

The Gospel in Contemporary Culture

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the importance of God's glory in missions and the need for God-centeredness in our lives and ministries.

Duration: 1:23:01

Topics: "Culture"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages listeners to not be discouraged by past failures or missteps in their ministry. He references Gordon MacDonald's book, 'Rebuilding Your Broken World,' as a resource for those who have experienced moral failures or difficult experiences. The speaker emphasizes the importance of preaching grace and reminds listeners that God's plan is not limited to a specific letter of the alphabet. He then transitions to discussing the book of Acts and encourages listeners to study it for increased vision and motivation. The speaker concludes by highlighting five words from Acts 13 that he wants to leave with the audience.

Transcript

The following message was recorded at an event hosted by Desiring God. More information about Desiring God events, conferences, and resources is available at www.DesiringGod.org George Verwer is a man who has been used by God to ignite pastors around the world, and to ignite young people and not-so-young people. And it's the force of his passion, you're going to hear his passion.

It's his radical understanding of Christian discipleship that is just a no-holds-barred, that there's nothing worth more in life than to give your life away for the sake of the gospel and the sake of the nations. Also, his commitment to literature. He's written many books, and you can see some on the table back there in the corner of the Commons.

But everywhere he goes, he promotes literature. It's a huge part of the ministry of his organization, that they distribute literature everywhere. He is the founder and international coordinator of Operation Mobilization, which began work in 1961.

Today, there are over 2,800 workers right now, scattered throughout the world, in many different ways, in church planning, in literature distribution, in health and medical, in all kinds of ways. They have two ships that many of you have heard about, that just go around the world, doing medical work and mercy ministry and literature distribution. Operation Mobilization is a great place to direct your people when they're

looking for relevant short-term experiences.

My most memorable experience with George Verwer, although there have been many, he was here several years ago, and I'll never forget that. But in 1995, I was invited to be one of 4,000 delegates at the Global Consultation on World Evangelization in Seoul, Korea. And 4,000 leaders came from 186 countries, which made it the broadest represented gathering, we believe, in church history.

And the nations came together to strategize of how we can cooperate and work together as the global church of Jesus Christ, to see the gospel for every people, the church for every people. And they asked George Verwer there to coordinate the mobilizers' workshop, because of his proven track record of mobilizing thousands of people into missions. But what I remember most is, during one of our sessions, we were invited, these 4,000 delegates were invited to go to the Urbana-style conference that the young students of Korea were having in the soccer stadium.

80,000 Korean students were gathered to give their lives for missions. And they invited all the delegates to walk into the stadium, and the Koreans just burst into celebration. And the person they chose to address these 80,000 students and these 4,000 delegates from around the world was George Verwer.

And I'll never forget him holding a globe like that, except I think it was a bigger one. And he was standing way at the top somewhere in the stadium of 80,000 people, and he just preached his heart out with his globe in his hands the whole time. And then when he was done, he just threw the globe and just got batted around the soccer stadium, as these students and these delegates from around the world were committing themselves to missions.

He's married to Dreena, his wife, and he has three adult children. He lives in England, where the OM International Headquarters is. So he's going to come and share with us.

I want to pray for him one more time, and then there'll be time for questions and answers afterwards. So let's pray for George. Father, we ask you to give supernatural energy to George.

You've done it again and again and again. He's come from Moody. He's going to Washington, D.C., tomorrow to England, the next day to South Africa.

And, Lord, how we ask you to sustain him. And, Lord, you have a word for us through him this morning, and I just pray that you'd give him maximum freedom, and that you'd give our hearts maximum receptivity, and that seeds would be planted that would trickle down and flow down to our congregations and to our communities and beyond. We love you, Lord.

We love what you're doing. We thank you that George can be with us. Anoint him, we pray.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. What a challenge to be back in one of my favorite cities, Minneapolis.

It's in my top 1,000 favorite cities in the world. It's the Lord who said, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person. This is not my thing.

It's not a missionary thing. But it's for all who love the Lord Jesus and who want to obey his word. There are many nations of the world that are suffering right now in such a phenomenal way that probably if that kind of suffering entered your town, you would not perhaps be able to function.

If you think of what's going on in Algeria, if you think of what's happened, and it's a little easier right now in Afghanistan, if you think of Sri Lanka, 50,000 dead. No one knows when they're going to be blown up. And many other parts of the world with less publicity, phenomenal suffering.

And before I share from God's word, I would like to pray for some of the nations of the world. My big thing is in world missions. I'm actually not a good mission speaker and don't accept very many missions conferences because my big thing is just Jesus and God's grace.

But we know as Jesus works in our lives and as we experience his grace and we start turning the other pages in the Bible, we do find a few other little challenges. Like he shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and even the uttermost part of the earth. Back when that was stated, Minneapolis would have been considered the absolute uttermost part.

Because that was stated near Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth. Let's just have a few more moments of prayer.

There's no Bible verse that says you have to close your eyes when you pray. So I'm going to point to some of these suffering places that are on my heart as we pray. Let us pray.

Lord, I pray especially for Algeria, this land in North Africa where the church just barely exists. We thank you for some signs of breakthrough among the Cabal people. We thank you for the workers who are there risking their lives.

And oh God, we believe you want to do something greater in Algeria. We want to be under the burden of this country. All those who have lost loved ones, a thousand more slaughtered in the past few weeks.

We cry out that somehow, somehow peace would come to this nation. And that the gospel may go forward. And Lord, we pray for Libya where there's not so much suffering on one level, but where we have one of the more, even more unreached nations of the world.

We pray for Gaddafi. We pray for this nation. We thank you for tent makers that are there sharing their faith.

And God, we pray for the Middle East, Syria, and Israel, and Lebanon. So many have died. And Jordan, Egypt, the terrible massacre in Luxor just a few weeks ago.

We pray for Egypt, for Israel, for the Middle East, that somehow this thing will not come unglued. And we pray for Iraq, and especially the Kurdish people who have suffered without a nation. And who are so needy right now with almost no church among them.

Lord, we think of people speaking on television and radio here yesterday as if soon we're going to be at war with this land of Iraq. Oh God, spare us. And by your spirit, work in that country.

We think of Iran and Afghanistan. We think of all the Afghan refugees living in Iran and very, very hard to reach. And we pray for Afghanistan.

Lord, I think of my own nephew living there. And his wife and children under the Taliban rule. Few believers in that whole nation.

We pray for Afghanistan. And Lord, for Kashmir and all the strife and suffering there in Sri Lanka. We think again the increase of suffering in Cambodia and pray for Cambodia and Laos.

We think of the increased persecution on Christians in China and we would pray for China. And somehow, there'd be greater breakthroughs there, especially among the unreached Muslim groups of China. Lord, there are many, many other nations on our hearts right now.

And we believe that by your grace, what we do here locally will affect what happens globally in other parts of the world. Help us to grasp this. In the name of Jesus.

Amen. Well, I think I spoke a little too loud at Founders Week last night at Moody Bible Institute. And I see a couple of thousand people.

Even with a sound system, I tend to speak too loud. So it might take a few minutes for my voice to level out. I've had 40 years of voice trouble.

Three operations on my vocal cords. But I've never hardly lost my voice. So you can relax if you think the meeting is going to end early because of my voice.

It is intimidating to speak to pastors and Christian leaders. Somehow, I got into this when I was about 19. And somehow the Lord just gave me such a wonderful linking with so many pastors.

First in the States. But then in Mexico where I learned Spanish. And then in Spain.

And then in France. And then in Great Britain. And then in India and Nepal and Bangkok.

Different countries where my wife and I have lived. We just celebrated our 38th wedding anniversary a few days ago in the airport before I left London. Had a special breakfast together.

And my heart really is linked with those who are pastoring God's people. And I counted a tremendous privilege to share with you this morning. I don't just say that.

And I know that what we do locally, what we decide and what we do locally does impact the world globally. So I believe this is an important hour. And if you have a notebook and you can write a few things down, that would be encouraging.

I know you probably are on information overload and all of that. If you get at least 10 points from what I say. And we know any good sermon should never have more than what? Four or five.

So I think I'll forget about trying to preach any kind of a sermon. But if you get 10 points and one year from now mention those points. I will send you free 10 challenging, motivating Christian books.

How many of you still read? I know that's not a popular sport. That's great. And you probably noticed that we have brought a few books on display.

Because you need some books between now and when you get the 10 other free books. Actually, the book I wanted to mention the most is John Piper's book. Let the Nations Be Glad.

The Supremacy of God and Missions. About two. Excuse me for that.

Maybe I should switch over to this microphone. Can I do that? Who's a sound person? Just switch over to this. I think I find that a little easier.

I was preparing to speak at Urbana. And I was really struggling. The two messages I had written out and submitted something I never do except for Urbana.

They were expecting, by the way, 19,000 there. And I had two of the evening meetings. I just sensed they were not the messages that I was to share.

And I had known about this book for some time. I'm a person of many books. And I had not read it carefully.

Even though I had a number of people urge me to do so. But somehow in preparing for Urbana. About a year and a half ago, I picked up this book by John.

It's so amazing because I think you actually gave me a copy four years ago when I was here. I know John's written so many books. Lost track of him himself.

But I believe this is one of the most significant books that has ever been written about world missions. We know no book is as significant as God's word. And God's word is about missions from Genesis to Revelation.

But John has been inspired of the Lord and has put down his thoughts about the supremacy of God. We need to be God focused in our missions. And of course in everything.

And so if you don't already have ten copies of this book. I want to encourage you to go to their bookstore. Don't confuse it with my little tiny book display.

And get some copies of this book and get it into the hands of other people. And I just believe God will use that. You see God's glory is tied into all of this.

And I can't even begin to express it the way John has. But I believe this is the bottom line. The supremacy of God in missions.

Too much missionary work gets very man-centered. Maybe even in your own ministry you find things getting very man-centered. Thirty-five years ago as a young Christian.

No, it's actually forty years ago. God brought into my life some books by a man named Deverme Frompty. He didn't understand all that I was reading.

But the whole focus of those books was becoming God-centered. And through that man's writings. And Dr. Lord Jones, his writings.

The Sermon on the Mount. And spiritual depression, its cause and cure. And then through other people.

Like A.W. Tozer. I learned more about repenting. And I learned more about becoming God-focused.

And God-centered in every aspect of my life. And of course I'm still learning that. We have a unique way of distributing books in OM.

And in the meetings I take. And some of you have already taken advantage of that. The books are just there on a donation basis.

I have a lot of struggles with God's people. And I'm a reluctant Christian. Saved in a one-night Billy Graham meeting in New York City.

One of my struggles is everything seems to go too slow. And certainly selling books is a very slow process. So we like to give books away.

And we want to give every one of you two books completely free. No strings attached. The first book is a book that I just got a hold of.

Written by a pastor. When Good Men Are Tempted. Bill Perkins.

It's a book for men. It's the most raw, straightforward book. On the challenge of our sexuality that I've looked at in a long time.

I've always wondered why the church was so strangely silent. On this subject. When there's 500 verses in the Bible about sex.

Actually many whole chapters. Proverbs alone has three chapters. All about sex.

Amazing verses. I know some of you are into Bible exposition. How many of you are Bible expositors? At least you're trying.

Praise God. How many of you have expounded verses like, Be thou satisfied with the breasts of the wife of thy youth? Raise your hand. Praise God.

Not many hands. Chapter one in this book. Part one is understanding the struggle.

Chapter one. Why naked women look so good. That did catch my attention.

I must admit. Two. Why other women look better.

Three. I'm caught. And I can't get loose.

And it goes on. Raising the white flag. Drag it into the light.

Your family. Choosing your master. Discovering the new you.

Breaking the addictive cycle. Why locking arms is tough. The lost art of buddy ship.

Pure sex. Tools for tight corners. I only have 90 copies.

I know there's far more here than that. But. Some of you already have this book.

It's free. Just go over there. But I would encourage you.

If you take it to read at least part of it. I don't expect pastors to finish every book they start. I remember when I got into this book.

Before this great grace awakening epistle of yours came out. John, I got into Charles Swindoll's book. On grace.

I just started in the middle. Have you ever done that? It's a good way to read. And the first chapters of this. Are fairly. Fairly boring, but they're okay. Whatever you do, don't get swindle.

He's speaking at Moody tonight. Don't get swindle mixed up with John Piper. But.

You're not into motorcycles, are you? This is really more of a book about love. And loving one another in some ways. Than it is about grace.

That's why it's called Grace Awakening. But as I read it in the middle and read both directions. It was it was really confusing.

But it was a blessing. As well. And I think my favorite chapter here is called the grace to let others be.

And that will especially be an encouragement in your marriage. So that's another one you can pick up free. I do little deals with a publisher.

I bought five thousand of these for cost price. And this was a hardback. Twenty dollars.

I don't like to spend twenty dollars for a book. Because generally I don't have twenty dollars. So I got my own edition.

Special edition. Of a very special book. I got ten thousand copies for a dollar twenty six.

It's pretty good for a twenty dollar book. I want to say say that. So that if you just even leave a dollar.

I know many of you are broke. Quite a few of you look very broke. Even if you leave a dollar.

Because after you get past the first two books. They're free. After that we would ask some kind of donation.

Even if it's a postdated check. Up to the year 2000. We're part of the 82,000 movement.

So we take checks. I had a whole load of checks from South Africa. All postdated and.

Sorry to say I've lost all of them. So if you do give a postdated check. Probably.

It'll never get cashed. The Great Omission by Robertson McQuilkin. One of the leading men in missions.

The man who gave up the presidency of Columbia International University. To take care of his wife. Because she had Alzheimer's.

I was just on the phone with him. Godly man. There's his book.

The Great Omission. I would be very encouraged if you took any of my books. Which are free.

Because they don't sell very well. But. Another famous.

Book that we have on the table is Paul Borthwick's book. Another great missionary visionary. Working with Gordon McDonald over in.

Though he's just left that job. Over in New England. How to be a world-class Christian.

Here's a book about the land of Turkey. How many of you pray. For the land of Turkey.

70 million people in Turkey. Raise your hand. A number of you.

Not many books about Turkey. So that's a great book. My Big Father.

This is one of the books. That we're not giving free. It's just a little too expensive to give free.

And I haven't pulled a deal off with the publisher. Since we're actually the publisher. But.

Feel free to take. Operation World. For any donation you can.

You can give. How many of you already have. This great book.

That is so encouraging. I always say all over the world. Anybody without two copies.

Of this book is probably backslidden. It's. Such an incredibly.

Important book. How's your geography. Anybody.

Excuse me. Can tell me what country this is. Whoa.

Sensitive Mike. Whoops. Raise your hand.

You get an extra free book. Iran. No.

That's a good guess. Come on. John Piper's not included in this.

Yeah. No. You're getting close.

Pakistan. No. Afghanistan.

No. Kazakhstan. Cuz.

What is that? Kazakhstan. Getting close. No.

No. Pakistan. Uzbekistan.

Paul, I was really hoping for. Intelligent crap. It's okay.

We're very big. Into forgiveness. This is a flag.

Of Tajikistan. Imagine if the American flag. Is held up in a country way off somewhere.

We had a great group of. Intellectuals together. and we asked them what country that was.

If you were an American in the meeting and not one single person recognized what country that flag was from, you might have some interesting emotions. Let's now turn to our passage of Scripture, if I can find my little Testament, Acts chapter 13. We're just going to read actually the first five verses.

In the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers. Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Menaem, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. While they were

worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work to which I have called them.

So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and they sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues.

John was with them as their helper. I try to spend a lot of time in the Bible. And I try to spend a lot of time in the book of Acts.

Because it's so motivating. It so helps one, thank you, to increase in vision. And I hope that each one of you, if you possibly can, in the next six months, read through the book of Acts.

You may want to try it, even one of these really mega modern paraphrases like the message. Boy, that will stimulate your biblical juices. I know there are some people oppose that particular translation or paraphrase.

But at least as a pastor, you can read it once. Because it does bring in some very interesting ways. And then you can always go back.

I know most of you are having your quiet time in the original Greek. You can always go back to that later on. There are five words from this chapter that I'd like to leave with you.

So then you're already halfway to your ten free books one year from now. The first word that comes out of this chapter is the word church. It's not the chapter, but these five verses.

In the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers. Somehow in God's providence, shortly after my own conversion, I realized the importance of the local church. And we got linked with some local churches who really believed in world missions.

And who believed in the Antioch or Acts 13 vision of sending out workers. Now, this was a very young church. This church has partly been started, it seems, because some believers were scattered through persecution.

I remember when I was in Brazil, I'm back there again soon, but when I was in Brazil. And they were trying to explain why they weren't sending many missionaries yet in some of the churches. They said to me, you see, George, our churches are very young.

We don't have the great heritage that you have in America or in Great Britain. We're just very young and this is going to take a long time. Well, how old was the church in Antioch when they sent Paul and Barnabas? Some of you are from small churches.

Some of you are from young churches. And you're thinking we're not ready to send out any career missionaries. But I believe with all my heart, missions should be implanted within the local church at the very time that the church is born.

Why should we hold back certain truths from young Christians or in a young church? If we're going to be biblical, then we need the Antioch vision from day one. Of course, if your church has now been going for years and they don't yet have this reality functioning, then you have quite a challenging job. And it's not going to happen overnight as you just go back and tell them now that you've become a visionary and you

get yourself a balloon and a global jacket and prance around your church, telling everybody to go to the 1040 window.

We don't want to start unnecessarily a major martyrdom movement in your churches. And I believe it takes tremendous wisdom when you go home as a pastor, starting with your wife, how you share what God does in your heart at a conference like this. And I know in our own movement, so many of the problems, and we've had many, are linked with communication.

How we go about sharing what we feel, what God has done, or what we feel we should do. And I pray that you'll take extra time when you get back home to be with your wife. And first of all, listen to her, because God could be working in her heart while you're away in a very powerful way.

We should not assume that God is always saying more to us than our wives. Various kinds of chauvinistic arrogance are still traveling at quite rapid speed. And then we wonder why increasing numbers of women are walking away from their husbands.

I don't know if you saw the film *First Wives Club*. Very important film, especially I'm sure for reformed ministers. But it's interesting that as that film came out, statistics show that now more women are walking away from their husbands than husbands away from their wives.

And my great burden as much as, and I'm not going to say much about it, but my great burden wherever I speak about missions is to also speak about marriage. Because our marriages in America are under assault. They are under attack.

Many times when I speak to Christian leaders, I speak from Acts chapter 23. I wonder if you could just turn there. Acts 23, verse 12.

The next morning, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. More than 40 men were involved in this plot. They went to the chief priests and elders and said, we have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul.

Now, then you in the Sanhedrin petitioned the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here. And when the son of Paul's sister heard of the plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul.

Then Paul called one of his centurions and said, take this young man to the commander. He has something to tell him. So he took him to the commander.

The centurion said, Paul, the prisoner sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to tell you because he has something to tell you. The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, what is it you want to tell me? He said the Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. Don't give it to them because more than 40 of them are waiting in ambush for him.

They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now waiting for your consent to this request. I think in some of the subtitles of various Bibles, it says conspiracy to kill Paul.

I believe you are apostolic men. I'm sure God's anointing is on most of you. Hopefully all of you.

You have a ministry. And I believe there is a conspiracy to destroy you, to destroy your marriage, to destroy your family. I don't speak like this easily.

I'm not a person who emphasizes Satan or conspiracies. I'm not a demon under every bush kind of a character. Like Tozer said, if you're going to survive the present day evangelical world, you need a lot of reverent skepticism.

Hallelujah for reverent skepticism. So, you know, when you read in your little gospel gazette that, you know, a tree out in the woods just got baptized in the spirit and is manifesting the gifts, you might just be a little skeptical. At the same time, the Bible says Satan as a roaring lion seeketh whom he may devour.

The Bible says Satan sometimes comes as an angel of the light. The angel of light. The Bible talks about resisting Satan.

And I believe there is a conspiracy brewed in hell to destroy your ministry. I've been involved with hundreds of churches. Many of them have gone through serious splits.

In Great Britain, we lose a Christian leader every week just on adultery. Every week on an average. That is an understatement.

In America, we lose a Christian leader every hour of every day through adultery alone. That, of course, is also an understatement. We are a huge nation.

We have huge numbers of churches. The percentage is still small. But it concerns me.

That's, of course, why I'm urging you to pick up one of these books, *Books When a Good Man is Tempted*. I'm sure some of you have other books along that subject. One of them that I love, I wish I had it with me today, is written by a woman who lost her husband when she gave him a birthday present of a hot air balloon ride and the balloon exploded and he plunged to his death.

And from the moment she stood there, Lois Nowdy, now married to a man named Steve Raybay, experienced supernatural grace of God to handle the grief and the sorrow. And then as a single woman, she discovered the slippery path there is in ministry, in ministry, into moral compromise and wrote that amazing book published by the Navigators called *The Snare*. If you can't find it, write to me.

I'll send it to you free. I'm convinced if the snare and other similar books were read by men, preferably at seminary, that we would cut the immorality in ministry at least by 30 percent. If some of you feel in your ministry you're under pressure and you'd like someone to pray for you personally, I would count it a privilege to add you to my list of people that I would like to pray for.

Because I believe you and your church will be attacked. Somehow, in God's mercy, the apostle Paul was spared. Imagine if you got back to your house day after tomorrow, whenever, and there was a little petition on your door.

I know some of you are probably very laid back kind of characters, not easily upset. We need such people in ministry. They often need a spiritual bomb put under them, but we need these kind of phlegmatic people.

They make tremendous church planters in the Muslim world. But if you got back home and there was a list of 40 people that were not going to eat, not even a Big Mac until you were dead. I dare to say some of the

most laid back among you might have a slight metabolic uplift at that moment.

Let's get back to our original passage. Acts 13, the first word, the church. My prayer.

My prayer for this meeting this morning is that every one of our churches could be empty out churches. You don't have to start big. You can start small.

Send one in the next year. One into missions. I don't believe mission work is some kind of a volunteer youth movement where we look for volunteers who are 18 years of age.

I believe we should be sending some of our best, most mature, godly people into missions. Were Paul and Barnabas just the latest two just kicked out of the youth fellowship for misbehaving? Can you imagine in some churches if suddenly two of the senior people in the whole church claim that the Holy Spirit is sending them into overseas missions? I will tell you, you will have an interesting elders meeting. Especially if one of them happens to be the chairman of the elders board.

But I believe the Holy Spirit is wanting to lay his hands on mature, seasoned people. That's not against young people getting involved. God operates sovereignly in the lives of so many people in so many different ways.

Let me get to that second word, which is not really a word, it's a person. The Holy Spirit. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work to which I have called them.

So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them away. Look at first for the two of them sent on their way by who the Holy Spirit went down to Seleucia and sail from there to Cyprus. The Holy Spirit is the chief executive officer of all missionary work.

And brothers and sisters, if we're going to plant churches in America or if we're going to see our churches strengthened in America, and if we're going to send out missionaries, we need an ongoing directorship from the Holy Spirit of God. One of my great fears for some of us, like myself, a fairly conservative person theologically, a fairly conservative person even in terms of practice and different avenues of ministry, quite conservative. I'm, for example, in connection with the whole Catholic question, which is a huge thing over here in the United States.

I've written a book against extremism in the church. I have seen so many people hurt by extremism, even sometimes under the name of the Holy Spirit. But I'll tell you, there's another danger.

It's overreacting to what you may think is extremism in connection with the Holy Spirit, overreacting into the deep freeze of dead orthodoxy. Don't do it. Don't do it.

D.L. Moody was a great man. I guess I have him on my mind because next year is a hundredth anniversary of his home going. And I studied at Moody Bible Institute and graduated there.

And just I'm here now because they brought me over from England to speak there last night. But D.L. Moody is described in a secular encyclopedia. This might encourage some of you.

Overweight American evangelist who depopulated hell by two million souls. Not bad. How are you doing? I'm not speaking of the weight.

I'm speaking of the souls. And D.L. Moody, long before it became more popular to speak so extensively about the Holy Spirit, long before that, around 1904, the birth of the Pentecostal movement. D.L. Moody constantly emphasized the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 431. I think some at the prayer meeting in Acts 431 had actually been at Pentecost. And yet in Acts 431, we find them gather together praying.

Place where they were praying was shaken and they were what? Filled with the Holy Spirit. Went forth and spoke the word of God in boldness. D.L. Moody used to emphasize the need to be filled again and again.

And one day, so I've heard it. A woman said to Moody, why do you keep talking about the need to be filled again and again? I know some of you have heard this. It's a great story.

He looked a lady in the eye and he said, Madam, because I leak. Can any of you relate to that? Praise God for free refills. And in much weakness, in much weakness, I share with you my conviction.

That the spirit filled life is the normal Christian life for every believer. I was saved March 5th, 1955 in a Billy Graham meeting in New York City. The Holy Spirit came to live in me that very night.

I don't understand all that, but that's what the Bible says. You are temples of the Holy Spirit. If you have not the spirit of Christ, you have not Christ.

That's pretty clear. And I testify now, 43 years later next month. The Holy Spirit, as far as I know, has been working and filling and refilling my life every single day.

I've had people that have been with me from the earliest days of this movement. My own wife has been with me 38 years. They will acknowledge that every single day for 43 years, I've known this grace.

This reality, this peace, this joy, this long-suffering fruit of the spirit. Described in the book of Galatians. Not in the absence of struggles and doubts and tears, blunderings.

Yes, sin. But in the midst of that, crawling back to Calvary for repentance and refilling. One of the most exciting pastors conferences I ever spoke at was at Moody Bible Institute about a decade or more ago.

And the main speaker was a man named Vance Havner. Have you ever heard of this man? He's now in heaven. He's sort of the A.W. Tozer of the southern part of the United States.

He had a very, very powerful humor. You know, he's the guy that said, you know, in the average church near where he lived, he had to backslide to get into fellowship. But when Vance Havner shared with those pastors at Moody and had the faith or whatever boldness to give an invitation.

One third of the pastors came forward, many of them weeping and repenting and asking God to do a new work in their lives. Surely, before we go from this place, we would love for God to do a fresh work in our lives. I do.

But there's something greater than that, greater than special meetings where we have special times of repenting and and tears and recommitment. And that's when you learn how to do it every day. Jesus said, if any person come after me, let him deny self, take up the cross and follow me.

And I'm convinced that much of the impurity, even among Christian leaders, is because we have neglected that message of the cross, the crucified life. The disciplined life. How can anyone pretend he's going to be effective in ministry without a disciplined life? I mean, it's it's ridiculous.

Paul said, I buffet my body. This is Paul. Forget me.

We're talking. Paul, you're my friends. I buffet my body.

I bring it into subjection. Last, after preaching to others, I become a castaway. If statistics are right, a certain percentage of you will be cast away and out of ministry within the next five years.

There will be another batch by the next 10 years. Unless you're willing to go against the tide. And develop discipline and develop a greater prayer ministry and learn how to handle such fiery darts as pornography.

If I had more guts, I'd ask how many of you are struggling with pornography to put up your hand, but I won't do it. But I know from experience, many hands would go up. Missionary sometimes are a little more vanguard than the average evangelical pastor.

And so they take wild surveys on the mission field. And one of the leading mission societies just took a survey and asked their missionaries. How many of them are starting to get hooked on pornography on the Internet? The percentage of missionaries feeding on pornography in that society on the Internet is a statistic.

I would not want to release without a little more confirmation. But I will tell you, the floodgate of hell is open. And if you start drinking from it, you are going to choke.

Just two days ago, another phone call. A pastor confessed addiction to pornography. Some people in the church want him out.

Some want him to stay. It's chaos. The church will probably split.

Then the marriage will split. Then the children will get discouraged. The time has come to say no more.

No more pornography. It had to happen in my life. When I was converted.

Because I was already hooked at 16. You see, I wasn't from a Christian home. I did go to a church.

And I'd love to take a few moments to speak about how I believe in the 30s and the 40s. And the 50s liberalism ransacked so many of our great churches. I come from the Reformed Church of America.

And half our churches in our denomination were ransacked by liberalism. And there was almost nothing left. Others stood firm.

Some of you are probably from that denomination. My church was so liberal. And I never remember hearing the gospel or repentance.

And I became the president of the youth fellowship. I became the assistant to the pastor. I was in the New York City nightclub on Saturday night.

And I was helping the pastor on Sunday morning. I was a religious hypocrite. When a little lady came into my life who believed in prayer.

And she put my name on her hit list. I'll just briefly give you this testimony. Not only did she pray that I would become a Christian.

She prayed, can you imagine? That I would become a missionary. Without even consulting me. You know, people from New Jersey where she's from, they're known actually for being rude.

I mean, at least a phone call would have been somewhat polite. And then she sent me a gospel of John through the post, through the mail. And reading that gospel is what began to change my life.

And prepare me for that Billy Graham one night meeting, speaking at an anniversary meeting of Jack Wardston. And that's where I was born again. And indwelt by his spirit.

I went, by the way, back to this high school. By that time I was about to become sort of president of the student council. Sort of a radical sort of a student leader.

That's also about the time that I got hooked into the sort of mild pornography of the 50s. If any of it can be mild. That lady had been praying for that school for 14 years.

I'd encourage you to pray for your high schools. I'd encourage you not to give up on your public schools. You may have Christian schools, fine.

But don't give up on our public schools. Praise God for things like praying around the flagpole. And schools that now have Bible studies before.

And prayer meetings before and after school. There have been some changes in recent years. That lady had been praying for that school for about 15 or more years.

And when I went back to the high school and started prayer meetings and started sharing. It's like her prayers had built up behind a dam and the dam broke. In one meeting alone where I shared about Jesus.

I went off to a good old Presbyterian college before I went to Moody in Tennessee. And I came back over Christmas and the students organized a meeting. And about 500 came to that meeting.

When I asked for those who would like to repent and profess faith in Christ. Don't remember how I said it. 125 stood up and came into the cafeteria for counseling.

One woman prayed. Among those young people was my own father. I was just with him two days ago.

He's followed the Lord ever since. He's 92 years of age. Sorry about that.

He left that liberal church and he went to the church of the very same denomination. Antioch style church. Sending out missionaries.

They soon sent out my wife and I. And declaring the gospel of grace. Faith Reformed Church, Midland Park, New Jersey. I just had the joy of sharing at their, I think, 125th anniversary.

The Holy Spirit wants to fill us on a daily basis. Being filled with the Holy Spirit does not make you super spiritual. It does not dehumanize you.

No matter how filled you are with the Holy Spirit. And I'm sure you're teaching this so I don't like bringing oranges to Florida. But no matter how filled you are with the Holy Spirit, you're still incredibly human.

You still probably will look twice when you see a very attractive woman. And the Holy Spirit won't just immediately depart from you. Though you may grieve him very quickly.

The Holy Spirit is the one that wants to send out missionaries from your church. I am absolutely convinced he wants to do that. And I'm convinced if you don't at least work in that direction.

Even though maybe there will be problems and maybe you'll fail. It's better to try and fail than never try at all. And I'm convinced that if you go back and have an Acts 13 prayer meeting with a few of your deacons or elders.

That you will experience something similar to what we find there in Acts 13. The Holy Spirit will start speaking. And the Holy Spirit may guide you to even speak to someone in the church.

And you take the initiative to ask them to consider, just to consider and pray about going out as a missionary. Some people wonder why I wear this global jacket. Can I switch over to this mic? You got me on this mic? Hello? This just helped me to stand up straight.

Is it working? Hello, praise the Lord. Hello. I have to speak close to the mic for a number of reasons.

I was trying to explain my global jacket that this is not just a gimmick or something to get you to think globally. I'm known for being a little extreme. I've got global socks, global shower curtains.

I've got global underwear. I was at a big Christian rock festival. By the way, there's a lot of CDs and cassettes.

I buy those so cheap I can't even tell you. But if you want a CD with some wild music, you know, leave a dollar and just take them. Because I don't want to carry them back to England.

I can hardly lift up my suitcase. But I promised my wife not to take my trousers off anymore to show people my global jacket. Underwear, that was creating a little strain in the marriage.

But this jacket really is more like a survival jacket. This is a true story. Flying from Brazil to Argentina.

You can see it on the map. It's a little over my stomach which somehow has been growing lately. And I went up to the cockpit of a British Airways jumbo jet to try to talk to the pilot.

They allow you to do that on British Airways. I do it all the time. And they started to discuss where they were.

And the co-pilot said, I believe we're flying over Ecuador. Which is way up here. They used this jacket to see where they were flying.

They were flying over the small country of Uruguay right here. So you may want to get one of these jackets if you're doing much flying. Or maybe you could go on British Airways or American Airlines.

But God wants to move in our churches. You know, it's so easy, even those of us who read a lot, to get wrong impressions. Do you know one of the greatest wrong impressions? I visited the United States ten times last year.

I ministered in hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of churches. And I find one of the greatest misconceptions. If I can correct this alone, it would be worth being here.

The great misconception is that there's phenomenal blessing somewhere else, but not much here in the United States. That is completely cuckoo. I've lived there, most of those countries, for the last 38 years.

You think there's revival in Argentina? Go talk to people from Argentina. They will tell you there is no great revival in Argentina. There are tremendous churches, individual churches, that have had phenomenal growth.

And some people call that revival. But overall, the church in Argentina is still a small, struggling percentage of people. We thought 15 years ago Argentina would send out thousands of missionaries.

Argentina has only been able to send out a small number of missionaries. Now that doesn't mean I don't have my eyes on Argentina. I do.

But every nation I go to, where the church is fairly big, Brazil, Argentina, Korea, Kenya. I don't go to Kenya, but I read a lot about Kenya. South Africa, where I'll be this time next week.

The church is not much different than the church here. The great difference is between one church and another. Not between nationalities.

This church, which I've followed for some years, is a tremendous, Biblical, Holy Spirit guided, empowered church. And our nation has thousands of great churches. Thousands.

There is no nation in the world more equipped in terms of money, people, and fairly solid churches. All of which want to improve, of course. And would love to experience greater revival.

That's true everywhere. God, in his sovereignty, has greatly blessed this nation. If you're into reconstruction theology, then of course everything will always be miserable for you.

Because you will never be satisfied until we have a born again president. And we've taken over Wall Street, and taken over Madison Avenue, and taken over everything else. That has got to be the most cockeyed, extremist, ugly theology of anything that anyone could ever imbibe.

That has never happened in history. That is foolishness. Even if we have a great revival, my praying pastors, we will not turn the hands of this nation or history back.

Don't play the fool. If revival breaks out, even in a large scale, there will be some changes. Hallelujah.

But probably the next day and the next week, if it happens in your town, will be the toughest, most difficult period in your life. And the history of revival, even when you talk about my beloved Wales, where I preached over 200 times, shows that a great revival, unless it's immediately followed up with a kind of basic material and things we've been talking about these days, soon leaves many, many people and whole churches totally backslidden. Or worse, some become cults or go into extremism.

I believe the way ahead for God's people in America is going to be rough, and it's going to be tough. There is a tremendous fallout. There is enormous confusion.

There is phenomenal division. And we need to fasten our spiritual safety belts and make sure that every day we're denying self, taking up the cross and following Jesus. And we need to understand that we cannot consider sending out missionaries, sending finance out to missions as something optional that maybe we'll do when things get better.

People used to say to me, well, aren't the Koreans going to really make up and send out the missionaries that are needed? And so I've been to Korea a number of times. How many of you know what's just happened in Korea? They have had the greatest financial setback in the history of their modern nation. We have 200 Koreans on OM.

All of them have lost 50% of their support. If we were a traditional American society, which we're not, they would have to go home. But we're trying to put more water in the soup.

We're sharing, and we're trying to keep those Koreans with us even though it is a nightmare for us right now. Because with it went Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and a number of other Asian countries. Their money was devalued more than 50%.

Now, if you're a missionary working there, then that's a plus. But the overall negative factor, humanly speaking, is way beyond any pluses. Now, there are some signs of it improving and coming back.

Meanwhile, have you followed the stock market in the United States? Do you know how many tens of thousands of born-again Christian millionaires we have in America? Of whom only a tiny percentage are giving to world missions. Brothers and sisters, our nation, your churches, my churches, we must continue to play a major role in world missions. What an embarrassment that we have churches that claim to be biblical and are actually almost boasting that they don't send out any missionaries in the old-fashioned way.

What do you mean the old-fashioned way? Acts 13? Full-time, dynamic, church-planting, apostolic missionaries? Short-term, if we are not careful, could become a curse. I believe in short-term, but it can never be a substitute for the kind of Paul and Barnabas apostolic ministry where we can plant churches in countries like Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Bangladesh. By the way, I could take ten countries that would have a population, try to follow this, ten countries that would have a population equivalent to the whole of the United States.

Ten countries, population equivalent to the whole of the United States that would have less witness than just Minneapolis. Just Minneapolis. I know this city, I know there are many, many needs, especially when we start talking about the kingdom and building the kingdom and holistic ministry of which I am committed to if we're talking about it in a biblical, sensible way.

Not this kind of off-the-wall thing that leads us into the deep ditch of dominion and reconstruction theology. I ask of you, make your church, by God's grace, an Antioch church. Let the Holy Spirit be in charge.

Have an Acts 13 kind of prayer meeting where you can wait upon God and where you can see at least one sent out. The next word, and we've got to go a little quicker, is the word send. Send, I think we see it twice in that passage.

The Holy Spirit sent and the church sent. I think immediately of Romans 10, 15. How will they go? How will they preach unless they are what? Sent.

The ministry of sending, that's why I don't think I'm here to recruit all of you to the mission field. The ministry of sending is just as important as the ministry of going. It really is.

In Europe we have what's called Grand Prix racing, a little similar to Indy car racing. For every one person in the car, 50 on the team. 50 on the team.

And today for every missionary we send out, even short term, we need at least 50 senders. There's a book, I don't know if we have it on the table, I generally do, called *Serving as Senders* by Neil Parolo. If you don't find it, look in the Bethlehem bookshop.

If you don't find it there, you can write to me, I'll send it to you free. *Serving as Senders* by Neil Parolo. Some churches, I remember First Baptist in Atlanta, when they first discovered this book, Charles Stanley, they required everybody on the missions committee.

To read that book. By the way, it's great to have a missions committee or missions work group, action group, whatever you want to call it. But you as a pastor need to be involved with them.

I did a missions meeting Sunday morning in a dynamic church in Ridgewood, New Jersey. And then we went out to lunch with the missions committee. It was an encouragement, you know why? Because the pastor joined us.

Some pastors seem to distance themselves from the missions group and from missions activities. Maybe they're just practicing delegation, that's good. But the church needs to know that the pastor is 100% committed to the challenge of world missions.

And it's wonderful when a pastor studying a book like John Piper's book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, can share this kind of material from the pulpit. The visiting speaker shouldn't have to do that. Visiting speaker can come in with his globe and talk about nations and talk about other things.

There's always plenty to share when we talk about missions. I'm praying for 100,000 new sending churches. And I believe if we could see 100,000, we're speaking about the whole world now, Korea, Argentina, Brazil, all these new sending countries.

We're involved with most of them. But if we could have 100,000 sending churches, I believe they could send 200,000 new missionaries. That may sound like a lot, but we're in a world of 6 billion.

We're in a world of 6 billion. And if we're going to be even moderately holistic, which is a great dream and sometimes it happens, you need 10 times more people. And 100 times more money to carry on holistic ministry.

That's why sometimes people who are into holistic ministry, they never get out of their own city. Because his needs are so great. Imagine if you're in New York City and you get into holistic ministry.

You don't need to look at any other part of the world. But if we're going to be biblical, we cannot do that. Because these other places, hundreds of millions have never even heard.

In many people's groups, the church doesn't even exist. It's not fair. Especially when God has blessed our churches so much.

That doesn't mean we don't emphasize the home because it's got to be both. And then my final word, maybe I'm only at my fourth word. I wanted to speak about prayer, but I'm not going to take so much time on that.

Except to say, as I've shared already in my testimony, that when it comes to missions, prayer is the bottom line. And I'd urge you, I'd beg of you in the name of the Lord, to be involved in some missionary prayer group. And to have some kind of missionary prayer meetings in your church.

Even if only a few, even if only a few come to start with. We all agree that prayer is biblical. We all have a life of prayer, hopefully.

Though surveys among ministers show that quite a few of them did not have a life of prayer. But we find in the book of Acts, the prayer meeting, gathering in prayer as we did this morning. That is also biblical.

Five men prayed and God spoke. Spontaneous prayer, organized prayer. And my last word is the word helper.

There in the fifth verse, they took Mark as their helper. For every person with a ministry like many of you, preaching and teaching, there have to be many helpers. And if you want to build a church that's going to be ascending, Antioch church and a dynamic church in your community.

Learn to esteem those who are helping you. Those who are giving their finance. That's a big ministry.

We estimate on a global scale, 30,000 people have volunteered to go into missions. Between 30,000 and 40,000, it's a guesstimation. At Urbana alone, when we gave the invitation, 9,000 signed up to go short or long term.

There is a sense where we're not lacking volunteers. Why such a tiny percentage of them ever get there long term? Because we don't have the Antioch churches. If a young person volunteers in a church like this or a very small church that has a similar vision, they have 100% better chance that they will go.

Then if it's just some young person who comes to Christ outside of the context of a church or gets a mission vision outside of the context of a local church and doesn't have a sending church. Many churches are actually pouring cold water on zealous young people in their churches who want to go. They always say, well, you're not quite ready or prove yourself at home here first.

How many of you proved yourself so dynamically in your hometown where you were born and reared in the church? Maybe you can write to me about that. One of the reasons we invite thousands of people to come on OM and about 90,000 have been through our training programs is because we believe getting people out of their culture and into intensive training in other cultures and other situations, even on those ships, is a way of discipling them and preparing them to send them back to the tougher situation in their own hometown. Praise God for that mention of Mark.

He actually didn't work out too well. They had to ask him to leave the team. But later on, Barnabas wanted to bring him back.

Do you remember that story? I hope you preached on that one. That's a great sermon for all these churches that are splitting. Paul didn't want him back.

And so there was what? A contention between Barnabas and Paul. But God kept working. God kept working.

And I'd urge you as I try to bring this to a close, that failure, failure can often be the backdoor to success. And if you've had failure in your ministry, don't let that intimidate you or discourage you. But allow it to push you forward to new horizons.

Maybe you've missed plan B in your ministry. Maybe you've had a moral failure. Maybe you've been through some other sort of difficult broken world experience.

And I praise God for Gordon McDonald's book, *Rebuilding Your Broken World*. Maybe you feel you're on plan G. Surely some people in your churches will. So I hope you're preaching grace.

And I have the joy of telling thousands of people who may be on plan G or F because of so much failure. I say, praise God for a big alphabet. Press on.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, I don't know where the time has gone this morning. And my heart is so full.

And I just cry out to you that we may study the book of Acts in a more powerful way. And that we would somehow allow these five mega principles from Acts 13 to become a dynamic reality in our lives. And in our churches.

And that we would be Antioch, Acts 13 churches. And that every church here somehow would send at least one. Or a couple.

Maybe even short term to start with. Lord, I believe anything is better than nothing. We pray for a fresh filling of your Holy Spirit in our own lives.

So that we will go where you want us to go and do what you want us to do. That you will give us great discernment on one side. But also enable us to take steps of faith and to take risks on the other side.

Lord, we thank you for these tremendous books that we can take advantage of. We thank you for one another. We thank you for John and his staff here that were led years ago to pull together this strategic conference.

And we believe that what we do here locally and in our local churches will affect what happens globally. We thank you. We praise you.

We go forward by faith in Jesus name. Amen. Thank you for listening to this message from Desiring God.

The ministry of John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Feel free to make copies of this message for others. But please do not charge for those copies or alter the content in any way without permission.

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