

Keynote: Spirit and Works

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Date: 08 May 2016

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- [0 : 0 0] I'd like to say many, many thanks to all of you for the warm welcome that Elaine, my wife, and I have received, and also Siang. We're so thankful to have Siang with us.
- She is the representative for Operation Mobilization in British Columbia. And she's at the book table in the rear after the service.
- You might like to just learn a few things about what Operation Mobilization is doing around the world. We appreciate your prayers, support, and we appreciate the partnership that we have with your church.
- And it's just a very special privilege. We've just enjoyed worshiping together with you and look forward to the remainder of the service as well. Just briefly about Operation Mobilization ourselves.
- I've had the privilege of being with Operation Mobilization from the very beginning. And one of the landmarks was in 1964. We were in a prayer meeting in Bolton, England.
- [1 : 0 1] And George Verwer, the founder of Operation Mobilization, was leading the prayer meeting. And he gave us a prayer request to pray for an ocean-going ship.
- Well, all of us in those days, we were in our 20s. We knew nothing about ships. And it just seemed like something that was totally unrealistic. We believe God can do miracles.
- But you have to have some good common sense in there as well. And so, but anyway, we began praying in 1964 for an ocean-going ship. All of our prayer partners around the world, we encouraged them to pray.
- And guess what God gave us one year later? Nothing. Have you ever had that experience? You sense the Lord is speaking to you about something.
- You want to trust God. You want to exercise that faith. You know God can do miracles. And it just doesn't happen. Well, five years later, still didn't happen.
- [2 : 0 0] And I went to George. And I said, George, maybe God is saying no. In my theology, God can say no. But George was not blessed by my question at all.
- And he said, Dale, he said, it's a spiritual warfare. And we have to persevere in prayer. So, yes, sir, we'll pray more. And by the grace of God, one year later, the Lord did give us a ship.
- The professional seafarers, we had not had hardly any response from them in those previous years. But then in 1970, the Lord just put it all together.
- And we were amazed. And it was just wonderful to see what the Lord could do. Just one or two little stories from those early days in the ship ministry of Operation Mobilization.
- From the very beginning of OM, we've had a passion to reach the Muslims, the most unreached peoples on the face of the earth.
- [3 : 0 4] And our ship that we purchased in 1970 got us far in 1971 out to India. And at that time, my wife and I lived in Austria.

We were taking Christian literature into the communist countries. It was forbidden in those days. And that was what captivated us. And I got a phone call from George. The ship was in India.

The ship was getting ready to sail up the Persian Arabian Gulf right into the heart of Islam. We had lived five years in the Muslim Middle East. We married in Istanbul, Turkey. And so we were really became Turks.

And George said, listen, Dale, that ship is going up the Persian Arabian Gulf right into the heart of Islam. And I want you to go and give orientation for the Muslim world. And I told him, I said, George, if I've learned anything in five years in the Muslim Middle East is the Muslims do not want a Christian ship.

They don't want a ship of evangelists coming in. And I told him, I said, I don't think they'll even allow you in. And George, he had had a long day.

[4 : 12] And he said, Dale, just go and give the orientation. So I said, yes, sir. And one of the greatest joys in my life was to be on the ship as she came into Dubai.

The authorities said if you give out Christian propaganda, that's forbidden. But you can sell your books. So we found the smallest little coin in Dubai.

And that was the cost of a beautiful gospel portion. And we saw hundreds of Arabs come every day on board, purchase those and look at other literature as well. And that was just amazing.

And since then, we've been in about 20 different Muslim countries. And almost all of them have opened the doors in a very similar way. So we praise God that the Lord is able to do miracles and things that we wouldn't imagine.

The first time that I was on our first ship, it was called the Logos, taken from the Greek New Testament. Word, the Word, it was called the, because we had a lot of books on our ship.

[5 : 17] So Word fitted in very well. But of course, it fitted even better. We know that Jesus is the living Word. And so it was a great joy. And as I boarded the ship in India, getting ready to sail up to the Gulf, we were praying that we would be able to get in.

As we came in to the Gulf, not only that time, but many other times, we had very interesting experiences. And one of our interesting experiences was the first thing we do when we come into a port is we have what we call an official opening.

That allows the local people to come on the ship and we who live on the ship to go ashore. And it was the official opening. And this would typically be spread, voiced, publicized right through the whole nation.

And we would have some government minister or the mayor of the city or someone like that come, give a little speech. And then the director on the ship would give a little speech.

And then we'd cut the ribbon and everything was open on that. And so in this one particular port, the director was talking with one of the high government ministers before the opening took place.

[6 : 36] And he told me, he said, you know, as I sat there talking with him, I just didn't know what to say. And it's just sort of stupid when you're sitting there and you're not saying anything. He's not saying anything.

And he said, then I really came out with something that, oh, it just didn't fit in. I said, well, what did you say? And he said, well, I told him. I said, you know, on our ship, we have no tobacco.

And we have no alcohol. And we have single men, we have single women, but a strict discipline. And as soon as I said that, I thought, you know, that's just a strange thing to say to some government minister.

But actually, the government minister liked that very much. And when it came time for him in the official opening on television cameras to give his speech, in the middle of his speech, he said this, the young people of our country should come to this ship and model their lives after the young people on board.

And I tell you, the people came. Thousands came to this ship. And we've had that sort of experience. Many times I share that. We do not presume that that will always be the case.

[7 : 43] Pray with us. Get some of the literature from Siang at the table there and pray with us for that. We certainly appreciate that very, very much.

But I am very thankful for the passage that we have this morning. And I want to share three things that speak to me from John chapter 14, your chapter for today.

And I'm going to give you two of those things right now. And then toward the end of the message, we'll give you the third item. But as I read John 14, three things jump out to me.

And the first one is in verse 2, where Jesus says, In my Father's house are many rooms. And I find that encouraging. It shows how broad God's love is, doesn't it?

Many rooms. Don't fear, oh, maybe there's no room for me in heaven. Maybe there will be some no vacancy signs put up there. Nothing to worry about that.

[8 : 49] God's love is broad enough to include anybody. Well, that's lesson number one. And what I'll be sharing this morning is how God is at work. We can be excited.

We can be thankful. God is at work in our day in a way that is unprecedented. Unprecedented. I've read many books on missiology, what God is doing in missions.

And they're exciting. And I hear certain themes that just keep coming through. And when I first heard some of these records or some of the statements from mission leaders, I asked the question, is that really so?

But then when I've heard it from so many from around the world, we are living in exciting days. So there are many rooms. Be thankful. But then we move on down.

One of the most popular verses is John 14, 6, where Jesus says, I am the way. Hey, wait a minute. Why not? I am a way.

[9 : 56] That's not what Jesus said, is it? He said, I am the way, the truth, the life. No man comes to the Father but by me. There is a broadness in God's love and there's also a narrowness.

We have to do business with God on his terms, not on our terms. And his terms is one of generosity, love, mercy, grace.

But at the same time, if we say, look, I don't want all of that. I want to do it my way. So God is at work today in our lifetime in a way that he has not worked before.

A book that I commend you to read is by Patrick Johnstone. He's the one that wrote Operation World. And he has another book called The Church is Bigger Than You Think.

And by that, what he means is that God is at work bringing men and women to Christ like never before. And he goes decade by decade. Let's just run through those decades real quickly.

[11 : 08] First of all, the 1960s. And I like it that he begins in 1960 because that's when we first began in missions in Operation Mobilization. And we're joined by so many people around the world who are praying and evangelizing, faithful to God.

And the Lord is doing it. What happened in the 1960s? That has never happened before. And Patrick in his book says, over half of the population of Africa claim to be Christian.

Doesn't mean that they're all Christians. They might be nominal Christians. But the fact that a half of them are professing faith in Jesus Christ is a tremendous encouragement.

And it doesn't mean that everything is rosy and nice in Africa. There's genocide in Africa. There's HIV in Africa. There's poverty, extreme poverty in Africa. There are wars in Africa.

So many things you can list. Jesus didn't promise it's going to be easy. Things are just going to glide along. He didn't promise that. But he did promise, I will build my church.

[12 : 16] And that's what Jesus is doing. Well, it was the 1960s. That was Africa. The 1970s was Latin America. My wife and I had the privilege of sailing on one of our ships around South America.

And we met Christian leaders who used to say, you know, we thought missions, that's the Northern American and the Europeans.

They're the ones that do missions. And we were meeting Latins in the 1970s who said, no, missions means us. We must go out and evangelize.

Again, this doesn't mean that everything is rosy and nice in South America. There's still tremendous needs. But God is doing something new in South America. What about the 1980s?

1980s was Southeast Asia. South Korea, what God is doing in South Korea. Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore.

[13 : 15] You can just go around so many different places. God is doing something new in Asia. The 1990s, my wife and I had the privilege of living a quarter of a century in Europe.

And one thing I knew living a quarter of a century in Europe and especially working in the whole area of bringing Bibles, Christian literature into the communist countries, I knew communism was there to stay.

You just have to get used to it. Nothing's going to happen to those communists. But you know, as you know, the wall came down. And there is a new freedom.

It doesn't mean that everything is rosy and nice. In Russia, there's certainly they have their problems as around the world. But God did a miracle. And it was a privilege to be able to see that.

Well, what's happened since the year 2000? His book ends at 2000. What happens there? India, there are millions of believers in India. Isn't that amazing?

[14 : 15] China, Wall Street Journal, a few years ago, published an article where they said there's a hundred million Chinese who claim to be believers in Jesus Christ.

So God is doing something wonderful that we can praise God for. But wait a minute. You might say, hey, that's so good. Jesus is the way.

God's broad. His love is so broad and everything. But, you know, I myself, I'm a very weak person. I don't know how to go about witnessing.

What can you say to me? And we read on down in John chapter 14, where Jesus foresaw that was going to be the problem. A lot of Christians are going to say, but I cannot do that.

I'm not a missionary hero or any of those sort of things. And so later on in John 14, Jesus says, I will send the helper. I will send the helper.

[15 : 14] I will send the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. You know, it's true. All of us are weak. We don't know how to witness so many things that we don't know what to do.

But God in us. It's possible that you are too strong for God to use you. But it's not possible for you to be too weak.

You get on your knees and you say, Lord, I cannot. But I believe you can. One of my friends, I asked him, what would you like on your tombstone? He said, I'd like these words on my tombstone.

He did what he couldn't. He did what he could not. We all come up short. I can't do that.

But the Holy Spirit, and this is the great help and the great hope, the Holy Spirit in me, even me. You are not so weak that the Holy Spirit can.

[16 : 20] One thing, I'll just close with one testimony. Brothers and sisters, whenever I meet someone who works among Muslims, I ask them this question.

Have you ever met a Muslim who had a dream of Jesus? I've asked that to 50 different people living in different countries. 49 have said, yes, I have.

I'll tell you. And they can testify. Now, how do you explain that? They had dreams of Jesus. It wasn't dreams of Muhammad. It was a dream of Jesus. When we first went to Turkey, we were in our 20s.

We didn't know how to live in Turkey. There was a Turkish colonel who befriended us. He and his family. And he was high director of Turkish Airlines at one time.

And one time they had a party. And we were in this party. And they were all Muslims. And his wife came up to me in the midst of the party. And she said, Dale, when I was a little girl, I had a dream.

[17 : 23] A man in a white robe. And he had his arms stretched out to me. And he said to me, come. And she said, I believe that man was Jesus. Now, that was the first I had ever heard.

You know, one person having a dream. Well, I guess it could be. But when you hear literally of hundreds and testified by men and women who have people of integrity, and you just keep hearing these stories.

And before coming to Vancouver, we were in Kansas City, Missouri. And there, there was a gathering of Algerians. And the Algerians were testifying that they had the same experience.

They said, oh, yes, we have people that have dreams of Jesus. Well, why is it always Jesus? Well, if Jesus is the way, the truth, the life, why not?

And Jesus said, I will build my dream. And he's doing great and wonderful things. And when you hear that people are being met in dreams, you can have two reactions. One reaction is, well, God's going to reach him anyway.

[18 : 30] I don't need to do a thing. Or the other reaction is, God is at work among these people. This is the time to get involved myself. Do what the Lord leads me to do.

Let me just close this little time with a word of prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, how we worship you and praise you and bless you. And we thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have promised to build your church.

And we thank you that you are the way, the truth, the life. And we pray, Lord, that you would just meet each one of us in a fresh and anointed way.

That we may go forth and plant seeds in the hearts of people. Testify and trust you to do your holy work. And we give you the thanks in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.