

# What Happened to Acts Ch 29

by George Verwer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a witness for Christ and following in the steps of the apostles, as seen in the book of Acts.*

**Duration:** 41:05

**Scripture:** Matthew 9:35, Acts 9:1-6, Acts 20:31, Acts 28:31, 1 Corinthians 4:13, 1 Corinthians 4:15-16

**Topics:** "Missions"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of studying the gospels and understanding the character of Jesus Christ. They highlight how Jesus went about towns and villages, driven by compassion. The speaker also explains the concept of 'operation mobilization' and how it involves believers actively demonstrating their love for Jesus. They emphasize that every believer has the responsibility to be a witness for Christ, regardless of their background or abilities. The sermon concludes with the example of the man who was cured of demons, illustrating the power of personal testimony in sharing the saving power of Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

Let's just pray together. Father, speak to us from your Word. We're not here interested in just getting a lot of excess baggage.

We're here to get what's on your heart, O God. Speak to us. Show us what real mission work is about.

For we pray in Jesus' name, Amen. I'd like you to turn in your Bible very quickly to Acts chapter 29. Acts 29.

Has anyone found it? Maybe you could read the first verse. Anyone who's found that, you of course have discovered by now that there's no 29th chapter in the book of Acts. Some people have felt that was a dirty trick, as I've embarrassed good Bible-believing evangelicals all over the world, who really should know that Acts does end at chapter 28, verse 31, where it says, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

And from then on, it's up to you, and it's up to me, to write the remaining chapters. You are Acts 29. We should be, of course, after 2,000 years beyond Acts 29, and I'm sure we are.

We're probably up somewhere around Acts 8,642. Needless to say, the book of Acts goes on, because the Holy Spirit goes on working, and he has never stopped working since the Apostle Paul gave these clear words that we have just read. We are to be walking in the steps of these men and women who we read about in the book of Acts.

And we believe, as our brother here goes out to Asia, crosses through places like Turkey, some of the very same cities where the Apostle Paul walked, that he goes with the same power and the same guidance as the Apostles that we read about in the book of Acts. I believe we have this affirmed in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, where the Apostle Paul describes his life. We're going to go back to the book of Acts, but first let us just take this quick glimpse at the Apostle Paul.

There is a tendency among some to put Paul in a very special category, and therefore almost to make into myth that which we read concerning the Apostle Paul's life, whereas we see this is quite far from what God would have us do and believe. In verse 10 of chapter 4 in 1 Corinthians, we read, We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ. We are weak, but ye are strong.

Ye are honorable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place. And labor, working with our own hands.

Being reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we suffer it. Being defamed, we entreat.

We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons, I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers.

For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. And here's the key verse I want you to see tonight. Wherefore I beseech you, be followers of me.

As we see the Apostle Paul in the pages of the book of Acts, from the day he was converted until the day he was there in Rome, still teaching and still preaching despite all the problems and suffering and hindrances and difficulties. So we are told to follow in his steps. The Apostle Paul was a man of action, and he of course was patterning his life after Jesus Christ, who was a man of action.

We see that in many passages. There's not time to review the life of our Lord Jesus tonight, but I do believe every believer should study at least every six months the Gospels, and try to see the Lord Jesus Christ, and what he was really like. We see for example in Matthew chapter 9, that Jesus went about all the towns and villages.

And we see in the very next verse, that he did this because he was moved with compassion. Some people wonder where we get the name mobilization, operation mobilization. Very simple.

The word mobilize comes from the word to move. It's a very simple word. And we believe that we are to be moved with compassion out to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now despite the example of the Lord Jesus himself, in going in every village, despite the example of the Apostle Paul, who covered an incredible amount of mileage for the sake of the gospel, and by the way stayed in some places a very short time. Other places he was there longer, but many places he was there a very short time. And he was moving on, and moving on, and going back, and moving on, and ends up of course way over in Rome, which in those days was almost equivalent to going around the world twice in

our day.

Actually it would be much, much easier to go around the world twice today, than to go just to Rome in those days, if you went of course by air. If you went OM style in the back of one of our vehicles, it would be slightly similar to the way the Apostle Paul went. No, actually much easier, except that often we not only end up walking, we have to push the vehicle as well.

An experience that Paul never did have. God is still in the mobilizing business. He's still in the work of moving men around the world that every creature may hear.

God will not allow the church to be stagnant, or settled, or immobile. The opposite of mobilization is immobilization. I don't think you can have immobilization, so we'll just say immobile.

And when you're immobile, you're unmovable. Reminds me of the man who thought Operation Mobilization was part of a mobile oil company. It is amazing how people get misunderstandings about God's work, especially when it's way across the sea, and they don't really get firsthand knowledge.

And we believe that we are in this thrilling task of writing further books in glory, and further chapters in glory, to the Book of Acts. We don't need any more for our Bible. We know someday we will give account to God for everything we've done.

It says that in Hebrews. I think it's important to understand that there are two judgments. There's the judgment upon those who have never come to Christ.

Maybe someone here is in that situation, or someone listening. And of course you will be judged, and you will be separate from God for all of eternity. We realize today it is not popular to speak about hell.

It is not popular to speak about the wrath of God. It's not popular to speak about separation from God, or to mention that you believe Hindus are lost, or Muslims are lost, or nominal Christians in England are lost, and going to hell. But Jesus spoke about it.

And if what Jesus said concerning hell is not true, then what can I trust in what Jesus said? Once I begin to dissect the Word of God, and take this, and leave that, and accept this because I can understand that with my 20th century brain, and leave this because I can't understand it, because my prejudices will not allow me to understand it, then where do I stop, and where do I start? And the reason I believe that we are going forth in this work is not because we particularly enjoy it, not because we have an itch to travel, but it's because we are under command. We are under command. When we were born again, we also enlisted on the very same day in the army of God.

That's why the Word of God calls even the young believer a soldier and a disciple of Jesus Christ. Isn't one of the greatest mistakes in the church today the fact that we want the blessings of salvation, but not the responsibilities? And that's why we like to speak of heaven, and we like to talk of some of the wonderful things that we have in Jesus, but we hesitate to speak very much about hell, and the tremendous responsibility we have to warn men and women around the world that there is such a place, and that the wrath of God someday is going to fall. Now I believe in hell.

I don't find it easy, and I believe some people's descriptions of hell are erroneous, and basically with my finite mind I can only say that hell is the perfect justice of God. It is the perfect, absolute justice of a holy, righteous, perfect God, who is completely beyond anything we can ever totally comprehend. If you want to

sometimes understand the greatness of God, think for a moment on the greatness of his creation.

If you go out on a clear night, you can see millions of stars. Millions. Do you know how much a million is? It's a lot.

Sometimes we talk in O.M. about printing a million tracts, and the average person that reads that in our prayer letter hasn't got a clue what that means. A million tracts, much less a million booklets, or a quarter of a million Bibles, a project we are in right now, a quarter of a million Bibles. Anyway, we go out at night, and we see millions of stars.

It's fantastic, isn't it? Some of those stars are so big that you can put our sun and our earth revolving around the sun, despite the distance between the sun and our earth, inside one of those stars, of course, if you could get it in. And there are millions of those stars just in our one galaxy. There are millions of stars, and you know how many galaxies there are? There are millions of galaxies.

Just let your mind go. Millions of stars in each galaxy, and there are millions of galaxies, and we realize that creation is nothing, is nothing compared to God Himself. God is so great.

That's why the real difficult thing to understand, really, is how any earth being will ever be saved, and eventually brought into the presence of God, as a friend of God. How that is going to happen is, to me, a greater mystery than that all of us are just going to someday, as we have become enemies of God, confined to outer darkness and separation from Him. Now we believe this, because the Word of God teaches this, and the Apostle Paul believed this, and that's why he went out warning men.

That's why we can read in Acts chapter 20, verses like verse 31, Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. Here was a man who was compelled of the Holy Spirit, compelled by the truth he believed. Remember, he was an enemy of the truth.

He was a murderer of Christians, and he had been completely turned around on the road to Damascus, and now had become a preacher of the gospel, and a defender of the faith, who went right out into the marketplace, and into the synagogues, presenting the infallible proofs that he believed. With Paul, it was not firstly a subjective experience. It was not firstly a matter of religious conviction.

It was firstly a matter of infallible proof. This stiff-necked Jew, with all of his training in his own religion, had been turned around by truth, and by an encounter, a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, and we follow in his steps. He said, be ye followers of me, and yet today we find very few people who even believe we should be literally following in the steps of Paul.

Now when I say literally, I don't mean in the ultimate sense. Paul was a distinct person, so are you. You will never do exact same things that Paul did, but his attitude, his mentality, his compassion, his willingness to suffer, which will always lead to some suffering, and believe me, it is possible right here in Britain to suffer for Jesus Christ.

You just go out and bang on some doors for Jesus Christ, and you will suffer. If not physically, you will suffer emotionally, as people spray out indifference upon you, and mock you. Not easy to give out literature in the streets of Britain, or go house to house.

That's why there's not even 10 percent of Christians in this country who are involved in any kind of real mobilization witness. The Jehovah Witnesses, by the way, boast 90 percent. 90 percent.

No wonder they're one of the fastest growing religions in the world. And I believe it is a great mistake that we have basically made Paul into a mythological, historical figure who we tend to relegate to history, and not really believe that this kind of thing can happen again, except for maybe a few people here and there. All my plea tonight is simply to go back to Book of Acts living.

Now we do have Book of Acts talk in our day, and it's with great fear that I bring this message tonight, because I know it is five times easier for me to speak about the Book of Acts than to go out in the highways and hedges in these coming days and live this out. One of the reasons that within two weeks I also will be on the road back to Asia, where I've spent half my life these past 10 years. Not, of course, that you can't live this way here, because you can.

And I believe you can be following in the steps of these apostles. You can be following in the steps of these early disciples as they follow Christ, whether you're living in Manchester, or London, or New York, or Chicago, or out in some little tiny town in northern Scotland, or southern Montana, wherever it may be. It's not a matter of location.

It's a matter of reality and dedication, and I think that's important to understand. As we look into the Book of Acts, there are a number of things that almost jump out of the pages, not just in the life of the Apostle Paul, but in others. Ordinary men, for example, Stephen.

Stephen wasn't supposedly one of those great men of the Word and prayer. He was asked to be a practical man. He was chosen in Acts chapter 5 to be a deacon, or a practical man in the church.

And the first thing we see after he is chosen for this particular work, that's Acts chapter 6 by the way, is Stephen out preaching. Strange, isn't it? He's out preaching, which I believe really helps do away with this false idea that only ordained people can preach the gospel. What utter nonsense.

And you know the brothers out in India who are preaching more sermons than most ordained men I've ever met, are simple brothers who no church would ordain. But they love Jesus, and they are being trained in the Word of God, and they are out sometimes preaching in the open air, just like Wesley did, which almost brought the church walls down, sometimes 10 to 15 to 20 times a day. And God is blessing it, and people are being saved.

And if we can show really that it's unscriptural for us to think only a certain few can preach, especially out in the open air, of course you realize that in the book of Acts they didn't have any of these buildings yet. That's another message that I will not get into tonight. How much more should we have to face up to this important issue, which in many ways is the crux of what I want to say tonight, that every believer is a witness.

And we must not stand up and say, yes, I'm behind this brother going out to India, this brother going out to the Middle East, if we ourselves are not willing to walk across the street. This is where many of the most missionary churches, I'm sorry to say, and I don't know very much about your church, but from the degree of young people here this evening, I would say that someone has been moving out somewhere, praise God, because it is extremely depressing in some places to go into churches and to find 98% elderly people. Now I'm all for the elderly.

I was prayed into the kingdom by an elderly lady, hallelujah. But really, if we're going to reach the world for Christ, we have got to also see young people mobilize for God. What a thrill it is to see half of you, at least here tonight, young people.

But I believe a mistake that even some of the most missionary churches make is to think our obligation is finished when we send someone across the English Channel, or we send someone to Africa. Our obligation is not finished when we do that. Our obligation begins to be finished when we ourselves get out of the chair, the easiest place to live the Christian life.

In fact, if you haven't got it out of the chair yet, you aren't even living it. You're dying in it. You're not evangelizing nor mobilizing.

You're fossilizing. You might as well be a skeleton propped up in the chair with a piece of string hanging from the church ceiling. We haven't begun to fulfill our commitment until we get out and cross the street and share Jesus Christ.

I know that's hard, and that's why we need the Holy Spirit, because he will move us in that direction, just as we see in the book of Acts. I mentioned a few minutes ago how God doesn't generally allow the church to get too settled. It seems that today we have specialized in settling down, digging in, and digging in is all right, as long as it doesn't become a rut.

You of course know what a rut is. A rut is just a grave with the ends knocked out, so we don't want to get in a rut. And I believe that every Christian is a witness.

If there's anything we see in Acts, we see that. If there's anything we have to accept when Paul says, be a follower of me, it's that. This man who day and night was witnessing, this man who crossed the world of his day sharing, teaching, preaching, you couldn't stop him.

You remember that time in the book of Acts, he was faithfully teaching the Word of God? There in Acts, is it Acts 17 or Acts 20? I believe it's Acts 20, and one man was there, and he fell out the window, and it was quite late, around midnight, this fellow fell asleep, out the window he went, and Apostle Paul of course just went down and raised him up. People have been arguing how he's done that, how he did that, when he raised him up. It's amazing, you see, today we specialize in arguing about all these things.

It'd be tremendous if we actually went and did some of them. Today everybody is arguing about the Holy Spirit. That is the number one argument in the church today.

Every month there's a new book about the Holy Spirit. But in the book of Acts, there's no arguments about the Holy Spirit. Have you seen any? They just allowed the Holy Spirit to move through, and he seemed to work in different ways, in different chapters, but he was working through all the chapters, and he was leading people out as witnesses.

And of course, the giving of the Holy Spirit is very much linked with being witness. How can we neglect that? Admittedly, there are some areas about the Holy Spirit that are controversial, are not easy for a layman to understand, nor even the non-layman. But there are other areas about the Holy Spirit that are very clear.

So let's get moving on that which is clear. No, we won't do that. We must persist in our arguing about the things that are not clear.

But notice, for example, one of the things that's very clear in Acts chapter 1 verse 8. But ye shall receive the Holy Spirit, or receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses. See, it's clear, isn't it? Ye shall be witnesses. Nowhere in the book of Acts do we read about any committees.

Nowhere do we read anything about church buildings. Nowhere do we read anything about Sunday schools. Nowhere do we read anything about half the things that most of us involved in the church are caught up with, whether it's the choir or whatever it may be.

Now, I'm not against those things, so relax, relax. You can put your stones down. I'm not against those things.

But it seems to me that we've got to get our priorities right. We've got to get our priorities right. The Holy Spirit was to be given that they would be and should be witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth.

That's clear. And what we see in the book of Acts is an exact fulfillment of that. It's a premise.

And the only way that will not be fulfilled in you and me, the only way is by disobedience. Disobedience. And I believe that many of us today, though we don't like the word, are disobedient children.

I'm not saying you're but I am saying that I believe many of God's children today, even the most sincere, the nicest choir members in Sunday school, people and committee members and deacons and elders, I'll include everybody, including myself, I believe we are guilty of disobedience to the Lord Himself, because we have not faithfully moved out everywhere as his witnesses. Down the streets, out to the villages, through the cities, to the Englishmen, to the immigrant, from the uttermost to the gutter most, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. That's why even in a place like Great Britain, there are hundreds of thousands who do not even have a copy of the Word of God in their home.

Can you believe that? Especially all these immigrants who come in. Do you think they come in bringing their Bibles with them? Many of these people have never seen a Bible. And yet we are not even taking the time in this country to go to their homes and give them a Bible.

Admittedly, it's not easy to witness to these Muslims, though we should be doing it. Yet the least we can do is give them something of the Scriptures. We can get Scriptures even in their languages from the Bible Society.

You can be sure there's no stampede to get such Scriptures. A nationwide survey has taken place recently here in Britain that has proven that very few Christians at all are interested in the immigrants, in doing anything. One man said to me, even this afternoon I was speaking on this subject, a leader in his particular assembly, he said, look, I can't even get my people to speak about Christ to an Englishman, much less to an immigrant.

Oh, may God show us our disobedience. May we not allow ourselves to be deceived any longer in this matter. May we not think that our obligation is fulfilled when we send a few people overseas, or when we put a few pounds in the missionary offering, or when we bring in a special evangelist and have a week of meetings, or when we bring in another special group to do our literature work, and another special evangelist to have a citywide crusade.

This to me all leads to what I call professionalism, in which we sort of feel the work of evangelism is done by sort of professionally trained groups. We have certain professional types who teach, and other professional types who preach, and we have specialized groups for children. No, child evangelism.

Praise God for their work. And then we have even some people who think, now we want to cover the neighborhood with literature. Wow, that is needed, isn't it? Let's call Operation Mobilization.

Hello, Mr. Scott, could an OM team come out and cover our neighborhood with literature? These people are lost here. We'd really love you to come, and actually, at six o'clock after you do it, we're going to serve you a cup of tea in the church room. No, a thousand times no.

And yet, again and again, we at OM have discovered when invited to a place, it was because people wanted us to do their work. They wanted us to visit homes they should have been to a half a dozen times ten years ago. That's not God's way, and I want to go on record on saying that Operation Mobilization will never evangelize the world, and all the groups together, Campus Crusade, IVF, Youth with a Mission, Child Evangelism, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, throw in all your favorite groups.

We will never evangelize the world. We have been working for years, most of these groups far more than OM, and half the world is still waiting to hear for the first time, and some of them even live in Britain. The world will only be evangelized as the Church of Jesus Christ, at least a good segment of us, go back to the Book of Acts and out as witnesses for Jesus.

Every believer a witness. Every believer a walking, living, verbal testimony to the saving power of Jesus Christ. A perfect example of this is when Jesus Christ cured that man filled with demons.

Do you remember the story? He cast the demons out, and they all went into the herd of pigs, and the herd of pigs went over the cliff. And what did Jesus tell that man? He told him to go back and to start witnessing. Wait a minute.

No theological training? At least Jesus should have sent him to the local Bible school. But no. He said, Jesus said, go back and tell them what's happened.

This is what witnessing is. Of course we need men, gifted men, with gifts from the Holy Spirit as evangelists and teachers. That's something else.

Of course I believe in that. But every believer is a witness. Every believer, like the man who had the demons cast out, can go back to his friends and say, look what Jesus did for me, with a big smile across his face.

Wow. That's more powerful than sermon preached even by Billy Graham himself. As I have looked around the world to see what is a major factor in bringing people to Christ.

It is not literature. It is not radio. It is not even church meetings.

Though anointed preaching is a very big thing, and a very biblical thing, as we see in the book of Acts. But the bigger thing is believers who love Jesus talking and demonstrating this book of Acts reality. It's Acts 29.

It's you. And the job of world evangelism is your job. You may be, or think you are, the most ordinary, inhibited, shy, quiet, frail person in your whole church.

But when the Holy Spirit moves through you, and I believe that that will have to be a daily experience, you may have a crisis in your life, but any crisis not followed by a process will soon be an abscess, and that's what we have everywhere. We don't lack people today with crises experiences. Eighty percent of the people I meet have had some kind of crises experience, but unless they've learned to daily deny self, take up the cross, and follow Christ, it has not meant very much after a few weeks, or a few months, in some cases a few years.

The Christian life is not easy. Being a witness is not easy. The devil will fight you on every corner.

He will try to demobilize you. If you think the war in the Middle East right now is vicious, wait till you begin to move in the army of God. Wait till you begin to really wear the shield of faith.

Wait till you really begin to take the weapons of our warfare, which are described in Ephesians 6, and move out to your neighborhood for Christ, or move out to that neighboring village, or move out to a foreign country, or across the Atlantic, or across the Channel, and you will see the enemy's weapons that make the Russian scouts and these other missiles seem like little toys. That's right, you know. I know it's hard for us 20th century evangelical fish, as someone described us, to understand this, but it's true.

We are in a warfare. It is a battle. There is a real enemy, and of course his far most powerful weapon today is not some gigantic open all-out attack, but just the subtle deceptive power of the fog that he seems to be able to manufacture at such great quantity and drowned us in.

The fog of materialism seems to be enough to stop most people. Without one subtle strategy of the enemy, maybe 50 percent of all believers are demobilized and made unaffected. Just materialism, much less the immorality that he sweeps in upon the church so often, much less the fog of indifference and the fog of lukewarmness.

I was thinking of the words of that hymn that we sang tonight and how my heart was stirred. Oh father who sustained them, oh spirit who inspired, savior whose love constrained them to toil with zeal untired. Is that your life? From cowardice defend us.

Isn't that the problem? Many of us, if we're honest, we're spiritual cowards. We're afraid to declare our faith. We're afraid to talk to the man next to us on the bus and say what we believe and give him a tract and urge him to give his life to Jesus.

We're afraid what he might say, what he might think. May we go to this hymn from cowardice defend us. From lethargy awake.

Isn't that the problem? The lethargy. Is that there's a gigantic persecution in Britain and America today? For there isn't. With lethargy alone the devil manages to demobilize perhaps 90 percent.

From lethargy awake forth on thine errands send us to labor for thy sake. Oh beloved let's get out of the pew. Oh beloved let's move forward and as our brother goes forward to the Middle East and to India let us move forward down the road across the street to wherever God leads us in the days to come.

Otherwise I believe much of our work in the church, many of our songs become only sounding brass and tingling cymbal. Jesus did it. Why? He was moved with compassion and if you and I have this love we will be moved with this compassion and if we don't then the bible says we are nothing.

We are sounding brass and tingling cymbal. Is it not some secondary doctrine we are speaking about tonight? This is not something that you can take or leave. This is not some little OM concept.

This is the most certainly one of the most basic principles of the whole of the word of God and we must obey and as we do step out by faith. God will give the grace. He will and this is a thrilling thing we've been seeing in OM and also in many churches we're working with.

Ordinary people, previously shy and afraid, immobile, immobile, lethargic, moving out, moving out, even onto the continent, even into other countries, some for short term, some for long term and God is using them. Not only our souls being saved but new churches are being born. We could be here all night telling of what God has been doing.

True it's just the beginning but if God can do it with a few, if God can do it in some churches, He can do it again and again and again. Beloved, let us rise and go forth in His name to write new chapters in the book of Acts for the glory of God till Jesus comes back. Amen.

Oh God and Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you the way it pierces into our hearts. It's one of the proofs that we are your children and we thank you that those whom you love you chasten and we pray that you would bring us Lord into the school of obedience that we would be willing to get involved in book of Acts walking, book of Acts witnessing, book of Acts reality.

Deliver us Lord from lethargy. Deliver us God from being immobile, being stagnant. Deliver us God from thinking someone else is going to do it.

Deliver us God from belittling your life in us by in a subtle way saying that you can do it in others but you can't do it in me. Oh God deliver us from such foolish thinking and teach us dependence upon your Holy Spirit on a daily basis that we may be your witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth for we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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