

Message 02

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the importance of perseverance in faith and the call to engage in missions through prayer and outreach.

Duration: 1:01:20

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 20:24, Acts 20:30-38

Topics: "Personal Testimony", "World Missions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal testimony and encourages listeners to be encouraged in prayer, vision, and pressing on. He emphasizes the power of the Word of God and how it can be used by ordinary people, even those with a non-Christian background. The speaker also discusses overcoming addiction and the importance of world missions. He references various Bible verses, including Acts 20:30-32 and Acts 20:35, to support his message.

Transcript

And it is already for me a much more relaxing week than my normal week. I don't want to describe to you my normal week. Even the one with the grandchildren a little while ago in Idaho didn't really quite prove to be as restful as we were hoping.

As the grandchildren are growing up, and the 16-year-old Emily has a driver's license, and so she was driving me around in a pickup truck, and the 14-year-old has a driver's permit, a 14-year-old driver's permit, so he wanted someone to, you know, sit next to him as he drove. So the whole grandchildren vacation proved to be a little intensive. So I'm already feeling a more vacation mode myself, and I've had some nice walks around here, and I'm looking forward to this golf game.

I always especially appreciate golf when someone else is paying, so I'm looking forward to that on Thursday. Before I open the Word of God, I just want to mention again, we really would like all of you to take as a gift one of our packets that has a little bit of info about O.M. and my book *Out of the Comfort Zone*, some of which will fit in with what I'm sharing this week. And then there's other books that we want you to take as a gift.

The one on HIV and AIDS. You can also take an extra one for a friend. This is a serious book that can save people's lives.

It's not a hard book to read, it's a hard book to digest. So we'd like to give that to you as a gift. Randy Alcorn's brilliant book, *Caring for the Unborn and Their Mothers*.

Dynamite book. I think there's a few of those left. And there's another book about HIV that's a gift.

And then my own book, *No Turning Back*. I can't find it right now, but that is also a gift. Here it is, *No Turning Back*.

That very much is tied in with our theme this week of perseverance, running the race, staying proactive through the teenage years, the twenties, the thirties, the forties, the fifties, the sixties, which is obviously the greatest decade and even beyond. I'm sharing 12 of the most important passages in my Christian life as I look back at 50 years of experiencing God's grace each day. And we started with that great passage this morning from Matthew chapter nine.

I never feel I do justice to any of these passages. There's just so much. And tonight, in a moment, we're going to be looking at Acts chapter 20.

The other books are free if you're going to give them away to somebody else, a donation, and we take checks if they're for yourself. And I wanted to add two other books that I didn't mention this morning. One is a Christian classic, *Calvary Road*.

Eighty languages has brought thousands of people into an understanding of grace and forgiveness. It has a chapter on revival in the home that set the pace for my wife and I in our first week of marriage. And it's just I got the privilege of knowing Roy as a very close friend.

I'm now a trustee on the Roy Hessian Trust. And believe me, this is a book you will not want to miss. Millions of copies in print, an easy to read book, *Calvary Road*.

And another book I wanted to mention was when I stepped down from the leadership of OM. And I've got some DVDs if you're interested in watching that event at the Keswick Convention. By the way, the leader of OM, Peter Maiden, who took over for me, is also the chairman of the Keswick Convention.

And as we're meeting here, 5000 people are meeting in Keswick. The very similar message to what is on our hearts here. We can be praying for them.

And maybe someday you'll wander on over to England this time of the year and go to the Keswick Convention. It goes for three weeks, about 12000 people sit there. Joe Stoll, I think, is over there again, former president of Moody.

It's not just British Bible teachers. When I stood down from the leadership, they gave me this book, which was a tribute to my wife and I, called *Global Passion*. Fortunately, it's not just about my wife and I. It's about missions.

And each chapter is an essay on major aspects of mission. Mission from poverty and under pressure. The place of networks in world evangelism.

Development of tent making ethos. Revolution of love rediscovered. Checklist for ongoing revival.

A brilliant book, not available in many bookstores, but there on our book table. And if you'd like some Gospels of John to give out to non Christians that you may meet during your time here, we've got some

Gospels of John there as a gift at our book table. Praise the Lord.

I'd like us now to just take a moment to pray for some of the nations of the world, and I'd like to pray for what I call the global top 10. Now, to be honest, this is the George Verwer top 10 because I don't know anybody else that has the same top 10. And I preached about these nations all over the world.

These are the top 10, excuse me, most unreached, difficult, semi-forgotten nations in the world. Now, the list does change because I have a runner up 10, and then I have another 10. In fact, I have about 30 nations, all of which have less than 1%, less than 1% of the witness that we would have in New England.

So these are special places. And I'm not going to get a lot of time to talk about these places throughout the week, as that's not my main theme. But I want to pray for these places.

And maybe in the prayer meeting, it's at 9 o'clock in the morning, the prayer meeting over in the prayer house. It's only a half hour extra from coming to the Bible study. We might be able to pray for some of these places.

Now, I know it's the custom in our churches, isn't it, to close our eyes when we pray? I guess that's OK. But there's nothing in the Bible about that, by the way. So if you want, as I pray for these nations, you can look at my globe and we'll point to the nation I'm praying for.

And I really want you to pray with me. I don't want you to listen. You have to listen, of course.

But I want you to pray for these nations, because these places are really on my heart. Let us pray. Father, we thank you for what you are doing around the world.

And we could talk about nations like Brazil and South Korea and Northeast India and parts of China. We could talk about parts of Africa where millions and millions have come to you. But, Lord, we want to pray for the more impossible, unreached places.

And we want to start with Saudi Arabia. And so we pray for Saudi Arabia. We thank you for some tentmaker missionaries who are working there.

We thank you for open doors in a closed country. We think of the huge breach of human rights in this country. We think of the complexity of the oil situation, the militant Islam that is taught there by the Wahhabi Islamists.

And we pray for Saudi Arabia, where the church does not yet exist among the Saudis. And then we would reach down and pray for Yemen. And especially, O God, the island of Socotra, where the church does not exist.

Where only the first tentmaker ambassadors of your son Jesus have arrived there lately. And so we would pray for Socotra and Yemen. We thank you on the mainland.

The door is a little bit open. There are a few believers. And then, Lord Jesus, we would reach over to Sudan, the nation perhaps in the last ten years with the greatest level of suffering.

We think of the hundred thousand who have died in the Darfur area of western Sudan. And we pray that peace may come there. We thank you for that peace that's come in the south.

And that soon the way this nation is going, it will no longer be in this top ten. But we pray for Sudan right now. And then we would reach up to Libya with less than twelve believers in the whole nation.

Lord, put this nation on some of our hearts. As Americans in business now can easily go to the land of Libya. And then, Lord, we would reach up to Turkmenistan, the only country there in Central Asia that is not really open.

We thank you for the open door in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan. But Turkmenistan seems to be the exception. With this fanatic leader, with the persecution of the church, with almost no missionaries, we pray for Turkmenistan.

And then, Lord, we would reach over to Chechnya, that little land of Chechnya, the city of Grozny that has suffered so much, where there's such chaos, with almost no believers. We pray for Chechnya. We pray for Grozny.

We pray for peace and stability to come to that nation. And then, Lord, we would reach out to the land of Iraq. Lord Jesus, we think of our own soldiers and troops there and British troops.

We think of the death that takes place there every day. Lord, we should be, as a nation, praying much more for Iraq. I really believe, O God, we have sinned against you in not praying more for Iraq, the land you put on my heart forty-seven years ago.

We thank you for new open doors. But at the same time, Christians are suffering. Tens of thousands are fleeing the country.

Not all of them necessarily true believers, but to have Christian, the Christian name, it's just chaotic. Oh, Jesus, we pray for Iraq, with just a tiny percentage of believers. And then we reach across to Iran.

We thank you that things are changing in Iran. We pray for increased dialogue with the U.S. government. We thank you for Iranians in many other parts of the world that are coming to you.

I thank you for the privilege last summer of speaking to a hundred Muslim, born-again Iranians. And, Lord, I'm sure that nation is soon going to be off my top ten. And then we pray for Afghanistan, Lord Jesus, where the church does not yet exist in a functioning way, and yet we hear of believers worshipping you in their homes.

We pray for Afghanistan, where over two hundred tentmaker workers are in a dangerous area, and we ask for breakthroughs in Afghanistan. And then, Lord, we would reach over to Tibet, a land that is no longer technically a nation, but was once a nation, where the church is almost nonexistent. We thank you for a few workers now in Tibet.

A little bit of literature. Lord, how can it be two thousand years since the Great Commission that a place could be so unreached as Tibet? And so we cry out to you for that land. And then, finally, Lord, we pray for North Korea, a land of phenomenal suffering, of starvation and famine, where they claim to now have the atomic bomb or may have the atomic bomb.

Lord Jesus, we pray that this land may open and that your church somehow would again breathe the fresh oxygen of freedom. Lord, we pray for these ten nations. With all of our hearts, we join with tens of thousands of others who have heard the challenge recently about these nations, and we believe we are

already seeing changes, and we give you the praise and the glory.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.

Hallelujah. I believe God answers prayer. It's the main reason I'm still here.

And I hope during your vacation during these days, you will take some extra time to pray. I had about five hours today of prayer. I'm not saying you need to have five hours.

I may have a little more experience, a little more training. I don't know. And some of my prayers are pretty weak.

But it's hard to find anything that I love to do more than pray to the living God. For the peoples of the world, for friends in nation after nation. I've had the privilege of putting about 120 letters on cassette tape.

I have helped word processors who type those up and put in free DVDs and free books and free cassettes and send them around the world so I can carry out my ministry wherever I am, even in the woods of New Hampshire. Boy, you're big on trees here in New Hampshire. You're big on trees.

And it's exciting to be here. Join with me now in your Bibles to Acts chapter 20. If you want to really get into the book of Acts, you can pick up this set of CDs, 11, it says here, I didn't write this, high-powered talks from the book of Acts, partly through the inspiration of John Stott, whose book I studied, a close friend there in England.

And God gave me the grace to share these 11 talks at a conference center, Marinath in Michigan, similar to this great place. But we're going to look at just this particular favorite passage that God gave me as a baby Christian, because tonight I'm sharing my testimony. I was still selling fire extinguishers.

That was one of the businesses I owned when I was only 16. I was traveling to Las Vegas, setting up agents in various cities. And I got to my aunt's house in Pittsburgh, and I ran into her mother, who was in a group called the Church of Christ, who believed if you weren't baptized, you might land in hell.

And so she really scared me, because I had been christened as a little boy in a Memphis church. It didn't seem to take. So I had not really been baptized.

I wasn't even sure of the subject. And I read through the whole book of Acts that night. That was the summer of 1956.

I was born again in March of 1955. So I was a baby Christian. I was so hungry for truth.

I read the whole book of Acts through after that lady gave me that challenge. I became convinced that I should be baptized, which happened some years later. But I also became convinced that that was not linked with salvation.

It was linked with growth. It was linked with obedience and sanctification and reality. And during that Bible reading that night, Acts 20 sort of became one of my favorite passages, and especially Acts 20, verse 24.

And that's my life verse. Now, a lot has happened since then, so I have a lot of life verses. Now, forgive me if I'm speaking too loud.

Am I speaking too loud? I don't want to speak too loud. Being loud doesn't mean I'm spiritual. It means I'm from New Jersey.

People down there tend to be a little bit loud. And I've had a lot of discouragements concerning my loudness. I was speaking in an Anglican church in Cambridge.

I'm back there again soon, and somebody gave me a note. Thank you for coming to our church, but there was no need to shout. We Anglicans are not deaf.

So I just felt a little bad about that. I have had some encouragements. One lady said to me, she was a deaf lady.

She hadn't heard any message in her church for months until I came. So there are some positive things. So I took this as my life verse, so I've had many great verses since then.

Verse 24 in Acts 20, before we read the whole passage. However, I consider my life nothing to me if only I may finish the race. That's the theme of the week.

If only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me. The task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Isn't that a great verse? As a baby Christian, I learned to memorize scripture.

And then a few years, I had hundreds of scriptures that helped transform my life. Now I spend a lot of time reviewing my memory verses, both in Spanish and English. And I'd encourage you.

Some of you may see me walking around with those, you know, my earphones on. And sorry if that's an offense to you, but I'm just listening to the scriptures. I was in one of my favorite little shops, you know, a little shop called Walmart.

I don't think it's a favorite place in New Hampshire. And I was in Walmart. No, I was actually in a dollar store.

Dollar Tree. Have they come here yet? That's where I treat my grandkids. I give me a dollar.

Say, feel free. Go for it. And now it's five dollars.

But I was in one of those dollar stores and I picked up the Bible on CD for a dollar. Not the whole New Testament, but a good chunk. I think you got to get, you know, about five CDs to get the whole New Testament for a dollar each.

So when you see me walking over to have food, listening, unless I'm talking to somebody, that's a one dollar CD I got at the dollar shop. What that has to do with this message, I'm not actually sure. So forgive me, I once in a while get a little carried away.

But my wife is seriously sometimes signals me, hey, you know, you're off the, you know, you're off the trail, but she's not here. So I'm probably in trouble. But let's read the whole passage.

Pick it up. Acts 20, verse 13. Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders.

Let the word of God speak to your heart. We went on ahead to the ship. You see, they were into ships back then as well.

Maybe later in the week I'll be able to show you this video. I don't know if you can show videos here of our ship. It's just a short thing.

Roy found it in his luggage or in his motor home. We went to the ship and sailed to Esau, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot.

When he met us at Esau, we took him aboard and went on to Melisa. The next day we set sail for there and arrived off Chios. The day after we crossed over to Somos and on the following day arrived at Melisa.

Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to Asia, for he was in a hurry. Oh, Paul in a hurry. To reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

From Melisa, Paul sent to the Ephesians to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them, you know how I lived the whole time I was with you. From the first day I came on the province of Asia, listen to this verse.

I served the Lord with great humility, with tears, although and though I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews, you know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you, but I've taught you publicly and from house to house. Somebody said this is 2020 vision, public ministry, house to house ministry, one on one, publicly and house to house. I'm declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

And now compelled by the Spirit. And we know the Holy Spirit is the chief executive officer of all missionary work. We'll see that later in the week in another one of my favorite Acts passages, Acts 13, which I also talk about in my book.

Toward the end of the book, the vision, the Acts 13 vision, when flying in a plane in Argentina, God gave me this vision for 100,000 churches to send out another 200,000 workers, not in O.M., but the whole body of Christ. That's so exciting. I look forward to talking about that.

And now compelled by the Spirit, I'm going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life, we already read this, worth nothing to me.

If only I may finish the race, complete the task that Jesus has given me, the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Now I know that none of you among whom I've gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. It's a sad note, isn't it? Therefore, I declare to you today that I'm innocent of the blood of all men, for I've not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

Keep watch, keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you, will not spare the flock.

Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on guard. Remember that for three years, this was another very strong verse for me, for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

I commit you to God, to the word of his grace. There's another one of our key words this week, grace. The word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

I've coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know these hands of mine have supplied my own needs, the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work, we must help the weak.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus himself, who said it is more blessed to give than receive. When he has said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept.

They embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement. They would never see his face again.

They accompanied him to the ship. Isn't that a tremendous passage? How can I add anything to the word of God tonight? I've, of course, expanded those verses many times in the 60 or 70 nations that I've had the privilege of ministering in. And even though I've read these words hundreds of times and I've listened to the book of Acts on cassette tape and on CD in Spanish and in English, it still excites me tonight to just read these words again and to somehow recommit myself, now as a so-called senior citizen, to be able to say passages like for the space of three years, I cease not to warn men and women night and day.

I felt that on this first day together with you. And I wonder, Roy, if you could bring me a glass of water up here because my voice, I can feel it starting to get a little dry. That on this first day with you, I thought I should share my testimony, which is so tied in to this passage.

I don't think we should be afraid to talk about ourselves. And I hope you have a testimony. And I hope you're willing to share your testimony.

If you only get five minutes, and that's all I've had in some meetings, then share five minutes. Take six. But don't go on and on if you're not the main speaker.

I have the opportunity on airplanes, on buses, on trains all the time to share my testimony. I have the low-profile approach. I have the high-profile approach.

I have the question-and-answer approach. By the way, if you want to get people to talk to you about Jesus, try carrying a Bible around. Let them see it.

Or if you feel that's a bit too much, just carry a copy of Purpose Driven Life, the hottest Christian book in America at this present time. It's hard to go anywhere in America, if you travel as I do, and not see somebody reading Purpose Driven Life, often even a non-Christian. So if you're carrying that book, people are going to talk to you.

And often they won't be believers. It's not that hard to witness for Jesus, if you just have a little bit of creativity and a little bit of courage. And this passage is one of these passages that again and again has caused me to be willing to share my faith, caused me also to be willing to share my testimony.

Some teachers in some seminaries tell young pastors, don't talk about yourself. It's a great mistake. Paul Tournier, a brilliant Christian psychologist, said, if we're not able to talk about ourselves, who can we talk about? Now, of course, that's not our dominant theme.

The Word of God is our dominant theme. But the Word of God is filled with stories about people. And quite a few of those stories are failure stories, especially in the Old Testament.

So tonight is my story. And it's not copyrighted. So you can use it in an abbreviated form to encourage people in prayer, to encourage people in vision, to encourage people to press on, to encourage people about world missions, to encourage people about using the Word of God more.

Because all of those themes are tied up in my testimony. And to help people understand that he can use ordinary people and he can use ragamuffins who are not natural Christians, which is my case, more of a natural non-Christian. And that he can help people overcome their background and overcome a tendency toward addiction.

So here's my story. I was born in Patterson, New Jersey. I met someone this morning from Patterson.

So you've heard of the place. My grandfather was from the Netherlands on my father's side. And my dad was only seven or eight when he came from the Netherlands.

And my grandfather was an atheist. He didn't believe in God. Some things went wrong in the Netherlands.

I've gone back to where my roots are. When my family, the Verwers, abandoned the church. I'm not sure if they were hardball atheists, but they were anti-church.

On my mother's side, my grandfather was born in Northern Ireland. His father was married in a place called Portadown, if any of you are Irish, around 1875. Then went over to Glasgow and then came here.

He was from a very addictive background, and he was an alcoholic. My grandmother divorced my grandfather. I only met him a few times in my life.

This Irish-Scottish-English combination, which I think may be toxic. So that's my background. My mother certainly had some religion.

She had some Methodist religion. So she sent me to church as a boy, and she went to church. But unfortunately, as it often is in the United States, and I'm afraid even more in New England, the church was not a place committed to honoring Jesus and proclaiming his word.

It was like a social club. There were a lot of nice people. The pastor was a really nice guy.

He was trained at seminary how to be a nice person. And I liked him. I became the president of the youth fellowship.

I became the assistant to the pastor. And I didn't know Jesus. I became interested in the Bible.

In fact, I got our youth fellowship to read the Bible through nonstop. It was about 70 hours. It was such an unusual thing.

The United Press picked up the story. And around 1954 or 55, it went across the nation. Youth Fellowship in Wyckoff, New Jersey, reads the Bible out loud nonstop.

You know, one of the interesting things that marks churches that have turned away from the Scriptures, generally, is they don't have prayer meetings. Did you ever notice that? It's almost impossible. For liberal Christians who deny the basics of the Bible, it's almost impossible for them to have a prayer meeting.

Our church had no prayer meeting. Isn't that amazing? If you look in the book of Acts, you see prayer meetings. Peter was in prison, but the church was what? Gathered, praying.

Fashioned, cottage prayer meeting. It was so unusual in my little town that it made headlines in the newspaper. Church has prayer meeting.

You know, like, oh, what? Is Noah back from the dead? God used that church. I met a man there, my Sunday school teacher, who didn't know Jesus. He's in heaven.

I'm hoping to visit his widow, Dorothy Ganod, in Owl's Head on maybe Sunday or Monday, before I fly back to England. Fred almost became a Jehovah Witness. Then he heard Dr. DeHaan.

How many of you are old enough to remember old Dr. DeHaan? Praise God, the radio Bible class. And Dr. DeHaan helped open his eyes about the Jehovah Witnesses. And Fred and I, more or less, both came to Jesus around the same time.

And he was like one of my early mentors. And we were friends for over four decades. In the midst of all this, I was getting worse.

I was getting into the world of pornography and starting to become addicted. Though I don't think I was addicted, I was moving down that road. My life was money and sports.

Some of the sports was not wrong. That was a healthy thing. Romance.

I guess by the time I was 17, I had 32 different girlfriends, not all at the same time. And I just was so in love with the fun and the nightclubs. And as Chris Rea, the pop singer, said, I was on the highway to hell.

And then something happened that totally changed my life. A little godly woman whose spiritual roots go back to Billy Sunday's visit to Patterson. When Herman Bronlin, the founder of the Hawthorne Gospel Church, was sitting on the windowsill.

And something happened through the preaching of Billy Sunday. And Dorothy Clapp was influenced through that. And she became a fireball for world missions.

And she heard about me, a troublemaker in Ramsey High School, across the street from her house. And put my name on her Holy Ghost hit list. She not only prayed that I would become a Christian, eh? Guess what? She prayed that I'd become a missionary.

She didn't even discuss it. You know, isn't it only fair to have a little discussion about what's going to happen with your own life? And then she sent me a Gospel of John. Her son, Danny Clapp, who was working for Word of Life at that time, sent this Gospel of John.

But it was his mother who was really behind this project. And this Gospel of John was to change my life. Because the Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword.

And so here I was with pornography in one hand. I was even starting to sell it in a very tiny way. And the Word of God, the Gospel of John, in my other hand.

And there was a conflict going on in my life. We read about that in the Word of God, don't we? The spirit lusts against the flesh and the two are contrary. And she started interceding even more for me.

As I read this Gospel, God prepared my heart for a night that was to change my life. When Billy Graham came to New York City for the anniversary of Jack Wursten, converted bandleader from New York City, a

wild guy, one of the men who was in charge of the business that night, Steve Hart, later for 25 years, was the chief finance officer of Operation Mobilization. He was there the night of that anniversary.

When Billy Graham came for a one-night stand, also to test out the Big Apple, for two years later, that great famous 57 campaign was to take place where thousands would come to a knowledge of Jesus. Some of my friends warned me about Billy Graham. This was not my world, believe me.

They said, beware, this is emotionalism, this is fanaticism. Somebody said he's a hypnotist. But somehow a guy named Jay Fippinger, who I couldn't stand, my heart at times was filled with hatred as a young kid.

Many a time I was in a fist fight, even once with a girl, a terrible day in my life as she beat me up. I don't always like to share about that particular day. I'll never forget years ago in New Jersey, preaching and suddenly I spotted her in the meeting.

Hallelujah, somehow she got saved. So I brought my binoculars to Madison Square Garden, March 4th or 5th, 1955. 20,000 people were there.

I sat as far away as I could and I watched this guy, Billy Graham. I had read a little bit about him in a magazine. Once when I was picking up some soft porn in the newsstand, there was a magazine, a secular magazine about Billy Graham.

And it showed that he had a wife, that he played sports. I thought, well, he seems to be like half normal. You know, sometimes with non-Christians, we need to go the extra mile to show them that we're normal.

I know some of you find that a little hard, but keep working on it. So I went to that Billy Graham meeting. I brought this girl that I was, among many, infatuated with.

She didn't have such a great reputation in my high school. I thought maybe she could use some of this religion. I actually thought I was all right.

I was the president of the youth fellowship. I was about to receive the God and Country Award from the Boy Scout Movement, the highest religious award in the Scout Movement. I was arrogant.

I was hyper, of course, I had to tell you that, right? You know, that was days when we didn't have Ritalin. You know, we didn't know what attention deficit disorder was. And so these people just somehow, they got saved, and they went out and turned the world upside down for Jesus.

So anyway, that's another message. I sat as far away as I could, and I watched Billy Graham. And I heard the gospel, for God so loved the world.

I gave it in Spanish, because you already have it memorized in English. You need to work on your Spanish, because the Mexicans are coming to New England big time. They're just checking it out.

Most of them have settled in North Carolina. I sat as far away as I could, and I heard the gospel. And I don't know why.

I don't understand how. He gave it to me. He gave that invitation.

I bowed my head. It hadn't registered that I had to do something. And I just thanked God for that invitation.

I read leaflets attacking the Billy Sunday invitation system. People that are hyper into sovereignty, they believe those invitation systems are from the devil. You know, I love to get the hyper-sovereignty people.

I just love them. If there's any of you here, let's have a coffee. Because if you're really into sovereignty, then you can believe that even if that's a mistake, the invitation is a mistake, God can use it, because God is sovereign.

And if I didn't believe God could work through mistakes and through some of the funny things that evangelists and other various and sundry types like me do, I would get very depressed. So that night, it was that invitation that got me out of my seat in front of 20,000 people. And I began to weep.

And God saved me by His grace that night. And that has been, this is no exaggeration, that has been a reality every single day. I remember some time later hearing that it was sort of standard procedure to lose your first love.

And then I heard from others that everybody sort of backslides. And I was starting to meet these backsliders, because I started preaching when I was like 17, and people would come back to Jesus in my meetings who knew Jesus but had drifted away, and they would write me and they'd tell me. And I started to think that, well, like everybody loses their first love, and then you've got to have revival and get that back.

And everybody sort of goes out in the desert and backslides. I don't know if we use that word anymore. I want to share this.

You don't have to lose your first love. I never have lost my first love for Jesus. I lost some of the initial emotion.

And a theologian named Hodges helped me understand the difference between the initial fervor, the initial fervor of the Christian life, and our first love, which is an act of the will, which is tied in with obedience. It's tied in with daily repentance and reality and the power of the Holy Spirit of God. And so here I am, having just celebrated my 50th spiritual birthday, thanking Jesus for this great reality that has been mine through tears, mistakes.

I'm going to be sharing about my weaknesses throughout the week, so I don't want to give any false impressions. It was a great Scottish theologian that said that great faith is not in the absence of doubt. Great faith is often in the midst of doubt.

And if you're a bit of a doubting Thomas, join the club. Let's have a conversation, because I've been tormented often by doubt in my pilgrimage in the Muslim world and the Hindu world, standing in the streets of Bombay, giving out another 5,000 tracts, believing that these people are lost without Christ. Not easy to maintain that faith, at least not for me.

God's grace to weak people. I found out later this lady had been praying for my high school for about 15 or 20 years. Her son, this godly man who sent the gospel, Danny, had been the president of the student council.

When I was a freshman, the next year in God's providence, I was to be elected the president of Ramsey High School Student Council. I didn't know what God was doing, but it enabled me to share my testimony with the entire school. That is now illegal.

That's now illegal. School time, main auditorium. I get up there and share about Jesus and God began to work.

The principal gave me permission to distribute Gospels of John on the campus of Ramsey High School. 1,000 students promised to read the Gospel of John. We wouldn't give it to you if you didn't promise to read it.

We bought them from that group called the Pocket Testament League. I remember the man, Henry Reidike, who later went with New Tribes Mission. I remember this businessman in his Cadillac giving me one of the first checks in the history of our movement.

We didn't know what God was doing back then. We were just trying to reach our high school, which I believe, by the way, is a great mission field. People started to get saved at Ramsey High.

The dam break. That lady's prayers had built up over a decade and a half. We started prayer meetings and more people came to Jesus.

That summer I went across the United States. That's when I had that Book of Acts experience. I had this other business of selling fire extinguishers.

It was quite an exciting business. I would light a gasoline fire on your front porch. Usually I had mercy and lit it in a pan.

And I'd put out the fire with this little fire extinguisher. I'd had people sometimes buy even a dozen because they were so afraid their house was going to burn down. And after I got saved, I'd still had this fire extinguisher business for a while, Bergen County Sales Corporation.

I had a couple of other businesses. But I started to distribute Christian books. Started to distribute the word of God.

And God was transforming my life by His word. By the ministry of Donald Gray Barnhouse on the radio. By the books of Billy Graham and Jack Wursten and others.

And I don't have time to explain all the different things that happened. Especially when I again went back to Grand Canyon and saw the beauty of that, one of the most incredible creations in all of God's creation. And caused me to again recommit my heart to Jesus.

To serve Him, to go wherever He wanted me to go. I went off to Maryville College, which at one time was a very evangelical Presbyterian college. A very biblical place.

But ten years before I got there, it went liberal and ecumenical. And even tried to destroy evangelical or biblical faith. But that was God's place for me.

Because I was to meet a man named Dale Roton. One year older than me. Was destined to be a lifelong friend.

A very quiet, scholarly, phlegmatic character. And he spotted me. I was warned about Dale.

Some of the agnostics on campus, and many of them were going into the ministry, mixing Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism. They said, watch out for this Roton guy. He's baptizing people in the shower.

It wasn't really true. So the next Sunday I got together with Dale Roton. We started to pray together.

I went back to my high school at Christmas break. And this is absolute truth. Six hundred people came to hear me speak in my former high school.

My father, who wondered what in the world was going on with his son, who meanwhile had become a bit religious, sat in that meeting. When I shared the gospel, a hundred and twenty-five or thirty students stood to believe on Jesus. A damn breakthrough through the prayers of that woman.

They came into the cafeteria for a book and counseling. And among those who stood up, my own father, the son of an atheist, born again of the spirit of God, who followed Christ as a very ordinary man and a best friend till ninety-four years of age. And then my mother came.

And then my sister came. And then her marine husband came. And they've had two or three of their children out on the mission field.

There's not time to tell you more tonight of the operation multiplication through one woman and her son, who are faithful to God's word, who were faithful in standing on the promises, who knew the kind of reality that we read about in this passage tonight about Jesus and about total commitment to Jesus. I soon found myself in Mexico. I may share more about that another night.

I saw that I could learn a language even though I was only nineteen. I discovered missionaries like the Wycliffe missionaries that were willing to work with us young people. And this was one of the birthplaces a long time ago, fifty-seven of short-term mission work that is now accepted by almost every mission and every Christian denomination in the world.

And probably this summer, there are over one million in short-term missions across the globe and tens of thousands who have gone into long-term service. It's because they got involved in short-term mission. They work together.

But one can never replace the other. What I saw God do in Mexico made me very patient at Liberal Arts College. Dale Roton left for Wheaton and I soon left for Moody Bible Institute.

I had a lot of entanglement with women even as a young Christian. I kept looking for this verse, Thou shalt not kiss. Because I'd been kissing girls pretty heavy since six years of age.

And as I studied the Word of God, I couldn't find that verse. And so I just kept kissing. And I often mix my evangelism with my kissing.

Sorry to tell you the truth. And I never forget leading this one girl to Christ. I was pretty excited about her and then spending the next two hours necking with her by the Washington Memorial there in Washington, D.C. I thought, however, that as I read other verses, that this was deceptive.

I was telling girls that I was in love with them when in fact, you know, that really, you know, this was really puppy love. It might have been real to this hound. And I began to hurt girls through my romance.

One girl in particular. And so I knew I had to be set free from this romantic. I was not into sex.

But this romantic spirit, it was a deception. And so I went on a fast. Probably the most important thing in my life.

I'm not recommending it for everyone. Some of you might have a nervous breakdown. No kissing.

No dates. No necking. It was during that time God sent me to Mexico.

It was a huge struggle. I was still struggling with pornography. Not in a major way, but it would come at me.

In fact, for a while, I thought, God can never use me. God can never use me. Because I was still struggling on occasion with pornography.

Mexico so impacted my life. It caused me to leave university and go to Moody. And when I got to Moody, I thought, well, they're all born again.

All these chicks. I mean, all these girls are born again. And, well, I'm safe here.

I was in love with about seven in the first week. Or infatuated. And I didn't do anything.

Then I went to rent a Moody science film. And I'll never forget it. And I got out of the elevator on the eighth floor.

I turned to the right and I saw this woman, secretary in charge of the film. It was love at first sight. The most beautiful thing I'd seen for a long time.

I broke my fast and moved in on the target. Her name was Drina. She was a real quiet country girl from Iowa.

She had never met anything like this. The first thing I said to her was, you're probably not going to be a missionary, are you? She said, well, why do you say that? I said, well, all the attractive girls here at Moody, they're all hunting pastors. None of them seem to be after missionaries.

You know, hint, hint, hint. I can assure you it was not love at first sight for her. I managed to persuade her to sit down with me and have a negotiation.

You might have called it a date. I'll never forget it. Neither will she.

I said to her, look, probably nothing going to happen between you and me. But I want to lay the cards on the table. I'm going to become a missionary.

If you marry me, you'll probably be eaten by cannibals in New Guinea. Strange enough, she still wasn't in love. The next week was the Gideon's fleece.

I gave her a bag of my dirty laundry. I wasn't big into washing as a young man. I used to sleep in my clothes to redeem the time.

I gave her a bag of this vile laundry and I said, will you wash this as unto the Lord? She accepted it. She told me a couple years ago, do you know I've been washing your clothes for 47 years? We've only been married for 45. She then reminded me that I started to sneak in my friend's laundry with my laundry.

I don't know what kind of deal I made with my friends concerning that. After months in mobilizing my prayer partners, she fell in love with me. She thought I was a man of God.

She was ready to listen to whatever I said from the Bible. We were in love. So I gave her that key verse from Ephesians.

Submit unto your husbands as unto the Lord. She accepted it. She gave me all her money.

My wife would be a millionairess today if she had invested it with Walmart, but she gave it to George. She's been more or less broke ever since. We got married.

God did some amazing things to put the marriage together, but humanly speaking, humanly speaking, we were a Bible college mismatch. We were so different, but we hadn't got to know each other except in this environment. She accepted this teaching, thought I was a man of God.

Off to Mexico. I didn't believe in honeymoons. That cost money.

I didn't believe in spending money much except for Bibles. I didn't believe in renting an apartment. We lived on the floor in the back of a bookshop that we had just opened.

Didn't hardly even spend any money for food. I kept giving her these commands. She kept doing whatever I asked, though she found it difficult.

And then she read the other verses. You know, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. That's a tough one, isn't it? That's never been my favorite verse, that one.

The truth is we had a lot of difficulties. We couldn't even walk together. We couldn't even walk together.

And the sexual thing? You know, they didn't teach us at Moody Bible Institute. They taught a lot of things. They didn't teach anything about sex.

And I tell you, I was not just ignorant, friends. I was what you call stupid. So we had some rough days as young missionaries in Mexico.

But we picked up this little book. We picked up this little book, Calvary Road. I remember one day when she was crying because I had said something unkind.

We picked up this little book, Revival in the Home. And I repented and apologized for my behavior. And I've now been repenting for 45 years.

What is the key to revival? It's repentance. What is the key to a good married life? Repentance. Brokenness.

Jesus reigning and ruling in our hearts. I'm not wanting to make things simple. There are complications that come into some marriages that are not sorted out with one easy prayer.

But my own testimony, as my wife and I just celebrated 45 great years of marriage, that Jesus is bigger than all the problems that can come into our marriages. And that we can run the race together as married couples. Never once have I ever resented getting married.

Though in some ways extreme, people like me, we shouldn't get married. But somebody said in a brilliant book, if you're extreme when you get married, you'll either become bitter or balanced. And by God's grace, and people will testify this who know me, and hundreds have been with me in this ministry for over 40 years, and I don't pay their salaries.

They raise their own support. So if they don't believe that I'm walking with Jesus, they are not going to stick around. And hundreds have stayed with OM for over 30 years because Jesus is real.

Because Jesus can even change aggressive, hyper, needy characters like me. And Jesus can keep marriages together that would seem to be almost naturally disintegrating almost before they started. Because Jesus is real.

And the Holy Spirit lives in us. The work multiplied very quickly in Mexico. It spread to Spain where Trina and I lived.

Within six months after our marriage and our first son was born, a few months after that, I went into the Soviet Union in the summer of 61 and had a giant failure. And I'll share with that in one of the other evenings when I point out how failure can be the backdoor to success. Soon 200 people joined OM and then 2,000.

It spread to North Africa and the Muslim world which was always our priority target. And then it exploded in India where my wife and I lived for a number of years. Since those days, these teams and 120,000 people have been on OM have given the Word of God to one billion people.

Tens of thousands have come to Christ. Hundreds of new churches have been born. One hundred mission agencies traced their birth back to their founder being on OM.

Yes, one woman prayed. One school kid got saved. God, in His mercy, from His Word, changed our lives.

And here I am. Two years since I stepped out of the leadership after 46 years. And I can tell you every single day those 46 years and now these two years, every single day I've been motivated in Jesus.

You know what these motivational motivational speakers get paid? You know, Tony Robbins, huh? \$25,000 for one night. You know, I'm happy if I get my airfare. Hallelujah.

But I believe Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost is the greatest motivator in the world. And I think if you're not motivated, something is wrong with you. I'm not saying you need to be loud.

I'm not saying you need to become a missionary. I am saying that you need to have a vision. You need to know where you're going.

You need to have a heartbeat. So many young people are leaving the church. They say it's boring.

Not just the church is boring. If we're honest, a lot of the people are boring. I've never had a boring day since Jesus came into my life.

I have to be honest. I've had boring hours, boring minutes. Now at my age, my wife and I are sort of thanking Jesus for boring hours.

It's good to just, you know, sit back and be bored. And I hope you during your vacation have some good just boring hours. But generally, we're motivated.

I have to be honest. I also have met too many boring people. And that's why I want to preach as long as the Lord gives breath.

Because I've seen about 200,000 people in my meetings around the globe stand up or come forward or sign a card and repent and experience the reality of Jesus of fresh in their lives and in their marriages. And when that happens, they're never the same. God bless you.

You're so patient. You're so patient. But I detect one or two are getting hungry.

It reminds me of that meeting in Germany. Oh, how I love Germany. It's in my top 50 countries.

And I was in Germany ministering and I was going on a bit long. It was my own meeting. I felt free.

I wasn't just a guest. I'm always more restrained when I'm a guest. So I was going on about an hour and a half.

Missions, the need to go, the need to give. And one older man in the back, he wanted to get me to stop, started waving his watch at me. I saw this man.

I stopped the meeting. I said, folks, look at this. That man's donating his watch for world missions.

God bless you. Hallelujah. Come back tomorrow morning.

God bless you.

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