

o.m. Conference

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon emphasizes the importance of Operation Mobilization, the role of literature in ministry, and the significance of understanding suffering in the Christian faith.

Duration: 45:01

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 10:15, Romans 11:33, Romans 12:1

Topics: "World Missions", "Prayer Support"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding world missions and reaching the unreached. He recommends a paper by Ralph Winner that provides insight into the complexities and problems of the year 2000 movement. The speaker also mentions a magazine and a video that are available for free. Additionally, he highlights the significance of the book 'Operation World' and encourages listeners to obtain it along with a free map and prayer cards. The sermon concludes with a story about a man trying to carry water in a leaking wicker basket, illustrating the need for prayer and financial support in missions.

Transcript

Thank you. This has been a very, very special week. We have so many things going on at the same time, including golf, free of charge.

I was the first conference center in the world, and I've been in many conference centers, about a thousand. I guess if you count church conferences, but I never had golf thrown in on top. It's good it's only nine holes because I get bored around the tenth hole and want to go do something else.

So it's been a great privilege to be here. And I love this kind of meeting this morning where we've got a lot of O.M. friends, ex-O.M.ers, O.M. leaders, O.M.ers, and some of you may not know what that is. It stands for Operation Mobilization, a movement that started when a woman prayed for me and sent me a Gospel of John that led to my conversion in a Billy Graham meeting in New York City that led to a trip evangelizing across the states that led to a trip of three of us in Mexico.

And this summer, there are not three of us, but there are close to 5,000 of us in Operation Mobilization, and 2,000 of those stay on year after year, though, of course, some go and new people come. And I know some of you have prayed for this work for a long time and supported it. Canada, on a per capita basis, is one of O.M.'s strongest fields in the world, much stronger, actually, than the USA per capita.

I think, for example, there's, I don't know how many people there are in Texas, for example, compared to Canada, but it might be somewhat similar. I don't think hardly anybody in Texas heard of Operation Mobilization. There'd be a few beautiful exceptions, especially in Dallas and a few other places.

So we're hoping in the United States, maybe we ought to target Texas. We have a lot of wonderful USA people here who've come, some all the way from Los Angeles and Florida, including my father-in-law and others who came all the way from Mexico. But how many are here from outside of Canada? Just raise your hand.

Welcome. They all wanted to sit in the front. Praise the Lord.

God bless you. I've observed all over the world the difficulty neighboring countries have with each other, Germany and Austria, Spain and Portugal, France and Belgium, Norway and Sweden. And of all the border countries in the world, Canada and the USA are one of the most friendly.

Now, you may not think so because you know, of course, there are always some problems, right? You probably even have that with your own wife, maybe a dog. But the USA and Canadian friendship factor is a very beautiful thing, and it's especially a beautiful thing among God's people. Think of people that went from the United States to Canada, like L.E. Maxwell, to found the Prairie Bible Institute, which in turn became a very Canadian Bible college, but also always Americans attending there.

My helper this year, every year I have a new helper. He's on his final assignment, so he's not with me right now. And Rasta Voss is a young man who graduated from Prairie Bible Institute.

His parents taught there, and he is American passport, Canadian passport. And it's been interesting this summer traveling with him as we've gone to the wrong country with the wrong passport and had some excitement, even when you have two passports. Now, to be very honest, one of the biggest things that concerned us this morning is where to put the books.

I generally don't go anywhere without my books. And for the first time in the history of my ministry, the books are out in the rain. But fortunately, we have a plastic thing over the top of them, and I'm going to be quite surprised to figure out how they actually sell these books.

We hope it stops raining. It's not really raining. It's sort of just drizzling, sort of like London, England, where I'm from.

But we hope you will get these books one way or the other. Grace Awakening is the book we're featuring the most. And we're sorry it's so expensive because it's such a bestseller, they're keeping it in a hardback.

I don't like that. But we're reducing the price considerably, I think by \$10. Is that right? Steve? Nodding his head.

Do meet Steve. He's very unique. He will give you a \$10 discount on that book.

Another book that we're pushing is Touch the World Through Prayer. If you get only one book, maybe you could grab this one. This is a lot cheaper because prayer is where it's really at.

One of our highlights here have been our little times in prayer. I, of course, have had the privilege of being here before the OM conference began, as I've been sharing since Tuesday. And a lot of people have been able to get that book.

We also have a lot of cassette tapes and a lot of other books. One is a book called Calvary Road, which was required reading for 25 years, everybody who came on OM. We have now 70,000 OM graduates, ex-OMers.

Most of them have studied that book. Probably one of the greatest Christian classics. I was at Roy Hessian's funeral just recently, but his message goes on through the pages of that great book, Calvary Road.

So take a look at this literature. One way or the other, we'll still have a display this evening. You could even come a little early.

We're just thrilled to see powerful Christian literature go out. Many of you may not know much about Operation Mobilization, and there's not time to say much this morning. There's literature about it.

You could sign up for the prayer letter. You could pick up this tape about OM. This one happens to be entitled, Why Give to OM? And it's sold at the price of the blank tape.

You don't like it? You can erase over it your own message. I'd love to have it back. You got a message from me? Great.

Put it on the tape. You know, you may have one. Why give to me? Send it to me, and we'll see what we can do.

Isn't it exciting? It's exciting to sing new songs. I love the old songs. I'm committed to the old songs, especially Armored Christian Soldiers.

Most people who sing it are hypocrites, but I'm committed to that song. But I like new songs as well. We've been singing some new songs this morning.

You can get a whole new book, the Love Europe Songbook, with new songs, with the music, and the words. I know Canadians are so gifted, French and English and Indian languages, and this has got all different languages. You can sing all these languages, I guess, at the same time if you're gifted.

But there's a book, a very unusual book, and I was told as I came in, I don't know what's happening to these people, except some of them have a lazy streak and don't like to carry the books back to Port Colborne. But they're offering this at half price. So the Love Europe Songbook, probably once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

They take checks, by the way, because, you know, you wouldn't want to put a Sunday date on a check. You can post-date the check right up to the year 2000. They're generous, big-hearted people.

Now, over the years, I mean, this is serious, over the years, I've developed a natural distrust for some of my book table operators, so I carry my own private supply. And up here, after the meeting, if that thing folds up, you can come up here and get some items that you have probably never seen before. First of all, this amazing paper, Mission Frontiers, put out by Ralph Winter.

If you want to understand world missions, and you need to, it's a serious thing, reaching the unreached, the year 2000 movement, the problems, the complexities, get Ralph Winter's little paper. And you can get a sample of this for a donation. I'd like to cover the cost, but otherwise I'll give it to you right up here by me, after the meeting.

I've got a magazine you've probably never seen. How many of you have ever gone to a movie, or you watched a movie on television, you know, you sort of got a little low, and you backslid from that early teaching against movies that I had, and committed myself to while I was at Moody. How many of you have ever watched a movie? Raise your hand.

You've watched a movie. Look at that. Come on, T.O., put your hand up.

Thank you. One of our board members. We have a new magazine about movies, A Christian Guide to Movies, that exposes these films for what many of them are.

Like I saw a film on the airplane, Fried Green Tomatoes. It was free, you know, on the plane. I thought it was quite good, but I wondered, you know, these two women that are so friendly, I wonder if they've got a problem.

And lo and behold, two weeks later, they were given a major award by one of the lesbian groups in America for that film, and when I picked up Movie Guide, I discovered it was based on a novel that exalted lesbianism and homosexuality. We need to know what these people are saying. This is almost the only Christian movie guide in the world.

I get it twice a month, and you can get a sample copy from me. You won't believe it. This thing is off the wall and is really exciting.

So I've got also one other item, especially for you OM people. This is OM's internal paper. This one is free.

And here's an article by Debbie Meroff, who's with us, professional writer, full-time in OM, based in London, and there's five proposals that are going to be discussed at our next field leaders' meetings. This is hot stuff. There's a video that goes with this, though we don't have many of those.

And you can pick this up free from me if you don't already have one. Now we need to move quickly and turn in the word of God to that passage we've already read in Romans chapter 12. But do take serious the literature we offer.

By the way, they're giving Operation World in a bargain. That's our most famous book. They're giving a map free.

They're giving these prayer cards, all free of charge with Operation World, probably the most significant missionary book in the history of the church. So be sure to get a hold of that while you can. We read my favorite passage of scripture this morning from the book of Romans.

It's amazing. We have 11 great chapters of powerful theology in Romans, comes into a crescendo at the last five verses of Romans 11, where it speaks of the greatness of God, the mystery of God. Let's read that, starting at verse 32.

This is from an old translation, but if you listen, it is easy to understand. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. Oh, the depth of the riches, verse 33, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out.

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counselor? Who hath first given to him, and it shall not be recompensed unto him again? For of him, through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. That passage is such a help for me because I find it such a struggle to see

so many people suffer.

I have close friends going through divorce. I have close friends whose children have become complete rebels. I know too many people that are dying of cancer.

I'm involved with people in prisons. I know the problems within our own teams and our own work around the world. My heart aches for Afghanistan that's breaking out even today as we sit here, perhaps in major civil war or more civil war.

I know perhaps too much of what's going on in Somalia and Cambodia and Northern Ireland and South Africa, places where I've lived, where I've bonded with the people, and so when they suffer, I feel their suffering. And many times I've cried out to God in despair, as the heavens seem to be silent to my prayers, to see changes in some of these situations, though there have been many answers to prayer. It was a brilliant writer 25 years ago that helped save me from agnosticism, as in my Christian life I've often walked along that precipice of unbelief.

It was Eugenia Price who wrote that book, *No Easy Answers*, on the subject of suffering. Wilder Smith wrote another book on that subject, that again saved me from many doubts and many struggles, and also the writings of C.S. Lewis, like *The Problem of Pain*. There are many great books that can help us understand the problem of suffering.

Perhaps one of the greatest is Edith Schaeffer's books, *Affliction*, or Philip Yancey's book, *Disappointment with God*. Where would the average dedicated Christian be if it were not for the ministry of Christian writers and the printed page? And though O.M. is involved in every kind of evangelism, and church planting, and Bible teaching, and high tech with video and audio, we are still committed to the distribution of the printed page, and would invite you to join with us. You can do it even today to get powerful literature out into the hands of people who often don't get books.

One of the exciting ministries we've had recently is getting books into prisons, and you'd be amazed how prisoners gobble up these books. And, of course, the Bible itself as well. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are His judgments. Brothers and sisters, stop trying to get all the answers. Another group has just sent me a letter that Jesus Christ is coming on October 2nd.

Come on. It's a waste of paper. Let's protect the trees and save the paper.

The Word of God commands us that we're not to get in to figuring out the exact time and date of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. We worship a God of mystery. There are things we will never understand.

Even this area I just touched on of homosexuality, which has caused so much chaos and confusion in the church. Clearly the Bible teaches that it is a sin to engage in homosexual practice. But there are things connected with homosexuality, and especially believers who still struggle with this, that I don't think we will have a full answer to this side of heaven.

In fact, the whole thing of sex to me is a mystery. I don't know when you've had a good Sunday morning, especially Sunday morning you're not allowed to talk about sex. Sunday evening you talk about sex if you bring in Josh McDowell.

I don't know when you've last had a good Sunday morning message on the subject of sex. Five hundred verses in the Bible on the subject of sex. Ministers falling in adultery from California to Maine, from Vancouver to Nova Scotia, but we don't talk about it.

I believe much of this immorality, if not all of it, is without excuse, because there is provision in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to live in reality and purity in this area. And if God can give lust to holics like me, and many fellow OMers are in the same camp, victory to live in grace and power for 25 and 35 years, then I don't believe anybody has an excuse. Sorry about that.

But there are elements of mystery. Why does God allow certain temptations? You ever argued with God about that? Or, why did God allow me to fall? A lot of the people I counsel in this area seem to blame God. They prayed for total deliverance.

I believe in some of our prayers we are asking for things from God that He has clearly taught in His Word He will never give you. Because you are a human being. Now, we are one of the movements that has turned out quite a few extremists.

And OM extremists just scare me right out of my shoes. That's why I've got my global socks on. If my shoes fall off, you'll get another map of the world.

If there's anything we need, if there's anything we need in these days, together with zeal and commitment and prayer, it's spiritual balance. Because extremism is not a pleasant thing, it's not a laughing matter. Extremism is causing more chaos and more confusion in the church than anything else, perhaps, apart from lack of love and things like lukewarmness that we spoke about last night.

When we begin to understand more of God Himself, His awesomeness, His greatness, His refusal to tell us everything about all of creation and all that He is doing and why He has done it. And we realize, therefore, as it says in verse 34, we are not going to be able to set ourselves up as His counselor. Sorry about that, especially my theological friends.

You are not going to be able to be God's counselor. And I think we need to be careful of blaming God for some of the things, some of the messes we've made in our own life, some of the things that have gone wrong, especially after we prayed. Because prayer is not a cop-out for obedience.

Prayer is not a cop-out for living in this planet. Billy Graham once said, Life at its best is filled with sadness. And we need to face the challenging reality of that.

None of us want to suffer. We don't like suffering. And yet we see, not fully, but we see to an amazing degree the purpose of suffering in the life of the believer and in the world in which we live.

Malcolm Muggeridge, who went from communism and atheism and agnosticism to faith in Jesus Christ before he died, said this, By avoiding suffering, people deprive themselves of one of the glories of existence. The dignity of suffering goes to the very heart of human existence, of literature, of art, and of everything that has ever happened. That is great.

Wrong views on suffering, false name it, claim it, health forever and money forever teaching has brought a lack of dignity and dragged the Church of Jesus Christ into the mud literally across the world. May we turn from it and go back to more balanced teaching from the Word of God. So that great passage, just before we get to my favorite passage, has again and again helped me in my walk with the Lord Jesus and

especially to enable me to maintain intellectual integrity as I also take steps of faith.

And then we're thrust into those words. Well, to really this whole chapter. I've read this chapter probably 500 times.

I've memorized it, but now, my age, I discover my memory sort of is a little bit leaky. I don't know if any of you have that problem. My wife tells me something two minutes later.

I don't even know what she said. Must be my short-term memory or maybe it's a block built up over the years with my wife, which certainly would be a terrible thing that I certainly would repent of. I remember a story when I was a young Christian and somebody was challenging about the need to memorize Scripture and I've memorized Scripture almost since my conversion.

It's been one of the greatest factors that has helped me walk with God, memorizing Scripture and re-memorizing it. And this is one of the chapters. But a man told a story about a guy who was trying to carry water in a wicker basket.

Do you have wicker baskets in Canada? And he was carrying water up a hill in a wicker basket from the river. And every time he got to the hill, the water was all gone. And a man came to him and he said, Look, you're a jerk.

You're not going to get any water to the top of this hill in this basket that's got holes in it. It's leaking out. The man looked at him and said, It doesn't matter.

At least it's cleaner every time I get to the top of the hill. And though when you memorize Scripture, some of it may seem to leak away and you can't stand up in the front of the Sunday school class and quote it, you're still probably cleaner every time you allow that verse to go through your mind and through your heart. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Now, I'm not going to read the rest of the chapter because I believe you know this chapter. But I want to just share with you, and this is one of the methods I use for Bible study, I want to share with you five mega words that jump out of this chapter and just hit me.

Because a year from now, you're not going to remember what I've said here very easily. But I'm hoping that you might be able to remember five words. And that these five words, which are very simple, very basic and yet very powerful, will grip your life and control your life, enabling you to be the man, the woman that God would have you be.

OM is known as the missionary movement, and we are a missionary movement. But OM is also a movement that is working day and night to see reality, renewal and revival among God's people. Maybe you thought we were going to have some kind of heavy-handed effort to recruit you to the mission field this morning.

Sometimes when people hear there's a missionary meeting, they don't go. But our burden is that the Holy Spirit does the recruiting. That's what we discovered in Acts 13.

And in OM, all these years, we've lifted up the Lord Jesus, we preached as we were able the entire whole council of God, and we let the Holy Spirit do the recruiting. It doesn't mean we never give a clear missionary challenge, but I think you know what I mean. Our burden in OM, and I hope it's your burden, is reality first, geography second.

And we believe that you could live right here in this part of Canada and be just as much a world Christian and a missionary-minded ambassador for Christ as someone who goes to Belgium, one of my favorite countries, where the need is very, very great, or to India, or to Bangladesh, or to Mongolia, which is just opening to the Gospel, or to Central Asia, or wherever. In fact, brothers and sisters, I want to be very honest. Right now, as far as I see it, and I've been in this every day of my life for 36 years, the need for senders, the need for people to pray and to finance God's work is four times greater than the need for workers.

Because all of us in missions are losing workers all the time, and some of the best, through the lack of finance or the lack of sending churches. And I'd be happy to send you as a gift a book that we've sold out of, called *Serving as a Sender*, if you want to seriously read about this important subject based on Romans chapter 10, verse 15. But I want to share with you in these closing moments this morning five mega words from Romans chapter 12.

The first word is God. We've already been talking about that the moment we started reading those verses in the end of chapter 11. I would like to give a plea which I know many of you could give to me because many of you know God in a closer way than I do.

And it's always a bit of a mystery how somebody is given the privilege of speaking and so many godly people have the more difficult task of attempting to listen. I have had the privilege of fellowshiping with people who know God. I don't know Him very well.

But the little I know Him is the most motivating, mind-challenging experience that I have ever had. Greater than anything I was into before I was saved. And I was into a lot of wild things and a lot of enjoyable things.

It wasn't all bad. But knowing God is where it's at. Now we're all different.

And when I read of men like Watchman Nee and Andrew Murray and A.W. Tozer and I fellowship with people face-to-face like Alan Redpath and others, I just felt so inadequate, so weak, in that I didn't really know God the way these men knew God. When I read Madame Gunion, when I looked at some of these other great spiritual books, I would come out sometimes discouraged rather than encouraged because it seemed that this kind of spirituality was so far from me with my impatience and my big mouth and my natural hostility and the temptation sometimes even to swear at people. Can you imagine somebody walking out of a church service after preaching, filled with the Spirit, greatly used somehow the Lord and within an hour he's got a temptation to swear at somebody.

I mean, does any of you ever have that problem especially in the car? Of course, as Christians we learn how to keep it under our breath. What do you think? God can't read your breath? God reads your mind. Perhaps this is one of the reasons this book has become my really most treasured book in the past few years.

Because it's a book about the grace of God. It's a book that talks about the amazing range of people that God is saving. Haven't you ever been surprised by that? You know, have you ever seen a really weird guy get saved and you say, Lord, what are you doing saving this guy? I thought he was a broad-roader.

I didn't want anything to do with him and now he's in church and, you know, two years later the guy's an elder. You're sitting there just screaming on the inside, Lord, why did you save him? None of you are that bad, right? The grace of God. And I would encourage you to understand that, to realize what A.W. Tozer was trying to say in his writings.

Tozer has some straw. O.M. is not committed to obey everything A.W. Tozer taught even though he's one of the most influential persons in our movement. He's in heaven.

He admitted that he had straw. He admitted that his greatest problem was lack of moderation. That really helped me when I read Tozer because, I mean, he, I've listened to a lot of his tapes and I tell you, if you want to know how to get Tozer tapes, the contact guy is here.

I wouldn't want to tell you who he is. He's sitting over, close to that door and he's about my age, little, slightly overweight but he's okay and you can find out how to get Tozer tapes. But Tozer admitted that he lacked moderation and so often that's been my sin.

Lacking moderation. And I thank God that without losing my zeal and without losing my commitment, I have, because of His grace and also the brothers and sisters who work with me, more moderation which we so need in the work of God. So that's my first word.

I could talk to you for hours on it. I know that's what some of you are worried about. The second word is reality.

Is that one of your favorite words? My book is called Hunger for Reality. My books aren't that great really. It's an embarrassment to even recommend them.

But that book has brought me 21,000 letters. People read even ordinary books. And it's amazing how the Holy Spirit can use some feeble utterances that fall from the mouth of some struggling disciple of Jesus.

But one of my favorite words is reality. Reality to me touches almost every area of our life. Reality, of course, we've been speaking about in Knowing God.

Reality in prayer. Reality in evangelism. Reality in relationships.

Reality in church life. Reality in the area of business which touches, of course, on honesty, integrity, justice and is one of the heaviest, toughest challenges that anybody in the secular or corporate world could ever face. And how we need to pray for Christian businessmen.

I want to start a movement to pray for Christian businessmen. They get misjudged. You know, they get a little better car maybe than the average.

People start talking. Tony Campalo jumps up at our banner. Anybody driving a BMW is a sinner or is in sin.

Well, I tell you, he got a few letters as a result of that. He wrote a book after that and tried to play it down. I thought, Tony, what a comedian.

I always love to speak. Have you ever heard Tony Campalo? I love to speak after him because after he preaches, I come across just so moderate and mild and gentle and laid back. It's a great experience.

I've had it a number of times. I tell you, you may not agree with Tony Campalo, but I tell you, we've been with that man and to me, the word that describes Tony Campalo and others that I've had the privilege of fellowshiping with is reality. You know, maybe they don't have perfect doctrine.

Maybe you don't agree with them on every area of their teaching. We're all learning. We're all growing.

But there's a reality there. There's a ring of God in his life despite some of the things that just so offend people from coast to coast. You heard of how he handled the Presbyterians? Have you heard that up here in Canada? The news, you know, doesn't always come up quick.

Tony Campalo was speaking in this big Presbyterian church, laid back, staid people, very hard to get them to move. You know, if anybody gets up or raises their hand, surely they're just going to the toilet. But he was pouring out his heart about the poor, about the suffering, about the lame and the famine and all of this kind of thing and he couldn't get any reaction.

I guess he got upset. So he swore at them. S-H-I, we say ship for the ship ministry but he wasn't talking about ships.

Can you imagine that church on a Sunday morning? I tell you, little old ladies who never even open their mouth. The place was in a complete upheaval. Well, I don't advise that he continue to do that but he was trying to drive... Not that he's going to pay any attention to me.

But he was trying to drive a point and he goes to extremes sometimes to do that. That you can say all kinds of horrible things to God's people. People being bombed to death, people starving, people being murdered, this thing, that and they don't respond.

But if you touch some little evangelical taboo which may have an element of truth, I tell you, you're in trouble. And I believe the point that he has driven is one that we desperately need. Brothers and sisters, many of us have misplaced priorities.

We get upset over things that may have an element of importance but it's no big deal. Al, I thank God for my dear father. He's not here because he's not feeling well.

But I remember we were having a bit of an engine rift between ourselves. He said something that wound me up and I started to come on him strong and he said, son, it's no big deal. I just shot up because he was right.

No big deal. In the early days of OM, I used to go out hunting. I used to go out hunting with a 55 millimeter cannon loaded with Bible verses and I would go out and I'd look for the smallest chipmunk.

There was one in the restaurant this morning, by the way. The smallest chipmunk and I'd get this huge cannon and I'd aim at the chipmunk and full blast, \$500 shell to kill a chipmunk. Somebody once said to me, hey Verwer, don't shoot mice.

Don't shoot mice. What do we mean? Don't get in such a stir. So much work, so much energy, so much effort over a small issue.

I remember in America when people were freaking out over your hair length. One Bible college measured your hair to let you in the door. Maybe there's an element of truth in there somewhere.

I haven't found it. But to get all excited about hair length. Now some people are getting really uptight about earrings.

Some of the modern young people like to wear an earring. My new helper this year, he's got an earring. Alright, maybe you feel Christians shouldn't wear earrings, but is that something worth breaking fellowship over? Is that something worth planting a new church with a sign out front, no earring wearers allowed here? In Africa, a lot of people have nose rings and they love Jesus.

I'm waiting for someone to walk into one of our nice conservative evangelical churches with a big giant nose ring and hopefully a poster on it, turn or burn. I believe. We need reality and often times we don't have that reality because we have misplaced priorities.

Misplaced priorities. We're making mountains out of molehills. We're shooting mice with atomic cannons.

And we need to turn away from it, worship God more, love people more, try to understand them. One of the things that's kept me on the straight and narrow path and working in love with so many people is I take time to get to know them. And I give them the benefit of the doubt until the judge bangs the gavel and says guilty.

I'm speaking a little bit figuratively, I hope I don't lose you. The third word I want to leave with you is the word commitment. One of the favorite Christian words but it's losing its meaning.

In some churches, especially in the United States, the word commitment almost is meaningless. The level of commitment is so shallow, the game of words is so bizarre that you can find churches that have all these words and if you can find anybody really committed in the church to the reality and the biblical teachings of God's word, it would be a miracle. Words are not enough.

The letter killeth, the spirit bringeth life. We need to examine the book of Acts as we were for three mornings this week and see what biblical commitment is all about. And then, stop measuring ourselves by ourselves.

That's a quotation from Tozer. He said there are no longer many people seeking for higher plateaus in the things of the spirit because so often we're measuring ourselves by ourselves. We need to measure ourselves a little more next to the Lord Himself and next to some of these people who we see moving across the pages of the New Testament.

I have a message called Seven Reasons Why Total Absolute Commitment to Jesus Christ is Completely Logical. And the first reason is what Jesus Christ gave for us. What the Lord Jesus has done for us, His death, His suffering, even just coming to the world.

I personally believe since He was God coming to the world and being His servant was also equally a huge, a huge form of suffering. And He was spit upon. He was mocked.

He was humiliated. Jesus did not just suffer on the cross. He had a life of suffer.

It's said He even learned. That's a mystery about Jesus' humanity. He learned by the things which He suffered.

So, I believe we've got to, when we say this word commitment or dedication, get into the word and see what that really means. That's why we have some of these books by men who walk this path of commitment and reality. My fourth word is the word zeal.

I bet you thought that one was going to come in there. Zeal. Please do not think that zeal means you have to become like me.

Some of you look a little tense this morning and maybe it's because you think if God really zaps you with the Holy Spirit and if you really get committed somehow you're going to be something like me. You have to wear a global jacket, carry a huge bag of books, be sort of loud, aggressive and be tempted to swear out your car window. We are all so different.

Some of the people I love the most are so different from me. Perhaps the person the most different that I was able to get involved with in the early days of work is Steve Hart. For a while I thought we came in from two different planets.

I don't know how we ever got past the first year together. We had to work in a little tiny place in the middle of the southern Netherlands and I turned all finance over to him. Before that I had it.

It's a miracle I didn't sink the movement in the first year. Turned it all over to him. Steve Hart and I became so close.

I can't think of his name without tears coming to my eyes. I can't look hardly at him without emotion because of the feeling and the bonding and yet humanly speaking we probably would have never become friends in this world. He's a bachelor.

All of his life. He is the best dressed person in O.M. I'm known as the worst dressed person in O.M. He changes his shirt every single day. My wife was reminding me again this morning why do you sleep in the same shirt that you preach in? I did take it off to come here.

This is a clean shirt. Well I think I wore it once in Europe but if it hangs out and goes in a suitcase for a week it sort of gets a different smell to it so you can wear it once more. One of the most exciting things about the Church of Jesus Christ is that God is calling all kinds of people from all different backgrounds who on a natural level would rub each other the wrong way but through the power of the Holy Spirit become bonded together for life and hallelujah for eternity.

And I love to be in interdenominational meetings like this where I see a few people courageously trying to get their hands up. I tell you where I'm going tomorrow you'll see their hands up. Even the fighting fundamentalists will have their hands up where I'm going tomorrow I'll tell you that because I'm going on a roller coaster and they all put their hands up on the roller coaster.

I believe I believe the reason that many people hold back please try to catch this hold back in their commitment to missions to Jesus to the work of God is because they have a distorted view of what real radical commitment is. They think that's somehow going to destroy their humanity. They think somehow they may not be able to enjoy a meal anymore or they feel maybe their goth score is going to go down if they don't stay just a little bit worldly.

When in fact the teaching of the word of God incorporates a holistic view of life where all kinds of good and wonderful things are in moderation incorporated into the great marathon race that we're into. This is the

final day of the Olympics. A lot of people would give a lot of money to be in Barcelona.

A lot of people would love to be in Barcelona but I'll tell you I'd rather be right here with you folk than in Barcelona any day. And the kind of medals the King of Kings is going out just are so beyond uncorruptible, incorruptible prizes that it cannot really be compared. Though I am greatly challenged by athletes who dedicate themselves and are so single minded in doing what they're doing.

And I have this question that I often ask people. Why don't we have more of that kind of commitment in the church of Jesus Christ? Why don't we have more of that kind of single mindedness in terms of world evangelism? As we live in this world with millions that still have never even once heard the gospel. I'm convinced if a group this big like we have here this morning would radically commit ourselves to biblical balanced Christianity that surely we could evangelize the whole world.

And my final word. I jumped over zeal a little bit but I think you got the point that zeal is worked out in different people in different ways. And it isn't always emotional.

It isn't always exterior. The greatest zeal that I have and I'm a person who loves quiet. I love to be alone.

My great blessing here has often been to be alone in the woods. I love birds. I love trees, bushes.

I just find the greatest times in my life are generally when I am alone. And yet sometimes in a church you're made to feel almost guilty if you want to be alone. When Terry Waite was released from being a hostage so long in Lebanon he shared over television that the greatest moments in his life were when he was often alone.

Perhaps that's why he was able to be alone often or somewhat alone in confinement during those years of being held by the terrorists. To be alone and commune with God. And if you're staying here for some days don't miss these woods.

The best footpath by the way is to walk out along the ninth hole. Don't get hit by a golf ball. Turn left and there's a path that winds back into the woods and nobody's back there unless you bump into me or somebody else who wants to be alone.

So zeal is worked out in different people in different ways. And then my final word is the word mercy. It's interesting.

It says here I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God. We all know we're saved by mercy and if you're not yet saved it would be my prayer that this morning you would receive the mercy of God. The fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you.

Whatever your sins may be they can be totally forgiven through Him. And that this morning you may accept that mercy and be saved by His grace. But now as God's people we must continue to walk in mercy and not go back to the law and not become unmerciful in our attitude toward other people and other groups and other churches and even toward people in our own movement who may have hurt us or even within our own family.

What a wonderful word. Mercy. It's tied in with forgiveness.

Isn't it a glorious privilege to go to bed at night with nothing against anybody? I've done that every night for 37 years. Now I need to bring that into balance and say that that was not a huge problem in my life. I have

other areas in much greater struggle.

And so I am in great sympathy for those of you who have gone to bed with things against other people. It doesn't always resolve easy and the emotion will sometimes come back. But in Jesus Christ we have the grace and the power and the mercy to forgive other people.

To let go of that thing that we're holding about them or against them. It may be our own husband or our own wife. Some of the marriage counseling I've been involved in the problem has been linked to the fact that the wife has not really forgiven that husband of some deep hurt from early in the marriage or vice versa.

To me the message of forgiveness is the heart of the message of grace and mercy. And I think probably I'd be a sick person by now if it wasn't for God saving me and bringing me into that place where I just find it incredibly difficult to hold anything against anybody. I guess maybe I've got to use too much of my energy battling my other problems.

Brothers and sisters we're warned in Hebrews to not even allow a root of bitterness in our heart. We've all been hurt in this planet. And if you don't want to get hurt you're really on the wrong planet.

There are holiday tours being prepared in outer space I think by the Swedes for the year 1998 or something. But as long as you're going to be on this planet and especially with God prickly people in the midst of attempting to evangelize the world and plant the church and do all the things we're attempting to do you're probably going to get hurt. My old football coach not that I was on the team I was a cheerleader said to the team he said to the team I'll never forget it Hey you guys it doesn't hurt to get hurt.

God can turn that hurt you're harboring in your own heart this morning into one of the greatest blessings and stepping stones in your life to grow to be more mature to be grace awakened to be big hearted and you'll discover the reality of fellowship that the word of God talks about. Not in the absence of struggles and tears and despair and perhaps at times even some depression but in the midst of those things you'll drink deep at that well of living water on a daily basis and you'll be one of God's grace awakened people. There is no better way to live there is no other way to live that even compares with what we have in Jesus Christ and from His Holy Word.

So let's go for it in a greater way because we've been with Jesus in this beautiful place these few days. Amen. Let us pray.

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