

Cd Gv112 7 Words for the New Millennium

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the importance of vision, grace, and prayer for believers entering the new millennium.

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-8, Matthew 6:33, Acts 12:5, Acts 13:5, Romans 12:18, Philippians 4:7

Topics: "Spiritual Transformation", "Community Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of transformation in the lives of believers and their communities. He mentions a popular Christian video called 'Transformation' that showcases five cities that have experienced transformation. The speaker also discusses the need for a biblical and balanced view on the topic. He shares seven words of grace, with the first word being 'vision.' The sermon highlights the power of God's work in transforming individuals and communities, drawing inspiration from real-life examples like Nelson Mandela's reconciliation efforts in South Africa.

Transcript

Turn with me now in your Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter 13. This morning I have seven words for the new millennium, seven words for the new century, seven words for the year 2000, seven words that can motivate you, excite you, and keep you going in the year 2000. It's great to be motivated, isn't it? Nothing like depression that can just warp your soul.

Sometimes depression is physical and needs medical treatment, and people have been helped by great drugs to come out of depression. But other times it's spiritual depression, the kind of depression one of my mentors, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, talks about in his book. One of the greatest Christian books in the English language, *Spiritual Depression, Cause and Cure*.

A bit of a heavy book can actually lead you into a form of a Calvinistic depression, but it's still a great, it's a great book. If one year from now you send me an email with these seven words, and I get this kind of email almost every day now, I will send you seven great books as a gift. If you don't like books, I'll send you seven CDs or seven cassettes or seven bags of rice, whatever you'd like seven of, but one year from now.

That's to encourage you to maybe write a few things down because in the age of information overload there's a danger that two weeks from now you will not remember anything that I have said here this morning. And that would make me a little bit unhappy because it was a bit of a pain in the neck actually to

get here. And my wife was not happy about me leaving to come here, and I would have been able to fly to the USA last night and have a little bit of an easier schedule.

Not that I'm unhappy, don't misunderstand me, it's just that I am praying for results from this meeting. If no results, I don't go. The Lord and I have an arrangement on that.

Because our God does answer prayer, and I have about 100,000 people who pray for me, and so you're now at the end of their prayers, forget me, just imagine 100,000 people praying for you right now. That can make anybody, even the most laid back Lancashire person, a little bit nervous. Let me read the first five verses of Acts 13, which I believe is also a tremendous motivational chapter for your coming Prayer Emphasis Week.

Don't allow this Prayer Emphasis Week to become some kind of legalistic mountain in front of you that you don't want to climb, because you're not really interested this coming week to go into any prayer meetings. But let the God of grace just fill your heart so that you will actually want to come. Now that doesn't mean you shouldn't come if you don't want to come, because in life Jesus said we should deny self, take up the cross, and follow him.

And I've been going to prayer meetings almost every single week for 42 years, and I can tell you sometimes for sure I do not want to go. Because OM prayer meetings tend to be long. But whenever I go, I find that God meets me there.

And I believe if you'll make an extra effort to come to some of these meetings, even if it's only a few of them, a few is better than nothing, the story of my life is something is better than nothing, I believe God will bless you. And it's exciting that in many parts of the world they have dedicated this first full week of the new century to prayer. And it's a great challenge.

And here in the church in Antioch, five men were gathered in prayer. In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, Colnagier, Lucius of Cyrene, Manet, and who was brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, it's a prayer meeting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

So after they had fasted and prayed, a little fasting this week would probably be a blessing as well. If you're short for time, just drop a meal and go to the prayer meeting instead. I have had the practice of missing meals regularly most of my life, it's a great blessing to miss meals.

And I'll tell you, one of the blessings is not spiritual, it's when you have the next meal you enjoy it more. I missed a meal yesterday, two meals actually, so when I got to my friend Chris's house, he asked me if I wanted anything to eat, I barked, and he immediately got some food out, and I very much enjoyed that late night supper there with my friend Chris. Miss a meal and spend more time in prayer.

So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and they sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, you see the Holy Spirit is quite active here, isn't it? The Holy Spirit is the chief executive officer of all ministry and of all missionary work. We must never forget that.

Some of us who are sort of conservative, I graduated from Moody Bible Institute, a very conservative place, sometimes when we hear about the Holy Spirit, we may hear something that sounds a little extreme, and the danger today of many of our conservative churches is in overreacting to what we feel is extremism, we end up in the deep freeze of dead orthodoxy, and it is deadly. Old Brother Andrew said it's

easier to cool down a fanatic than it is to warm up a corpse, and I urge you to let the Holy Spirit fill you in the year 2000, to be a cutting edge, book of acts person for the kingdom and for God's glory. The two of them sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

When they arrived at Seleucus, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper. I often speak on seven words from Acts 13, but I'm a little weary of that message, and to be quite honest, the seven words I'm going to give you this morning are not necessarily my favorite words.

I've been preaching on my favorite words all last year, and the Lord told me to launch in to some new words and study those words from the word of God and bring out some new thoughts. Now, because I've not spoken here, supposedly, since the 70s, I could bring out my old thoughts from last year, and you would think they're new, but I'm not doing that this morning, though there will be the mixture of the old and the new, and I think that's prophetic of what we're going to see in the year 2000. There will be the new, and there will be the old, but it all can be wonderful in the hands of the Lord.

It's interesting that in Acts chapter 12, we also have a prayer meeting going on because Peter was in prison, but what does it say in verse 5? Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. There's so much to pray about. People might say, why are we going to have a prayer emphasis week? There is just so much to pray about.

What about Chechnya? Do you think that's worth praying about? Put yourself in Chechnya this morning instead of here in Lancashire. It's unbelievable what's going on there, absolutely unbelievable. What about Afghanistan? What about Angola? What about southern Sudan? Maybe you don't follow the news.

As God's people, we should be the most cutting-edge people in wanting to know what's going on in the world because we want to respond in prayer, and because the Lord Jesus clearly taught that we were to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth, and I feel ashamed to some degree that 2,000 years since Pentecost, 25% of the people on the planet have never heard. They know about Coca-Cola. Do you know how many people celebrated the millennium? Somebody claimed yesterday on television that 2 billion people celebrated, outwardly celebrated the millennium.

I was spending New Year's Eve with my grandchildren, they went to sleep, then with my daughter, she even got me to play games, I'm an anti-game person, and I ended up playing this funny little game, and my other eye was trying to watch New Year's in Rome and New Year's in Delhi. I've been ministered in many of these places, and it's of great interest to me. The call to prayer is the call of the new millennium.

It's the call that God gave for 2,000 years. Most Christians have thrown it aside. Even surveys show the average Christian has no real prayer life.

Now surveys show the average minister is praying five minutes per day. The average minister, I'm sure Adrian is not in that camp, or he'd be a complete idiot to launch a prayer emphasis week. God has called us to pray.

That is not optional. You may say you're a naturally unspiritual person, and prayer meeting's not for you. Let me just tell you, my friend, you're looking at a natural unspiritual person.

I'm so unspiritual that I could just cross one millimeter right now into the flesh, and my passion would go out to just punch you in the teeth, because you look so ill. But you see, I immediately repent the moment I

move that way. I only just say that because you're looking at a natural SOB.

You're looking at somebody who's a basket case par excellence. You're looking at somebody who at seven years of age started a fight with his fist. At 16, I'd been on my 32nd girlfriend.

I was hooked on pornography. I was a liar, and I was on the road to hell. And then people like you, not all of you, just some of you, started to pray for me.

A little old lady near my high school put my name on her Holy Ghost hit list and said, Jesus, save him. Jesus at that point must have said, what? But he's a God of mercy. Not only did she pray that I would be saved, she prayed, can you imagine? Without even discussing it with me, that I should become a missionary.

I am not a missionary type, I can assure you. And then she sent me a Gospel of John through the post. And as I read this Gospel, God started to move my heart.

And then a wild man came to New York City, sort of a combination of Madonna, Clint Eastwood, Hudson Taylor, and whoever you can think of, Amy Carmichael. His name was Billy Graham, sort of the Clint Eastwood of the evangelical world. And he took out both of his six shooters and blew my brains out, spiritually speaking.

Yes, Christians would describe it as being born again. Why isn't God a little more fussy about who he chooses? Why does he choose loud-mouthed, renegade, hostile American types? Why can't he just choose laid-back, Lancashire, quiet folks who mind their own business and don't go around shouting at people, especially in church? Because we have a God of grace. And he's going to continue to save a lot of people that you don't even like.

And you know there's some people in your town you don't like, you may have even stopped praying for them, and he might save them next week. And then they become your brothers and sisters in Christ. Isn't it all very messy? No wonder so many English people really prefer not to go to church, because the church is a place where grace is preached.

The church is a place where God is working. I just listened to a converted Roman Catholic priest, Brendan Manning, the author of Ragamuffin Gospel, one of the greatest books on the subject of grace that has ever been written. And I tell you, when I listened to him a couple days ago, my heart was again stricken.

That there's still more about grace that I am not grasping. And though I bring these books to you, to be honest, I haven't even finished, I'm such a fast lane sort of character, I haven't even finished reading this book, and I've gone all over the world recommending it. Talk about hypocrisy.

Thank God for his grace. But let me give you these seven words. I think Adrian, in his grace, is giving me a little more time than maybe you normally have.

Bear with me, I'll probably, considering my age, never get back here again. And so just bear with me, and let's hope the children stay entertained. But let me quickly give you these seven words of grace, and pray that my flight from Heathrow will be late.

The first word is the word vision. Again, if you write these down and send them back to me in a year, you'll get seven free books. We see these men in book of Acts, waiting on God, and God gives them a vision.

A vision to go out as missionaries. And that vision may come to some of you this morning. I am a missionary, forty-some years on the field.

India, Spain, Nepal, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Mexico, where I started, I never dreamed in those early days, I would end up immigrating to Britain and making this my home country. In fact, my wife and I never did make our first furlough. We read about that in a missionary book, but somehow it never did happen, though we do go to the States at times to preach.

As we go into this new millennium, God wants to give us a greater vision, and let me tell you, when you have a vision, you will be motivated. And you will be happy. Forgive me, I'm just being honest.

I have never had an unhappy day since Jesus Christ took over my life forty-three years ago. The world is out there looking for happiness, money, booze, drugs, business, but happiness is a byproduct of walking in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. And if you're not happy, it is only your own fault.

And if you think it's tied with not having suffering, write to me and I'll share a few things that my wife and I have been through, because ours has been a life of considerable suffering. And seeing your closest friends murdered out on the highway, and seeing people killed when there's bomb attacks on your ship, and then having two out of your own three kids discouraged in their mid-twenties abandon the Christian faith is not exactly what we dreamed about when we got married. But we know that Satan cannot rob us of our joy.

Their joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And I'm joyful inside, even when I'm weeping outside in a moment of sadness, as I will at my close friend's funeral tomorrow morning. When we have a vision, we stay motivated.

When we have a vision, we know why things are happening. When we have a vision, we're also willing to leave things with God that we don't understand. I've worn my global jacket, I don't know if you can see that way from the back, but it's so helpful to have a map with you if you do a lot of flying, really.

I went up to the cockpit of a jumbo jet, British Airways, flying from Brazil right here, I remember it well, to Argentina. We were flying over this little country, and the co-pilot said to the pilot there in the cockpit, I was with him, I think we're flying over Ecuador. Well, Ecuador is way up here.

They used my jacket that day to see that they were flying over Uruguay. And so if you're going to do a lot of flying, you may want to get your own map. Vision, vision firstly of the Lord himself.

Think of Isaiah chapter 6, isn't that one of your favorite chapters? Vision of the Lord, high and lifted up. And it was after that vision, the repentance, the purging, the cleansing, it's a great chapter. Isaiah was able to say, here am I, send me.

My second word for the new century is the word grace. You've guessed that one already, right? You know, I'm so glad that now I'm a grandfather. Because for 10 years preaching up and down this country, I was attacked and criticized viciously beyond imagination because I was young.

And older British people said, God cannot use a young person like that. He's also American. He's also a loud mouth.

And I heard he even has sex problems. God could never possibly use someone like that. Now no one's calling me just a bag of youthful zeal.

There's a lot of super spirituality around Britain in the 60s, you didn't notice that. Super spirituality combined with legalism. What a combination.

And so no one of my temperament was ever classified as spiritual. When I first spoke at Keswick, I got in so much trouble, it's a miracle I ever got back. Took years to get back.

Always change chairman, then I get back. I'm back again this summer by the grace of God. Because it's impossible for my temperament to speak and not offend some British person.

In fact, it's impossible for me to speak and not offend some American person. Now is the problem all mine? Or could the problem partly be with some of God's chosen, frozen people who do not want to change, who do not want to repent of their pride, who do not want to believe God for a new thing in their life, who in fact are stuck in their traditional legalistic church forms and if anybody dares rock the boat, you will discover they also are not so sanctified. We need a revolution of grace.

Most of our churches, especially traditional churches, I don't sense that's true here, are still locked in legalism and judgmentalism. And unless they break from that and are willing for the grace that the New Testament talks about, the church will continue to shrink. I'm in a Baptist church, so it's always good to talk to us about some other church.

Let me talk about the church I was baptized in. It's called the Brethren Assembly. Have you ever heard of that Open Brethren Movement? Has any of you studied what's happened to the Open Brethren Movement in this country? And I still love that movement, so don't misunderstand.

And some of their churches, like the one where my co-director is an elder of, Hebron Hall and Carlisle, are great. But a majority of them have died or are dying all over the nation. And it was once considered the greatest spiritual movement in Britain.

It spread all over the world. For a while, faster than even the Baptist churches. The Baptists soon caught up and passed them up again.

That's your movement is so huge and universal. I'd urge you to understand, brothers and sisters, without grace, we're not going to see the church grow. Many, many churches in Britain are growing.

They're building new buildings. I was in a church in Liverpool not long ago. Started with a dozen.

There's now 600. But it's because they discovered something of grace. Some people have tried to say, well, all the church growth is only in the charismatic side of the body, where they're emphasizing the Holy Spirit and gifts.

But it's not true. There is growth there. But there's also tremendous growth wherever there's an emphasis on grace.

Willow Creek in Chicago, not a charismatic church. Mainline evangelical church. Growing beyond comprehension.

We have similar things in Britain. But the message of grace is there. They're forgiving people.

They're reaching out to people. They're letting 1 Corinthians 13 reign and rule in their lives because that's really what horizontal grace is about. The first few chapters of this book are about salvation by grace, a message you've heard many times.

I'm not going to give it this morning, but just to mention it. That as you go into the middle of this book and you get into chapters like chapter 9, graciously disagreeing and pressing on, then you get into 1 Corinthians 13. Then you get into the reality where you love people that you may not particularly like.

Where you let love cover those differences. Where you're no longer easy to offend. I found that many Christians, grace-killing legalists, are the easiest people on planet earth to offend.

I'd rather go down to a pub any day than to some of our grace-killing churches where they're so incredibly judgmental and critical and where the sins of the tongue go beyond any immorality they may have in their local town. It's true. And many British men of God are saying this, and women.

So don't think this is just coming from me. Grace is never optional. Forgiveness is never optional.

And if you could get a time this year into studying this, I'm sure many of you are, it will bring renewal to your soul. It'll lift you out of some of the things that may be causing pain in your heart as new dimensions of forgiveness bring freedom and peace and a joy that is almost past understanding. My third word is the word reconciliation.

Now this is one of my newer words. I haven't spoken on this much. In fact, I'm very concerned about some of the extremism that's going out under the name reconciliation.

And one of the reasons I'm mentioning this this morning is because you're going to hear more about the reconciliation movement and you're going to have to have discernment as to where you stand. Doctrine is important. Some people who emphasize grace, you don't hear them emphasize doctrine.

Some people who emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit and evangelism and all these beautiful things, they don't say much about doctrine. Brothers and sisters, without doctrine, we don't have anything. But where do we learn about all this? We learn from the Bible.

And the Bible, the teaching of the Bible, that's what doctrine is. And I believe we're going, and I wrote about this last week, it's gone out on the Internet all over the world. So there's going to be an increase of compromise in connection with biblical doctrine.

And we need to understand it is possible to have sound doctrine and yet be filled with the Spirit, be grace-awakened, be visionary, and experience church growth. Yes, reconciliation is a key word as we go into this new millennium. And we need to find a biblical, balanced view.

One of the most touching things on television in the last few days was Mandela going back to his prison cell. Did any of you see that? Lighting that candle. When the whole world is going through all this noise and all the celebration, boy, I'd like to have a little of that money that went into fireworks, especially in London and Edinburgh and Sydney.

This humble man goes and lights a candle in his prison cell where he spent more than 20 years and probably had some kind of experience of Christ, so I'm told. The reconciliation that took place in South Africa, I was there during it, was one of the great miracles of this past decade. They're not over it.

The battle is still great. But the initial reconciliation delivered them from perhaps a bloodbath that could have taken a million people in South Africa. It's going to be a new secular big release on television.

I just had the storyboards about it concerning reconciliation. Non-Christians are concerned about reconciliation. And so it provides an open door for us as believers in Jesus to share about the true reconciliation.

For we are, are we not, ambassadors for Jesus Christ. That's what a real missionary is. It's amazing how not so many young people are responding anymore for long-term missions here in Great Britain.

There's still quite a few. But I think it's because the word missionary no longer communicates very well with young people. And so maybe we ought to call them God's ambassadors.

What if you were given the opportunity of a top job in the British government working for the Prime Minister as ambassador of Britain to France or Italy or to your favorite country? That'd be pretty attractive for some of you young people. I dare to say, young people, you might think about that possibility, whereas some of you aren't even willing to think about becoming a missionary. We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ.

Let me give you my missionary testimony. I've never had an unfulfilling day since I made that commitment to Jesus. I've had miserable hours with great failure and mistakes and discouragement, but I learned never let the sun go down upon your anger.

That's what the Bible says gets more difficult in the winter. And so I don't like to let the sun go down upon any sin in my life. Yes, we are called to reconcile people to God, but we are also called to be salt and light so that we can help people be reconciled in our society.

This racism problem isn't going to go away. And many, many other problems we have right here in Britain are not going to go away. The walls are going to continue to be built.

People are going to be killed. The wall between youth and older people is getting bigger, and we need to have a ministry of reconciliation and pray for that across the world in a balanced way. The fourth word is the word transformation.

Again, I don't know if you've heard that word much. Maybe you're one of the Christians who loves not knowing what's going on. I meet Christians, they read no Christian magazines, they read no Christian newspapers, I can't even give them one.

It makes them depressed. I'm so far from that, forgive me. I'm not judging you.

I love to know what's going on. I love to hear when God saves another thousand people in China. I don't know, somehow hearing about people saved just sort of turns me on.

Do any of you ever get excited when you hear of someone being saved? We hear the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner that comes to repentance. I don't know if any of you have a negative streak. Chris and I were talking about this in the car.

You might think I'm a divine sort of optimist. I have a deep negative streak. I can match you five for one anytime.

Send me an email about your negatives, I'll match you two to one. But God showed me from His Word that I am to be an optimist at the end of the day. That I am to believe in the sovereignty of the great God of the universe.

And our God, our God is working. And one of the new words you're going to hear, it's in all the Christian press, the hottest Christian video right now is called Transformation, about five cities that have experienced transformation. So I decided to start speaking about transformation.

I think this is my first service. What do people mean by that? It's big. It means that we as God's people are not just evangelizing the world.

We're not just people seeing people saved and brought into churches and disciples. We are to see transformation in their lives, that we all agree, right? And in turn, transformation in their community. Now I can't, I'm so embarrassed now, I feel ashamed.

I can't even pronounce the name of your town. How do you pronounce this town? Well, that's pretty easy, isn't it? We are to pray for transformation in this town. Now as I read about this, as I watch these videos, as I hear what's going on, I'm just being honest, it makes me nervous.

It makes me nervous. But there's a danger of overreacting to that teaching, and therefore getting the other extreme, where we don't really believe anything can ever change. Do you know one of the reasons the Christian influence got into the Millennium Dome? Do you know why? Because some Christians are proactive in Britain in politics, and I thank God for it.

Because some Christians decided that we cannot just be pushed around, because the anti-Christian forces of Britain are ten times greater than they were when I came here 38 years ago, believe me. And they're feeling it on the campus, they're feeling it everywhere. And the Evangelical Alliance and other groups and individual churches and the Archbishop said, hey, we're gonna speak out.

We believe in transformation. We believe that we need to see some changes in our nation, in our town, in our government. We stand for social justice.

Whole new mission agencies have been born that are moving across the world, preaching social justice, helping prostitutes in Bombay who are being walked on, who were sold as slaves into prostitution. And it's exciting. Yes, it's got its problems.

It can get extreme. We need a lot of discernment, but we must not throw the baby away with the bathwater. And churches that are going places today have decided to get involved in connection with the physical needs of their community.

The elderly, the aids, people, the poor. Maybe you don't have any such people around here like that. I believe this is the most important thing I can say to your church.

You must consider the physical, mental, and emotional needs of the people in your community, probably you already are. And whatever you're doing in this area of transforming this part of Lancashire for God's glory, even though at the end of the day it may not be that much, may God bless you for it. Some of you are doing it on a personal, individual basis.

Many of you, if you look in a revolutionary way at your own work, and your work is important to God, you will see that your work, that you do, has a transformation aspect to it. And when you begin to see that, that work will take on a new meaning. The day of thinking missionaries are first class, and those that remain at home working for Joe Blow's bank are second class.

That is history. Anybody studying the word of God, I believe, has rejected that. We're all going first class.

Your work matters to God. Being a sender is just as important as being a goer. And it's exciting when you discover that kind of biblical reality and theology.

And then, quickly, the fifth word is the word harvest. It is harvest time. Not everywhere.

Maybe not to the same degree as it was in Britain 30, 40 years ago, but it is still harvest time. Tens of thousands have been coming to Christ in Britain. It's not always seen in the statistics because tens of thousands are also going to heaven.

So it takes sort of a mini work of renewal constantly just to replace the great saints that go to heaven. In my life, every week, I have a friend who dies. Goes to glory almost every week.

Funerals has become one of the big events in my life. I thank God for it. It's harvest time in Britain.

It's harvest time across the world as more people have come to Christ in the past 100 years than ever before in history. More missionaries are out there now between 200,000 and 300,000 than ever before. Yes, it's true, certain nations in parts of the world have been neglected.

That is one of the biggest burdens of OM. I don't have time to share that message, but 90% of all missionaries are working where the harvest is already taking place. We're trying to mobilize missionaries to Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, North India, where in many cases there is almost no harvest.

In some cases, like Tibet, Afghanistan, the church doesn't exist. We cannot be discouraged by that. We must somehow press on.

It's harvest time. How many of us would pray that this year the Lord would give us even one person that we could personally lead to Christ? Can you realize the multiplication that takes place if every believer will take on the responsibility of winning one person to Jesus Christ? Especially if that person gets the vision to win one other person. You've all heard the incredible statistics.

It doesn't seem to take account for those who backslide, but it still is one of God's programs. Operation multiplication. And my sixth word is another new word that I haven't spoken on much, and this might help you more than any other word, especially some of you that might be struggling in your faith, and that's the word intimidation.

One of the biggest conferences I speak at this month is a huge medical conference in Swannock of doctors. Statistics show that Christian doctors, more than in any other period, are losing their faith. Some of them in the medical studies at university.

It's really quite shocking. People in the medical world are facing phenomenal intimidation. The whole research into DNA and everything else connected with it, the possibility of cloning human beings 15 or 20 years from now, and if some of you have been reading about some of this lately, and I do a lot of reading, I

will tell you, it is very intimidating.

Some people don't even want to hear it. But technology is out of control. It is out of control.

And we are going to face new brands of intimidation from non-Christians. Ministers and pastors are going to face it. People in certain kinds of secular work are going to face it.

University students right here in Britain, I don't know if you can imagine the intimidation that comes upon them. Even if they hint they believe that homosexual sin or that practicing homosexuality is a sin, just to hint you believe that at university, you might end up being beaten up. Society to a large degree, there are plenty of exceptions, has decided that homosexual practice is now normal.

Articles this week have said 10 years from now, having babies will be seen as something separate from sex. Sex will mainly be for pleasure. Having babies will be separate from sex.

If you don't understand what I'm talking about, because you're not reading, and when you do read, it will be intimidating. If you're a biblical Christian. And I want to ask you, young people, older people, hold up that shield of faith against the fiery darts of intimidation.

Because we are God's people. And God's word is still true. And none of this has disproved God's word.

And many scientists and great men and women across the world are still flocking to Jesus Christ, despite all the diabolical confusion and intimidation the committee rooms of hell are able to manufacture and send our way. I'm a person of tremendous struggles, of enormous doubt. And I thank God for that Scottish theologian who said that great faith is not in the absence of doubt, it's often in the midst of it.

And my final word may surprise you. It is the word suffering. Yes, a lot of people are promising all kinds of things for the next few years.

Have you ever met the I Promise You revival crowd? That's an interesting group. I tell you they really wind me up. But I'm trying to have grace awakening for them.

Because they've been promising me revival since I came here 38 years ago, and it has not happened. And they said absolutely, prophetically it would happen about 5 years ago, and it has not happened. Now in America they've got tens of thousands of people fasting for 40 days.

That's been going on for several years, and it still hasn't happened. But I believe with all my heart, God's plan for revival starts the moment you are saved. Revival primarily is Jesus living in you.

And if Jesus is living in you this morning, and you're filled with him and his grace, whatever terminology you want to use, that is revival. Now there may be a big bang revival. They seldom happen, and we exaggerate them when they do happen.

I've read a lot about it. I still say praise the Lord. But I say that's plan B. Plan A is you and I abiding in Jesus Christ.

And I've had the privilege of fellowshiping with people all over the world who live in daily revival. Stanley Volk, a great man of God from Britain, spoke about that. Alan Redpath, one of my mentors, spoke about that.

Roy Hessian in his brilliant book, *Calvary Road*, there might be a copy on my table. He spoke about that. You and I can live every day in revival.

Yes, at the same time, there's going to be a lot of suffering. The idea that a big revival comes and everything's going to be wonderful, do you think you're going to, despite the emphasis on transformation, we're going to turn the hands of the history clock back? It's not going to happen. We must live where we are.

We must face the complexity of our society as it is, television, digital, email, not be intimidated. At the same time, be willing to suffer. The Bible says all those who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer.

My wife and I thank Jesus with all of our heart for the small privilege we've had to suffer for him. I remember when the Soviets first arrested me, when I was smuggling Bibles as a young missionary in 1961. What a wonderful experience that was.

It was a failure, it was a blunder. Some of you heard of Brother Andrew, God's smuggler. This morning you've got Brother George, God's bungler.

But failure is so often the back door to success. In fact, there's a great book on that subject by Erwin Lutzer, *Failure, the Back Door to Success*. I haven't even read it.

The title was just such a challenge to me. Praise God for those of you who don't read much, just read the titles and repent on the spot and God will bless you and encourage you and you'll save a lot of time in the long run. So for the year 2000, I commend to you vision, I commend to you grace, reconciliation, harvest, transformation, I urge you to stand against intimidation and be ready to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ.

And as you do that, you will know the peace of God that passes all understanding. You will know the spirit-filled life, which is God's purpose for every believer. Let us pray.

Lord, I just thank you for this wonderful patient group of your people here this morning, willing to lend an ear to the likes of me, a ragamuffin par excellence, saved by your grace and thrust into the battle and kept going every single day for 44 years. And Lord, I know if you can keep a character like me going day by day, then nobody here has an excuse for not being a dynamic disciple, a spirit-filled Christian, a cutting-edge revolutionary for kingdom ministry. Oh God, do great things.

As we think through these things, as we pray through these things in the week to come, as we share with one another, and we realize that your unity in this new millennium will be in the midst of phenomenal diversity. And we thank you for every church and every believer. And we want to go forward in love and unity as much as possible through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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