

(The Book of Acts) Session 01

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the importance of the Book of Acts in understanding early church missions and the ongoing need for evangelism today.

Duration: 38:05

Scripture: Matthew 9:35-36, Acts 1:8

Topics: "Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of spreading the gospel to the whole world. He shares his experience of preaching to young people and challenges the notion that they are not interested in listening. He encourages the audience to make the most of their lives, even if they feel they haven't accomplished much. The speaker also highlights the need for prayer for laborers in the harvest and expresses compassion for those who are lost and without guidance.

Transcript

When I was a teenager, we would read that 50% of the world had never heard or read the gospel. It was, I'm sure, just an approximation. A lot has happened in these past years in mass evangelism.

Quite a staggering radio, television, Billy Graham, Jesus film. And so, people are tending to say that probably the statistic has changed a lot. And today, it may be only 25% of the people of the world that have never heard, never heard a single Christian song by even one person, or read a gospel tract, much less a New Testament.

The problem is that in 1999, 25% of the world's population would be very similar to the number of people that 50% of the world's population would have been the year I was converted to Christ in 1955. So, brothers and sisters, we have a long way to go yet, especially in India that John has been so beautifully presenting. I guess I feel that Gladys Staines situation a little deeper than some as she was recruited into O.M. India so many years ago, and that's how she met her husband, both of them from Australia.

I'm aware when I speak on Sunday night and true on Sunday morning that some of you I will not see again. Just the way it goes, fast lane operators and people that have to go back. Somebody told me this morning they just stayed an extra few hours so that they could see what I had to say.

I hope they weren't too disappointed. If you're only here tonight and you have to go, I would urge you to pick up a couple of these great books. This is not a business.

I can assure you many of these book distributions, we actually lose considerable money. People today are not aware of the price of books. But we want to get these books out.

And if you have a piece of paper right now, or a little blank page, learn to use up the blank pages in your Bible. I had a lot of blank pages in this Bible and I used them all up years ago. This is a museum piece.

Then I saw these maps here in the back. I couldn't figure out how to travel using these maps. So I filled all those maps up with Bible verses and outlines as well.

But I say that because I know that everyone is going to want to get at least one of these books. Because some of them are very selective for certain kinds of people. For example, this is a book for business people.

The Soul of the Firm, written by the man who was the CEO of ServiceMaster. Peter Drucker, I believe, is his guru. It's a seeker-sensitive book, great for non-Christians.

Some of you may not be Christians, welcome. This meeting isn't just for those who call themselves Christians, it's for anybody. But there's a book, The Soul of the Firm.

Peter Drucker said, Bill Pollard tells us in The Soul of the Firm how to manage a large service business and give its employees dignity, productivity, meaningful work. It's yours for a donation. If you don't have a donation, take it free.

Another book that I mention every time I come here, I believe, is Calvary Road, a Christian classic. I'm not going to say much about each one of these, there's not time. Then The Challenge of Missions, Oswald J. Smith, the most influential person in my life, next to Billy Graham.

And his book is being reprinted again and again. Fortunately, these kind of books, when you see OM lit, it means we published it ourselves. So if you leave only a dollar, you would have covered the cost.

It's when somebody else published it that it gets a little rougher. I didn't even know they'd republished my book, Literature Evangelism. And my publishing man in the States, there in Georgia, he got a fantastic idea.

I never thought I'd see this in my whole life. He's put Oswald Saunders together with George Verwer. Oswald Saunders, his book, Effective Evangelism, together with my out-of-date book that never did sell, even though it was published by Moody Press, Literature Evangelism.

First time I've ever seen it. It's there tonight. You can't lose.

At least one of those books should help you. And then this book, The Snare. If I had any dictatorial powers in the body of Christ, I'd make every person in ministry read this book.

It is the only book ever written that's straightforward, preventative of people in ministry falling into immorality. It's written by a woman who gave her husband a hot air balloon ride for his birthday, and it blew up, and she watched him plunge to his death. Lois Maude Rabbe.

She's now remarried. For a number of years, she was single. And she saw how sexual entanglement can take place so easy in ministry.

She had a lot of courage to write this book. I was so challenged, I brought her to the OM Conference in Europe, and God used her among our new recruits. The Snare, now in Spanish, is one of the most significant books I believe NAV Press, who do a lot of great books, have ever published.

Another great book along that same line is called When Good Men Are Tempted. I offered this on the Moody Radio network that I often speak on. 1,300 people wrote in, phoned in, emailed to get a copy.

Of course, I did offer it free. This is a must for anyone that's involved counseling anybody with sexual struggles, or who has, like me, struggles in that area themselves. It's a very blunt book.

It's a men's book. You can just, you know, the chapter is Why Naked Women Look So Good, Why Other Women Look Better. It's a little blunt.

Written by a pastor from Oregon. His son was on OM. That's how I met him.

Men are finding trouble getting this. They're not as proactive as women in buying books. And women are buying up all the copies.

It's available tonight, like all the other books, on a donation basis. A new book I never saw before until tonight by our own OM professional writer, converted Jewess, Debbie Miron. Pray for her.

Her mother's had a horrendous stroke. She left the ship and flew back to New England to be with her mom, who no longer can speak. That's her brand new book, Touch of the Master, stories from around the missionary world.

Women as Risk Takers for God. I know some of you men probably are not going to want your wife to read this one. She might get a little more liberated and tell you something that's been on her heart for a long time that you need to hear.

But anyway, Women as Risk Takers for God is a phenomenal book, and I hope you'll get a copy. Do any of you still, despite all the scares like me, still occasionally like prime rib? Does any of you eat that? You know, just be honest on occasion. Prime rib beef.

We don't even have it in England. It doesn't exist. If you tell someone you want prime rib, they'll give you a good piece, a good slice of ordinary roast beef.

It's quite good as well. This is prime rib, friends. Steak.

Some of you have had too much milk in your spiritual diet. A little silly Sally's gospel book on how to lose weight. And it's time you had a steak.

Spiritual Depression is probably the greatest Christian book of this century. Lloyd-Jones was the greatest theologian for 40 years in Europe. Never well known in our country where we like to prefer just to read American authors.

This is a book that could just make your vacation here such a blessing. After all, a vacation is a good time, isn't it, for a silly mignon or prime rib? Spiritual Depression, It's Causing Cure. It is not about mental and

emotional depression.

It is about spiritual depression. I never have liked the title. In fact, some of you, as you read this, you'll get depressed.

And then you'll need Swindoll's book, *Grace Awakening*, to pull you out of that. They sort of work together. If anybody here, anybody here who's a pastor or full-time in ministry, would you raise your hand? We need to pray for these people more often.

People full-time in ministry, raise your hand. Not so many. They're all out ministering somewhere or trying to recover.

But we've got a book especially written for pastors. I've never seen it till tonight. I went through it quickly.

It's dynamite. It comes from a Grand Rapids publisher, Craigel Publications. A lot of great books.

It's called *Ministry Nuts and Bolts, What They Didn't Teach Pastors in Seminary*. It looks good. Your pastor could be so blessed when you gave him a copy of that.

Because the average pastor is not that good at nuts and bolts. Some of them are nuts, but they're not so good at nuts and bolts. And that could be a real blessing.

I get so excited about Christian books. You'll get more out of the books this week than you'll probably get out of me. But there's no need for competition.

We can do both. And we can be blessed. Turn with me now to the Book of Acts, which we're going to be studying all week.

And it's exciting to see this book where we see those windows, those windows of how the early church was. I want to say that as a Christian, I never found it very easy to fully believe that the Bible was God's Word. That was a problem for me at university, studying under anti-Christians who like to pull the Bible apart.

And maybe there's someone here that you've had doubts about the Bible as God's Word. Maybe the evolution problem has given you difficulties with Genesis. Maybe studying psychology has given you some difficulty with certain passages.

I think some who are reared in the church and have never studied some of these issues that much do not realize how much anti-Christian propaganda is out there these days. I come from post-Christian Europe. We are regularly, as believers, attacked on television right across the whole continent.

And they use extremism in America to attack us. BBC One last week, number one channel in British television, featured Benny Hinn. Benny Hinn, one of the most off-the-charts American evangelists you could ever imagine.

And Ruby Wax, one of the most gifted secular non-Christian interviewers, as far as I know, interviewed him. And fortunately, it wasn't as bad as some of us expected. Because sometimes these interviewers are vicious.

But it was bad, but it could have been a lot worse. They focus on things that are negative. Someone from Switzerland, I was recently in Switzerland again, said that in Switzerland today, all Bible-believing Christians are being marginalized.

They are being pushed into the margins of society. Now, that is happening here, but much slower. Now, you may think it's bad here.

It is. But I will tell you, in Europe, it is ten times greater. We have quite a few godly people yet in government in our country.

We have godly people in every aspect of society. We have a lot of great Christian programming on radio and TV, some bad as well. But the road is going in the same direction.

And here in the United States, in the next ten years, there will be efforts, especially on the part of liberal media and anti-Christian forces, which are increasing in our country, to marginalize and to ridicule those who are considered believers in the Bible. And we need to understand, there are many beautiful, balanced, godly people from many, many walks of society, not just pastors, or people who are sometimes labeled as fundamentalists, but all kinds of godly Christian people across the world who believe the Bible is God's Word. Great scientists, great political leaders.

They may not believe it in the exact same way that they're teaching it in a particular school in Alabama, but they believe that the Bible is God's Word. And I'm here this week as a doubting Thomas, as someone from a non-Christian background, who almost lost my faith at university to say that the strongest conviction in my life is that the Bible is God's Word. That's why we believe so strongly in world missions.

That's why, instead of me just sharing a lot of my bits and pieces of George Burwell's philosophy of life, I'm going to be taking you into God's Word, and let God's Word speak to you. Tonight, a little less than perhaps on other days, because I wanted to weave into this also my testimony, with the hope that those of you who are here for the week will get to know me a little bit, and I certainly want to get to know you, and that will help in our communication throughout the week. Acts chapter 1 and verse 8. But ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth.

One of the commentaries that I read about the book of Acts said that Acts 1.8 sets the pace for the whole book. One Bible commentary divided the book into six different sections. I may share about that tomorrow.

And at the end of each section, there was a phrase or a sentence about the gospel going out to the whole world. Absolutely brilliant. I tie this passage in with a passage in Matthew chapter 9. If you have your New Testament, don't worry.

If you don't, you can turn to one of my favorite passages in Matthew where we find the Lord Jesus in verse 35 going about all the villages, teaching the synagogues, preaching the gospel, healing every sickness and every disease among the people. That's a beautiful picture of Jesus. Just as the gospels give us pictures of Jesus, and remember the author of the gospel of Luke is the same person who wrote the book of Acts.

I've been reading quite a bit about Luke during this period of study, and it's amazing how little we know about Luke. We know he was a doctor. We know that he was with Paul.

You'll find in the book of Acts toward the end that he's speaking as if he's with Paul. You don't find that in the earlier chapters of the book of Acts. Some people believe the book of Acts was written by Luke to try to convince the Roman government that Christians weren't so bad.

And right now in India, we have a number of writers who are attempting to have influence in the government so that they will not accept some of the vicious attacks in writing against Christians and against missionaries that are going on in a big way right now. In fact, there's a new law supposedly coming in, I hope it doesn't happen, in which people who want to go to India to speak at a seminar will not be able to do that without advanced permission from the government. Pretty wild.

But some commentators believe that Luke was writing the book of Acts to try to influence, not exclusively for that reason, because you have God's bigger picture why the book of Acts is being written, for us and for the edification of all believers through the New Testament. But on the human level, and you'll never understand Scripture unless you understand the right mingling of the divine and the human, for the word of God comes through human beings. And you'll feel that humanity as you read the Scriptures.

And it can be a stumbling block if you don't have a proper understanding and a proper hermeneutic on how to understand Scripture. It's amazing that a number of statements in the book of Acts actually sort of pay compliments to the Roman Empire. And Luke was a bit of a diplomat.

It's good that we have some people in the Church who are diplomatic. Don't you think so? This was not my biggest gift in the early days, and some feel I've not yet arrived in this area as well. But I have a co-director who really carries more of the load of leading OM than I do.

We've just had four days together with our international executives. That's why I flew in on Saturday instead of Friday. I hate arriving here on Saturday.

I always like to get one day to get my parachute off. I've just come in from London, England, for those of you who weren't here this morning. And my co-director, Mr. Peter Maiden, the laid-back North Englander, is an excellent diplomat.

So actually, most problems now in OM, we're in about 80 countries, they're not supposed to call me. If they've got something heavy, something complex, they're not supposed to phone me. They're supposed to phone me with blessings, and phone Peter Maiden with the problems.

And then he and I can talk it over together. And it's been working for about 15 years. Other people feel that Luke wrote the Book of Acts because he was especially trying to sort out tensions between Gentile believers, and in the Book of Acts we have the first recorded missionary efforts to Gentiles, because originally it was all Jews.

We have that amazing story of Cornelius. But there were seemingly tensions between Gentile believers, who tend to be influenced by Paul, and Jewish believers, who tended to have Peter as their hero. Some people disagree very strongly with that theory, but it's interesting.

So as we have glimpses of the Church in the Book of Acts, we have this glimpse of Jesus here in Matthew, and in Luke, written by the same author as the Book of Acts, we have one great picture of the Lord Jesus after the other. And so I know that I've already challenged you to read the Book of Acts, and probably you feel that's enough for one week. But if you can read Luke at the same time as you read Acts, you get a bit of a double blessing.

And maybe you can do one through audio tape, and I'm sure you can get audio tapes from this bookstore or local bookstore. I tell you, I'm amazed at the number of Christians in Michigan. We could take the Christians of Michigan, and you would have more believers than 30 nations that I could list.

I could list 30 nations to start with Saudi Arabia, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Afghanistan, Tibet, which is no longer a nation after the rape that took place of the Chinese. But we could list 30 nations from that book Operation World. There's a few copies of that there on the book table.

And you have more believers in Michigan than all those 30 nations put together. In fact, John, probably with his fantastic ability for statistics, could just talk about places like Rajasthan and UP and Bihar and compare it with Michigan. I mean, it's like another planet.

It's like another planet. I don't believe we are here by accident this week. I don't believe that two people who are radically committed to India are ministering together by accident.

Some people, the way they organize things, would make sure this wouldn't happen. But you see, India has one out of every six people in the world. One billion souls.

And so to have two Indian committed people, we actually met in Bombay, I don't believe it's too much. And my message will not be about India, but will be going through the Book of Acts. But you can't separate it.

And you cannot separate the different aspects of living for God. And one of the greatest mistakes we've made, as I said this morning, in so many of our seminaries, where a very high percentage of everybody in training is planning to minister in America. Let's just get that straight.

All these people in our Bible colleges, including my beloved Moody Bible Institute and Prairie and Briarcrest, I minister to more Bible colleges than any living soul in the world. Almost everybody in those places is preparing to work in their own nation. And of those who want to go, only 10% ever make it, because it's such a problem to try to get to the mission field in our generation.

Short-term summer efforts, that of course is something else. Verse 36 says, But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they were faint and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. Isn't that powerful? My testimony is tied into this passage of Scripture, because I'm here due to the vision and the prayers of one godly older woman.

I was not from a Christian home. My father and my grandfather, of course, both born in the Netherlands. I'll be there again in a few weeks.

Stadskanaal, supposedly the longest village in the Netherlands. There are a bunch of Verwers up there. Not one of them yet knows the Lord Jesus Christ.

By the way, hardly anybody can ever pronounce my name, so if you don't have it right, don't worry. It seems so simple. Don't you ever feel your own name is simple? Nobody else can get it.

Now, De Vries, I think that's pretty easy. My grandfather was actually an atheist. Now, I can't say that I'm completely Dutch, because my mother's father was not Dutch.

My mother's father was a mixture of Irish, Scottish, and English blood, which is basically toxic. And he was a complete drunk. I'm sorry to say, I only saw my grandfather three times in my life on my mother's side.

The third time he was dying of DTs as an alcoholic in a hospital in New Jersey. I'd love to talk for a few minutes about alcoholism and drunkenness, because I don't think, with all the emphasis on drugs and all the emphasis on crime and killing and shooting in America, I think we're whitewashing the enormous problem of alcoholism in America. Even some of these people who lead this nation, they're alcoholics.

Every once in a while, we get to hear about one when they go through rehabilitation. Generally, that's kept hush-hush. And alcohol is on the increase in the high schools.

Some of the other stuff that they are drinking, if you follow this, it's more bizarre than anything we were drinking back in the 50s. And, of course, they have this kind of partying where they go out, and the whole purpose is just to get drunk as fast as possible. And the Word of God speaks about that problem.

So I stand before you, the grandson of an alcoholic and the grandson of an atheist. At 16, I was a bit of a liar. I owned three businesses.

I'm in a fast lane outside New York City. I was on my 32nd girlfriend, and you didn't want to get in my way. Not that I was strong, but I had a tongue that could make you look like a real jerk real quick.

Of course, that meant I got in a lot of fights, which wasn't very pleasant, especially once with a girl who actually beat me up pretty bad. And then into my life came this praying old woman. She wasn't really that old, but when I was 16, anything over 30 looked like a relic.

And she put my name on her hit list. She not only prayed that I would become a Christian, she prayed that I would become a missionary. Can you imagine that? She didn't even discuss this with me.

I mean, it would have been nice to get an email, not in those days, but a phone call. I'm about to change your life through prayer. I just want you to know you're probably not going to stay in New Jersey much longer.

She prayed and then sent me a Gospel of John, her son who influenced me as he was the president of the student council when I was a freshman. In God's providence, after my conversion, I became president of that same student council. He worked at Jack Wursten's World Life Camp every summer, and I believe this Gospel of John that changed my life was actually sent to me from Word of Life, but he and his mother were in cahoots to get me.

I read the Word of God for over two years. I even started to raise money to give scriptures out around the world as I joined a group called the Pocket Testament League, and as I got involved in my local youth fellowship in an incredibly liberal church. I'm from the Reformed Church of America.

Not the Christian Reformed, that's another group. Some of you know these groups quite well here in Michigan. Hope College down the road here.

Interesting things happening down there. Read about it in Christianity Today. Praise God.

But my Reformed Church in New Jersey was completely down the neo-orthodox and the liberal road. There was nothing about salvation, about the Holy Spirit. Certainly we didn't believe the Bible was God's Word.

Things like that. And so it was really a glorified religious social club. The pastor actually was a nice guy.

A real diplomat. He made me his assistant. I became president of the youth fellowship.

I was bringing new life to the church by teaching the kids how to rock and roll. This was the day of Haley and the Comets and Elvis Presley. But I was on the highway to hell because salvation is not by going to church.

Salvation isn't by good works. Salvation isn't by becoming the assistant to the pastor. Salvation is only through what Jesus Christ has done on the cross.

And so I was reading this gospel. I was going to church. I was dating all these different girls and even got some of them to read gospels.

Dancing was a huge thing in my life. Not that I believe that's some great, huge evil today. Charles Swindoll has something to say on that one.

It certainly can be evil. In my high school it was often just to get the gals warmed up to take them to bed. But not everybody dancing has the same motive.

We might just have a little bit of discernment on that hot subject. And then Billy Graham came to New York City. I don't know.

I think most people, even those of you who are not into the religious scene, you've heard of Billy Graham. And in my day when I was converted, he was very highly criticized. He was no great hero whining and dining with the Queen of England, which he's done since then.

He was considered a religious extremist and emotionalist. My friends told me he was a hypnotist. And beware! I knew almost nothing of that, what we call evangelical world of believing people.

But somehow, in God's providence, when Billy Graham came to New York City, a business person who was on the board of that great Word of Life camp gave me a free seat in a bus. Another guy lived down the street from me urged me to go. I thought this one girl that I was infatuated with who had a few problems, maybe she could use some of this kind of hot religion.

So I got my binoculars in case he was a hypnotist. I went to Madison Square Garden. I sat as far away as I could.

And I heard the gospel. You know, those of you who have heard the gospel since you were small, there's a great danger that you can take that so lightly. In my heart, even as I'm here in Maranatha, it just especially goes out to any of you young people who are struggling.

I relate more to people who struggle than the people who have it sorted out. Because I'm still struggling myself. I've just come from Sweden and I had 2,000 people in the afternoon and 2,000 young people at night.

People are trying to tell us today that young people won't listen more than a few seconds. They're into computer games and they're into video machines and all these things. I do most of these things myself, by the way.

And they can't concentrate. This was Sweden. This was what's known as post-Christian Sweden where the church is one-fifth the size as the United States or one-tenth.

And 2,000 young people at 11.30 at night sat for an hour and took it in like blotters out of the Sahara. And when the invitation was given, many came forward to surrender to Jesus Christ. Let's stop making generalizations about young people.

There are all kinds of young people, plenty of them that know nothing about God, never been to Sunday school, never read a Bible, right here in our own country that is rapidly being paganized. But let's realize that lots of young people reared in Christian homes or who have come to Christ and are following Christ. And we've got a dynamic spiritual movement going on among young people in America today.

That flagpole movement, the Urbana Convention that I'll be speaking at again the end of the year 2000 where they expect 19,000 university students. Let's pray for these young people. Let's realize the Bible can still be relevant at Harvard and Yale.

Let us deal with subtle forms of intimidation. I'm reading a new book on that subject right now. It looks really powerful.

Email me if you want to know about it. The power of God unto salvation. That's what hit me that night, March 5th, 1955.

And I was born from above. I became a Christian, a believer in Jesus. There's many different ways to describe a true Christian.

Someone said the most biblical description of a true Christian is in Christ. You look through the Bible, you'll find the greatest, most often used description of a Christian is someone who's in Christ. The word Christian actually doesn't appear that much in the Bible.

That night, because of Calvary, because God so loved the world, he sent his only begotten son to die for me. I was born from above. His Holy Spirit came to indwell me.

We're going to see a lot about that in the book of Acts. That has been a reality every single day. I'm going to say this slowly.

I tend to speak too fast. That has been a reality every single day since that moment of my conversion. I purposely say that.

I risk being misunderstood because that could sound arrogant to someone. But I purposely say that because I believe that we overemphasize this whole thing of falling away from Jesus and backsliding and growing cold. Some people never ask to give their testimony in their church until they backslide, get a real gruesome mess.

Then when they come back to Jesus, they can give their testimony in the church. I think of a church in California for years. I've hoped that I could get a chance to speak there.

I went to speak to the leader of that movement. He knows about me. He knows what God has done.

But I've never, ever had an invitation. A pastor nearby fell into major adultery, fell out with his church. He was disciplined.

A few months later, he was able to speak at this church that I've never been able to get into for 35 years. So it's true. If you backslide, you make a real mess, you'll be asked to give your testimony.

I'm not even saying that's wrong. But I am saying, brothers and sisters, that is not plan A. Plan A is you believe on Jesus and you make Him also Lord of your life. You're not saved by that.

But if you love Jesus and you're truly saved, something happens. And you begin to learn something about the Lordship of Christ. And the division and the controversy about the Lordship of Christ here in the States, which doesn't even exist in most nations, is almost totally unnecessary.

We have a gifting in America to shoot mice. Have you ever seen someone out in the street with the latest high-tech machine gun shooting mice? No, you generally have to go into the church to see that. And I'm speaking spiritually.

I was saved by the grace of God and have been walking in His Spirit by His grace every single day for 43 years. I don't think I ever thought I would get this far. I used to be scared stiff.

And I always felt so weak and inadequate. And I still do. Now to bring that into balance, you need to understand I've had lots of failures.

But you see, I learned from the Word of God and the message of grace exactly what to do when you fail. 1 John 2, Sin not. But if you sin, you have an advocate, a lawyer with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

And so when I had a failure or I sinned, not all failure is sin, by the way. But all sin has an element of failure. I knew how to repent.

As a baby Christian, I found this little book called Calvary Road. Calvary Road came out of the Revival. I thought I had a copy of it up there.

Here it is. The Revival in East Africa. Roy Heshin, the author of this book, who became a very close friend, he's now in Heaven.

He was an evangelist, but he was a bit egocentric a bit arrogant, a bit insensitive. And he went down to East Africa and he met these Africans that had just been blessed and experienced Revival. And it humbled him.

And he learned about brokenness, about humility. He learned about biblical personal revival. And we're going to be hearing about that this week.

Because I believe personal revival, that which I experienced because of Calvary. Of course, I had to continue to grow. Of course, I made many mistakes.

But I believe it's God's provision for every believer. And I know other people. I had the privilege of knowing quite a few people who have had the same walk.

To use an Americanism, it's no big deal. It may be unusual, but in the light of all we have in Jesus Christ, in the light of the reality of the Holy Spirit, if we really begin to understand that message of grace that we've tried to talk about this morning, then we realize we can live in personal revival. I had a man on the phone this afternoon because he's having a struggle with anger.

He's a friend I met in the Arab Gulf. He now lives in Vancouver. Just a phone conversation this afternoon.

You know, I'd love to talk to every one of you on the phone, not all at the same time. He's sharing with me because he's not getting victory over his temper. He feels he may not be saved.

Remember a young man calling me from a nation in Europe on the phone who's hooked on pornography? A man going in ministry? Having a lot of failure and I've been able to share with him the way of victory and the way of grace. But he fell with a prostitute some time ago. He's totally fearful to ever tell his wife about this.

And he called me and he said he felt he lost his salvation. Surely if he fell with a prostitute he must have lost his salvation. I don't believe that's necessarily so.

It could be that he's never been saved by God's grace. It's not for me to judge. But Christians do fail.

Christians do sin. One of the leading pastors in this nation fell into adultery. A man who's written many books.

A man who I know personally. A godly man. But in a moment of crisis and weakness through a lot of different factors he fell.

He was quickly restored. It eventually took a couple of years for the full restoration. And he's back in dynamic ministry today.

God does restore people. There is plan B. There is plan C. There is plan D. I sometimes minister in prison. A lot of those guys are on plan H. Any of you have had a number of failures in your life? I don't think all of you were shrink-wrapped in the local Sunday school.

Come on. Let's be honest. Maybe if you're honest you're somewhere on plan F or H. You know what I say? Praise God for a big alphabet.

Press on in Jesus Christ. Get back on that straight and narrow road through the blood of Christ through restoration. And you will realize all that you have in Jesus.

And God will use you. There's a brilliant book I just found out about yesterday. I'm itching to read it.

Talking about the second half and comparing life with a football game. All football games, all main sporting events are actually won in the second half. You can't technically win just in the first half.

You may get way ahead, but we've seen some big reversals, haven't we? The whole of the United States is talking today about women's soccer. I didn't even know American women were into soccer. I guess I need to get over here and get some more orientation.

But boy, that was a big victory for the women yesterday. Never won. I follow soccer in Europe.

It's called football. It's never won in the first half. Most of you are through the first half of your life.

Maybe you don't feel you've done so much. Maybe you don't feel you're exactly a Book of Acts Christian turning cities and people upside down for Jesus. And I would urge you, make the second half better.

Some games have been won in the last five seconds. We've all seen that at least in the movies. And if God only gives you one more year or five more years, make that count for eternity.

Let the Spirit of God fill you and bend you and use you and become an apostolic Book of Acts disciple whose life will count for eternity. Let us pray. Our God and Father, we thank You for Your Word.

We thank You for this great passage in Matthew 9. We didn't even get to the end of it where You challenged us to pray to You, Lord of the harvest, that You would send forth laborers into the harvest. But that's what that woman did when she put my name on her hit list. And when she prayed for me and for my ungodly high school.

And we thank You, God, that You are alive. That You do answer prayer. That Your Bible is true.

And as we dig into Your Word during this week together, we believe Your Holy Spirit is going to do greater things in our lives. And we will be sure to give You all the glory and to give You all the praise through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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