same time, it's a very dangerous message.

Because you might miss it. You might think you've heard it too many times. You might think it's too simple.

But this is how Christ is building His church. This is His how-to. And it's called the cross-centered church.

If Christ is going to build His church, and He is going to build His church, then the gates of hell will not prevail against it. He's going to have a powerful tool in His hand. A powerful event in history has taken place.

And it's the cross of Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 2, verse 2, Paul says, For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.

And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Now, Paul is pastoring this church at Corinth. He has a heart of love for his church.

But he sees the church in chaos. He sees the terrible crisis that the church is in. He sees the many heresies that are being introduced.

He sees the wolves that are coming into the church. He sees the foolishness that is being proclaimed. He hears the various messages that are going back and forth, pulling people in different directions.

He sees the division in the church at Corinth. He sees an immorality that's not even mentioned in the world. He hears the story of Christians having lawsuits towards other Christians.

There is rampant cardinality. It's beyond his imagination. How could Christians act so carnal? How could these things happen in the church of Jesus Christ? And these are the same things happening in our church today.

There is division in the church. Gossip in the church. Lawsuits taking place.

Pastors falling into sin. In America, a survey was taken recently among pastors, and they found out that 30% of pastors are addicted to pornography. In America, the same survey the divorce rate among Christian leaders and those in the church is no different than those in the world.

Almost half the marriages are ending in divorce. There is adultery and fornication. Many pastors are leading these type of churches.

They see the problems in their denomination. The problem in the church that they are pastoring. And they are wondering about the solution.

How will things be made right? How will we have a holy church? How will we have a bride without spot or wrinkle? But Paul is not confused. He has no dilemma. He doesn't have to run to various conferences.

He knows the answer to chaos. He knows the answer to poor doctrine. He knows the answer to crisis.

To immorality. To carnality. And it's one answer.

He says to this church of chaos, of doctrinal breakdown, I have one message for you. That I've determined I've determined in my heart that I want to know nothing. There is nothing you can tell me.

There is no message that will persuade me. The church needs to go back to one thing. I've determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

We've been talking about Jesus. But now I want to talk about His cross. Because Paul was determined to preach the cross.

To him the cross was life. And when I say the cross, I mean the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His ascension to the right hand of God. This is the event of the cross.

And Paul said no plan. No idea or scheme is going to be sufficient for the church in crisis. When there's a problem in the church, Paul is crystal clear.

The Word of God is absolutely clear. If you're going to set your church free, if there's going to be power in your pulpit, it's not going to come from eloquent preaching. It's not going to come from smart doctrines.

It's not going to come from theological training alone. It's going to come through the preaching of the cross. The foolishness of the cross.

The absolute surrender of your life through the cross of Jesus. There's nothing else. Paul says, I'm determined.

Why does he use the word determined? Because he knew he had to be determined. Because all the gates of hell would try to persuade him otherwise. All the religious leaders would try to tell him there's another message.

Tell him there's a more popular message. There's a softer message. There's a kinder message.

There's a more attractive message. You don't have to go right to the cross. You can water it down.

But Paul was determined. Pastor, are you determined? Christian worker, are you determined? Are you resolute in your heart to say that my walk with Jesus and my ministry in the kingdom boils down to this one thing? It's about the cross of Jesus Christ. I don't want to know anything but the cross of Jesus Christ.

I was at a pastor's conference recently in the United States I was preaching at. I have started many churches in my life in inner cities in America. So I was invited to speak at this church planting conference.

There were many seminars on how to plant new churches. And after one of the sessions I took a group of about 10 young pastors out for lunch. And they began to tell me about their strategy, about their vision,

about their plans, about their 10-step program, about their 5-year plan.

They were talking about everything. All their plans, all their dreams, all their desires. But there was no conversation about Jesus.

You could have had that same meeting with businessmen. CEOs could have talked about their corporations in the exact same language. But I asked them a question.

Where does the cross fit in? Where is the single message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified? I said, what's Jesus been saying to you lately? And they looked at me like I was speaking in Slovakian to them. They looked at me like they had no idea what I was talking about. There was a blank look on their face.

Young men. Passion. Vision.

Desire. Ambition. But no Jesus.

No cross. No Christ on the cross. No resurrection.

And without that, there's no life. It's hopeless. They're headed for churches that are dead.

Because Paul says, I don't want to know anything. When I have a conversation, I don't want to hear just about your plans. I want to hear about the King of kings and Lord of lords.

I want to hear you tell me about Jesus. Tell me how the cross has impacted your life. Tell me how you died to your own plans.

Tell me how the cross has impacted you. And that's why Paul had to be determined. Because he knew the religious leaders would come in.

Wolves in sheep's clothing. Trying to dissuade him and impress him. To preach something else.

To have central something else. But he had nothing to do with it. No method.

No plan. No activity of the church of Jesus Christ will be a success. It will fail.

It will fall short. If the cross of Jesus Christ is not the centerpiece of that church. If that's not the central message of the church.

And pastors, I want to encourage you. Ministers, I want to stir you up. Return to remember the cross.

For it was at the cross you were saved. It was at the cross you were set free. It's by the cross you are holy.

It's by the cross the lost people are saved in your church. And I have no time for the American churches who in our modern society are taking the crosses off the church walls. They say they don't want to offend anybody.

But Paul says the gospel is an offense. Unless we have the offense of the cross in the center of the church. And I don't mean just a piece of wood on the wall.

But the preaching and the prayer meetings and the life of sacrifice and the commitment and the giving is all born out of a life in the cross of Jesus. Look back in the previous chapter. Chapter 1 of Corinthians.

Verse 17. Paul says this. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to us, it is the power.

The power of God. For us some it's foolishness. For a carnal church it's foolishness to preach the cross.

But for us who have been to the cross, who know it's by the cross we live, the cross is not foolishness. The cross is the power of God. It's the power of God.

Paul says he saw this power. In chapter 2 he said it was the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. And many in our modern day think that this manifestation of the Spirit, they believe that this demonstration of power has to do with charismatic manifestations.

Now listen to me carefully. There are churches all over the world that determine their effectiveness by the amount of their charismatic manifestations. If they have a big meeting, and people come to the front, and people pray for them, and they all fall down, then that's a good manifestation.

If there's prayer for the sick, if someone speaks in tongues, if someone blows on you and you fall over, I could list a hundred different things about manifestations of the Spirit. And some of them might be good. And some of them are foolishness.

But none of them are the power of God. Not the central power of God. They may be a result of the power of God, but Paul makes clear what the power of God is.

Look at verse 18 one more time. The message of the cross is the power of God. Does that sound foolish to you? Would you rather be a charismatic manifestation? Would you rather be laughing or barking like a dog? Would you rather be falling all over the place? Or would you rather have the cross of Jesus Christ so impact your life that you're transformed forever? That you're now a new creation? That you're not the same person? That the glory of Jesus is shown through you? Not because of your outward manifestations, but because the cross lives in your heart.

Paul said, Christ did not send me to baptize. He could have added to that list. He didn't send me to the church to preach about Sunday school, to start small groups, to have charismatic meetings, to heal the sick, to raise the dead.

Those are good things. But Paul is not called to preach those things. He says, I'm determined.

I'm persuaded. There's this one thing I've got to preach to you. And that's the cross of Jesus Christ.

That's the power of God. The message of the cross. I was in Cuba this year.

And I met the bishop of the Methodist church. There are 800 Methodist pastors and churches in Cuba. Now in America, some of the Methodist churches are alive.

And some of the Methodist churches are very dead and very liberal. In Cuba, the Methodist church had been very liberal. But one day, there were two young men in this bishop's church.

And they were down at the altar. And they were reading the book of Acts. And they read where they could be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And they said, we've never heard you preach about this, Bishop. Pastor, you've never told us about being filled with the Holy Spirit. He said, but we want this.

And he said to them, that's not for today. That's passed away. That's foolishness.

But they were saying in their hearts, we want to know this. We want to know this power. We know a little bit about Jesus.

But we're hungry for more. And he said, that's foolishness. Just come to meetings.

Just pay your tithes. That's a good Christian. He walked out the back of the church.

He got a funny feeling in his heart. He said, I'm not being a good pastor to those boys. So he walked back into the church.

And he stood at the back of the church and watched them. And they were on their knees at the front of the church. And they began to weep.

They began to cry out to God. And they began to raise their hands. And they got filled with the Holy Spirit and with power.

And the pastor said, this doesn't happen today. And he went forward to grab them by the arms and take them out of the church. And he said, this isn't for today.

You have to leave the church. This can't happen. And they said, Pastor, it just happened to us.

And he said, well, if it happens to you, maybe it will happen to me. And he prayed, God, should I be filled with your Spirit? And instantaneously, the heavens opened. And he got filled with the Holy Spirit.

He was baptized with fire. His life was changed. He became on fire for God.

Within a few weeks, he called all his church together. 800 pastors. And he said, forgive me.

Because I've told you that the power is gone. The Spirit is not alive. But I met the Spirit.

And I've been filled with the Holy Spirit. And He put a new power in my heart. And I want you to have that.

And they were filled with the Spirit. And 95% of the churches now in Cuba are on fire, Spirit-filled churches. Because two boys said the Word says it.

And I believe it. And I'm waiting on God until I receive it. But here's what this bishop told me.

His Spirit came in such power. He had a church that could seat 1200 people. But he only had about 10 people in his church.

The Communist Party had so taught atheism that nobody went to church. But the power of the Spirit was there. And all of a sudden, somebody in the church came forward for prayer.

And somebody got healed. And a little boy who couldn't walk was carried to church by his mother. And the bishop laid hands on that baby.

That little boy stood up. And he began to walk. There was a powerful healing.

And everybody in the village heard about it. And they started visiting his church. And he said that within six months, his church grew from 10 people to over 2000 people.

And people were being healed. People were laying all over the floor. Some were speaking in tongues.

People were preaching all over the streets. Healing took place every day. Prayer meetings were going late into the night.

But he thought something was missing. And the miracles began to diminish. And the crowds became less excited.

And after the miracles were gone, the people started leaving. The crowd cut in half. And then it was down again to a handful of people.

All that excitement, all that revival, all that charismatic manifestation had nothing left anymore. Please don't hear me saying those aren't good things that took place. But this bishop got something in his heart.

He said there's something missing in my church. It's the message of the cross. He began to teach verse by verse.

And highlight the passages about the cross of Jesus. And all of a sudden, people started attending his church again. People got dramatically saved.

Drug addicts were set free. But men now were becoming disciples of Jesus. They weren't there just for the miracles.

They weren't just there for the fish and the loaves. They weren't just following the masses to get a miracle. Now they were hearing the message.

The message Jesus told us to preach. The message that Paul said he was determined to preach. It was the message of the cross.

Hallelujah. It's the message of the cross that brings us life, that brings us victory, that changes our hearts, that moves mightily in our lives. And I want to tell you without being ashamed today, the cross is central.

The central idea on the heart of God. The thing that delights God most. We might think it would be many things.

Maybe it would be worship. Maybe it would be evangelism. Maybe it would be world missions.

But the thing that delights God's heart the most, the key to the Father's plan and creation, was the cross of Jesus Christ. The primary thing on God's heart is the message of the cross. It's the cross that His Son bore for us.

It's the life that comes from that cross. And now in our modern day, the primary message, the primary lifestyle of our church today is no longer the cross, but it's the benefits of the cross. Hear that one more time.

The primary message of the church today, the primary lifestyle of Christians today, is no longer the cross of Jesus Christ. It's the benefits of the cross of Jesus Christ. And whole churches are built on the benefits of the cross.

There are whole movements built on healing. And I thank Jesus for healing. When I was a little boy, I was told by my father, my mother was dying of cancer.

She had an inoperable cancer on her backbone. And it was eating away at the bone. And the doctors tried a radical surgery, but they thought there was very little chance of her being rescued.

And when they cut her open, and they looked into the place where they were going to take that cancer out, there was no cancer there. It was gone. Jesus had healed her.

And she's alive today. I was told when I was 12 years old, she couldn't live another 6 months. And she's alive today.

I believe in healing. I thank God for healing. But I don't live in the kingdom of God for healing.

I'm not alive because of healing. I'm not saved because of healing. I'm saved because of the cross.

The message of the cross that's central. But we live today for the benefits. Whole churches are built on healing.

I believe God wants to prosper His church. It's one of the benefits of the cross. But there are whole movements built on this benefit of the cross.

They build a whole church on this one message. And every Sunday morning they get up and they preach the same thing. God wants you to prosper.

He wants to make you rich. He wants to give you incredible wealth. They preach about the benefits.

But they don't want to preach the cross. And there are 101 different messages clamoring for our attention. Messages of wholeness.

Of peace and prosperity. Of popular psychology. Trying to make people feel better.

Trying to make their life cope. But there's a temptation in the church to get it backwards. To put the benefits of the cross ahead of the cross itself.

The cross brings the benefits. We live for the cross. We preach the cross.

We die with Christ on the cross. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live.

Yet not I. But Christ lives in me. The result of this is a crossless Christianity. And this crossless Christianity brings about the very same problems that Paul found in Corinth.

We wonder why there's so much immorality in our churches. We wonder why there's so much division in our churches. We wonder why there's so much heresy in our church.

Every heresy, every false doctrine is born out of the same thing. A removal from the cross is being central. And when you take out the cross and all you leave is the benefits of the cross, you are destined for heresy.

You are destined for a false prophecy. You are destined for a false movement. You'll get into all the hype, all the manifestations, all the new teachings.

But it's the cross of Jesus that keeps your heart steadfast, that keeps you grounded in the Word of God. And it's nothing but the cross. And you may not like this sermon.

You'd rather me be preaching about charismatic manifestations. You might want to see me do some exciting miracles. But I'm determined, I'm determined in my heart to preach nothing to you except the cross of Jesus Christ.

And out of that comes all kinds of benefits. He heals the sick. He raises the dead.

He touches the poor. He prospers people in need. He pours out all His gifts.

But it's not born out of desiring those things. It's born out of the cross. And that's why Paul says this in 2 Corinthians.

Open your Bibles once more. This is not just my message. This is God's message.

2 Corinthians 5. And verse 14. For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus, that if one died for all, then all died. And He died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves.

No longer living for yourself. What is the effect of the cross? What is the true benefit of the cross? I thank God for His healing. I thank Him for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

I thank Him for the mighty moves of God. The true benefit of the cross is that we no longer live for ourselves. That's the real transformation.

When you become other centered. When you're not focusing always on yourself. When it's not just all about how does this benefit me? So many Christians come to church and maybe they hear a sermon like this and they say, how does that benefit me? Does it heal me? Does it prosper me? Do I become richer? How does this benefit me? Do I become more popular? Make more friends? But a man who has been affected by the cross has a different question.

Have I been affected by the cross? And the only way I can know is that I no longer live for myself. That I'm giving my life away. And that's what the Father wants.

Pastor, minister, evangelist. God wants you to be thoroughly convinced of this. That if you want the Father's heart in your life, then you will have a heart for the cross of Jesus Christ.

It is the centerpiece of God's thoughts. It stands in the center of history. Everything in the Old Testament looks forward to it coming one day.

Everything in the New Testament looks back towards what He did that one day. It is the centerpiece. In Revelation 13, you don't have to turn there.

But it says, even before the foundations of the world, even before God's first move towards creation, long before the first creative Genesis 1 word, before any foundation was laid, there was a lamb slain. There was a lamb slain. The idea of the cross.

The plan of the cross was on the Father's heart even before He created the first thing. Even before creation came, the cross was in God's mind. And let me tell you why.

Why is the cross so important to the Father? Is it just about healing or prosperity? Or is there more to it? The Father knew this. You see, the Father is very creative. How many of you know we serve a creative God? You can look at creation.

You can look at everybody's life around you. How unique and how different they are. Look how different your life story is than someone else's.

God is a creative God. And when He began to design the creation of the universe, and He began to write the story, the divine story, the story didn't go like this. In the beginning, it did not go like this.

In the beginning, God created and they lived happily ever after. That wasn't His story. That wasn't the drama because God is creative and He created this amazing drama, this amazing story far beyond anything you could read in any novel.

Angels and demons, heavens and earth, falls and risings, hate and love, war and peace, this was part of God's story. He created nothing evil, but it was unfolded in His story. But He knew He couldn't create this story unless the story had a power to it that one day He would know the story would end well.

And now we read our Bibles and we know the end of the story that it's because of the cross of Jesus that all is well. Why the cross? When God created man, He had to create him differently than he was. Do you hear me there? Do you understand what I'm saying? When He created you and I, we were made in His image, that if He made us exactly like Him, He is the only thing perfect, He is the only thing absolutely flawless.

So if He created us just like Him, what would He be creating? He'd be creating more of Himself. It would just be a further extension of Himself. So He had to take a risk and create something different than Himself.

And when it was different than Himself, although He says it was good, it was different than Him to some degree. And to the degree that it was different, there was a potential now for a flaw, for something to go wrong. Dare God risk this? Wouldn't it be safer for Him not to create us? For to create us would allow for a potential for a potential for a fall.

So before God was willing to take that potential risk, even before the potential was there for the fall, God made a plan of redemption. Before there's a fall, there's going to be first a redemption. Before there's a flaw in man, there's going to be another man.

The man Christ Jesus. My only begotten Son. And I'm going to send Him to this fallen world.

And His cross will be life. So the Father looks at creation. And the reason He can create us, the reason He can minister to us, is because He knows the final chapter.

He knows the centerpiece. Is that one day His Son would be willing, as the Bible says in Philippians, with joy, to go to the cross and to lay down His life, to pour out His blood to stand on a tree for you and I. And it would be that message, that message of the cross that would become the centerpiece of the universe. That every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ has taken lordship.

And when we see Him in that last day, when we stand before Him in heaven, we're not going to just see Him as King, although we will. We're going to see the Lamb upon the throne. We're going to remember it

was the cross that makes us stand here.

And you may be passionate for Jesus. And you may be intimate with Jesus. And you may worship Jesus.

And you may pray to Jesus. And you may witness to Jesus. But let me tell you this, it wasn't your prayer that saved you.

It wasn't your intimacy on the cross. It was not your intimacy on the cross. It was not your passion on the cross.

It was Jesus on the cross. So your passion isn't even the first thing. Your intimacy is not the first thing.

Nothing else is the first thing. Paul said, I determined this. That this was of first importance.

What was of first importance to him? In the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, he says, this is first importance. This is first importance. That Christ died.

Rose again. That's the first importance. Some of you are thinking to yourself, it was important to me That was an interesting message.

Had a few good points. But I liked his dad's message earlier today. That was much better.

He got me shouting. I was ready to jump on my feet. Because that was a powerful message.

But I'm preaching to you here today. The first important message. This is of first importance.

This is what we determine. There is nothing else but this. It's the cross.

Are you willing to lay it all down? To take up your cross. To follow Jesus. Not just to get the benefits.

But to get the cross. To lay down your life. To surrender all to Jesus.

Let me close with one example. Last month I was in Brazil. I was in Rio de Janeiro.

Pastors conference. Several thousand pastors. And the Lord put something onto my heart.

I had heard about the slums and the ghettos. Just outside of Rio de Janeiro. Some of the worst poverty I've ever seen in my life.

And I asked the bishop of the Pentecostal church there. Do you have any churches in those slum areas? And he said there's about 100,000 people that live up on that hill. And they have no money.

Some of them are starving. Very little food. Most have no electricity in there.

No running water. They live in shacks that they make out of some of them cardboard. I said do you have any churches there? He said we have one little church.

I said I want to go to that church. He said but pastor you're very busy. We have thousands of pastors here.

Pastors of big churches. And you have to speak to them. Do you have time to go see this little church? And I said that's what I want to do more than anything else.

And he almost began to cry. He said for 15 years I've been a bishop. People have come from all over the world.

Famous evangelists from America. Well known speakers from Europe. And in my 15 years of being a bishop never once has an American or an evangelist from anywhere in the world asked me to take him into that ghetto.

And he said I'm so blessed you want to go there. So the next day we got in his car. And we drove until the road stopped.

And we had to get up and walk a dirt road. And I saw the worst living conditions I've ever seen in my life. Open sewage was running down the streets.

There are no police in this neighborhood. This neighborhood is ruled by gangs and drug lords. They carry machine guns with them in the streets.

These gang leaders. And the bishop had to ask for permission for us to come into this neighborhood. And as we walked into those first few places the worst poverty I've ever seen in my life.

There was an open field. And this little church had their whole congregation there. And they had a small brass band.

And they had written a sign. Welcome Pastor Wilkerson. And they marched me through those little ghetto streets.

Up and down these dirt roads. To a small church. Where this pastor has been pastoring for 25 years.

No electricity in his house. No running water. Four children.

Sleeping in the same room. No beds. No mattresses.

No lamps. No refrigerator. Almost no food.

But he had something in his heart. He had the joy of Jesus. He had the love of God.

And he took me to this little tiny church. And more than 100 people crowded into this little church. And they thought they were honoring me because I was an evangelist.

But I wanted to honor him. Because he knew of the cross of Jesus. It was the joy that was set before him.

He needed nothing but Jesus. And he said, this is my church. There were many men in this church.

Many men in this church. And he said, all of these men. And all of these women.

Were drug addicts. And gang leaders. And I said, about how many? 5, 10, 20? He said, no, all of them.

And I thought he didn't understand my language. No, I said, what percentage of your church? He said, all of my church. Including me.

Including my wife. Every one of us. Except the little children.

We're drug addicts. We're gang members. We're murderers.

And there's now 200 people in this church. And every single one of them. Was led to Jesus.

By this little pastor. Who nobody knows his name. Who doesn't have a dollar to his name.

He has nothing. But he's living under the cross of Jesus Christ. And if that wasn't enough for me to see.

He said this to me. Would you come with me? I want you to visit one woman in our church. And I didn't want to go at first.

I thought I'd seen enough. But I said, I'll go with you. And we went for another long walk through this ghetto.

And we walked to the door of this small little shack. It wasn't even a door. It was a piece of wood.

And we opened up and it was dark and damp inside. And there was an elderly woman laying in a bed. She couldn't walk.

She could hardly see. And the pastor told me. This woman is 118 years old.

When she was 9 years old. She was a slave here in Brazil. And she was set free.

And when she was 18. She moved here to this ghetto. And she's lived in this little shack.

She met Jesus when she was 18 years old. And she's lived in this same little place. This one little room.

She's lived there for a hundred years. And this pastor said for every day of her life. Every day of her life she's been on her knees.

Crying out to Jesus. Save the lost. Heal the sick.

Save this people. These poor people in this ghetto. And it was a result of her prayers.

That that poor pastor. Was in that place. And she took my hand.

And she said I want to pray for you. And I've had some mighty men of God pray for me before. I've had well known evangelists lay hands on me before.

But nobody. Has come near. To praying for me.

With that kind of power. She grabbed my hand. And she began to pray in Portuguese.

And there was an interpreter in English standing next to me. And I could not believe what he was interpreting. It was like the very words of God himself.

Angelic words. Tears were in my eyes. This precious woman.

A hundred years. Giving herself wholly to Jesus. And she stretched out her hand.

And she prays for this nobody. And she still holds my hand. And she says Jesus.

Thank you. For answering my prayer. For a hundred years.

I've prayed that you would send me a man. A man who had ability. Who had some resources.

To come into this ghetto. And help these poor people. And give his life to these poor people.  
And send money to build things. And she said this in her prayer. And I thank you now Jesus.  
That I can come home to see you. Because you sent me this man. And I was so humble.  
I was so broken. And I walked out of her little room. And I turned to the interpreter.  
And I said wasn't that amazing? Could you believe what she said? He said I didn't know what she said. He said I didn't know what she said. I couldn't interpret it.  
She wasn't praying in Portuguese. She was praying in another language. I said how did you interpret that for me then? He said I didn't interpret it for you.  
I said I heard you interpret. He said I didn't say a thing. And I said to myself.  
There was one other person that spoke English in the room. And I ran to Monica. I said Monica.  
Did you interpret for me? Did you say that what she was praying? She said no I couldn't understand her. She was praying in a different language. I began to weep.  
Tears came to my eyes. Born out of this one thing. Not because of me.  
But because of one woman. Who for the last 100 years. Has not ceased to pray day and night.  
That God would touch her city. Would touch that ghetto. And I heard a word from heaven.  
And I'm not a mystical kind of person. And I'm tired of charismatic foolishness. People saying they hear the voice of God all the time.  
And I don't know what I heard. And I don't know who said it. And I'm not saying I heard the audible voice of God.  
But I know what I heard. And I know I heard her prayer. And I know I heard her cry.  
When we walked back to that pastor's church. I said anything you want. It's done.  
He said I've been praying for a school. He showed me a piece of land. And it had a little foundation on it.  
And I promised him right there. We're going to build you a school. And right now.  
As I speak to you today. In Brazil in the ghetto. There's a pastor.  
Because a woman prayed for him. He started building a school. For 80 of those little children in that city.  
Drug addicts children. Gang members children. And not only that.  
We told that pastor. You're not going to live in that old house anymore. On top of the school.  
We're going to build you a two bedroom apartment. With a kitchen. And a bed.  
And a lamp. And a desk. Because that woman was praying for you.

That woman knew one thing. She could no longer walk. She could hardly see.

But she knew the cross. A hundred years. Never delivered from the ghetto herself.

Never moved to the nice suburbs. But she could care less. Because she was on a mission from God.

We asked her. Do you want us to move you? We can move you to a nice apartment. She said I can't move.

This is where I'm going to die. Because in my last breath. The last breath that I breathe.

Is going to be a prayer for this ground that I die on. No one lives like that. When they live for the benefits of the cross.

You only live like that. When the cross has become central to you. And that old woman.

Taught me something of the cross. And I preach the cross today. With joy.

With love. With affection. With tenderness.

Because of that one woman's example to me. And I want to encourage you. Let the ministry be about that.

Let your life be about that. Then you'll never complain. Then you'll never grumble.

You'll never get into false doctrines. Your church will be a holy church. You'll pastor a people who are a holy people.

No sacrifice will be too great. And in the last days when things get difficult. God will raise up a holy people.

When the enemy comes in like a flood. God will raise up a standard against it. He says He's got men of the cross.

Women of the cross. Soldiers of the cross of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Stand with me if you would. I have no invitation for you. I have no benefit to give you.

But only to ask you this. To not leave this building today. Without a determination in your heart.

To say Jesus. The cross must become central to me. I've been seeking you for your benefits.

The cross has not been central to me. And I'm not going to leave this building. And I'm not going to go eat dinner.

I'm not going to move from my chair. Until I know. Until I'm determined.

That just like that old woman. That 118 year old woman. That everything else to me.

Is counted as loss. Save the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus and Him crucified.

That you are willing. That you are willing. To take up the cross of Jesus.

And follow Him. By grace. I just want you to sit down now.

And take a moment of prayer. Do you mind just playing the piano a little bit? We're just going to have a little bit of music. And just quietly on the piano.

And just take a moment would you? It may only take one minute. It may take an hour. But you determine.

I'm not leaving. If you need to get on your knees. If you need to lay on your face.

You get in a position. Where you can wait upon God. And tell Him.

I'm not leaving. Until you put in my heart. The apostolic determination.

To have nothing but the cross. And Jesus I pray now. That the cross would come alive to us again.

That it would be fresh to us once again. That we would not just look for the benefits. Jesus.

But we would look to you Jesus. Hallelujah. You can be dismissed at any time.

Just get up out of your seat and leave whenever you feel ready. We're going to have a wonderful meeting tonight at 7 o'clock. But right now is your time with God.

And there's a big crowd here. But you can get alone with God. And get the cross as central in your life.

Amen.

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