

# (The Book of Acts) Session 05

by George Verwer

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*George Verwer's sermon explores the healing in Acts 3, emphasizing the importance of a Christ-centered message amidst challenges of doctrine and persecution.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 1:8, Acts 3:6, Acts 3:15

**Topics:** "Acts"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the power of personal evangelism and the importance of building relationships with people before sharing the gospel. He emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in opening doors for evangelism and encourages a balanced approach to spiritual warfare. The sermon also highlights the boldness of Peter in preaching a Christ-centered message and the persecution that followed. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need for believers to put their faith into practice and to be set free from the opinions and criticisms of others.

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## Transcript

Acts chapter 3. I've got my NIV. I found it in my briefcase. I thought I had this with me.

The Bible I guess I use the most. If in the first two chapters of Acts we're seeing a mighty work of the Holy Spirit, in the second chapters, third and fourth, we suddenly see Satan let loose against God's people. Quite an enormous shift.

Though this shift doesn't come immediately because the first part of chapter 3 we have the testimony of this lame man being healed. One of my favorite little verses and in our short time all we can do is get sort of certain verses. We can't possibly try to expound all of this.

But my favorite verse really is verse 6 where Peter facing that beggar who's standing there says, silver and gold have I none but such as I have give I thee in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. I always find that a little amusing especially if Peter was the first Pope which I don't find too much basis for thinking. But if he was the first Pope he certainly has a different testimony than the present Pope.

Silver and gold have I none. One of the most wealthy organizations in the whole planet today is the Vatican and everything connected with it. Once I was sitting on a train with a man who is in charge of investments for the Vatican, one of the persons who was not even a Christian and he was sharing the things that they invest their money in and they're not too worried about what it is to make sure that lots of

money keeps coming in.

I praise God there may be some of you this morning that are Roman Catholics, and I don't want to offend anyone but I believe it is a great mistake today to think that we can just as evangelical biblical people sort of easily work together with with Roman Catholics. This has been difficult for our organization in Europe. The pressure is on to try to work together.

But we believe the doctrinal foundation is not there to work together and we are very open-minded in as many areas as we can. But you have to decide to draw the line somewhere and as I've already shared in my ministry I get concerned on either extreme. But as we tried to bring out last night doctrine is important and there must be at least some kind of basic doctrinal foundation to work on to decide who we cooperate with.

Actually, we believe the Roman Catholic world is a major missionary target area and we have been targeting Mexico and Latin America and Spain and when these people come to Christ most of the time they see it's impossible for them to just remain within the dark Roman Catholic Church say of Spain. Now, I think on the other side of the coin we need to understand that there are many many different kinds of Catholics today and there is an evangelical Catholic movement and you will find individuals who love the Lord. But and I'm sure you can have fellowship with those individuals, but that's quite different from you know trying to have an evangelistic campaign.

We'd especially appreciate prayer because with a number of groups we are targeting Rome in the next for the millennium and we are planning to be at these two gates where all these Roman Catholics, millions of Catholics, tens of millions I believe, let's say millions to be safe, are coming to the Vatican, coming to Rome on a pilgrimage for the millennium and we're uniting together, Ghiottano Satelli, some of you know this wild evangelist, Italian guy married to a Yank, and a number of other groups are working together to evangelize and to share the gospel with these millions of Catholics who are coming. Most of these people do not understand salvation by grace. Now somebody might immediately pop up and say well, we know many Protestant churches that are like that.

Let's face it, there are many Protestant churches far worse off than Roman Catholics. But what does that prove? What does that prove? It proves of course we need to evangelize those people as well. The greatest opposition in India right now to some of the things we're doing there come from liberal Catholics who are linking up with very liberal Protestants and their target, their target are those groups, especially sometimes parachurch agencies, as sometimes we're called, we don't like that, who are trying to see Hindus come to Christ.

In the light of this present persecution, we've teamed up a little bit for negotiation and relationship with the government, with some evangelical Catholics and to have a united voice to the government and some of the greatest opposition is coming from liberal Catholics and liberal Protestants. So it is complex. When it comes to the abortion issue, we might be standing side by side with a Roman Catholic in a political demonstration or something similar, but those of us who are committed to evangelism and church planting across the world, we find that we need to work together with those who are of like mind in regard to the basic principles of the Word of God.

Anyway, that's a little bit of tangent because whenever I think of Peter and this testimony, silver and gold have I none, such as I have I give thee the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And then we have recorded one of the great healings in the New Testament. And since I touched on the subject of

healing yesterday, I'm not going to get into it again.

John Stott's commentary that I'm studying to help in my preparation as a brilliant, a brilliant explanation about healing and takes a very balanced and middle position. Pointing out that it's not that it never happens, talking about miracles in general, and it's not that it is God's sort of norm, that this is sort of happening every day and that the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Then we get into the man is healed and there's great rejoicing.

Verse 9, all the people saw him walking and praising God. And they knew that it was he who sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man who was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's great wondering.

By the way, one of the things John Stott brought out and other writers bring out is that if you look at the miracles in the New Testament, especially the miracles that Jesus did, they are often so completely different than from what people are talking about and claiming often these days. And those miracles also were always permanent. There were no relapses as far as we can see in connection with the miracles done in the New Testament where today in terms of the miracles that are claimed, we also often find them telling us later that there's a relapse.

Because the person lost their faith or because the person, you know, had doubts or unbelief came in and it certainly, as we look out across the mission field today, is one of the most complex issues that we face. We then go into this second sermon by Peter and I was wrestling in my heart with how much of this sermon I should attempt to talk about because there's so much there. It is such a Christ-centered message and it's just a reminder that our preaching today should be Christ-centered.

It seems to me, and I fall into this, it is so easy to get into other agendas. There's so much to talk about. There are so many different campaigns now as Christians we're supposed to be in and I just want to throw this in that I don't think I'd be here today and my wife who will be coming over here in a few minutes if I hadn't discovered the reality of limitations.

Learning to live within my limitations. I don't know if you ever heard of R.T. Kendall. How many of you ever heard of R.T. Kendall? Famous, famous Southern Baptist, but he ministers in London, England, so you wouldn't have heard of him.

He ministers in the church where Dr. Lloyd Jones was once the pastor. Where Campbell Morgan, maybe you've ever heard his name, some of you have read a little bit, was once the pastor. Very interesting, some of the things he says about the book of Acts.

Very balanced. But R.T. Kendall came to our leadership meeting when our leaders gathered from all over the world, not all of them, but many of them, and he shared a message on the anointing and working within the anointing that God gives you. He would just express it in different terms than perhaps I would.

Some people today talk about boundaries. There's some interesting books about boundaries. I haven't finished any of them to be honest, but I like the terminology because often I believe as especially those of us who are zealous and we got a vision and we want to evangelize the world and our hearts break when we see poor people, our hearts break when we see so much suffering, that there's a part of us that just want to do, you know, everything we can, but you can't do it.

And one of my great struggles is to continually live with my own frailty, my own limitations. I think anyone who's a visionary, as some of us are, we have to learn to live with frustration. Some of you have frustration and you feel you must get to a frustration seminar, a seminar that specifically deals with frustration so that you can get over frustration.

I'm not saying you shouldn't do that. We have seminars in America for every possible kind of problem on planet Earth, and some of them, I believe, are really cuckoo. But I believe a visionary has to learn to live with a degree of frustration and our favorite verse has to be casting every care upon him because he cares for us, and I know that even coming on a vacation, there are points of frustration.

Isn't one of our great problems in the church today that's led to a lot of disunity is, is this problem of unrealistic expectation, and even when we go back from a week like this and we've experienced some blessing and we've got greater vision, we can go back with an unrealistic expectation as to, you know, what's going to happen now in our family? What's going to happen in our city? What's going to happen in our church? We have a lot of new language flying around today, especially connected with spiritual warfare terminology, and you're going to bump into that sooner or later. It has caused havoc on the mission field, though I believe in spiritual warfare, and I believe there can be a balanced approach to it. In one sense, the moment we're born again, all of us are thrown into spiritual warfare, but many of the young people today are not happy with the language of the 50s and the 60s and the 70s, where we spoke about reaching men for Christ, seeing the church planted, impacting nations.

Now they've got the takeover language. Have you heard the takeover? We're going to take this city for Christ. I think there's even books by that title.

The wildest message that I ever gave was after Maranatha last year. I was a tame little Easter Bunny here at Maranatha last year compared to when I hit this black church in Detroit. These people have been trying to get me there for ten years, and it wasn't a totally black church.

In fact, I think the pastor was an Italian. It was right in the heart of Detroit, and you know, black people are easier to preach to than white people. Let's face it.

They let you know. If they agree with you, they let you know, and as they let me know, I let them know, and they let me know, and it just got more and more wild. A couple of white people were there that had never heard me speak like this in my entire life.

They thought I'd suddenly become black, and this tape now is on the underground throughout Detroit with George Verwer's totally over-the-top message. It's so funny because in the morning, I was speaking in this laid-back, very conservative Baptist church, all white in Grand Rapids, which is known for its whiteness, and then there are beautiful exceptions, by the way. Grand Rapids is changing, but Detroit is an amazing place.

Anyway, instead of giving you Peter's sermon, I've given you my own, but the verse that especially jumps. How not to preach from the book of Acts is verse 19. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.

When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. What a tremendous word from God, and we hope that this week the Holy Spirit will be gracious among us, and this will be a time of refreshing. We should not think that what happened in the book of Acts is just ancient history.

We go off to our favorite academic institution, and we put these little bits of information in our head. By the way, some theological seminaries today are famous, there's one around New York City area, for hardly ever touching the actual text of the Bible. Can you imagine? Men and women preparing for ministry and hardly ever getting into the actual text.

I'd like to believe that's changed because that's some information from some time ago, because the evangelical biblical cause has had so much influence in very unusual places. You know, even the World Council of Churches, which was so totally liberal way back in the 50s, has many evangelical Christians who have infiltrated it and keep jumping up in the meeting and calling for things to happen. But to me, when we study the Bible, other books can be useful, but the text is the most important, and I'm counting on you.

I'm hoping you are going to read the text as we continue through the week. So Peter gives this Christ-centered sermon. It was also a very bold sermon.

Right off there in verse 15, he says, you killed the Prince of Life. You killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. We looked at that Acts 1.8, that we would be his witnesses, and now we see Peter putting that into practice.

And the challenge of this week is not going to be, firstly, to gather up information about the book of Acts and also what John shares, but putting it in practice. The real challenge of the week starts when we go home. We find that people leaving OM, many come with us for a summer, many come with us for two years.

We have another five, six hundred new people joining for two years, and five or six hundred who are on a two-year program. They leave. All that happens at the end of August, the most wild time of the year for us.

But you know what? We find with many of these young people, it is harder for them to adjust back to life at home in their church than it was to adjust to India or Central Asia or Turkey or somewhere in North Africa. And anything you can do to help returning missionaries adjust to what they find when they come back. Some, even who have been out on the field for years, they may not come back in good condition.

They may come back discouraged. They may come back struggling with unanswered prayer. And then when no one even meets them at the airport, and there's no car to drive and no place to stay, the enemy can try to use that to really discourage these people.

I'm a bit fascinated with Grand Prix racing and NASCAR racing in India. What do they call it down in Indianapolis? Indian car racing. Don't know much about it, but I'm fascinated.

And a friend of mine from my childhood, I may have mentioned this the other day, all he's doing is winning racing drivers to Christ. He was just at Silverstone, the Grand Prix race in England that took place this last weekend. And God is moving among racing drivers, but he was criticized because he was doing the work on Sunday.

Can you imagine God's people? You know, the church would be so wonderful, wouldn't it, if it wasn't for the people? Just fellowshiping with Jesus, the Holy Spirit, but of course, it's people is what it's all about. So, we need, we need to be set free. Peter gave such a powerful message.

And then, seemingly, all hell breaks loose, as suddenly, persecution breaks out. As we move into chapter 4, we find the Sadducees. They were sort of the elite of their day.

They were very arrogant. They didn't believe in the resurrection. They thought they were really the power force.

Read about the Sadducees in one of your Bible dictionaries, very interesting group, and how sad that today we can even have spiritual Sadducees, spiritual Sadducees within the body of Christ. Let's just read these words. And as they spoke unto the people, the priests and the captains of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

And they laid hands on them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was now eventide. And many of them who heard the word believed, and the number of men, I'm sure that women must be included in this, and that's another great controversy. I would just love to talk about the whole subject of inclusive language, but I will not speak about that at this moment.

But just to say this, there's extreme inclusive language that would disturb probably most evangelical Christians. There is a balanced use of inclusive language that has been going on in a very tame way, like the Urbana Convention for many, many years. And most women, especially modern women in university who were trying to win to Christ, were not declaring war on people around America, because they're not the exact same as us, or read a different translation of the Bible.

We are trying to win people to Christ, and I will tell you to win university women to Christ in America, you need to use some inclusive language. And to make a few slight changes in the New Testament, to use a few inclusive words, in no way destroys the message of the Word of God. Don't confuse that with some extreme Bible or some other extreme use of so-called inclusive language that you've got into.

Anyway, it's hard to believe for me that a 5,000 saved here were only men, but it's not a major point. So if you don't agree with me on that, please do not come up to me after the meeting. I don't mind you coming up to me after the meeting with anything major, but do not come up to me with trivia.

Write me, email me, phone me. Why is that? Because I'm a hyper person, I'm an excited person, and when people come up with grace-killing trivia, I don't always respond as lovingly as I should. And over the years, I have got in considerable difficulty.

I'll never forget preaching in Jordan, pouring out my heart, and I was using a modern new Arabic translation. Little did I know that there were people in the audience who believed this translation was from the devil. I was just a visiting, passing through.

Somebody gave me this Bible. I wasn't using the Arabic Bible. I guess just referred to it, and just after the meeting, a man just jumped on me.

You know, I was nervous enough. I'm not as bold as I look. I have a fear, easily intimidation instinct by certain kinds of people, especially if they look like they're gonna bite you.

That always bothers me when the people who come up to me look like they're going to bite me. Anyway, I certainly reacted in the flesh, and I don't know what I said to this poor chap, but two people had to grab me and get me away from him. So, oh, praise God, where am I here? Persecution, being grieved that they

taught the people, 5,000 people coming to Jesus Christ.

No wonder they were upset, and the truth is whenever God's working, Satan is stirring. So, if you're going to do anything for God, you better be ready for opposition, and I also need to be more relaxed, and be ready to handle the fiery darts of Satan. It came to pass on the next day that the rulers and the elders and the scribes and Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together in Jerusalem.

When they had sent them in the midst, they asked, By what power or by what name have you done this? Wow, talk about a great question. Wouldn't you like that to happen to you? You know, this afternoon you're out walking along the beach. Someone comes up and sort of asks you, you know, what's the greatest thing in your life? What power is causing you to function here this afternoon, and that opens the door.

I don't find personal evangelism easy, but I use the method of saying things that get people to ask me questions. You don't always have to hit people with the four spiritual laws, or now I know the opposition has produced the four spiritual flaws, or with your favorite, we used to have in our day, four things God wants you to know. You don't always need to hit people immediately with the gospel.

You might want to take an interest in them as people. You might want to just, you know, do some basic conversation, and the door will often open. And through the persecution, through the problems, through the difficulties, the door opens for Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit.

Verse 8, so basic, isn't it? The filling of the Holy Spirit. Why does that have to be mentioned here? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man by what means he's made well, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand, and be before you well or healed. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which has become the head of the corner.

And they're one of the greatest verses in the book of Acts, especially for us mission-minded characters. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there's no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. That one verse alone has the power to change our lives, as we realize Jesus Christ is the only way.

That is the hardest, that is the hardest part of my faith for me to maintain. Now, I am not naturally there. There's part of me that naturally is universalistic.

And if you don't think even many leading seminarians and theologians in America are universalistic today, you just don't know what's going on. That is a very popular theology, especially as people get older and they don't see their dreams fulfilled. Maybe they were expecting so many more to be saved, and now they're getting toward their end of their life, and there's a shift in the universalism.

Universalism, it seems that happened to Sadhu Sundar Singh, a great man of God in India. But as he got older, it seems he may have slipped into that. Not for me to judge, but I believe we have to stick to the Word of God, not our human reasoning.

If there is some second plan where all these different relatives of ours can be later saved, forgive me, I say, praise God, praise God, but I don't see it here. So I don't want to get into that. I don't want to get into

speculation.

If I get into speculation, I may miss God's great plan for reaching people here. Because it is, it is motivational to realize Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other name whereby people can be saved.

That is not our only motivation. I've been attacked as being too motivated by the reality of hell. I was accused by some of being the only student at Moody Bible Institute that behaved as if hell existed.

By the way, I didn't say that. That was stated about me as a wild student who believed half the faculty was backslidden, and half the students were totally lukewarm. It caused a few problems there when I was a student.

No wonder I needed to get into Grace Awakening and make up a few adjustments in my theology as I realized the gospel of grace. Neither is there salvation in any other. There's no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, I love the teamwork, and perceived that they were ignorant and unlearned men. Oh, does that one upset our seminary professors today? They have many, many interpretations of that. They insist that that isn't really accurate, and that these were really highly professional fishermen.

They were highly trained fishermen. Therefore, we today also must come to their seminaries and get highly trained. Don't misunderstand me at this point.

I believe God uses all kinds of people, and I believe seminary training and getting PhDs, we have a number of them on OM, that is great. But it's not for everyone, and people who have higher education must never despise the ordinary lay person, and a lot of the great evangelism today in the world is done by very ordinary people who are very similar to Peter and John. They were basically, in terms of this world's knowledge, ignorant people.

It's not either-or, and it's not honoring to God to have either-or, but in our society, we have neglected this truth. I was just with a tremendous pastor, a Dallas Seminary graduate, one of the greatest pastors in Sweden, a Swede, who lives often in pain because he's some kind of tumor in his brain there for years, that just, he never knows when he's gonna go. Even when he was interpreting for me in his Swedish, he was in pain.

He had just returned from Ethiopia, and he opened his heart. What God was doing in Ethiopia, I mean, it's awesome. Ethiopia is one of the fastest growth, church growth places in the world right now, and it's not, it's not that linked with present-day missionary work, and they don't, pastors, trained pastors, Bible college pastors, forget it.

Most of the churches are pastored by lay people who are just, just like me here teaching you the book of Acts. I'm reading two chapters from John Stott just one day ahead of you, just to get a few extra bits and pieces, you know, to make it all interesting, at least for me, and it's getting harder to keep up because he's got so much to say, it's a thick book. Of course, the other side of the coin is I've been 43 years in this book, but so much of what God is doing today is being done by ordinary lay people, and one of the great mistakes we've made in this country is to think that the work will mainly be done by paid Christian workers, and our churches are overloaded with paid Christian workers.

Everybody is professional, and it's very intimidating often to the average person, and it's a great mistake, and the pendulum is swinging back in some churches and in some places, and we've got people saying things like, everybody's in ministry. Everybody's in ministry. Everybody's doing something.

It's not, it's not linked with how highly educated you are. We have to sometimes learn by our mistakes. The Holy Spirit, the end of the day, is the key person in all of this kind of work.

They marveled that they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus, and I want to close on that line. As it's my prayer that when people talk to you, and when people meet you, wherever it may be, that somehow, not all of them, some of them will realize you've been with Jesus. That's what makes the difference, the end of the day.

Let us pray. Our God and Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the challenge that comes as we read about your church being thrust into persecution, and we'll pick up on in in the message tonight.

And Lord Jesus, we just pray that as we go out into the highways and byways, as we share, as we witness, that people will somehow notice that we are different, and they will realize, even if we have to tell them, we have been with Jesus. Not only that, but that by his spirit, he lives within our hearts. We thank you, O God, that you use ordinary people, and we want to stand against every form of intimidation that's keeping any of us from dynamic, book of Acts, apostolic ministry.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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