

A Ministry of Reconciliation

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Preacher: Rev. Derek Maxwell

[0 : 00] Well, thank you. It's a great joy for me to be with you today and to have the opportunity of sharing about God's work and also sharing from God's word.

Thank you for your prayers, for your partnership in the ministry as we serve the Lord together across the countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and more recently, our new development into Far East Russia.

We appreciate all who pray for us and remember us as we continue to serve the Lord in these days of great opportunities. Today, I want to share just a little with you about the work as we continue to serve the Lord.

Your minister mentioned about the 25 years of serving God in the Republic of Moldova. 30 years ago, the winds of change began to blow across the former Soviet Union and the communist countries.

God brought down the Iron Curtain and 30 years ago, everything was changing in what was countries that were close to the gospel and was so difficult for believers. And God opened up these countries for the spread of the gospel.

[1 : 05] And what a joy it has been to serve the Lord in some of these countries. 1991, the Republic of Moldova gained its independence. In 1992, SGA were invited to come to this country for some discussions about a partnership that could be developed.

And in 1993, SGA began their teaching program in this little country. As your minister said, it is indeed the poorest country in Europe economically. Unemployment has been running at 43% over the past 18 years.

And it's very difficult for people in this little country sandwiched between Ukraine and Romania. But God is building his church. Over the years, over 300 students have graduated from our Bible school.

Many of them are serving the Lord today. We're also financing missionary pastors as they lead the work, as they reach into unreached territory of Moldova with the gospel.

And of course, it came to our attention that many missionaries needed transport. And I'm sure some of you have heard of our project. When it was launched first, we called it Getting Men Moving, and then we renamed it The Gospel on the Move.

[2 : 23] You can pick up some of these Project Leaflets as you leave this morning. They're on the table in the vestibule, just to your right. And please do make yourself, make your way over to the table.

This is the one on the Bible schools, preparing gospel workers. But the need for transport was indeed a great need, and we were glad to be able to help.

And with our wonderful friends in the UK and the supporters that we have all over the UK and Ireland, God made it possible for us to provide motorbikes. And last year was our 25th anniversary in Moldova.

And to mark that, we provided 25 motorbikes, one motorbike for every year that we've been serving the Lord in the country. But it doesn't stop at that. We're so thrilled that 62 motorbikes have been provided in Moldova, and the gospel is on the move.

These men are serving the Lord. They can now reach into communities that was very difficult for them, the distance to walk. And this is a great means and a great blessing for them in the spread of the gospel.

[3 : 28] Of course, whenever God uses these missionaries to plant a new church and people get converted, it's very important that in the orthodox context that they have a building to worship God in.

The orthodox believe that you cannot worship God in the house that you live in, but you need to have a special place for worship. And so through the houses of prayer ministry, and this leaflet is available, or as we would call it in the UK, church buildings, we've been able over the years to provide 30 church buildings for new converts, for new congregations, for church plants.

Sometimes they're a new build, other times we purchase an old dwelling, we have it refurbished, and it's open to the glory of God, and it is the new church in the village.

And what a joy to be able to do that and to provide for these people. One of our most recent projects in Moldova is the one that is called the Medical Evangelism Ministry.

And you can pick up one of these leaflets this morning. This is medical, and it's evangelism, and it is a ministry. One of our graduates, Sergei Shalinsky, who was a medical nurse before he came to our Bible school, is now heading up this ministry, and God is greatly using it.

[4 : 47] Medical care is not free in Moldova. When you want to visit the doctor, you pay a fee. When you need medicine, you pay for it. You pay for all your medical care in Moldova.

For many people, they are so poor, they are unable to visit the doctor because they don't have the money to pay the fee. The Medical Evangelism Ministry is a ministry where Christian doctors and nurses are giving themselves to serving the Lord.

They will move into a community. They will open up a health clinic there for a day or so where people will be able to come and be examined by the doctor, seen by the nurse, and receive some medicines for their illnesses.

And of course, it's wonderful to be able to help people physically. We all want to relieve pain and to minister to people and help them in a practical way. And these Christian doctors are doing that.

But not only are they doing that, but they're showing the love of Christ, and this is practical Christianity. And the result is that God is breaking down walls of opposition through this ministry, and people are ready to listen to the gospel.

[5 : 56] You can imagine these orthodox people, these people coming to the medical clinic. When the doctors take care of them, then their hearts are open to hear the message of the gospel.

You see, it's a medical, it's evangelism, it's for the soul, and it is a ministry. And through this project, churches have been planted in the country of Moldova.

And God is using this work, and we as a mission are funding this ministry. We're so glad to be able to do that through the donations from God's faithful people all over the UK, including the Isle of Lewis and in Ireland.

And this is a tremendous blessing. And we're so thankful that we're able to be part of this. I'm going to take you briefly now from Moldova. Indeed, I'm going to take you from Eastern Europe, and I'm going to take you over to Central Asia.

When we consider Central Asia, we are thinking of five republics, and some of them are bordering with China. So you have Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, you have Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

[7 : 05] Stan means territory or region, and so Kazakhstan is the territory of the Kazakhs, Tajikistan, the territory of the Tajiks. During the year, I had the opportunity of visiting Central Asia and visiting some of these countries.

I want to leave with you one very important project. We're involved in many projects in Central Asia, but I want to leave one very important one with you that's very heavy on our hearts in these days.

And the project that we're actively involved in is providing God's word for people groups in Central Asia, Muslim peoples, who need the word of God in their very own language.

Let me bring you, first of all, to the country of Kazakhstan. There are 11 million giving them the word of God. We want to give the word of God to the people groups of Central Asia that they will have the opportunity of reading God's word for themselves and come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Please pray for these Bibles. Our most recent development is into Far East Russia. A very long journey from us this morning. If you were to fly from here to Moscow, you will cross three time zones.

[8 : 14] If you cross from one end of Russia to the other, you will cross 11 time zones. And we're in a region where we're serving God beyond Siberia. We're in an area that is to the ends of the earth.

We're in an area that is paganism and it is so difficult. There are three words that describe Far East Russia. The first one is inhospitable because in the winter the temperatures are minus 40 to minus 60.

The second word I'd use is paganism because there are thousands of towns and villages with no church of any kind. I'm not talking about evangelical church. Any church. And the third word I'd use is infrastructure or the lack of infrastructure because many of these communities have no roads. There's no ways of reaching these communities by road or by car. So SJUK with the other SJ offices have launched this project. Please pick up this leaflet.

And we're partnering with Kingdom Air Corps from Alaska and they're providing the missionary planes. They're training the pilots and God is helping us to fund the missionaries and train them. And together Far East Russia has been reached for Jesus.

[9 : 26] These little missionary planes are already three on the ground. By 2021 we trust with God's help there will be 12 missionary planes available. And Far East Russia which is an area almost the size of the United States of America.

With God's help the unreached will be reached with a great message of the gospel. First person to come in one of the largest regions is Yakutia.

It's the size of India. That's one of the nine regions. The first person to come to faith in Yakutia was in 1993. Today we're working with first generation believers who are ready to serve the Lord and reach out with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Please do take the literature with you as you leave and read more of what God is doing and how the Lord is building his church. I've got two books with me that I want you to take and pay some other time.

This book Out of the Depths is the testimonies of five people from Central Asia and friends it's a wonderful read. How God has saved these people from so difficult backgrounds and different backgrounds with a gospel application at the end.

[10 : 43] That book is four pounds and then if you want to read more about God's blessings in Moldova the revival in the 90's and how God has been working in that little country 25 years a quarter of a century of blessing in Moldova that little book is available at three pounds.

Feel free to take the books today and you can put them on an envelope pass it on to somebody in the church or ring up our office and pay by credit card or go online and pay that way. But I really want you to have the books because you'll be blessed and thrilled as you read of what God is doing in this day of opportunity and how the Lord is building his church.

You know friends this is not about SGA today this is all about the Lord the Lord said I'll build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Romania was freed of communism 30 years ago. There is a man called George who lived in Romania and during the communist days he was very active in persecuting the believers and imprisoning them.

After the demise of communism in December 1989 you could say that George was out of a job and he relocated and came to the city of Oradia. One Sunday evening George decided to come to Emmanuel Church it's a very large church seating capacity of several thousand.

[12 : 13] The church was filled and George was sitting at the very back. During the final singing he left and went back to his apartment. Next Sunday night he was back again sitting in the balcony at the very back.

He left during the final singing the third Sunday he was back again and during the final singing George left the balcony and went back to his apartment but God had been bringing light into his darkness and that night George repented of his sin and put his faith in Jesus Christ.

He came back to the church that evening and the congregation were gone the ministers were still there and George came up to the ministers and he said to them he told them of what he did in the past how he persecuted the church how he imprisoned the believers how he hated the Christians how he wanted to destroy the church in Romania but he said tonight I have confessed I have repented I have come to God and he said I believe that God has forgiven me for all of my past and then he looked at the ministers and he said will you forgive me?

Eventually George came to the SGA Bible School he went through the three years of training and the first evening arrived it was graduation commissioning service and George left our Bible School to go out into Romania to be a pastor to be an evangelist to preach the gospel and be a church planter when I think of George I think of Saul who became the Apostle Paul how God met him on the Damascus road and how the Lord revealed himself to him and a miracle took place in Saul who became Paul the Apostle the pastor the evangelist the preacher the church planter the writer the theologian the apologist a man who was changed by God's power and that is the man the Apostle

Paul under the anointing of the Holy Spirit who wrote these scriptures that were read to us this morning as we come to 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17 the word of God reminds us if any man is in Christ he is a new creation the old things have passed away all things have become new I want to say first of all today friends this is a miracle performed where God touches a life and God changes an individual by his power Paul was changed Saul who was persecuting the church became Paul he had experience with God that changed his life what a wonderful experience that is being born again of the Spirit of God you remember Nicodemus who came to the Lord Jesus that religious man of his day you wouldn't have met a more religious individual Jesus met him there it's recorded in John chapter 3 how Nicodemus came and Jesus said to Nicodemus you must be born again Jesus was saying to Nicodemus you need to experience the miracle it's interesting in verse 4 Nicodemus didn't say why do I need to be born again he said how can a man be born again must he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born

[15 : 33] Jesus said to Nicodemus the wind bloweth you cannot tell where it cometh from and where it goeth so is everyone that's born of the Spirit of God you see my friends this is a miracle from God if I could explain it this morning if I could explain every detail of this experience then it would no longer be a miracle because a miracle is something that we cannot really explain but a miracle is something that happened it's real it's genuine and here we read in these scriptures that if anyone's in Christ they are a new creation the old is gone the new has come there was the miracle that was performed and indeed all of us need to have that miracle the word of God is very clear that all have sinned and come short of God's glory and this experience with God is something that's a personal event no one else could be born for you we can remember our birthday we can look back at a time in our lives but it's wonderful to be able to look back to the experience of the new birth when we have been born from above and our lives have been transformed by the power of God not only do we find here the miracle performed but I want you to note secondly the mandate procured because here

Paul the Apostle not only speaks of this great miracle where an individual is changed by God's power where we will never be the same again for greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world but with that miracle that's performed Paul is saying to the church of Corinth there is a mandate to be procured because here in verse 19 the word of God we read here as Paul writes to this church that is in Christ God was reconciled in the world himself not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation then again in verse 20 therefore we are ambassadors for Christ God making his appeal through us we implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God here Paul is saying to the believers there is committed to you the word of reconciliation he goes on to say in verse 20 as though we beg you on behalf of Christ but Paul uses another word here that's striking and that is the word ambassador therefore we are ambassadors for Christ now an ambassador must be a citizen of the nation that he or she represents if you take the British ambassador in another country they're a citizen of the United Kingdom and all of God's ambassadors were once citizens of Satan's kingdom living outside the kingdom of God but Jesus Christ can set sinners free and give them a new citizenship and we read this in Colossians chapter 3 and verse 10 where the word reminds us that we have our true citizenship in heaven you see the word of God is telling us this morning that we don't belong down here this world is not our home the word of

God is telling us that as we are ambassadors as we are here in Christ place are in Christ stead we are representing the place that we belong to where our citizenship is and that is heaven the Lord has transformed us the miracle has taken place heaven is our eternal home and our citizenship is in heaven today that's why for the Christian we live so loosely to the things of the world because my friends these things the material things we will leave them all behind they're only temporal they're fading they're passing away but the word of God tells us that our true citizenship is in heaven we belong to heaven that's why friends there's a longing in our hearts for heaven today because that's where we really belong while we belong to heaven that city that have foundation whose builder and city builder is God we are here on earth as ambassadors for that wonderful place called heaven yes the

Lord has saved us the miracle has taken place but there is a great responsibility that is that we are ambassadors and we are representing Jesus here on earth the things of earth grow strangely dim the things of earth don't hold us anymore because it's heaven and that's where we belong friends it's wonderful today to have that assurance and to know that one day we'll be with Jesus we will

spend all eternity in the glories of that wonderful place but until that day we are here on earth we have a work to do the bible says we're ambassadors we belong to that place called heaven our citizenship is there you know an ambassador represents his ruler and his people you know every believer is called to full time christian living no matter where we are we're representing

[21 : 34] Jesus christ and his church and people will form their opinion so often about heaven and about christ as the look on our life sometimes in northern ireland we say you know people will not read their bible but they'll read your life for many people they're not reading their bibles today but they're reading the ambassadors lives from heaven and they're taking note of christians and that's how they decide and look and make their conclusions but you know also i believe that an ambassador needs to keep in touch with headquarters you know it's very important that an ambassador knows what his ruler is thinking and how his nation wants him to act concerning important matters of state each nation has a general policy and that expresses the official position on many matters it also has a strategy for applying this policy and day to day decisions and so the ambassador needs to keep in touch with government the ambassador needs to keep in touch with headquarters so that they know how to act and what decisions to make and i say this reverently this morning but you know heaven's ambassadors need to keep in touch with headquarters heaven's ambassadors need to keep in touch with the lord and i believe that we can do that as we spend time in the word of god as we spend time in prayer that we might hear the voice of god friends before we go out to be an ambassador any day we need to meet with god the word of god reminds us for we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities against powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world against spiritual wickedness in high places we need the lord to guide us we need the word of god in our hearts we need the spirit of god within us we need his power to help us through each day i know life is very very busy and you know it's busy for everybody isn't it sometimes people look at the minister or they may look at a missionary and they may feel well it's okay for the minister and for the missionary they have plenty of time to be in touch with heaven they have all day to read they have all day to pray i want to say to your friends i speak personally from my own heart this morning it's not like that i've got to be honest with you today i never have time to pray i always have to make time i think it was tosher who said satan is more interested to keep us on her feet so to keep us off our knees my friends if satan succeeds in keeping us off our knees then we have missed out on the very best we may be doing good but we're missing the best i believe as ambassadors we need to be those who are in touch with god we need to know what it is to commune with god not just saying our prayers and doing our readings but oh to meet with god that god will touch our hearts in a special way you know as i think of an ambassador they can be called home at any time to give an account you know god's going to call us ambassadors home we don't know when that day is going to be but i know one thing for sure that every day i live it's one day closer and the lord's coming back and maybe he'll take us in death or he'll come back and take us home i'm not sure what way i'm going to leave this world but i know where i'm going not because i was brought up in a praying home not because i was brought up in perns in a home where perns loved jesus with all of their hearts but because i came to a place where i realized that i was a sinner and i needed god's miracle one day god's going to take his ambassadors home the word of god says in chapter 5 verse 10 for we must all appear before the judgment of seed of christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil we read there in verse nine so whether we are at home or away we make it our aim to please him you know friends we have just this one life to live i know i'm going to shock you when i tell you that i'm i've joined the 50 club but you know one thing i'm aware of and that is that this one life of mine is passing so quickly and with this one life i have one desire and that is that i might please him but when i stand before the lord i might hear those words well done you good and faithful servant may god give us the grace and the strength may god give us the help may we be good ambassadors for heaven you know nothing else is going to count you know dear lady that i met some years ago maybe i shared this with you before but please forgive me and i'm almost through this morning her name was molly harvey she's with the lord god called her to be a missionary in the amazon in brazil she had to go before a panel of doctors in the royal victoria hospital in belfast and they told her that she could not go to the amazon her heart was weak and she would never survive but molly harvey was called of god and she wanted to please god she went to serve god in the amazon and she served god for almost 40 years with some amusement she used to say you know the doctors who told me not to go are all dead and i'm still alive but that lady said something that's impacted my life

tremendously in fact i think of this so often the words of this lady she's with the lord today but her words live on she said don't count your years but make your years count the miracle performed the mandate procured the message to proclaim you god has given us ambassadors a message the message god has given us is a message of reconciliation a message where sinful man can be reconciled to god where sinful man can be clothed in the righteousness of god where god can work this miracle where god can change lives my friends this is the message that burns in our hearts today what a glorious message god has given us to bring to the slavic nations of the world and to bring to our neighbors next door may god help us to be faithful as we serve him may god help us to go forth with this wonderful message and as we are here in christ's stead may we serve him faithfully and live for the lord's glory life will soon be over and then it will be eternity may we live loosely to the world the things of the world may we live our lives for god in these days shall we bow in prayer our god and our father we

thank you for your work we thank you for your precious word we thank you lord that you're moving across the world today we thank you that people are here in the gospel for the very first time this very day we thank you for the message of reconciliation and lord we thank you for the great truths you have given to us and we pray lord that you'll help us for those that have experienced the miracle that we will truly be good ambassadors for heaven and lord you'll help us to bring this message to needy people be with us lord in our final singing and as we conclude this service strengthen us come by your spirit lord apply your truth and minister to our waiting hearts in jesus name we pray amen can we have our final singing this morning as we turn to number 126 page 419 126 when zion's bondage god turned back as men that dreamed were we then filled with laughter was our mouth our tongue with melody a man who bearing precious seed and going forth doth mourn he doubtless bringing back his sheaves rejoicing shall return let's sing to god's praise 126 when zion's bondage god turned back as men that dreamed were we then filled with laughter was our mouth our tongue with melody among the heathen said the lord great things for them have brought the lord has done great things for us when joy to us is brought the lord the lord streams of water in the south are upon this lord recall who saw in tears are reaping time of joy and joy they shall.

That man who bearing precious seed is going forth of morn, in all the breaking packages rejoice in shall return.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all until he comes or he calls. Amen.