

Cd Gv279 Coney Hill Morning Service

by George Verwer

God's grace is sufficient for us in the midst of suffering and weakness, and we must trust in His strength to be strong in Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

Topics: "Social Justice", "Spiritual Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the guilt he feels when enjoying recreational activities while millions of people suffer without food and homes. He shares his personal experience of being radicalized by witnessing the poverty and suffering in a rubbish tip in Mexico. The speaker encourages the congregation to not be afraid to weep and feel compassion for those in need. He also emphasizes the importance of being aware of the trials and challenges that come with serving God and highlights the need for prayer and seeking God's guidance in difficult situations.

Transcript

As we remain standing, I'd like to give you a welcome. A number of visitors with us. We do welcome George Burwer.

George, we agreed as a leadership 18 months ago that you were God's man for this Sunday. We affirm that. And we want to hear God's words through you.

Bless you, your family. And if you're a visitor here for the first time, you're from another fellowship, take our greetings back with you. There'll be a bookstore.

I'll leave that for George to talk about. There'll be a cup of coffee afterwards. Share in all the life of God's family here.

The communion table's spread. If you love the Lord, if you love the Lord, you believe that he died for you, he's alive, he's your saviour, this table's open. It's for you.

And if you're not at that stage, stay in the atmosphere of worship, even if you let the bread and the wine pass you by. Who was on the Bromley March for Jesus yesterday? Just raise your hands really high. Okay, just one will do, okay.

Who was on the West Wycombe March? Raise your hands. Who was on the Bromley March? Again, let's all put our hands up. Keep your hands up, West Wycombe.

And that is fantastic, that is super. We had a great time in Bromley. You had a terrific time in West Wycombe celebrating the living Lord, praying for God to be Lord in government, in politics, in the arts, in entertainment, in our schools.

That's super. We want to do that again, Easter. What about turning that march from the Catholic Church up to the pub car park? How about turning that into a celebration, all of us together at Easter? I think we need to actually talk to the West Wycombe Council of Churches.

I'm the chairman, so. We can do that at Easter and actually announce the kingdom of God together. Easter, Good Friday, let's do that.

Let's sing in songs and hymns of fellowship. Bless the Lord, O my soul, 43, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Father, out of a world that is hurting Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Southern Africa, Liberia, out of this world, where you've placed us, where we work, where we live, we bring our gifts of money, place them before you.

And it's our desire that your name would be lifted up and shared in this neighbourhood during Tell West Wycombe. And that some of these gifts would go to help others to the very ends of the earth in those hurts. Help others share that Jesus is Lord of all the earth.

Use both gifts and give us to this end, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. As I invite in a moment George to bring God's word, both written and spoken to us, we're going to sing a hymn which will prepare us to receive that word.

554, in songs and hymns of fellowship. Thou whose almighty word, chaos and darkness heard, Thou whose almighty word, 554, we stand to sing. We are the ones who come to love you.

Father, we thank you for this man of God, this Christian leader. We thank you for him in all his worldwide responsibility. Thank you for his responsibilities within the family of OM, within his own family.

Pray that as we, under your sovereign hand, invited George 18 months to speak to us on this Sunday, you would make us aware that he is your man for us today. Speak through him and encourage and refresh him in the very act of him being a blessing from you to us. Challenge us, we pray.

We want to hear you in Jesus' name. Amen. It's a privilege to be able to share with you this morning.

My wife and I actually live in West Wickham. I've been in the Bromley area as our base for our international ministry over these last 25 years. In fact, I think it's 25 years ago that I last spoke here at your church, I remember well, because I couldn't find the church.

And it was the first time I'd ever visited West Wickham, even though I lived in Bromley. I always thought of West Wickham as sort of the regions beyond the Little Strange, when you sort of travel around the world. But in God's providence, we've had many rent-free flats and accommodation here in West Wickham for close to 25 years.

You can imagine how much of the Lord's money that saves. We sort of have a bit of a neurosis in that direction. It's great to be back and minister in my home town.

We have adopted Great Britain as our country, even though we don't speak the language. We are very grateful for your love. We were quite involved in Bromley Baptist when we lived up that way.

And we're very grateful for your prayers and your fellowship. I tried to get out of this meeting this morning when I heard of the events that have faced your church, but through prayer, it seemed that we should go ahead. It's interesting because a lot of my ministry is to people who are grieving and who are going through crisis.

God, I guess, has prepared me for that. Two of my closest friends, the co-leaders of the whole work in Great Britain, 27 years ago, were both killed simultaneously in their mid-20s. I was with the father of one of those young men.

It was a long time ago. And my book, *A Hunger for Reality*, was dedicated to them. But I was with the father on Tuesday night.

And the reason for that meeting was that our complete warehouse, two million pounds of books and warehouse, was completely destroyed in a fire a couple of weeks ago in Carlisle. This has only just shifted from Bromley. We were there in Sherman Road all these years.

We outgrew that. The work actually doubled. We took on Kingsway as an exclusive.

Everything they have has been destroyed. Most publishers we only represent, so we could reorder those things immediately. But our own publishing house, STL, and Kingsway, we were exclusive warehouse.

They lost everything. So I went there Tuesday night to speak to our staff. And they say that a fire and the loss of everything in a fire has some similarities to losing a friend.

I was ministering at a church hundreds of miles from here about a year or two ago. The reason was, again, deep grief. The entire congregation was completely overwhelmed with grief, very different.

So the death of a Christian is actually a joyful, glorious occasion. The word of God teaches that. Doesn't mean we can't grieve, because that's your humanity.

But we know if Diane could say anything to us this morning, she would say, run. She would say, fight. She would say, march.

She would say, live your life. We know that from her own life and her own testimony. But we as human beings, as the family especially, to put this all together, there's going to be weeping.

There's going to be grief. My mother died not so long ago. And it's just awesome for me.

I went into the woods, and I never wept so hard. I was worried about the police hearing me. And I still feel that.

Two years ago, this month, the homegoing of my mother, though she was elderly, she was godly, she was with the Lord, it was a glorious occasion. We are so frail, we are so human. Some of us are more emotional than others.

I would not be able to speak here this morning if I were a member of your church. And I knew this woman in depth. I just don't have that.

I tried to speak at my mother's funeral. I got in a half a minute and just collapsed emotionally. I had it written out, so I gave it to the pastor, and he read this token memorial I wrote to my mother, which I'd be happy to send any of you.

This week, another one of my closest friends just went to be with the Lord through brain tumor cancer. I remember him so well. Alfred Boschbach, ship cook, German.

One of the longest serving persons in our ship ministry. And he's left behind a relatively young wife and a couple of children. When you get involved with a lot of people, and some of you are doing that, you're gonna be involved with a lot of sadness, humanly speaking.

Billy Graham, my spiritual father, said life at its best is filled with sadness. And brothers and sisters, we have to somehow, as hard as it is, and it's very hard for me, we have to decide somehow, we're gonna fight on. We're gonna fight on.

It's interesting that in God's providence, we were all marching through the streets. No one asked. You know, I just wanted to put my hand up, but no one asked how many were marching in Bridgewater Somerset yesterday.

That's where I was. I got back 1.30 last night after an evening mega celebration in one of their United Reformed churches that somehow has a revived pastor. I tell you, when you see the United Reformed churches coming alive, you know the second coming is near.

I come from a Reformed background, by the way, so I'm allowed to say that. This church I had to minister to hundreds of miles away had a grief far greater than the departure of a loved one. The elder had discovered that their pastor had been living in adultery for 10 years.

You cannot even imagine, don't try to, how that hit the church like a spiritual atomic bomb. The grief, the confusion, the animosity, the sense of betrayal. This pastor's a dynamic man who had disciplined many of these people.

They felt cheated. They felt tricked, conned. There was anger.

The elders who were disciplined by this man, he was a longstanding famous leader in that city, had to remove him from ministry with all the chaos. I became involved in this on a longer term basis and was privileged to be involved in the restoration of that pastor and to see him launch back into ministry, though not in that church. I guess God prepared me for some of this as in the United States, I became involved with a man named Gordon McDonald, who was one of the greatest writers in the nation, was the president of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, but in his previous job as leader of one of New England's outstanding churches, he had a very brief, very brief period of moral fall.

It had been put right, it had been repented of, his family was intact, and then he took this big job and during that presidency of InterVarsity, known as UCCF in this country, this news of his adultery became public in the U.S. press around the time of all this television business. He had to immediately resign. I became very close to him at that time and to his wife, and I saw God and God's people through tremendous grief and anxiety, detention, restore that man to ministry, who's now taking a very small church after a couple years of restoration in New York City.

He said he'll walk his whole life with a limp, but he's going on. The saddest thing in Christian work is when a soldier goes down in battle. It goes beyond the grief, even of a loved one who knows Jesus Christ.

The loss of a loved one who does not know Jesus Christ goes beyond both of those things, and I found that so complex as a young Christian that I almost turned away from Christianity completely. I don't come from a real Christian background, and as I wrestled with the problem of suffering and pain, somewhat of a sensitive person more than I appear to be, I couldn't handle this subject. The slick, easy answers about healing depressed me to great extreme because it just wasn't like that.

It wasn't happening like that. For everyone with terminal illness healed, there were 25 who died, and in my commitment to honesty, I could not play games. I couldn't accept the slick, easy answers of some of my fellow Christians, and so I tottered on the brink.

It's an awesome walk of agnosticism. There's a society in London, sort of joining it, called Agnostics Anonymous because all my Christian life, I've had that agnostic streak, those doubts, those questions, that gnawing pain that maybe somehow it's not all true, and if so, if I die in this particular airplane and I seem to get more interesting vibrations at 32,000 feet, then what is it all about? And I just want to share with you that you are looking at a very weak, needy, struggling, doubting person. Introduce me as a Christian leader.

It's no big deal, neither with God nor me. I'm a very weak, needy, struggling person. My wife who's here can testify of this, and yet God has kept me by His grace.

So I want to talk to you this morning, just so briefly, before we break bread, of God's grace. That's what it's all about. That's what it's going to take.

All of us in our times of doubt, questions, and suffering, through, in the midst of those great battles as a young Christian, I picked up a book by a woman. I don't know where I'd be without women, especially my mother, of course, wouldn't be here at all. And I'm thinking of other women.

Eugenia Price wrote a book, and the American title was No Bad Answer. I tried to sell this book in England years ago. People always asked me who Pat was.

So we republished it under the more English title, No Easy Answers. But there are many better books than that on the same subject, and I'm going to mention some of them at the end of my message. But Eugenia Price, in that brilliant book, points out that in some of these things, and I want to say this, especially to those of you who are younger, there are no slick, complete, easy-to-understand answers.

There are answers. Christ is the answer. The Word of God gives us hope, gives us answers.

But ultimately, some of these things we must leave with God, especially God's time. Have you followed what's happening in Liberia? Intellectually, what's happening in Liberia is 25 times more difficult to accept and understand what's happened here this week. And this is hard enough.

We're not saying this is easy. Not at all. But how can we understand what God is allowing in Liberia? What about Sri Lanka? What about on that train in South Africa this week, extremists just broke into the train while we're talking about the Clapham Junction accident, which is a year old.

This horrendous thing takes place in South Africa where these extremists get on this train and just start murdering and killing, hatching, hacking to death everybody on the train. We as God's people, we as world citizens are different from the average person, even I might say in the average church, as we have so many religious people who understand these things. We are world citizens.

We must feel with South Africa this week whether we want to or not. We must come out of our little provincial, Bromley mentality. We must come out of our English mentality.

We are God's people. Our citizenship is in heaven and we feel with those in South Africa. One of the most complex, difficult, hurtful situations in the world today.

We must still feel with Afghanistan, which has got worse and worse and worse. A year ago, one of our men laboring among the Afghans disappeared completely leaving a wife and two children and she was pregnant. He now has three and no husband.

He's never ever been seen. No explanation, no clues, only rumors. He's dead, he's kidnapped.

We don't know. And yesterday in Northern Ireland, a nation that I've ministered to many times, Lagos too is right there at this moment. The police was kidnapped yesterday.

It goes on and on and on. Why are so many people on tranquilizers? Why are so many people on drugs? Why are so many people on alcohol? Why are so many people on the promiscuity trying to forget everything trip? Do you think these are all baddies? No, they are people who have discovered, some of them very young, that life is difficult. Maintaining a marriage is difficult.

Keeping a job is difficult. Facing the death of people we love, the mystery of it all is difficult. So people grab whatever seems to somehow enable them to at least function on a day-by-day basis.

And there are millions of people who are merely functioning on a day-by-day basis in this country, trying to forget there is such a thing as death. It's considered a no-no in our culture to talk about death. It used to be sex, we couldn't talk about sex.

Now we talk about sex all the time, but we can't talk about death. Even though we've got new films this summer in which over 100 people are slaughtered and butchered and murdered in one film, it's not acceptable to talk about death, death except in the context perhaps of a film. We've created an unreal world.

We've created a world of fantasy. And when something unpleasant comes breaking into that little fantasy world, we can't handle it. I have seen hundreds of Christians handle in a courageous and a beautiful way every kind of suffering and tragedy.

If I've not seen it, and I've seen a lot of it these 35 years in following Christ, I've been able to read about it, I've been able to be with them later. The key is God's grace, God's grace. I'd like to read this passage of Scripture in Corinthians.

That again and again has ministered to me. And I'm sure it is very familiar to many of you. In 2 Corinthians chapter 12, we have one of the greatest passages in the Bible about the grace of God.

Paul had prayed for this messenger of Satan, this thorn in the flesh to be taken away, but it didn't go. Verse eight, 2 Corinthians 12.8. For this thing I besought the Lord three times, that it might depart from

me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong.

We have such a wrong understanding often of Christian leaders. We fail to realize how weak they are. For 35 years I waited to meet my spiritual father, Billy Graham.

We finally had three minutes together, one for every decade I lived for Christ, at the Greater Urbana Convention. And he was about to preach. I would have thought that he could walk into that meeting without even a thought.

This gifted preacher who has proven himself so many thousands of times. But as we shared before he went to preach that night, there was such weakness, there was such inadequacy. He was not well and had to go to the hospital shortly after that.

And his message actually that night, if you've listened to Billy Graham for many years, that night it wasn't really that on target compared to some of the preachers like Bombshell, Explosive, Atomic Bomb, Tony Campalo, that we had later in the week. Oh, how I love to speak at the same conferences with Tony Campalo. All my life I've tried to be more English with absolute failure.

The laid back, phlegmatic Englishmen who can handle any situation. These are the people I admire. I can't understand them, can't relate to them, but God's given me the grace to recruit many of them.

And they're all over the world with Operation Mobilization. Peter Collins, by the way, not one of those. I've lost my train of thought now.

I know I'm talking about the grace of God and Billy Graham and his inadequacy to go and speak in that meeting that evening. God's grace is sufficient. His strength is made perfect in weakness.

It's such a paradox because other scriptures command us to be strong. And anybody who knows the work that I'm involved in and knows my leadership and my leadership style, if they evaluated me secularly, they would say, well, this character's a strong leader. Don't tangle with him.

He's a fighter. I was mentioning Tony Campalo because he speaks in such an emotional, explosive way that if I speak after him, I always seem so quiet, laid back, and mellow. By the way, there's a new book about being laid back.

Have you seen that? I think it's written by an Englishman, though he lives over there in Canada. I don't know what all these Englishmen all go to Canada for. I think it's just more space.

J.I. Packer, Laid-Back Religion. Have you read this? This is dynamite. Don't read this until you're perhaps in a more restful mood.

A penetrating look at Christianity today. And surely when God allows suffering to come into our midst, when God allows what, humanly speaking, is premature death, it is to try to say something to us. It doesn't happen at random.

When God is wanting to say something to us in the church in Britain, I also was marching yesterday and found it such an inspirational experience in Bridgewater, Somerset. Amazing town. It had more traffic jams per person, I think, than any town, certainly in West, in that part of Great Britain.

And the police gave us this escort through these Bridgewater traffic jams and it was exciting because some of us kept launching out to give tracks out. It's impossible for me to stay in line. It's not my temperament.

So we were dashing here and then giving this little leaflet of why we are marching for Jesus. And there were people from so many denominations and so many churches. And we finished with this prayer time that I think most of these marches had using this special book.

It was a great experience for me. God is doing something in this country. Let's not miss it.

In order for God to do something in our church and in this country, we will have to be tried by fire. Everything God has ever done on this planet has been through a degree of trial by fire. I had to counsel the leader of our work among the Afghans.

We've had a special document from the United States government pointing out that Peshawar is now one of the main training places in the world for terrorists, extremist groups, suicide squads. And this couple, both of them Americans, have heard that they may be, have their life threatened. They've had to pray and they've had to seek God about going back there as a leader.

A very high profile person speaks the language, knows many Afghans. We can't decide this as leaders. If we had to decide, we'd say Gordon and Grace, they've given 20 years of their life there.

I think you better have a year in the States and look for recruits. There's plenty to do. I'm sure you know that in Christian work, there's plenty for everyone.

And I just thank God for your church, your commitment to missions, your commitment to our feeble fellowship has meant more, 10 times more than you can grasp. We're not good at communicating these things. I wrote to some of you about that.

It's such a battle to find people interested in world missions. It's such a battle to find the workers. It's such a battle to find the finance.

I guess this is why we are able to face suffering in our work. We're able to face death and kidnap, losing ships, warehouses burning down, loved ones in difficulty because you can't be a missionary. You can't be a disciple without having to day by day and week by week face fiery trials and suffering and death and difficulties and refugees.

I know that if I could go out and find the finance, that with that finance, I could save one or two thousand more lives in the last six months. Would you like to live with that? People like myself are overexposed. We're overexposed.

The letters that are on our desks begging us for money. We know people are dying as refugees. We can pick up the phone and arrange for this and arrange for that.

But so often we're not able to. There's not the finance. We're not even able to finance what we're already doing.

How am I going to pick up the phone as I would like to do and fly another airplane load of relief goods into Jordan? We're on the cutting edge of the relief work in Jordan right now. I just talked to Jordan this week. I probably have the biggest phone bill in West Wycombe.

Three hundred people have professed faith in Jesus Christ in the midst of that relief work. Now, we don't claim they're all converts, but the suffering, the agony, the need in Jordan is great. And yet that is small compared to a more traditional kind of refugee situation.

Those people have countries to go to. Within a week or a month or two months, they'll be on planes. They'll be back home.

Not many are dying in Jordan. And that's bad enough. What do we say? What do we say of these African starvation situations, grasshopper blight situations? What do we say about the Mozambique refugees whom we also work among? The chaos in a number of African countries is so great that when I read about it, I have to stop reading.

I can't handle it. One thing I know, and I hope you know this lesson, for spiritual survival, don't go beyond your limits. You can only take on so much.

I belong to the Hades Tennis Club. That's one of my forms of survival. You call it recreation.

I call it survival. If I don't pull away from OM, from the pressure, the phone calls, the death, souls going out into eternity without Jesus Christ. If I am not able to turn that off and somehow refuel, pay attention to my little body that needs something more than phone calls, evangelism, prayer meetings, painful experiences, I won't function.

By the way, this is the cheapest tennis club in the entire world, nine pound a year. It's behind the Hades Library. No one's ever even found it.

Do you ever feel guilty when you're involved in recreation? When you're enjoying something, walking through these beautiful woods. I've jogged through every woods almost within eight mile radius of here. Yesterday in the afternoon, I was relaxing in the Guantanamo Hills, looking at the birds, looking at the trees.

And then suddenly the pain and guilt comes. Here I am enjoying this scenery, enjoying this wonderful place on this forest. I'm enjoying this farm before I go off to preach.

While millions are without food, millions are without homes. I've walked through the refugee camps. My life was completely radicalized in a rubbish tip in Mexico when I was 19 and held babies in my arms that were covered by flies.

And as I walked into the sunset of that rubbish tip, I wept and recommitted my life to other people and to God. God knows our weakness. God knows that we can handle only so much.

Don't be afraid to weep in these situations that are coming to your church. We're all different. Don't judge the man who doesn't weep because he can weep weeping in his heart.

But don't judge the one who does weep. One of my favorite verses, and I was preaching on that text the day that Gordon McDonald first came into my meeting, this man I referred to before that was made public. The verse was, we are as God's people sorrowful yet always rejoicing.

The first chairman of the OM board of directors, a Mancurian businessman suddenly died very quickly of a heart attack. I find that so difficult. And it's happened to so many.

There I was at his funeral and the minister was a man named Ayre, Canon James Ayre, unique Anglican. And there are many of them. Oh, how in coming to this country, though my wife and I are a little more of a Baptist background, how I have come to appreciate what God is doing among the Anglicans.

And this canon, I love that title, canon has a good fighting spirit to it. This canon shot full salvo at this funeral and I'll never forget it because he preached on the legitimacy of sorrow. That was such a help to me because I feel sorrow.

I often weep. I went to the funeral of my friend John Lewis just down the road here when his little boy was killed not far from here on his bicycle at 12 years of age. Though I barely knew the little boy at the funeral was experiencing some deep sorrow for me.

And I think when I embraced him, he was not weeping. The Brits are fantastic at holding it back. It's a mystery to me, but there are many Brits who don't hold it back.

Praise God, I can relate to that group. And I wept at his arms. We all talk about Lagos and how all the people were delivered.

It made big news in the British television. For years, I've been trying to figure out this British sense of humor. And I know it's pluralistic and so I don't judge people.

But up and down this country, we go trying to get people to pray to the ship, to give to the ship, to the point of almost thinking of selling it because we didn't have the money. People visited it, they went on it and still weren't interested. We couldn't even get them to sign up to be a prayer partner.

But in God's unique sovereign purposes, he allowed that ship to sink or half sink and the news hit God's people. And the ship, ministry in the interest of the ship doubled. This is why our warehouse has just now gone up in flames.

Is this the only way that Operation Mobilization can get new prayer partners and supporters? I know it's hard for people to get into their bank accounts, but I'm not interested in this kind of bonfire. And I can assure you, we did not set it, even though we got very big insurance coverage. It's something people don't know about Lagos and the loss of Lagos, is that though everyone was saved, one of the women from that ship was cycling not far from here a year later and run over and killed by a truck.

And I will tell you when that happens, I scream, God, why? Isn't it wonderful that as a psalmist, we can be open with God, we can scream, we can weep. We can't hide our emotions from him. We don't have to pretend.

Ultimately, we have to live our life. Ultimately, we have to come out of that sorrow. Otherwise, we will become confused.

We will become bitter. One of the books I've been pushing all over the world lately is called Forgive and Forget, Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve. Almost every copy I brought to Bridgewater was sold yesterday and I had to run to my office.

It's right there about the place where you get your tires repaired. And grab some more copies, because I felt this was a book that God may want to use this morning as it explains that when life hits us full force, the suffering, the confusion, the questions, and we know that great faith is not in the absence of doubt and tears and trials. Great faith is in the midst of those things.

That's what builds our faith. That's what refines our faith. But as life hits us full force, the disappointments, the sufferings, the unanswered prayers, we will become either bitter or better.

And as this experience comes upon your church and other experiences that may be more difficult, you will become bitter or better. My life is not the great success story that publishers think who want to write it up. My life is nine disappointments for every success.

And often I think that's part of the price. My prayers for Turkey, 30 years of praying have not been answered very much. My prayers for Iraq, 33 years praying for Iraq have not been answered to any great degree.

My prayers for Afghanistan, my prayers for some of my own relatives who I prayed for for 30 years, only to see them slip into eternity without Jesus Christ. How can any thinking human being not battle some degree of question and doubt as life hits him or her full force? Welcome my young friends to planet earth. It's rough and it's tough, but there's grace as God's people for every situation.

There's not only forgiveness, but there's the glorious ability to forgive. And I've never gone to bed in my life with anything against anybody anywhere where in this planet. And surely that is a miracle for a character like me.

Yes, we're weak. We feel inadequate. And if Billy Graham felt inadequate after preaching for 50 years to stand in front of that group of young people at that meeting, we should not be frightened by our inadequacy as life seems to come down the road on the fast lane like a giant out of control lorry.

And saying that I'm reminded of two of our Bangladeshi workers, just young men serving Jesus, standing on the side of the road outside of the hospital because they had gone to visit someone and a lorry came down the hill out of control. We don't have to run to alcohol. We don't have to run to probing promiscuity or drugs.

We can run to Jesus. He will embrace us. He will minister to us.

It may be a song. It may be a word of scripture. It may be a book.

Without books, I don't know where I would be. For so often I read a book or a magazine or listen to a cassette tape and just the thing I need for that moment is there. No wonder so many of God's people are thrown about and so spiritually anemic because often books, the word ministry is neglected in their lives.

Some people believe and we have a whole generation of spiritual midgets in our churches who have never grown strong and who therefore can't say fight the good fight. You therefore can't say to live is Christ, to die is gain. I am frightened of death.

I'm not. No need to pretend. But I have faced death again and again and I grabbed it by the neck and wrestled it to the ground.

In fact, I'm doing it purposely now. I'm getting as old or a little more excited about death. One of the things that makes me think about death is roller coasters.

So the past two, three years, I've become committed to roller coasters. The worst, the biggest, the scariest in the world. It's become a form of recreation because as I go over that first hill, I feel so near to death.

I raise my hands. Everybody behind you is watching. This is the one place where the Pentecostals and brethren all have to put their hands in the air and they say, glory to Jesus.

I'm coming home. A minute later, I'm off the roller coaster paying my money for another trip. It's great.

Go to try it. I know it's not exactly the English brand of recreation, but Alton Towers is at least worth a try. Brothers and sisters, we've got to grab this thing called death.

No matter how frightened we are, no matter how much we'd like to postpone it, I'm in that camp. We've got to grab it by the neck and say to live is Christ, to die is King. Without that, there's no purpose for this church.

There's no purpose in the word of God. It's a con, it's a sellout, it's religious deception. It's more subtle than any call.

Without the message of the resurrection, without the message, oh, death, where is thy sting? There is nothing left. So let's grab it at this moment of grief. Let's grab it with all of our hearts, though we will all do it in different ways.

And let's go forward together to reach this world for Christ, to be his witness, marching, praying, opening our homes, opening our hearts. Yes, his grace is sufficient. His strength is made perfect in weakness.

Let's pray. Our God and Father, we come in weakness and fear and trembling. We think of your certainty, Apostle Paul, who was so overwhelmed that he despaired even for his own life.

And there may even be someone here this morning carrying some load that we don't even know about, who may be despairing of his or her own life as we see the suicide rate in Britain go off the charts. We become aware that the message of hope and faith and salvation that we have is needed more than ever in this country. And by your grace, we are committed to take this message to everyone in the nation, yea, even by the year 2000, if not before.

And we know we must include the rest of the world in this great forward thrust. Help us to find the balance between when we have to receive, whether it's through your word or a walk through the woods, or a little bit of recreation, and when we have to give, as we so long to do each day of what we do commit. All those who are grieving over this dear sister Diane, who's gone to be with you, and Alfred over in Germany, and others that we know about.

By your grace, we want to be able to say with them, to live is Christ, to die is gain. And it's through him that we live and we pray, and we have our being, amen. I want the privilege of ministering to you a little longer.

I do come back tonight, so that may help. But I'm thinking at this point, more of some books. I have the privilege of being very exposed to books that can meet special needs.

One of my great struggles, as I've shared, is doubts. Here's a new book on the subject of doubts. Don't be ashamed of your doubts.

That may be a blessing to you. I haven't read it yet, but I know it's good. Laid-back religion, I've already mentioned.

But there's a book that was hardly known, I think, until a few of us started to push it. It was a very controversial book in America called Disappointment with God, by one of the greatest American Christian writers of this generation. The English publishers couldn't handle the title.

How can we be disappointed with God, really? So they changed the title. It's called Seeing in the Dark. I sent one to Margaret Thatcher, had a very good letter back.

And I have these books, and many other books, not just for you, though I hope you will read some of them, and other literature, but to pray about giving some of these books on these particular subjects to people who are hurting. And this book on the subject of disappointment in connection with our faith, I believe is one of the most needed books in Great Britain at this time. So this ministry goes on through your commitment to other people that you can minister to a lot more than perhaps at present if you would make use of great Christian literature.

Audio: http://archive.org/download/SERMONINDEX_SID18167/SID18167.mp3

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/george-verwer/cd-gv279-coney-hill-morning-service/>

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