

# Plea for Reality in 1977

by George Verwer

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*The sermon emphasizes the need for the Church to develop confidence in God, trust in God, and wait upon Him, and to avoid polarization and division.*

**Duration:** 53:13

**Topics:** "Spiritual Discipline", "True Worship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker highlights the importance of discipline and turning off distractions, particularly television, in order to grow spiritually. He emphasizes that success in the world does not impress God, but rather it is important to focus on the ministry and testifying the gospel of grace. The speaker warns about the religious boom in America and the danger of being consumed by materialism and entertainment. He encourages the audience to rely on the Word of God and warns about the consequences of prayerlessness and spiritual lukewarmness. The sermon concludes with the reminder that true worship comes from a heart that recognizes God as the giver, the Savior, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

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## Transcript

I'd like you to add a turn in the Word of God to the Book of Acts. In the Book of Acts, chapter 20, verse 24, None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy in the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Turning over, verse 31, Therefore, watch and remember that for the space of three years, I ceased not to warn everyone, night and day, with tears.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you inheritance among all them who are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

I have shown you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak, and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. When he had thus spoken, he knelt down and prayed with them all. They all wept much, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face no more, and they accompanied him unto the ship.

Let's just unite in prayer together. God and Father, we thank you for this opportunity to look into your Word. Lord, I thank you for some that are willing to go the extra mile, and give of a Monday evening to study your Word, and to hear something of the situation around the world.

Lord, open our hearts, open our minds. Make this little meeting strategic. Make it count for eternity.

Cause us not to be hearers of the Word, but doers. Cause us to realize areas of inconsistency, and any other kind of spiritual cancer that may be eating away at our life, that we may be men and women of action. For we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

This is my final meeting of one month of meetings. I guess over the last 25 days I've had about 60 meetings, and this is the end, and I'm very happy to get to it. I just have one more meeting tomorrow night with the board of directors of this work.

A group of men that I ask to serve as the legal guardians of this work, and guardians of me, so that things can be done decently and in order. Especially in the area of finance. And then, in about 40 hours from now, I'll be getting on a plane back to London, to be with my family.

And I'm very much looking forward to that. I know some of you are already praying for the work of OM, and I am very, very grateful. We're not a movement that is very concerned about numbers, so we're not too worried that there aren't so many here tonight.

We've discovered over the years the power of a mighty minority. On Saturday night, I had a house meeting. Just 15 or 20.

Yesterday, I was in a very, very large church. It doesn't matter. I just want to be where God wants me.

When I arrived in the States on this trip, which mainly involved ministry in Mexico, and in Spanish, which is always quite a challenge, since my Spanish has gotten rather rusty, living out of Spanish-speaking countries the last 15 years. But I said to the Lord as I arrived in New York, I didn't even want to go. I don't particularly like leaving my family at Christmas, though I've been doing it for 16 years, because it's a time when students are free and ready to come with us to Mexico.

And I said to the Lord upon arrival, Lord, I want every day to count. I want to see you answering prayer every day. I don't care if the meetings are big or small.

I want to see you answering prayer. And every day for these 25 days, I've seen specific, clear-cut, definite answers to prayer. Many, many different ways.

People coming to Christ. God opening doors. We prayed for God to open a way into television in Mexico.

This is impossible. A Roman Catholic country, a secular station, and yet God opened the door for me just last week to testify to perhaps one-sixth of all the people in Monterrey, a city of a million and a half, on the main secular television station in the city. God opened the door.

Though sometimes it's been speaking to hundreds of thousands, other times it's just been speaking to individuals. I'm constantly praying that God will give me individuals I can share my testimony with. It happened again on the plane today.

It's exciting, isn't it, to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Someone say, well, this is just coincidence, yeah? I've had 22 years of coincidences. I don't have enough faith to believe that this way of living is just coincidence.

Maybe you've got a lot more faith than I do. Often I'm speaking in churches, and sometimes I ask everyone to turn to Acts, chapter 29. It's quite interesting to see most of the people flicking through their Bibles.

Some of them have trouble finding Acts, and then they find it, and have a real problem finding chapter 29, since there are only 28 chapters in the book of Acts. You all knew that, of course. It especially gets embarrassing when the pastor is sitting behind me, looking for Acts, chapter 29.

The fact of the matter is, we are Acts, chapter 29. The book of Acts continues. God continues to work in a mighty way.

God continues to add to the church daily such as should be saved. I'm very concerned, after this trip, as I return to Europe, I'm very concerned for the church here in America. I believe the deceiver, the devil himself, has a master plan to undermine the life of the church of Jesus Christ in America.

I believe there are many dangers in the church, that some people are not even aware of. Others don't know what to do about it. I find many pastors who just are almost pulling their hair out, for though they're finding sometimes their congregations growing, they're not finding people growing in spiritual reality.

And this is a great concern to many pastors and Christian leaders in America today. Maybe my observations are not worth much. I come as someone from Europe, having not lived in America for 15 years.

But on the other hand, perhaps I can be more objective than some people who live here, and understand and live mainly within this culture. First of all, I praise God for the many strengths of the church in the United States. There are many great churches on various sides of the theological fence.

There's no one movement that God is using in America today. God is working in many different ways. I think God's greatest work is always in individuals.

People say God is doing great things in their church. And I go there and I find, as usual, it's a few who are paying the price, doing the work, and it's many who are going along as passengers. And then they say, God is doing great things in our church.

Usually, God is doing great things in individuals. And I'm excited about that. I think there's an increase of hunger for God.

There are large numbers of people who are no longer be satisfied with the latest series of clichés. They want to know God. I believe the Lord has used the writings of A.W. Tozer in this area to strike at some of our superficiality and some of the areas of spiritual danger.

And I praise God for that. On the other hand, I find that a large number of Christians are not reading very much. Even in Mexico, among those young people, 75% had never read a book by A.W. Tozer.

Many Christians in America today have hardly even heard of great men like Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Andrew Murray, Hudson Taylor, and other great saints of years gone by who have given spiritual food that we

need to be feeding upon and we need to be using. There are many superficial Christian books that are coming out today. And this, of course, doesn't always produce a great amount of spirituality.

It's exciting to see the generosity. This is, of course, relatively speaking. But compared to many Christians in other countries, I find people in this country very generous.

I find people relatively enthusiastic. We certainly don't lack for sincerity in our country. And on Sunday morning, the average person who pushes into one of our churches generally can be counted on as being sincere.

And this is exciting. The amount of Christian literature being produced in America today is amazing. There's probably a new Christian book coming off the press every ten minutes of every day, 365 days a year.

And I can assure you that's not an exaggeration, though it would be difficult to prove, because I would include in that all the books of the denominations, as well as all your big non-denominational and inter-denominational publishing houses. It's exciting what God is doing. Yet there are dangers that I see in the church.

And when I see these dangers, I feel I must speak about them. Because I know these are dangers in my own life. I am part of the church in the United States.

I am sent out by local churches. My linkings here are with a few local churches that consider me their representative overseas. And so I'm linked.

The Bible says, when one member suffers, we all suffer. When one rejoices, we all rejoice. What are some of the dangers in the present-day church situation here in America? First of all, there is the danger of prayerlessness.

Samuel Chadwick, that great man of God, of years gone by, who led so many to Christ, said the one main aim of Satan will be to destroy your prayer life. He will aim most of his efforts at getting your prayer life. Once he has your prayer life, everything else will quickly fall into order.

I'm concerned about this, and it's been a great burden on my heart for many years. I would be happy to send any of you listening to this message on tape or here tonight a free copy of the book *Power Through Prayer* by E.M. Bounds, if you'll just request it. We've been distributing this book all over the world.

We've just done another edition of 50,000 copies. We're doing this with the hope that it will be used of God to bring people back to a life of prayer. There are many wonderful books on prayer.

We have one here this evening, *How I Know God Answers Prayer*. And I believe we should be studying such books. More than that, we need to be looking into the Word of God.

We will see in verses like Corinthians, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty unto God through the pulling down of strongholds. I'm amazed at the lack of prayer in most of our Bible colleges. Christian colleges, many of them hardly have prayer meetings at all.

I'm appalled when I discover that so few come out to the midweek prayer meetings in the average church. So much so that now many of them have been abandoned, and there are little Bible studies instead, or they show films. God is calling us to a life of communion with himself.

One great man of God said recently, hardly anyone's interested if you have a meeting when only the Trinity is present. Think that one through. We bring in some famous personality, we show the latest Christian film, as millions of dollars are spent to produce more films to entertain the American evangelical.

We can be sure of a packed audience. But have a meeting in which only the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are advertised, and you're able to find that you'll be able to have the meeting in the pastor's office. We may not see the judgment fall upon us immediately as we drift into this land of prayerlessness, but it will come.

It will come. Perhaps we're being held together by a remnant of praying people. Perhaps we're being held together by a few.

But we know God will honor the prayers of the few, even when great masses of his people are wandering into spiritual lukewarmness. So then I consider the greatest danger of the Church in America today even greater than materialism, even greater than false doctrine, false cults, or any other of the devil's devices. Secondly, I'm concerned about our lack of confidence in God himself.

Many of our Christian organizations are finding their staff members from our large corporations. They bring in these men trained with our corporations, and they put them in key positions in Christian work. They don't find out whether the man is a man of prayer.

They don't find out whether the man is filled with the Spirit. They don't find out whether he's a man with a deep confidence in God himself. They want to know if he can operate a computer.

They want to know if he has some gift in the area of business and organization. I, as much as anyone, believe that God's work should be done decently and in order. We need men with a gift in business in God's work.

We certainly need some in our work, but I don't believe that's the way we work in the Church of God. Too many times we have sought God's rubber stamp on one of our own man-made ideas, rather than together as a body of men, whether we're a board of directors or deacons or elders, seeking God hungry and thirsty after the will of God to know his plan, to know his mind. Someone once said, quite a few years ago, and I read it in Bounds' book on prayer, the Church looks for better machinery and God looks for better men.

Men of prayer. Men with a deep confidence in God. I think this particular problem is very much linked to the fact that we are a very success-oriented nation.

We very much drive to success. This is very good in the business world. We don't expect the average business to go out and look for failure.

But failure has a much more important part in God's program. It's through failure, it's through mistakes, that often we learn a deeper confidence in the Lord himself. It's through failure that oftentimes we're stripped of our human crutches and we're taught to depend upon God.

Many people in the Church in America today are finding it all very unreal. This is why many of them jump from one Christian camp to the other. Some jump from the non-charismatic camp into the charismatic camp, and from the charismatic camp to the super-charismatic camp.

And from there they jump into something else and emphasize mainly casting out demons. And from that they'll jump into some extreme form of quote-unquote discipleship in which they lord it over God's heritage instead of leading people as loving shepherds. We're a nation of extremists.

And this is because we have basically refused the way of the cross. We have basically refused to die to self and to take up the cross and follow Jesus Christ. And so we're looking for the next religious trip and we go from one group to the other.

And then after maybe 20 years we discover we're still spiritually barren and wandering in a desert of spiritual myopia. I am concerned. God is looking for people who will put their confidence not in human organization nor in the latest religious trip but in God himself.

Mr. Packer's book *On Knowing God* is one of the books I can recommend the most in this day in which we live. God wants to teach us confidence in himself. The whole Bible is filled with exhortation about trust, confidence, waiting upon God.

Perhaps we're producing a generation of religious neurotics who always want to be doing, doing, going, going and who never wait upon the Lord and get to know him in a deep and infinite and perceptive way. A book that has made an impression on my mind along this line is a book by Alfred Gibbs called *Worship*. I was especially touched by reading some of the definitions of worship that he has put in this book.

Though worship, of course, is a hard thing to define. He says, the overflow of a grateful heart under a sense of divine favor. Another one, the outpouring of a soul at rest in the presence of God.

Another, worship is the occupation of the heart not with its needs or even with its blessing but with God himself. And lastly, worship is the upspring of a heart that has known the Father as a giver, the Son as a savior and the Holy Spirit as an indwelling guest. Where is our confidence? Is it in the fact that we're an affluent society that can raise money for almost any project imaginable? Is our confidence in our own strength? Is it in the size of our organization? Or is it in our numbers, now that such a high percentage of people in America are classified as born again? God wants to shake us.

God wants to break us. And we'll never go up in spiritual growth until we're willing to go down. The Bible says in the Gospel of John, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.

At 17, I was leading many to Christ. At 17, I was preaching to hundreds. At 17, I was doing this and doing that.

And then God had to begin to move in and break me again and again. He had to break me to show me how weak I was, to show me how easy I could get in my own little religious trip. And it was only through those crisis experiences, many of them at the foot of the cross, that I began to understand something of what it is to have my confidence in God Himself.

Watchman Nee says, God will arrange our circumstances to break us on our strongest point. And God has a wonderful way to allow circumstances to come into your life. God can allow suffering.

God can allow trial among your family members. God can allow bankruptcy. Many things God can allow.

You may not like them. You may cry in the night about them. But you know, the more you resist, the more God allows sometimes the screw to go down upon you, especially if He loves you.

Those whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth. And when you find the hand of God somehow coming hard upon you, you can rejoice. You can rejoice for you know you're not only a legitimate one, but you're a son of the living God.

Confidence in God, trust in God, waiting upon God, knowing God. This is the need of the hour of the church, I believe, in our nation. May we develop this whatever the cost.

Another great problem I see in the church today and great burden upon my heart that is not always easy to explain. Perhaps the word polarization helps fit in. John Stott, that great evangelical leader who last week was speaking to 15,000 students at Urbana, has written a great book called *Balanced Christianity*.

In this book, he has made a wholehearted plea for spiritual balance. He has asked us to avoid polarizing, going into our opposite corners. He's brought up many subjects.

For example, he's compared the intellectual person with the more emotional person. You've certainly noticed in the church of Jesus Christ there are those who are very intellectual and they want to know all the deeper meanings and they want to know the Greek and the Hebrew and they want to be involved in intensive systematic Bible study and you're able to find them feeding on Matthew, Henry commentaries or Martin, Lord Jones. Then there are those who are more emotional and they would tend to gravitate into a meeting where there's more emotion and where there's the latest guitar-strung chorus and where there's a little more excitement than perhaps in other places.

It seems to me the truth is somewhere in both and yet in the middle. We need emotion. There's nothing wrong with emotion.

We should sometimes at least sense the presence of God. But we need intellect as well. I don't think we should put theology in opposition to experience.

We need both. We need sound theology and yet we need a heaven-sent experience with God. Not just once a year or once a month or once a week but daily.

Don't allow this kind of mentality, whatever side you're on, to keep you from fellowship and from spiritual balance. There are so many areas where we easily divide, where we easily separate, even though God's Word says the main way that people will know that we're His disciples is our love for one another. I have found no nation in the world quite so much as America where people become so strong-minded about such little things.

It seems to be part of our national heritage. You can get people so concerned about natural vitamins, they will speak to you about natural vitamins as if you were going to die in a week if you didn't start taking alfalfa, natural vitamins, and everything else. It's all right if you're a rich man and can afford it.

The price on some of these pills is more than it takes to give a man a whole meal in India. But whether it's natural vitamins or something else, people seem to get extremely tense about things that are not really that important in comparison to what the Bible emphasizes. And the Bible emphasizes love.

And you can't get that through pills. It'll cost. It'll cost you your ego.

It'll cost you your pride. It'll mean sometimes going to your very wife and admitting what a poor, miserable husband you are. Or maybe even going to your own children and confessing you're false.

Or to the pastor, or to the elder, or to a brother, a sister, a roommate. God hates pride. The Bible says, these are not my thoughts.

God resisteth the proud. Some of you may be having difficulty in your life. You may sense God's far from you.

You may sense that somehow your faith is not real. It could be some subtle form of pride in your own heart. Pride is the most secret of all sins.

You can have a dose of it and never know it for ten years. Yet, the Bible says, God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. Oh, I tell you, I yearn with all of my heart to know more of humility.

I feel so far from this great area of reality in the Christian life. And if you utter a prayer on my behalf once in a while, just pray that I may learn something of humility. With all the mistakes I've made, with all the stupid things I've said, and many other faults and errors, you'd think I'd be a fairly humble person by now.

But it's not as simple as that. It takes a daily experience with God. And sometimes the likes of me is not quite willing to pay the price.

God giveth grace to the humble. My greatest prayer is one that I express often daily. Lord, break me.

William MacDonald wrote a book by that subject that every Christian should read. Lord, break me. Only through brokenness are we going to know the way of reality.

And I believe as we learn more of brokenness and humility, this depolarizing will disappear. We'll be able to have more fellowship even with people we don't agree with. We'll be less suspicious.

We'll be less critical. We'll be less cynical. The devil seems to be able to use cynicism especially in a very hideous way to divide people and to bring in all kinds of divisions and confusion.

Tozer wrote about cynicism in one of his books. And I'd like to read what he said. In this world of corruption, there is a real danger that the earnest Christian may overreact in his resistance to evil and become a victim of religious occupational disease.

Cynicism. A constant need to go counter to popular trends may easily develop in him a sour habit of fault-finding and turn him into a sulky critic of other men's matters without charity and without love. What makes this cynical spirit particularly dangerous is that the cynic is usually right.

His analyses are accurate. His judgments sound. Yet for all that he is, he is wrong.

Frankly, pathetically wrong. As a cure for the sour fault-finding attitude, I recommend the cultivation of a habit of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving has great curative powers.

A thankful heart cannot be cynical. This has been a real challenge to me as someone who has too often bordered on the university of the cynics and who wants to stay in God's school of thanksgiving even if I don't get out of kindergarten. Do you know the reality of thanksgiving in your life? Do you know the power of praise? I believe as these things become more the emphasis of the church, we're going to see less polarization and less sterilization.

They usually go together, together with stagnation. We need a fresh breath from the living God. And this will come as we turn away from self and embrace the cross of Jesus Christ.

However, there's another danger in the 20th century church that perhaps is just as great. It's one that we don't hear too many messages about. It's the danger of undisciplined living.

There's all kinds of jokes about undisciplined living. We even have them on OM. People who always sleep in, it's all quite funny.

People who, you know, are doing this and that and have never learned a disciplined life. And I'll tell you, there is no more serious spiritual gangrene eating away at the American church than the lack of discipline. Not only on the part of church members, church leaders, even pastors.

One of the greatest men of God in Britain says the pastor is the ripest target for laziness. Most of the time during the week, he doesn't have to account to too many people. This problem is even greater on the mission field among missionaries.

Pastors generally are surrounded by a congregation who can see fairly soon what he is not or is doing. Missionaries sometimes in isolated situations can allow laziness to come in. There are dozens of verses in the Bible against laziness, slothfulness.

And I believe it comes as a curse upon one's life. The lack of discipline coupled with laziness is an unstoppable combination when Satan gets his hands on it. There are some wonderful books on discipline, but people don't seem to be too interested in them.

It takes too much discipline to read books. Easier just to turn on the television and watch the Minnesota Vikings running down the field once again. It's interesting that we admire people who discipline their life and become champions on the field of athletics.

And yet we ourselves, according to a recent report, before we're 18 years of age, have spent 18,000 hours sitting in front of the destruction tube having our brains filled with things, most of which is of little permanent value. Until you have discipline in turning off the television set, I do not believe you'll ever amount to much with God. You may be successful.

That doesn't impress God. There is such a religious boom in America. We've got so much money in America.

People are so concerned about their own emotional and mental life in America, which is coupled with a religious boom, that all kinds of religions will go in this country. As one man of God said, if the Holy Spirit disappeared, no changes would be made in most places. It's not success that makes an impact with God.

It's holiness. It's reality. It's disciplined living.

It's godliness. And this is going to cost. It's going to cost us some of that precious sleep that we may get up early and seek the Lord.

It's going to cost us some of the other good activities as we learn to put the best in place of the good. Oftentimes, I believe, it is the good that hinders us from getting the best in life. And I just want to say this to those of you who are perhaps 16 and 17 as I detect a young audience here tonight.

I am not speaking this way as an old goose in his 30s. I started to speak this way when I was 17. I started to live this way when I was 16 and a half.

And I believe that's the best time to get started. Laying a foundation of disciplined living. Laying a foundation of control over the various areas of our life.

Keith Miller in his striking book *Taste of New Wine* said this, I have become convinced that the things which keep us from a live relationship with Christ are often not the bad things in our lives, but the good things which capture our imagination and keep them from focusing on Jesus Christ. I want to ask you, are there any good things capturing your imagination in these days that perhaps in turn are keeping you from focusing on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? Oh, how many good things. How many good things.

I believe it's a good thing to keep this church clean and I think the people in charge of it are doing an excellent job. The carpet is clean, the walls are clean, the church is wonderful, the windows are clean. This is good.

What if the church was burning down? What would you think of the fellow who came in in the midst of the fire with a vacuum cleaner? And he said, I want to clean the rug. Someone else came in to wash the windows. Someone else came in to tune the piano.

Someone else came in to repair the microphone as the building burned to the ground. You say that's stupid. Yes, the church is stupid.

Often times, very stupid, as we are engaged in every kind of secondary activity while a world burns before us and half the people on this planet go out into eternity never having heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe the good is the enemy of the best. And until we get this into a right perspective in our country, we will never begin to fulfill God's call and God's command to us.

I'm aware as I speak tonight that these words are easy. That's why I leave in two days to go back and put it into practice. I know all too well that preaching is easy.

We can grind men out through our cemeteries or seminaries and they can churn out sermons like McDonald's turns out hamburgers, but that will not produce spiritual revival, renewal or reality. We need men and women who will live this life. We need men and women who will stop saying we are willing to do anything and who will begin to do anything that God tells them to do.

And I believe that will mean sacrifice. That leads me to what I feel is another major problem that we face today very much linked with a lack of discipline. And as I go on, I'm reminded of those words in Corinthians where Paul said he buffeted his body and brought it into subjection.

Thus, after preaching to others, he become a reprobate. Wow, I tell you, that speaks to my heart. But the next problem I want to share with you, the next burden, is our unwillingness to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel.

In fact, we don't use the word sacrifice much in the church anymore. Somebody years ago said Jesus Christ's sacrifice was so great that anything we do is not a sacrifice. So now spiritual people are embarrassed to use the word sacrifice, lest they somehow don't appear to be spiritual.

It's certainly not a pleasant word in our affluent society. Sacrifice. One man was complaining about the sacrifice he had to make out on the West Coast.

It was because he lost his job. He was going to have to sacrifice. They were in times of difficulty.

He was going to have to sell his yacht. Sacrifice. My dear beloved, we do not know the meaning of this word except in a few exceptions.

I'll be the first one to admit that there are individuals in this nation who know more about this than I do. And I come as one who yearns to learn. But as a whole, it is a missing ingredient in the spiritual life of our church.

Sacrifice. Going the extra mile. Giving and giving and giving.

Until it hurts. Until we feel we cannot go another inch and have to fall down and cry out for the grace of God. Until God has knocked down some of your own props, you'll never even know the God who is there and who is here.

You'll only know your own little cultural carbon copy. Your little American God. You'll not know the God of the Bible.

And if you don't think that cannot happen, you haven't traveled much around America. I'm concerned. I'm burdened.

Do we know God? Or are we creating a God made after our own likeness? God who is a little bit like Santa Claus and just gives everybody everything they want, while millions go without a proper diet around the world. And worse than that, without ever having the gospel of Jesus Christ. I think the last time I came here I mentioned to you something of some of the nations that are so much upon our heart.

Places like Nepal with 13 million people and just a few hundreds of believers. Places like Afghanistan with 18 million people now and maybe 12 believers and a handful of missionaries in the entire nation. Places like Turkey with 37 million.

37 million and only 50 Turks who know the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps the problem as we think about the church in America is simply this. That Christianity is basically good in America whether it's true or not.

You think about that. You see, Christianity and the American way of life, especially in thinking the way our nation was founded, go well together. Christianity has brought many drunks out of their drunkenness and put them in church.

This is good. Whether it's true or not, it's good. We live in a nation where Christianity is being used by politicians and I have no particular person in mind but it is being used by politicians to get votes.

And again I repeat, I have no person in particular in mind because it would be impossible to judge. And I'm trying to drive home an important point that Christianity is good in America whether it's true or not. And if you don't think there are not people who think this way, you obviously haven't studied Neo-Orthodoxy or the new existential philosophy and theology that has propounded from coast to coast in this nation.

Praise God for raising up men like Dr. Schaeffer who have spoken strongly out against this type of existential subjective Christianity. He calls truth, truth, truth that we might get it into our head that it is

hysterical that Jesus Christ died on the cross and he says if you were there if you ran your finger down the cross you would get a splinter. Mahatma Gandhi said it doesn't matter whether Krishna ever lived or not.

Nor does it matter, he said, whether Jesus Christ ever lived or not. It's the essence of it. It's the experience.

Men like Sartre, men like Jaspers and other new philosophers teach that the main thing in life is a final experience. And so now we have all kinds of people in America having a Jesus experience. A Jesus trip.

They raise their hand or they mumble a few phrases and run down into the river and get baptized and they feel they've been turned on to Jesus. There's tremendous danger in this. Not that God cannot work through it.

I tell you God can work through almost anything. He used a donkey in the Old Testament so don't be so flattered when he uses you. But I believe as we look out over a lost world we have to say that if Christianity is true at all it is true for all.

Therefore we must not only preach the Gospel in the countries where when there are results it brings basically a better citizen. We must preach the Gospel in countries that when a man comes to Christ as it would be in the Muslim world he is considered a traitor and his own parents may attempt to kill him. You may not have the faith to preach in such a country now but as you grow in Christ as you become more and more convinced that this is the Word of God that God is God that the Bible is true that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation then you will be willing to go even to lands where when a man comes to Christ he is classified as a second-rate citizen or a traitor.

If there are some things that I say which you do not understand it may help you to try to understand the background that I have. As strong as I may speak to you tonight on an individual basis I think most people have found me a very understanding person because though I speak forth that which is I believe the truth on a personal basis I give much time for growth much time for people to understand and enter into these things. I've got enough struggles with my own spiritual problems much less wanting to go around and club anybody else down.

What I speak from the pulpit standing before you and before God is one thing. What I do on an individual basis with people my relationship with them my attitude toward them the patience I must have with them is something, something else and something very, very important to understand if you're going to maintain any kind of spiritual balance. I don't expect you to go out of here this evening and become spiritual revolutionaries ready to pioneer the Muslim world next week.

But I do hope you will go out of here and at least begin to aim in the right direction. You can't drive to New York City in twenty minutes but at least you can get the front of your car aimed in the right direction and going down the right highway. And I believe the problem today is not only we are not getting to many of these mission fields we don't even have the thing aimed in the right direction.

90% of all of our effort in America among Christians is to America. Everything is to America. We may make publicity about some of our around the world escapades but when you look at the cold facts America gets the 95% and we give the rest of the world the husks.

But for every one person that goes out to the mission field in so-called full-time work you can be sure there's another 20 at least 20 who remain. And that is not a poor that is not a proper figure because it

would be worse than that. This is of concern to me.

I got a little off the track as we were speaking about some of the areas that polarize us that separate us and I have to move on to my final burden as we were thinking about this subject of love and that being our greatest need. I'm led to say that I believe perhaps one of the greatest needs in the Church of Jesus Christ in America today linked especially with this whole thing of the disciplined life is the need and again sacrifice sacrifice comes into this but it's the need to take God at His Word. This is the Word of God.

There's now a great controversy going on concerning inerrancy. This concerns me. Perhaps greater division is going to come through this, I don't know.

But I believe perhaps as someone who's lived in England too long that it is dangerous to push this whole inerrancy thing too far in which we are ready to pounce on anybody who doesn't have our exact same interpretation of what full inspiration of Scripture is. This book I believe is the Word of God. Maybe I will not have the exact same understanding of it as some dear English brother who has just graduated from Oxford University and who does not think within the same context of the average American who may have come out of one of our seminars.

But basically as I meet people when they say they believe this is the Word of God it is fully inspired by God and they accept it completely as the authority in their life I feel I must fellowship and work together with such people. And my great burden in the midst of all this is the danger of us becoming the greatest hypocrites of all. Pounding the pulpit with a tremendous mallet of inerrancy of Scripture and yet not allowing the Word of God to be the final authority in our own lives concerning our morals, our attitude toward the opposite sex, concerning handling of money, oh how many tricks Christians can pay even in their taxes, even in little things when it comes to honesty and money.

Allowing the Word of God to be the final authority when it comes to how we invest our life, time, talent and energy. One man of God said some time ago the greatest sin among young people in America today is wasting time and I believe it. I believe it's greater than immorality and there's plenty of that.

There's an invasion of impurity into the church of Jesus Christ which would frighten even a casual observer who really gets to know what's going on. Praise God for Roy Heshin who's just written this stinging book *Forgotten Factors* about immorality within the church of Jesus Christ. I'll be happy to send you a copy if you would be willing to read it.

The author of that great book *Calvary Road*. Yes, as we think of the church situation we realize that the Bible is the crucial area of conflict oftentimes. It is the Word of God.

As Dr. Schaefer says there may be problems to the man who believes the Bible but there are more problems by far for the man who does not believe the Bible. This is the Word of God. There are many intellectual reasons.

Ultimately as Billy Graham and I was reading what he said about this just last week. Ultimately we must by faith take this as God's Word. We may have doubts but there are enough proofs.

I'm not talking about a leap of faith but I'm talking about just simply an act of faith that this is God's Word and then we move upon that. Not blindly, not in intellectual suicide but in a logical, biblical way. Is the Bible the final authority in your life? Your final rule of conduct? When it comes to the decision as to who you're going to marry will the Bible be the final measuring rod? The Bible says be not unequally yoked with

unbelievers.

And I believe it is just as dangerous for a man who is dedicated to Christ, who is committed to Christ as a disciple and a warrior for God to go and marry a woman or a man, vice versa, who is not committed. It's not enough to find a girl, young man, who says she's born again. What does this now mean in America? Born again.

Gallup polls said one third of all Americans now claim to be born again. It may be true in Iowa. I'll tell you it's not true in New York State.

I doubt if it's true here either. When you go to choose your wife, when you go to choose your husband, you need someone who's put their life on the altar. Someone who'll go where God wants you to go and live on God's standard of living.

I want to tell you selfishness in our country is at such a dimension that you can barely talk about it without people getting angry. We have accumulated that which rusts upon earth in such a way that it is a disgrace to God and it is bordering on blasphemy if we look at the teachings of Jesus Christ and the lifestyle of the book of Acts. But yay, that's for Sunday morning and for Sunday school and for the flannel grass.

Not for Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday when we make the real decisions that determine how we live and where we go and what we do. Yes, my beloved, spiritual schizophrenia, if we're honest, is the order of the day. The double life, Sunday morning with the evangelical smile and the plastic halo and then Monday through Saturday our own selfish, materialistic, stubborn way.

May God bring our nation to the knee. Many times Christians flippantly are praying for unsaved people to repent or they're praying for some of our crooked politicians to repent or they're praying for some of our drunkards to come out of the taverns and be saved. We're praying for revival among the pornographers and those who produce the wicked literature and the wicked films.

But the greatest prayers we can pray tonight are not for such folk. They are not Satan's major tool in America today. The greatest tool in the hands of Satan is a lukewarm saint.

D.L. Moody said a lukewarm Christian will produce more agnostics than all the unbelieving books the devil has ever produced and I believe he was correct. Lukewarm Christianity, it's mediocrity, it's the plush curtain not the iron curtain that is destroying the spiritual fiber that alone can make a strong church. It's we who must repent as much as the drunkard down on the end of the row or the crooked businessman in New York City.

I call you, I call myself, I call to all who hear this feeble message. Let us repent as God's people and embrace the cross and follow Christ wholeheartedly wherever it leads for I believe we will incur judgment upon ourselves and upon the church. I beg of you, let us repent.

Let us pray. Our God and Father, I seek your face in repentance myself tonight knowing areas of inconsistency in my own life, knowing it's easier to preach than it is to practice, knowing that even as a Christian leader there is such a danger of just getting caught up in giving messages. Oh God, you know I want to live this life or I do not want to preach again.

I want to know the reality of discipline and love. I want to know what it is to be an abandoned disciple and soldier of your Son, the Lord Jesus. I don't want to talk, I want to walk and walk with a master who alone

can make this real to such a weak and feeble inadequate vessel as I. And Lord, I know there are others here tonight who yearn to walk with you.

And I pray they may be delivered from the devices of Satan, from his cunning fox-like tricks that do everything to keep us from spiritual reality and from those wells of living water that daily we must partake of. Oh Lord, search our hearts tonight. Do not allow us to be hearers of the Word, but doers.

Keep us from the fog of spiritual schizophrenia that we may walk in the bright light of your Son, Jesus, and know him in an in-depth way. Keep us from discouragement at times of failure and enable us to understand that failure is often the backdoor to success. That we may be more concerned with holiness than happiness and that we may live for you in love with you and in love with one another in discipline and in faith.

We love your church, oh God. And what we have said tonight is because we love the church and we believe you're calling the church to repentance and to action on a seven-day week basis. We ask this in trembling faith, asking that you would help our unbelief in the name of Jesus Christ.

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