

Reality & Vision 19.6.86 Stapleford Convention

by George Verwer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of true commitment in Christianity, highlighting the dangers of superficial commitment and the need for reality in our Christian lives.

Duration: 38:12

Topics: "Vision"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being active workers for God rather than just passive listeners. He mentions the abundance of books and tapes available for study, but encourages the audience to not just consume knowledge, but to put it into action. The speaker references the apostle Paul's example of preaching the gospel and testifying to both Jews and Greeks. He also highlights the apostle's realistic view of life, people, and himself, urging the audience to have a similar perspective.

Transcript

It's always an encouragement to come to a place to speak at a convention where they believe in Christian literature, then I can feel relaxed to start with. I was in an embarrassing situation in California a couple of years ago in a very large church of a pastor named John MacArthur, and a few thousand members there, and they wanted me to speak, but they didn't, they had heard that I was a book pusher, and so they insisted that I really try to limit pushing of books to three minutes. I wasn't too worried because John MacArthur wasn't going to be there anyway, but last minute he changed his mind and he was sitting there.

It's not easy to get in these rather big churches when they have an outstanding Bible teacher, they don't really need anybody else to come along. So I stuck very, very carefully to my three minutes, we had a terrific display of books, then during the message I weaved in the other five books, and we had a bonanza on the book table that I could have never imagined. I do hope you will, however, take a look at the book table.

Noem, we also carry our own books, but there were so many books here tonight, we just added a few, and our little display is on the other side, mainly just some tapes, because in Operation Mobilization these days, the fellowship I represent, we're not only bookworms, but we also listen to tapes. I heard someone almost say something that didn't sound too good, but especially for Tony over here, but I hope that you will just take a look at those, because it gives me that opportunity to get in your home for a week or in your car, that's a terrific place when you're stuck in the motorway, traffic jam on the M1, you can listen to George Verwer on The Fruit of the Spirit, and we trust that might minister to you. There's several books

that I especially want to emphasize, and they're available, these two books at half price.

One is, why is it taking so long to get better? This was an enormous struggle in my Christian life. Even as a Christian leader, I felt I was so slow in a number of areas of really growth and grace, and I met this man at Filey, we were speaking together at a minister's meeting, and he was sharing that day at Filey to the ministers on the subject of this book, why is it taking so long for many of us to improve after all the meetings and messages and books, why is it taking so long? And this is available, while the quantity lasts, at half price, and I know it will be an encouragement to many of you. One of the books that we're also making available at half price is called, There Is Really Only One Way, Is There One Way, by Dick Hillis, a great missionary statesman, on the subject of whether Jesus Christ is the only way.

This is being attacked very much in our day, in our seminaries, some of our seminaries, and people who say Jesus Christ is the only way, the truth, and the life today, they're thought of as some kind of a bigot, especially in a multiracial situation, and we certainly want to believe the best, we want to respect people of other religions, I think that's incredibly important, respect their culture, even try out their food, but when it comes to our faith, we believe that Jesus is the only way. I would not be here and believe these conventions are a waste of time if this isn't true, because it means really the Bible isn't true, so what is true? And I just want to commend this book to you, forward by Billy Graham on Jesus, The Only Way. Three other books I'd like to emphasize tonight, My Big Father, again available at a reduced price because supposedly they're slightly damaged, I can't find out, I think that little white spot means it's damaged, so I got them free, and you can have them at half price, and the profit goes to missions.

This is about the land of Turkey, one of the first men ever come to Christ through the work of O.M. in Turkey, where we have a church planting ministry, and this is easy reading, it's not a heavy book like some of the A.W. Tozer books we've brought, but it's easy reading, but very challenging, and then David Watson's brilliant book on discipleship, as this man was dying, how he managed to get so much in print is really quite baffling. His other books are more well known, none of them in my mind compare with this book. This is to me the outstanding book that David Watson wrote, but because it's called discipleship rather than leaping and jumping or joy in the night or something, people don't buy it, people don't want books on discipleship because the word discipline is a no-no, and yet this is a message we need today, discipline in every area of our Christian life, and lastly, healing for damaged emotions, a book that God has been using in such a mighty way around the world, they finally just put it in a British edition, half the price of the old edition, the most, almost the most widely read book in our work right now, healing for damaged emotions.

Even today, as I was working in the car traveling up here, I read a letter from someone greatly blessed through this book. If you get only one book, I'd really commend this to you, healing for damaged emotions. I'd love to speak on the subject, but the book speaks better than I do.

There's a lot of other material, I'm not here to talk about Operation Mobilization, but if you want some literature about the work that we're involved in, and we certainly need your prayers at this time, I've just come from the ship Lagos, literally arrived yesterday morning. She's in Canada, in Saint John, New Brunswick, though I had meetings in Halifax and Montreal on my way here. I actually live in London, England.

And the other ship, the ship Doulos, which many of you have visited in the last year or so, is in Sierra Leone, and it's just an overwhelming response. The president and the vice president of the nation came to

the ship. In two days' time, a ship's party will be having lunch in the state house with the president.

That, of course, opens the door for the media, and when that happens, the people come by the tens of thousands and receive the word of God. There's not time to share about that this evening, but if you want some literature about the ship ministry, about the Muslim world, about the subcontinent of India, which is so much upon our hearts, please do visit our special OM display. Meet my good friend Wayne Thomas.

He's also just back from India, though he's actually Welsh, and I'm sure you'll get something that you find profitable, and a lot of it is free. Let's just once again pray as we look into the word of God. Father, we thank you for the privilege of being here tonight, just separated to you and to your word.

And we don't want to just be hearers of the word. We want to be doers. For we pray, O God, move in our hearts through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. I want you to look in your Bibles with me to Acts 20. There are several words that are burning on my heart, and if you have a pen and paper, it would be a great encouragement to me if you could write some of these things down, because I believe God has brought us here to seriously look into the word of God together.

I'm not against other kinds of meetings. I speak in every kind of meeting you could ever imagine. I have to actually return to North America to speak at the largest Christian rock festival in North America.

You may think that's all the devil. Some people do. But these young people believe that Christian music is God's alternative to the heavy rock music that is coming out and destroying so many people.

And though I can't handle all the music myself, I have met these young people, and I've seen so many of them on fire for the Lord that I just have to believe the best and not try to figure out everything. That will be a meeting a little bit different than this. Five thousand young people out in the open air.

Last year when I was there, Steve Taylor was singing. They kept wanting him to sing more. I wondered, when am I going to get to preach? Finally, the police moved in and closed him down because they had a curfew after 10 o'clock at night, and they couldn't have any loud music.

So then I was able to speak, and many, many responded. But I think one of the purposes of a meeting like this, where we actually have two men teaching each night, is to heavily emphasize the Word of God. We're not against other emphases.

And they also preach and declare messages from the Word of God. So if you can write some of these things down. I was just preaching Moody Church in Chicago, and they had a man there many years ago, Harry Ironside.

A man from a brethren background, but he became the pastor of one of the largest churches in America. Interesting. Whenever he was speaking, people were writing down what they received, and studying it, and comparing it.

And there's just a number of words that are burning on my heart tonight. And often God hits me with just a word from the Word. I may be reading a whole chapter, but a word just jumps out of that chapter, and that becomes something to challenge me during that day.

I'm sort of a natural backslider myself. I don't know, any of you, if you automatically go on spiritually, that's great. You know, I can't relate to that, but I don't want to say it doesn't exist.

But I'm a natural backslider. And if God doesn't somehow touch me every day, I begin to grow cold, or I begin to get a wrong attitude. You ever get a wrong attitude toward other Christians? And I find that I need that fresh touch, that fresh message.

Sometimes for a character like me, that fresh kick from God's Word. Acts 20 is one of those powerful chapters for me. Starting at verse 19, serving the Lord with all humility of mind.

We could stop right there and be here a long time, because it seems that so often today we know so little of humility of mind, the right attitude, the right disposition. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, with many tears, trials which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews. How I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things which befell me there, except that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. When I was a young teenager, I made verse 24 my key verse. Let's read it, my life verse.

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 received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Now behold, I know that you all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more. Wherefore, I testify unto you, this day I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departure or departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore, watch and remember that for the space of three years, isn't this incredible, the space of three years, I cease not to warn everyone night and day with tears. And now brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel, yea yourselves know at these hands and ministered unto my necessity unto them that were with me.

I have shown you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak, to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than receive. And when he had thus spoken, he knelt down and prayed with them all, and they all wept much, 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 onto the ship. To me that passage is so powerful.

I remember as a young baby Christian, I had just been converted. I think some of you, if you've read my books or perhaps been in another meeting where I've shared at Keswick or somewhere, know my testimony, how I was from a non-Christian background. I was a loud mouth, pornoholic, outspoken, bombastic, intimidating young man with three businesses and a lot of other crazy things happening in my life, when a dear elderly lady, who surely if she lived anywhere within range here would be here every

night and would have busloads of her friends as well, a woman of tremendous vision, put me on her hit list.

And she started to pray for me, and she prayed for me for three years, and every year I got worse, but she was spiritually stubborn. She had a fight within her that the Spirit of God had put there at her conversion, and she had been persevering in prayer for 15 years for that ungodly grammar school where often a third of the students were drunk on the weekend. And she was praying that people would not only be saved but be sent.

She had a great missionary vision, and she sent me a Gospel of John through the post, and that began to prepare me for a one-night meeting when Billy Graham came to New York City. He came just to spy the place out. It was considered the toughest bastion of hell in America at that time, and he came that one night, and I was prayed into that meeting, and there found the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior.

And I never tire of telling that story because without the gift of salvation, you know, I would just not be here. And the message I have is simply Christ and Christ crucified. And there may be someone that's come with a friend, or perhaps you've just come here this evening for some reason, and yet you yourself don't yet know Jesus Christ personally.

And what a wonderful thing. Many times when I'm preaching on recommitment, people actually come to Christ. We've even had people come on OM who had a written testimony and have come to Christ during the early orientation.

A young man who came to work as my typist. I was in the States at that time for a conference. He flew ahead of me, and he was sweeping the floor, preparing a factory floor for the OMers to sleep on, and he got saved pushing the broom as he realized that he didn't really know Jesus Christ in a personal way.

I went back to that high school, a child of God. We started prayer meetings in the high school. Some of you know the rest of the story.

That became the birthplace of Operation Mobilization. Two years later, three of us went off to Mexico. That trip is quite well known.

But the year before, I was still in business, and I went across the States selling firefighting equipment, and also I started distributing Gospels of John. I was a baby Christian, and I met a lady who was a distant relative in Pittsburgh traveling west, and she tried to tell me that I was from a Reformed church background, and I think I'd been christened a Methodist. So I didn't know anything much about baptism, believer's baptism.

But this lady tried to tell me that night it was necessary to be baptized to be saved. I'm telling you, she scared me. I stayed up the whole night reading the book of Acts.

I decided baptism was an important teaching, but it wasn't necessary for salvation. And that very night, God gave me this verse, and I never, never ceased to go back to this passage and meditate on this verse. None of these things, verse 24, moved me.

Neither counted my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course. I don't know where I am in my course. I've been now living for the Lord every day these last 31 years.

Maybe I'm three fourths of the way, maybe I'm halfway, doesn't matter. We never know. We've all got to be ready to go at any time.

But that verse has never ceased to burn in my heart. And I'm going to be emphasizing through my ministry here, my burden to seek greater commitment among God's people. I really sense that so much Christianity today is superficial.

Even as I say that, I know it needs a lot of definition, because I know something can look superficial, and there can be a very deep root. And we need to be very careful of just judging people by outward appearance. Some of the things that young people are into may look superficial, but some of those young people may be going on in a very deep way for God.

Our work was written off by most older people in its day. It was written off by most people when we came to Britain. Most Christian leaders wouldn't give us the time of day.

They said, this is just young people, they're just youthful zeal, and this will just blow over in a year. In 62 there were 200 of us, in 63 there were 2,000, and now you have 25 years of O.M. Britain to see if it's all going to blow over in one year. Christians tend to get stuck.

They tend to become very conservative. They tend to be unwilling for change. And then they tend to write off other Christians who may be different as being superficial.

And so I don't share this burden about true commitment that we may go out of here and judge others, that we may examine our own hearts before God, that I may examine my own heart. Now as I read this passage, a number of words just jump out at me. And let me just see how many of those words I can share in my time this evening.

And I know that Tony, as we've been teamed up together many times, especially in his own church, will just follow on, and we're just thrilled to be here together as a team. No pastor in Great Britain knows O.M., or has ministered to O.M. more than Tony Sargent. So we're thrilled to be here together as a team.

But there's several words that are just jumping into my mind right now. The first word is reality. Commitment must include reality.

We discovered in our early days that it was easy for a young person to give a superficial commitment. And there may have been some evangelistic zeal, there may have been some willingness to go to a prayer meeting, there may have been a willingness to even sell a few possessions as that kind of thinking came through our work. But in-depth commitment, the 1 Corinthians 15, 58 kind of commitment does not come overnight.

Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. When I think of the Apostle Paul, I think of reality. Just think of the reality gripping this man's heart when he says for the space of three years he ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.

What are we going to do with verses like that? Think of the reality that gripped this man's heart when, for the sake of his situation, he decided that it was best to support himself. Amazing. Verse 35, I've shown you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus.

The verse just before that's what I want. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me. You know one of the really dirty words in our generation, you know what it is? Work.

When I first came to Britain 24 years ago, I learned a new hymn. I can always remember it. I was in Birmingham and it was called, There's a Work for Jesus.

And brothers and sisters, if we come to a convention like this and we don't go out from here with motivation to work harder for Jesus Christ, it's a sham. And you know, we get a lot of people today that are coming and they're always writing another article about workaholics. You can imagine, I mean, I'm just written off as a complete workaholic.

Can you imagine working six days a week? I mean, this could be dangerous. 15 hours a day. You know, around in the third world countries, people have to do that just to eat.

Just to eat. And my work, I will tell you, and what a pleasure it is, what a joy it is to serve Jesus Christ. It's a lot easier than some man working 14 hours in a field just to get a little food on his table.

How easy it is on these fair islands to become unreal about life. Most Christians have a naive view of life. I believe if God does something in our hearts in these days, we're going to be willing to work harder for him.

It may mean visiting the sick more. It may mean visiting those in prison. It may mean distributing literature door to door.

It may mean helping someone in a practical task. You know, if you invite the most famous singer and most famous speaker in the town like we do in London, England where I live, and we're actually competing with each other every Saturday night, you can pack out the Albert Hall and even charge five quid a ticket. But I'll tell you, if you call people to work, whether it's to clean the church or to go out door to door with the Word of God, you'll be able to meet in the church vestry.

How in the world people can go to some of these conventions year after year and never become workers, never put their hands on the plow, and begin really working for God is beyond my comprehension. We see the Apostle Paul gripped with reality, a realistic view of life, a realistic view of people, a realistic view of himself. We need to study a lot of other passages in order to emphasize this, and we're limited in what we can do.

That's why it's so good we can come back again tomorrow night. But I was looking at those words in Corinthians the other day, 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 3. Paul says, I was with you in weakness, fear, and much trembling. Brothers and sisters, great faith is not made in the absence of doubt or fear or trembling or difficulty.

Great faith is made as we battle through in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't know if they have on the book table Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones's book, Spiritual Depression, Its Cause and Cure, but after going through about 1,000 books, I consider that the greatest book of this century. And in that book, he puts an emphasis on discipline.

He puts an emphasis on denying self, taking up the cross, and following Jesus. Following Christ will be rough, and it will be tough. Reality.

Sometimes when we're preaching the gospel, we give the unconverted the idea that to come to Christ is mainly peace and joy and forgiveness and happiness, and all of that is part of the picture. But the fact of the matter is that when we decide to follow Christ, it will be rough, it will be tough, there will be misunderstandings, our heart will be broken, and there will be failures. Erwin Lutzer, that great Canadian ministering in Moody Church, said failure is the backdoor to success.

I was going to read the book, but just the title brought me into revival. I never bothered to read the book. I loaned it out to somebody.

The second word that burns in my heart as I read this passage is vision. Vision. You know how many people find the Christian life hard? They don't have a vision.

They don't know why we're doing this. They don't know why we're going here. They don't know why we're trying to mobilize an army of people to go out to the Baluch and the Kurds and the Uyghurs and the Turkmens, these unreached people's groups, millions of them, where the church doesn't even exist.

The Christian life without a vision is drudgery. It becomes church-anity. This is why now in America, many people will not go to church except once a week.

It's just out of the question. You can find churches with 5,000 members, 3,000 Sunday morning, 100 Sunday evening. Church prayer meetings, finished.

In order to get the numbers, we've dropped the standards. It's as simple as that. And the first thing to drop, if you want the numbers, at least in the States, prayer meeting.

That is an obnoxious thought to many people, a prayer meeting. Isn't it interesting that when we bring in our celebrities, we can pack out the biggest auditorium, but when we have a meeting, which according to the Book of Acts is the most important meeting in the church, only the Holy Spirit and the Living God are present, no one is really very interested. I will tell you, if that is an indictment against present-day evangelicalism, then I don't know what is.

Maybe I'm reading the wrong New Testament. This is the authorized version. Maybe you can check me out after the meeting.

Vision. I was climbing a mountain in Scotland for a little recreation a few weeks ago, and I had my Walkman with me. I find the Walkman's the greatest invention since the printing press, and I was listening to some lectures by John Stott in the Contemporary School of Christianity in London, and he was sharing on leadership.

And you know, John Stott is the kind of man that can get very quickly to my heart. It takes a phlegmatic, brilliant, calm Englishman to very quickly get to the heart of a big mouth, tending towards superficial, especially before I knew Jesus, American. And as I was climbing this mountain, listening to this tape, and praise God the rechargeable batteries lasted, he spoke on vision.

And I just had to, before I got to the peak, where by the way, I lost my hat. If any of you climb that mountain and find my hat, please return it. Anyway, I just had to cry out to God that he would increase my vision.

He especially on that tape spoke about Wilberforce, the vision of Wilberforce, to stop the slave trade and to get the slaves free. And how that man worked 5, 10, 15, 20, 30 years. He never moved from that vision.

God gave me a vision for world evangelism when I was a young man. I've been discouraged hundreds of times. I've had my heart broken hundreds of times.

I border on giving up. It just seems so hard. There's so little interest in the church in world missions today.

We got the Muslim world. We got population explosion, 4.7 billion. We've got a billion people, 1,000 million just in the subcontinent of India.

And as you go up and down this country and around the world preaching on world missions, number one, you can't even get the people to the meeting in the first place. And number two, the response is always so small and yet the population continues just to explode. And, and, you know, it took till about 1830 to get the first 1,000 million people in the world, about 1830.

We had that many just in India and Bangladesh and Pakistan. How are we going to do it? And I tell you, if I get my eyes on the task and on population and on the church and on the problems, the visa problems, the resurgence of Islam problem, the divisions within the church problem is, is very different problems you can think about. If I start getting my eyes on the problems I've had, I don't know if you're like that.

There may be someone here tonight, you've got your eyes on people. You've got your eyes on your church, which may be going through a division. You've got your eyes on your wife, who you feel is really as predicated as she should be and her cooking's not like it used to be.

Or you've got your eyes on something else. I just would recommend to you Hebrews chapter 12, running the race with your eyes fixed upon Jesus. Our first vision must be the Lord himself.

Other visions will come and go. Some of my visions have come and gone. Some of O.M.'s great dreams have come and gone.

But the Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. Paul was a man of tremendous vision. Read about him in this passage.

Read about him in other passages. And he had the vision despite the fact that he just didn't know what was going to happen next. Some of the things he knew would happen, I would not say would generally be very motivating.

For example, verse 23, I only know the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. Now in the past couple of years, a new doctrine has arrived in Great Britain. You can imagine where it came from.

It was in Australia. I was just down there. You can't blame the Aussies for too much.

This new doctrine has come right in from Texas and Oklahoma, good old Oklahoma. This new doctrine, folks, says that if you're spiritual, you're going to be able to trade in that old crummy Ford Escort and get yourself a Rolls Royce. And if you're really spiritual, you're going to be able to get yourself a much bigger house, and you're going to be able to get a triple car garage, and you're going to be able to just, well, more or less get whatever you feel you really need to be spiritual.

It's called name it, claim it. You think I'm talking about something small? We're talking about a movement that has now attracted hundreds of thousands of people. One church that went even more extreme, no matter how extreme you are, you can go more extreme.

You may think some of your friends are extreme. They haven't started yet here. It takes English people a while to get really extreme.

But one church has 80 people dead. Tomorrow night, I'll have a book on the table that shows the difference between presumption and faith, actually written by one of the great leaders of the charismatic movement who strongly believes in healing. He actually teaches theology at Oral Roberts University.

And that man has seen extremes, and he's written this book. And people of all different theological sides love this book, except the very, very extreme, like that one church in America where 80 people were dead as a result of extremes in the area of healing, refused to go to doctors. Finally, some people took this man to court.

And guess what happened to this dear man preaching this extremism when they were in the middle of the court case? Guess what? He died. Absolute truth. That's absolute truth.

Of course, this has been a national scandal in America for a number of years. And one of the things I like about Paul's vision and about the reality I see in Paul is the balance. Here's the man who wrote 1 Corinthians 13.

Here's the man who, one hand, is going over the wall in the basket. In the next hand, we read in Thessalonians that he was like a nursing mother among her babe. What a challenge the apostle Paul is to the church today.

And believe me, he was not in any way teaching some kind of hyper-prosperityism where if you're godly and you're dedicated and you're led of the Spirit, everything is going to be wonderful and you'll never be sick and there'll never be any problems and you'll never have any financial difficulties. This passage is one of 20 passages that completely demolishes that concept. He said, the one thing I know the Holy Spirit has for me, the one thing, talk about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, bonds, afflictions, bonds and afflictions.

It says later in Timothy, all who live piously in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. We know there are different kinds of suffering. Some suffering is directly for the cause of the gospel.

Other suffering is because we are human beings. I find sometimes the suffering I have to face just because I'm a human being on planet earth is more difficult to deal with spiritually than the things I've suffered directly for the sake of the gospel. Because it's more subtle and it just doesn't seem like any sense to it.

And yet, it's through these sufferings and through these problems, not that God doesn't heal, not that God cannot deliver, but the Word of God shows that sometimes He delivers and sometimes He does not. Sometimes He heals and sometimes He does not. People don't like this.

They like to get everything in neat little black and white categories. But you see, God doesn't work that way. And as we follow God with all of our hearts and we follow in the steps of men ablaze for God, like the Apostle Paul, there will be the human factors.

There will be the element of mystery. There will be the questions that we won't have answered. Like the millions who have never heard the gospel and who tonight go for a Christless eternity while the church seems to sleep on or fight on or get sidetracked into things that are so obviously not the best.

Reality and vision are the two words I want to leave with you this evening. We'll follow on from here, both Tony and I, as we share together. Let us pray.

Our God and Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you for this tremendous example in the life of the Apostle Paul. This commitment, this reality, this enthusiasm that we see gripping him and yet the balance, the earthiness about him.

And Lord, it challenges us with all of our struggles and our weaknesses and our failures to recommit our lives to you and to run the race with our eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus. Oh God, increase our vision on many different levels, but also especially our vision of the Savior. For we pray in his precious name.

Amen.

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