

(The Book of Acts) Session 06

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the critical role of attitude, boldness in faith, and integrity within the church as essential for spiritual growth and revival.

Duration: 22:22

Scripture: Mark 10:17-22, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:44-47, Acts 4:31, Acts 4:33-35, Acts 5:31

Topics: "Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by acknowledging the need to sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom and the importance of sticking to the allotted time. The sermon focuses on Acts chapter 4 and highlights the power of grace in the lives of believers. The speaker emphasizes the significance of attitude in life, stating that it is more important than facts, education, or circumstances. The sermon concludes with a reference to a biblical story about a man and his wife, highlighting the consequences of testing the spirit of the Lord.

Transcript

What he says on the subject of attitude. This just blew my spiritual socks off because I so easily get a bad attitude. And sometimes even toward my own wife.

Can you imagine? Much less my children, grandchildren, in fact, anybody that gets near me. Sooner or later, I have, I can have a struggle with attitude. Now, praise God, I am maturing a little bit.

So I can confess this is not the problem it used to be, but when I read this, I thought, Lord, this is the end. I need to retire from ministry. Maybe go sit at the feet of Charles Swindoll.

Attitude. The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts.

It's more important than the past, than education, and than money or circumstances. It's more important than failure or success, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill.

Think of the phenomenal emphasis in our nation on skill and excellency. We worship the Olympics. We're now going to worship a bunch of women kicking a ball around a field as that's become the number one news item of America in the last four days, and I'm not anti-soccer.

I'm actually pro soccer, but it's a matter of priorities. Our attitude is more important than our giftedness, our appearance, or our skill. It will make us or break us, or accompany a church or a home.

The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding attitude, and regarding the attitude that we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way.

We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have that is our attitude. I'm convinced that life is 10% what happens to me, and 90% how I react to it, and so it is with you.

We're in charge. We are in charge of our attitudes. Dynamite.

Turn with me now to the book of Acts. I've really fallen behind. I have this goal that I won't even go to a meeting if they don't give me an hour to preach.

We sacrifice all at Maranatha for the sake of the kingdom, or Ronald Bush, or ice cream, or movies, or whatever, and I do want to stick to my time, but I'm not going to be able to cover all that I want. I think I must have been dreaming when I was thinking about all this, but we were in chapter 4, and we ended up with that great truth about these people who had been with Jesus just to finish off chapter 4. I cannot pass on to chapter 5 without reading verse 31, and when they had prayed, the place where they were was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. One of the main themes of the book of Acts is boldness.

I remember when I was ministering years ago, and I used to come across quite strong, and people would come up to me and say they were shy, and especially the women, they were very shy, and they just couldn't speak easily, you know, about Jesus Christ to someone. You get that same woman. You may have married her.

Get her on her favorite subject. It may be sewing, or cooking, or flower arrangements, or hot rod driving. Women are into everything these days.

Get her on her favorite subject, that little shy, quiet woman, and you will discover she has considerable gifting in the area of speech. Brothers and sisters, if we love Jesus with a passion, we will speak about Jesus, and we see that again as we look into two or three more chapters. Verse 33, and with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and there's that word again.

Great grace was upon them all. Great grace was upon them all. Without God's grace functioning in personal revival in our lives, we are destined to stumble and fall on our face.

The message of grace. We then, in the last few verses of Acts chapter 4, get back to the last verses of chapter 2. Neither were there any among them that lacked, as many as were possessors of lands and houses, sold them, brought the price of things that were sold. Remember Mark 10 about the rich young ruler.

Laid them down at the Apostles' feet. Distribution was made unto every man according to his need, and Joseph, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas, interesting, which is being interpreted the son of consolation, a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet. Again, such an amazing burst of generosity.

Very unpleasant verses in our culture. So a character named Grant Edwards paraphrased Acts 2, 44 to 47, which is in line with those verses in Acts 4. Can I read with your permission his paraphrase? And all those who believed were apart and had nothing in common. They began hoarding their possessions and property, neglecting anyone who might have need.

And once a week the religious met for Sunday morning worship, and twice a week the spiritual met for Sunday morning worship, plus Sunday evening worship. And three times a week the elect met for Sunday morning worship, plus Sunday evening, plus Wednesday night Bible study. And all that assembled were of a divided mind, in their own churches, on their own corners.

And afterwards they all retreated to their houses in suburbia to live the rest of their life, or the week apart from each other in their own lifestyle, acceptable to their pagan neighbors. And they ate alone in sadness and insecurity, blaming God for their troubles. And they were laughed at by their neighbors, and God withheld from them power and blessing, for their number actually decreased day by day.

Now that, I didn't write that, and if you don't like that, I think that's a little rough, maybe a little exaggerated. You can check with this guy Grant Edwards when you get to heaven, you know, if he made it, or if you make it. But to me, it's, it's, it's a challenge.

Especially when we think of the lifestyle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Especially when we think of the lifestyle of the vast majority of men and women that have ever gone to the mission field, and ever made any kind of an impact. And the people that we're reading about, as they crisscross across the pages of the book of Acts.

Now, if you think that is difficult, then let's turn to chapter 5. Because chapter 5 has one of the most difficult passages in the whole of the New Testament. We come across two interesting characters, one man and one woman, woman Ananias and Sapphira. A certain man named Ananias with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession.

It's made clear later on that they did not have to sell that possession. It's made clear later on they did not have to give the money to the church. That's grace.

And kept back part of the price. The commentator that I've been reading indicates that they had made some kind of commitment, that when they sold this, maybe they asked the church to pray about this. And that if this was sold, they would give it.

And I've heard of things in modern context, by the way. That they would give it all to the work of the kingdom. So when they kept back part of it, they were in trouble.

Kept back part of the price, his wife also knowing of it, and brought a certain part, certain part of it, and laid it at the Apostles feet. Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? Now, is that strong or is that strong? We think of the Apostles being filled with the Spirit. We think of Ananias and Sapphira being filled with the lies and the evil of Satan.

Satan filled thine heart. It was interesting to read John Stott, such an outstanding leader, say very clearly in his commentary, though he claims no great in-depth experiences with Satan, he believes Satan exists. Brothers and sisters, you cannot explain what's going on in our churches, if you don't believe that Satan exists.

You cannot understand what is going on in Washington, if you don't believe that Satan exists. Converted through the ministry of Billy Graham, one of the first books I read was Peace with God by Billy Graham, still one of the great Christian books, very simple, very basic, and he has a chapter about the devil, and it was an enormous help to me in my Christian life as a baby Christian. While it remained, was it not thine own, and after it was sold, was it not your own, in your own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in your heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and died, and great fear came on all them that heard these things. Now, in most churches today, one of the subjects in the age of the seeker sensitive church, and I believe in balanced seeker sensitivity, but it so easily goes extreme. It so easily goes off, as G.R. John MacArthur, one of his unusual books, tried to try to portray.

But one of the most unpopular things to speak about is the judgment of God. Now, it's interesting how easily we get into different extremes. I was listening to a New Zealand character who has a tape called Hell's Best-Kept Secret.

Have any of you heard that tape? Guess it's not getting to Michigan. Michigan tends to like that which comes from Michigan. I'm a loud mouth from New Jersey, living in England, got here, need to take a survey.

But this man has won a lot of people to Jesus Christ. He has a tremendous church. He was in New Zealand, now in California, and his is sort of the opposite of the seeker sensitive message.

He just believes in preaching judgment, preaching hell. He believes in preaching the law. He preaches the Ten Commandments, and people hearing this guy preach feel so miserable, they repent and get saved.

Have you heard about this drama that's going around the United States that's brought a few hundred thousand people to Jesus? Now, I always find it unusual to meet Christians who don't read Christian magazines. They're really not interested in what God is doing. Now, I admit I'm a magazineaholic and get way too many, and I can't read them all.

But I like to read widely, and I'm excited about what God is doing. By the way, if you're not at least a little bit excited about what God is doing, and just generally excited about Jesus, guess what? You're backslidden. You're not walking with Christ.

That's right. Now, you can get real defensive. You'll be saved.

You'll get to heaven. Don't misquote me. But if you're walking with Jesus, if you're filled with the Spirit, there is something happening in your life.

You can be the most laid-back English person, born under a rock in the middle of the Lake District, but when the Spirit of God is working through you, you will be excited. Now, I didn't say loud. You don't have to become loud like me.

My loudness has nothing to do with spirituality. It's because I'm from New Jersey. You know, Bruce Springsteen.

Loudness. I also like loud music. My dream is to someday bring my own musician to Maranatha.

But I know the music is all arranged, and it's already so good, so I guess it will just be a dream. But I have Bill Drake, my own personal musician, who no longer goes with me because he gets bigger meetings than I do, and he's got six months out on the ship Dulles in Australia, and thousands are hearing the gospel with, through this outstanding musician, who I believe has the anointing, if it's possible, of a character named Keith Green upon him. Bill Drake's written 300 songs, has five CDs, is the most powerful missionary musician in the world today, but his music is a little bit loud for the average person over 30.

But God is still using him, and you can always bring your earplugs. I carry mine now because of my age, when I get into heavy metal situations. We have, by the way, more wild churches in Britain.

We have more wild churches in Britain than you have generally here per capita in the United States. In fact, we now have a church, and I know this will blow your circuits, and you can disagree, just listen. We have churches that worship to heavy metal music, not rock, which I know some of you have been taught from the devil.

This, by the way, is Christian music with more powerful words than a lot of the stuff in our hymn books. I'm not saying I'm into that. That's when I bring my earplugs.

I didn't know I was getting into that situation. I invited a couple of my older prayer partners. They had never seen anything like that in their life, but one of them was okay because his hearing aid was broken, and he sort of enjoyed it all.

I believe there's a place for preaching the judgment of God. I believe there's a place for telling people they are on the road to hell. Even pop singers like Chris Rhea has a song, Highway to Hell.

I love that song. I've listened to it over 35 times, and I want to commit my life to rescuing men and women from hell and from eternity away from God. The judgment fell and Ananias was dead.

Let's read on. The young men arose, wrapped him up, and carried him out. Oh, they're gonna bury him.

It's amazing the details they go into in the Bible. And it was about the space of three hours after when his wife, see his wife wanted to get in on the action. His wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

And Peter answered her, tell me whether you sold the land for so much. And she said, yea, for so much. And Peter said unto her, How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them who have buried thy husband are at the door and shall carry thee out.

Can you imagine saying this to a woman? I mean, I can't imagine saying it to anyone. Then fell she down immediately at his feet and died. And the young men came in and found her dead and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

And great fear, I tell you, talk about a seeker-sensitive church. And great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things. Now, why in the world do we have this here in the New Testament? Because God wanted something like this in His Word.

The main thing, I don't think, is just what happened here. The main thing is that God was, through His Spirit, preparing the New Testament. This was a story that was to get into the New Testament and this was to be studied for the next 2,000 years.

And there's a many a person who has been shaken out of hypocrisy because that's the essence of their sin. Hypocrisy, lack of integrity, and lying. And through this passage, because this did not continue in the church, this is not the way God generally works today or even in the last 2,000 years, though occasionally like this, things like this do happen.

But God's Spirit, in preparing the New Testament, wanted something like this included. That we could learn, that we could wake up, that we could realize the importance of holiness, that we could have a greater hatred for hypocrisy, and that we would be committed to integrity and to honesty. When the Revival hit East Africa, and I mentioned the book Calvary Road, there's only a few copies left, the greatest breakthrough was when leaders started to confess their hypocrisy, including immorality.

And the Spirit of God began to move and people took the mask off. I tell you, it's a beautiful thing when God's people begin to take the mask off, begin to just be real. Doesn't necessarily have to be in a major public meeting.

Now, I know Promise Keepers is highly criticized by some people, and Promise Keepers is not a church, it was a movement. Every movement is loaded with strong points and weak points. But I will tell you, when I measure the positives against the negatives in the Promise Keepers movement, I just praise Jesus.

I was there in Washington when one million men, a couple years ago, were on their faces repenting. My dear women, please do not be naive about what men are struggling with. A high percentage of men are struggling with lust and with pornography, whether they're 17 or 77.

It has become one of the biggest industries in America. It is devouring the Internet in a way that is incomprehensible. And unless men are willing to become accountable, unless men are willing to walk in the light, unless they are willing to somehow experience the Holy Spirit on a deeper level, very few get the victory long-term in this area.

And through Promise Keepers, I am sure at least a million men in America, at least for a season, many of them, of course, backslid later on because they didn't go on in discipleship. They didn't go on in Biblical spiritual warfare. And that movement could only take them so far.

And in the end of the day, the local church is so crucial, so crucial in terms of spiritual development and what God is able to do long term in people's lives. God has not given up on America. Millions have come to repentance and the new birth in America over the past few years through the ministry of many, many people in churches and a wide range.

But so often in America, we're willing to go a few steps, but not willing for a long-term embracing of the cross. Embracing of the cross. So we become a nation of superficial saints.

One minute a man is praising Jesus. In the next minute, we've just discovered he's fornicating with his secretary. And we're losing probably one pastor in America every hour of every day.

365 days a year just on immorality alone. And that is an understatement, of course. We are a huge country of 250 million people and perhaps 25 or 30 percent claiming some kind of spiritual experience.

Yes, the message of Ananias and Sapphira is still relevant in 1999. After that great breakthrough took place, that judgment came. Suddenly, there's an outbreak of church growth.

There's an outbreak of miracles. And then we discover the devil is back again, putting them in prison, bringing persecution, all kinds of difficulties. And you can read about that, I hope, on your own through the remainder of chapter 5, though we'll touch on it a little bit in the morning.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the power of your Holy Spirit.

And we know, oh God, we know, oh God, that you are wanting us to come into greater reality. You are wanting us to come into greater integrity. You are wanting us to be more open.

You are wanting to fill us with your Holy Spirit, just as it was in Acts 4.31. And when they prayed, the place where they were gathered together was shaken. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit. And they went forth and spoke the word of God with boldness.

And Lord, I just pray for each one of us here tonight, that we would know the reality of the Holy Spirit in our lives. That we would know what it is to take the mask off and be real, and seek your face in repentance and brokenness, for personal revival and crucified living. That we may be your men, that we may be your women.

That we may go where you want us to go and do what you want us to do. For we ask this in the powerful name, the awesome name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18154.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/george-verwer/the-book-of-acts-session-06/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net