

Op World 1 Sun 1982

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the importance of prayer, commitment, and the Holy Spirit in fulfilling the mission of spreading the Gospel as outlined in John 14:6.

Duration: 32:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, John 14:6, Acts 4:31, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 9:24

Topics: "Operation World"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of believing in Jesus as the only way to the Father. He shares his personal journey of doubt and how John 14:6 revolutionized his life. The speaker also discusses the mission of Operation Mobilization and the need for a spiritual revolution for world evangelization. He encourages believers to recognize their own limitations and to rely on the Holy Spirit's power in their lives.

Transcript

I want us to look at just one text tonight, and that's John 14, John chapter 14, and verse 6. Now, some of you are a long way in the way. Can you hear me way back there? Raise your hand if you can hear me. I have a great following of deaf people all over the country, and I often have them come to me and say, Brother, you're the first person I've heard preach here for weeks.

Then I have others come and say I preach too loud. John 14, verse 6, Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.

I believe that's one of the greatest, most powerful missionary texts in the whole Bible. And it was when I was a young student at college that God used this text to revolutionize my life. Some of you know the story of Operation Mobilization.

We just celebrated our 25th anniversary from the very early days when three of us, Dale Roton, one other brother, Walter, and myself went to Mexico. We had this celebration in New Jersey, even though in the United States Operation Mobilization is not very well known, having become a European movement and really having its larger birth in Europe in 1961 and 62. It was a joy to have with us at those meetings the elderly lady who really was God's instrument, through prayer, to bring this movement into being.

And I tell this story not because I'm that interested in history, but because I believe the story of this woman who believed this verse in John 14, verse 6, is a story that can inspire you the rest of your life. Because when it comes to world missions, the bottom line is prayer. Learning how to pray, being a man, being a woman of prayer, learning the art of intercession.

There's a book on the table called Born to Battle published by OMF and written by an OMF missionary who went to be with the Lord some years ago. It's about intercession. Get that book.

I'll be showing it on another evening. Let me tell you about this lady. She's a woman who believed the Bible.

She really believed. And you know when you really believe something, you act. You act.

If we believed this tent was going to fall down in a few minutes, we would not sit and sing another chorus. We would not sit and write a chorus. We would not develop a theology on falling tents.

We would get out of the tent. Simple as that. You wouldn't need a lot of education to know.

And if we really believe these things we keep singing about in our churches, we keep arguing about sometimes. I believe the action must come or it is evident we don't really believe it. Our faith, Martin Luther said, and I was listening to a talk about Martin Luther traveling here today, a talk Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones gave before he died, and I remember those words of Luther that our faith, Christian faith, is a revolutionary thing.

And we're here this week to talk about spiritual revolution. Only spiritual revolution will lead to world evangelization. I believe in so many cases today, whether we're in Britain or in America, whether we're in Scandinavia or in India, so often when it comes to missions, it's token commitment.

That could easily be the case this week. A lot of effort has gone into organizing this, more than even I know. It's harder to organize something like this than it is to preach it.

My part is very, very small. I am incredibly conscious of how small my part is, even in this week of coming together. A lot of people have worked hard.

And it's somehow my prayer that this will not be a week in which a few people in Chester give token commitment to missions, but somehow it will be a week in which a large number of believers give total commitment. You don't have that many missionary conferences. Let me assure you, my friends, the missionary conference is a disappearing relic in the 20th century evangelical, Pentecostal, Bible-believing world.

I don't want anybody to feel left out. And I'm convinced that this is really a tremendous thing that you have done to organize this. And I pray that it will not be token commitment this week, but total commitment.

On the phone, getting to the meetings, and believing that from this tent, the ends of the earth can be touched through prayer. The ends of the earth can be touched through acts of obedience. This is the kind of woman this woman was.

She corresponded with missionaries. She had maps of the world and missionary letters all over the house. She didn't neglect her family.

All of her children, three or four of them, grew up to be godly young men and women. She was involved in local evangelism. She was involved in the church.

She had child evangelism classes in her home, plus all of her housework, and yet she was a totally ordinary housewife. When I went to the school near her home, it was what you call a grammar school, somehow she found out about me, probably through my bad reputation. And so she began to pray for me.

She had been praying for the school for 15 years, prevailing, persevering prayer. I was at one of the truly great churches in Britain this morning, the Worthing Tabernacle. There was a pastor who drove me up to the other side of Reading where I rendezvoused with my OM coach, which broke down.

Then another man rescued me and brought me up here. And this pastor was sharing with me that more or less in his church now, because God has been moving in this church in a mighty way over a number of years, more or less, if you're not ready to commit yourself to the prayer meeting of the church, really he'd prefer you not to become a member. Interesting.

You know, he's not totally legalistic about it, but he talks to people before they become members. He wants to know, you know, what do they believe about prayer? Are they going to be in the prayer meeting? And I will tell you, they have a prayer meeting there on Monday night. They have four or five other prayer meetings during the week in which the ends of the earth have been touched, and workers flowing out from there, and finances flowing out from there, and the church at the same time is packed on Sunday morning and often full on Sunday evening as well.

And it isn't a small church. And the pastor every year goes for a month of missionary service, usually with Operation Mobilization. Yes, there are still committed, missionary-minded churches in this country, but also few in comparison to the need.

This woman had the same vision. Prayer meeting was a priority for her. And she believed this little verse, that Jesus was the way, the truth, and the life.

In fact, through her son, she arranged to send me a Gospel of John. Now, I wasn't from a Christian home. My grandfather was an atheist from the Netherlands, and my father was born in the Netherlands.

My other grandfather was a drunkard from Glasgow. As you can see, my spiritual heritage wasn't overwhelming. And this lady heard about me, she started praying for me, and for two to three years she prayed for me.

And then she sent me, in the name of her son, she was very wise, in the name of her son, who went to the same school, a Gospel of John. And that little Gospel of John was used to break into my bent, deceitful heart. And then Billy Graham came to New York City, just for one night.

It wasn't a crusade. And some Allison people prayed me into that meeting. The young man who invited me came to the anniversary.

He's a Wycliffe Bible translator. He was also touched in that high school. It was good to see him again.

And I heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And there might be someone here tonight. Though this is a missionary meeting, and though our challenge is mainly for true believers to become involved in the great missionary task, there may be someone who's drifted in here tonight, and you don't even know Jesus

Christ personally.

You've never been born again. You've never experienced salvation. Someone once said everyone is either a missionary or a mission field.

Which is it for you tonight? There's no middle ground. In answer to that woman's prayers, by then other people were praying. That night I found Christ as my personal, or as my Lord and Savior.

I went back to that high school, and I was very young and ignorant. But somehow I learned that God answered prayer. You know, you don't need a lot of education to learn that.

It's good to get all the education you can. But God answered prayer. And as young students, 17 and 18 years of age, we started a prayer meeting in the grammar school.

And by the time Billy Graham came back in 1957, it was two years later, we were organizing nights of prayer. And God had already been working, and dozens and dozens had come to Jesus Christ. In fact, in one meeting where I just shared my testimony to the students, this was shortly after I finished at that grammar school, I had the opportunity to go back.

I think about 500 were in the meeting. 125 students in that one meeting came into the cafeteria for counseling about salvation. Within the next year, another 75 or 100 more surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ.

One woman, one ordinary woman, who believed God's Word, one woman putting God's Word into practice in her daily life, entering into the reality of prayer, entering into the reality of witness, even by sending a simple Gospel of John through the Pope. And the whole movement of OM, there's about 1,600 of us now with permanent work in about 35 nations. In the summer, there's about 3,000 of us.

All of it, the two ships, the 400 workers in India, the 23,000 who have been trained and graduated from OM, many of whom are serving Christ in almost every nation in the world, the 300 million who have been presented the Word of God face to face, either through literature or through speaking, can all be traced back to one praying woman. Does that excite you? I will tell you what excites me. I might just say that one of the things that disturbs me is that so often we find that God's people are no longer excited.

You say, well, you know, they're plenty excited in my church. Our big problem is extremism in our church. Well, I know that's a problem these days sometimes.

Some of the smaller groups, some of the newer groups, they're all excited. And when that's the case, often the bigger danger is extremism, getting off into this total answer or that total answer. But I don't think that's the biggest problem in the average church.

I don't know anything about Chester. But I doubt if it's the biggest problem in town. Too much excitement, too much enthusiasm for God, people just going overboard in witnessing and prayer and loving one another too much.

You know, A.W. Tozer said something I'll never forget. He said to think that was the greatest problem in the church, too much enthusiasm, was like sending a squadron of policemen to the nearby cemetery to guard against a demonstration by the residents at midnight. Not the biggest problem in the average town.

I read in the book of Hebrews that our God is a consuming fire. And I always like to ask this question of myself. I like to ask it daily.

Sometimes I forget. And I want to ask it of you. Are you on fire for Jesus Christ? Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit? Sometimes we find one group way over here becoming sometimes extreme in some of their thoughts about the Holy Spirit.

We find others reacting, going in the other extreme, not understanding the beauty, the reality of the person and the power of the Holy Spirit. Such tremendous controversy. We read in Acts 1.8, Ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

The Holy Ghost will bring a holy go. And God in these days wants to fill us afresh with the Holy Spirit. And speaking about the Spirit walk, the Spirit-filled life, Billy Graham said, I don't care how you get it, just get it.

Some of you probably heard this amazing story about D.L. Moody. I have to tell it again even though I know many have heard it because God uses it to touch my own heart. You know, I don't know about you, but I'm a natural backslider.

If any of you go uphill naturally, spiritually, you just go, you know, every day, you know, just straight ahead uphill. Boy, you know, you can come and autograph my Bible right here. A special section for you.

Written on the top, hypocrites. Someone said to D.L. Moody, why do you keep going on and on about being filled again and again and again with the Holy Spirit? Moody just looked him in the eye and he said, because I leak. Well maybe you didn't expect this this week, but I can assure you, you're looking at one weak, leaky Christian leader.

But I've discovered where the refills are. In my prayer tonight, in my prayer, it says, Oh Lord, do it again. Fill me, fill us with your Holy Spirit.

Acts 4.31, people were there in that prayer meeting who had been touched at Pentecost and yet in Acts 4.31 it says, and when they prayed, the place where they were gathered together was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they went forth speaking the word of God with boldness. It doesn't say they went forth arguing with one another. They went forth discussing periphery issues concerning theology.

They went forth discussing the date of the second coming. They went forth discussing the relevancy of the coming Israel. They went forth speaking the word of God with boldness.

It seems so often today we're speaking everything but that which the Lord has told us to speak. The gospel of Jesus Christ. John 3.16, John 14.6. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

Not a set of theories, not churchianity, but a living, reigning, ruling Lord Jesus Christ. As we come here, we don't even come to preach missions. We come to preach Christ and then follow on in what he taught about world missions.

I want to ask you, are you filled with the Holy Spirit? That isn't some special, super spiritual thing that happens to a few odd people who stay up all night. Being filled with the Spirit is the ordinary Christian life. In a sense, that's where it begins.

When you're filled with God's Spirit and you're learning to walk in the Spirit day by day, then you're more teachable and you can learn many of the precious lessons from the New Testament that, without the help of the Holy Spirit, are difficult to understand at best. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is the normal Christian life. It's the provision for every believer.

It doesn't mean you're no longer human. After you're filled with the Spirit, you still have to eat. You still get tired at night.

Wings don't start to grow out of your back. You'll still fail. Being filled with the Holy Spirit doesn't exclude failure.

One of the greatest experiences of my life, perhaps, together with being filled many, many times with God's Holy Spirit, was the experience of really accepting my humanity. I was a natural extremist, and when God touched me, it was like an arrow shot from an overtaught bow, and I just went on until I hit some tree and I'd come back again. I made many, many mistakes in my early Christian life, and I did get in at times into super-spirituality and into extremes about sanctification, and I made a lot of people feel pretty bad.

It wasn't always the Holy Spirit making them feel bad. If the Holy Spirit didn't do it, I'd take it up on my own. God had to humble me through mistakes.

God had to humble me through failure in my home, failure with my wife, failure with my children. And one of the great deliverance experiences in my Christian life when I was delivered of false ideas about how Christians behave, and I started to accept Christians as they were, weak, feeble, human beings. Some of you young people may be rebellious the way I was.

Fortunately, in my case, God got control of it. I went to a Bible college. I learned to submit.

I learned through a little book Calvary wrote what it was to repent. And somehow through that, God brought me into a degree of spiritual balance, so I have a long way to go. One thing I feel so convinced about is that this treasure, Holy Spirit, God, is in an earthen vessel.

And some of you are going to have a lot of trouble in your Christian life until you get it sorted out in your mind and in your thinking that you're just a clay pot. And you won't get so depressed and so down or so discouraged when sometimes a little bit of the earth gets mixed in with the treasure and the message and the prayer. I remember when I went first for one of my first nights of prayer in Spain.

Talk about high goals. My goals were so high I had to use binoculars to see them. I had so many high goals about prayer, and I was going to spend a night in prayer out in the woods alone.

I'd been in nights of prayer with other people, but I hadn't been out too many nights of prayer alone. And in Spain it was warm in the daytime and cold at night. I'd forgotten that, so I didn't take much clothing.

I went out and was sitting in the sun praying. I was fasting. I was very extreme.

I did a lot of fasting. That's not the reason I'm skinny. That's another problem.

But I was sitting out there praying and praying. I had this little piece of bread. I was going to eat that in the morning when I broke the fast.

So I put it there next to me, and I was praying and reading and praying. Eventually, like most human beings, I fell asleep. And I woke up when I got cold at two in the morning.

I was shivering, and I, boy, this is the time to break the fast. I went for the bread. The bread wasn't there.

Somebody stole my bread. Can't God protect me in this night of prayer? Obviously, some animal came along, and he saw that I was mainly bone and went for the bread. I will tell you, I never forget that experience.

And when I walked back to the apartment where I was living, I ran into a pack of about ten dogs. That's always a wonderful experience, all barking at you in the middle of the night in the dark without a torch. I was so slow to really face up to failure, to face up to the fact that this treasure is in earthen vessels, and that as a missionary, I was still just an ordinary person.

Missionaries are ordinary people. But we do have that treasure, and we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. That doesn't dehumanize us, but it gives us power.

Ye shall receive power. And I'm convinced that God wants to show us much of that in this week together, that many will know when this week is over that they're walking in the power and the energy of the Holy Spirit. And if I didn't believe that's possible, I wouldn't want to share any more.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. I was sharing with you how that first year at college, I became gripped with this verse.

And I had to ask myself whether I really believed it. My first year at college was a great, great struggle. Most of the people in this particular college doing a degree course were either unbelievers or young people who had overthrown the Christian faith.

Incredible place. Many of them were studying for the ministry and through higher criticism, unbelieving teachers, all kinds of liberal thinking, they had overthrown their basic biblical beliefs. And some of the teachers, including my own Bible professor, they just reveled in making fun of us if we claimed that we believed the Bible.

And they mixed Hinduism and Buddhism and Christianity, they mixed it all together, and they used to mock us if we said we believed, you know, in a verse like John 14, 6. And I remember one young man who was a philosophy student, he came and knocked on my door and he said, Jesus saves! Green stamps. You have to withdraw the hallelujah on that one. Just mocking that which we would consider to be most precious.

But you know, God is sovereign. Peter gave us that verse, Romans 8, 28. I suggest you memorize the whole chapter.

It's the first chapter in the Bible I memorized. And somehow God knew that was the perfect environment for me. I had to put my faith on the line.

I had to fly my flag. I had to learn to pray. I had to learn something about the spiritual warfare.

I would have never survived that first year in that particular environment. And I had to seek out people who were strong in faith. And I heard about this character Dale Roton.

I heard he was a fanatic. I heard he was baptizing people in the showers, which was interesting. He was a Presbyterian.

And so I sought out this Dale Roton. He was a year ahead of me. Very bright student.

And he became really the one who at the university, that college, helped me understand something of the Christian life. In God's mercy, though, he and I are very, very different. We've been together now for 25, 26 years.

I think one of the things people don't understand about Operation Mobilization is that the great secret has not been the evangelistic thrust. The great secret hasn't been all the zeal and all the dedication. All those things are important.

But I think the great secret, apart from God himself, his mercy, and the fact that he answers prayer, is the way through accepting what the Bible teaches about relationship, the Lord has welled an army of men and women together right across the world who are of one heart and one mind. And he's kept many of us together for a quarter of a century. If you know anything about the tactics of the enemy to break up relationships, break up marriages, break up churches, then you know it's a miracle when a couple of dozen people stay of one heart and one mind 15, 20, or 25 years.

And, you know, we learned something in the midst of the spiritual warfare that every relationship we have will be tested. My relationship with Dale was tested. My relationship with my wife was tested.

And God is going to bring some of us in these days into relationship. You're going to make real friends today, people who are going to stick with you, people who are going to pray for you. Maybe some of you will end up out on a team together in Turkey two years from now, or out in the front lines of India, or maybe in a little prayer group here in this part of the country.

And God will knit your heart, and it'll be beautiful. Then the devil will test it. God will allow it to be tested.

And I pray you may learn to stand against the wiles of Satan when he tries to move in and break up some relationship you have. We have different kinds of relationships with different people. We should never be jealous of relationships other Christians have.

People who were once very close to me, and we were knit of one heart and one mind, today I know they're closer to others. Praise the Lord! That's wonderful! If one person can be blessed through me for a few years, and we can be close, and now he's closer to others, maybe something happened where even I turned him off a little bit. That's normal.

And this other person has picked up the pieces. Hallelujah! As long as a person gets on with the job. You know, it's easy in Christian work to try to squeak out little bits of glory for ourselves.

Have you ever done that in the Lord's work? Some of you look young. You haven't been in the Lord's work that long. God will share his glory with no one.

And even as we come here together night after night, even as we pray together, we want to give all the glory to God. We don't want people going away talking about George Berward, talking about Operation Mobilization. We can mention we have different kinds of relationships with different people.

And these things, of course, we're not a secret society, but we want to glorify the Lord. And if anything happens here, I'm sure it will be because people are praying. And God has chosen to work.

In closing, I want to ask you, do you really believe that verse? Do you really believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life? No man comes to the Father but by me. I don't want you to answer that question with words. I want you to answer that question with your life.

That's what God challenged me to do when I was 19 and I started from Mexico. There was a time when I doubted the Christian faith. I was so confused.

And I said, Lord, if I can ever come back to a greater belief in all this. I never left it. I never departed it from it as far as my walk with Jesus.

But in my mind, I had very little I was hanging on to. That's wonderful because that proved God was hanging on to me. And you may feel intellectually mixed up at times.

You may feel intellectually weak. You may be confused by some theological problem or philosophical problem. Maybe at university.

But I can assure you one very important thing. God loves you. And even when you're shaking and weak and trembling, He still loves you.

Don't get out of the train when it's in the tunnel. Don't get out of the train when it's in the tunnel. I sense in my heart some of you sitting here today are in a dark period in your Christian life.

I often sense that. It's not based on any sort of mystical thing as much as just an involvement with a lot of people. And I pray that if you're in some dark period in your Christian life, you'll not make some foolish mistake.

Not sort of jump off that train in the midst of the tunnel. And I prayed to the Lord. Somehow my faith would increase and I would understand.

And I said things, I guess some of them were silly, but, Lord, if this is your word, then the only logical thing is my whole life. My whole life. Everything.

My time, my money, everything on the line. Nothing else counts. If this is really your word.

And within that year, I became convinced. More and more, week after week, I read other books. I got a hold of some books on Christian archaeology.

And my faith came into greater bloom. And somehow, by his grace, I laid my life on the line. And every single day, these 25 years, I have known the satisfaction of doing his will every day.

Oh, I've failed, I've sinned. Sometimes I go to a church and they're expecting some strong missionary challenge and I give this, one of my favorite messages, the confessions of a weak missionary. I've got the outline in my Bible.

I might give it one of the nights this week. People are amazed. This guy's got all these problems.

Struggles, fears, lust problems. Missionaries with a lust problem. You know, we're so, so confused, many of us, about what the Christian life really is.

And I pray that this week will not be just a week of focusing on world missions. Praise God, that is our burden. But it'll be a week in which the Holy Ghost can focus on us.

And that the Holy Spirit will reveal false ideas or sin or pride or jealousy or anything in our hearts, anything in our lives, that's keeping us from running that race. Oh, how I long for this in my own heart. Do you believe that verse? With all your heart? All your mind? All your soul? All your strength? If you do, or should I say, if you will, you will be a revolutionary for Jesus Christ.

You will turn Chester upside down, I can tell you. And Wales and England. God is not looking for a great majority movement to somehow launch out across the world in jumbo jets.

Or on the Queen Elizabeth II. But God is looking for a remnant who will say, Lord, here I am. I'm weak.

I've failed you many times. There are things I don't understand. But I believe this is your word.

This Jesus is the way. He is the truth. There is no other hope for all of mankind, no matter how good they may be.

Without this message and without this Savior, I therefore will give myself to taking it, to giving it, to preaching it, to disseminating it in every possible way. May God grant you the grace to do just that. Let us pray.

Let's just have a moment of heart searching so we can pray, Lord, take my life and let it be consecrated unto thee. Pray your own prayer in your own words. And ask the Holy Spirit to do a deep, filling, lasting work even this very night.

Amen.

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