

Logos 2

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon reflects on the ship Lagos collision, emphasizing God's mercy, the testing of faith, and the importance of community support through prayer.

Duration: 33:07

Scripture: Lamentations 3:22, James 1:2

Topics: "Mission Field"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses a recent event involving a collision at sea and emphasizes the importance of faith and trust in God during times of trial. The speaker mentions the difficulties faced by the organization in the past and acknowledges the current test of faith for those involved. The speaker also mentions the support and prayers received from others, including missionary leaders. Throughout the sermon, the speaker references Bible verses from James and 1 Peter, highlighting the importance of joy, patience, and unwavering faith in the face of trials.

Transcript

I'm sure most of you have probably heard the news, and it's not a rumor, it's not something we're spreading around. The ship Lagos has had a serious collision off the coast of Argentina, actually in Chile in the waters. We received this news, I guess about two o'clock this afternoon.

Peter, who's been involved with me in God's Providence, Peter and I were to be together today at Forrest Hill, which is rather unusual of a thing. I only arrived back on a very late flight from New York, but we received the news from Dale, who had talked to Graham Wells, who was standing next to Jonathan Stewart. I think I burst into tears, and probably will.

Not because it's such a sad thing, though that's there, but because, in God's mercy, he spared all the people. Let's just have some people give thanks for that before we talk about some of the other details. No one is hurt, no one is drowned, we know that, it's a big question parents, of course, have.

So let's thank the Lord for 17 years of ministry, for his mercy. God, we just do cry out to you with mixed emotion, earth and vessels, sometimes different emotions collide within our being, we don't even know what's exactly happening. But we think of the ferry that crossed the channel with all those people dead, and we think of you sparing us in this collision at sea, seemingly with a rock, and spared all of our people.

We thank you for the Chilean Navy who were involved in this rescue, we thank you for the fast thinking of crew members, we won't know all the heroic tales for a while, but we give you thanks. And we know, Lord, you give, you take away, we bless your name. Yes Lord, we do want to really thank you for watching over the 140 people or so on board the ship.

It's just an amazing service, not only was no life lost, but not even a minor injury incurred. Can we just look at two scriptures together, two that I shared with you, I believe, some weeks ago, in James chapter 1, and in 1 Peter chapter 1, James 1, James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting, my brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing this, that the testing of your faith worketh patience, and that patience have her perfect work, ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.

Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed, so let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord. Going on, blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. As we think about this incident, we need to understand there's no way any of us here can feel what the people on that ship are feeling, it's just impossible.

I've lived on that ship, I've wept in the engine room and wept on the bridge, I've been scared silly when I thought we were going to go down and coming out of Calcutta, and Jordan Christensen came down and said, look, basically I don't know where we are and the sandbar is all around us and I'm sure the echo sounder doesn't work, and we just prayed, and I said, look, go up, and he said, it's so old, and I said, well, go up and try it, and he ran back up and tried it and it worked. We got into Bangladesh, and when we sailed out of Rotterdam and we almost managed to turn the ship upside down in Rotterdam, but when we sailed out of Rotterdam, I said, God, if we just make it to India, I think I'll be happy. We made it not only to India, but we made it 17 years throughout the entire world.

We have so much to thank God for as we face this crisis, but we feel with those who are there, it's a very, very, very traumatic experience to go through what they have gone through, because as you're in the midst of that experience, you don't know how many of your friends around you you'll never see again, you don't know, as we already knew, the first thing we hear is everybody's safe. Immediately you're relieved if you know anything about ships, and with that ferry crossing in Great Britain this year, we're well aware of what ships can do. So we want to try to, as we pray for the staff and crew, we're going to point out where this area is on this map in a few moments.

We have the cell phone turned on here, and Dale Roton may come through any minute with more details. At 9.30, hopefully from Vera's flat, if she will allow us, we will be doing a broadcast over MBI radio network in North America to mobilize prayer. This has already been arranged.

We cannot stop something like this getting into the news, so we like to get the story at least a little bit straight. We believe God can use that. And certainly when we think of this scripture, we realize that this is going to be a great test.

It is a great test for those who are there. Great test for those who are on the bridge. We don't have the details, but all those men on the bridge will fight enormous struggles when we had our difficulties years ago, sometimes it was a cooperative effort between the bridge and the engine room.

So even though we find it difficult, I'm sure some of you who are new to OM, to enter into this enormous trial, test of our faith. We especially want to think of those who are there, pray for them by name. We are trying to contact all the parents of all staff and crew within a period of 24 hours.

Massive amount of information going on. People have been phoning me just perpetually non-stop since the news came out. The director of OMF who lost a woman through a stabbing just recently in the Philippines and whose husband now has three children and facing a considerable crisis, John Wallace was one of the first missionary leaders to call and give his prayers and his sympathy.

Keep that in mind as we look at 1 Peter, let's allow the word of God to speak to our hearts. We have another aerial on that, so that's not an emergency. We've got our makeshift paperclip aerial on the cell phone, which now we're told may damage it.

But we've been doing that for two months. Blessed be the God and Father, verse 3. By the way, I never had to use these at all at Urbana, wasn't that a great vision? I got a big print Bible, but I don't have that one with me right now, between the tears and whatever else. Praise the Lord for these reading glasses.

Verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away. That's so important. OM's treasure did not go down with the MV Lagos.

By the way, the ship has not sunk yet, and you can feel free to exercise faith that she will not sink. We have been told that with a bow ripped open, water in hold 1 and 2, 45 degree list, and water continuing to come in, it is unlikely that she will not sink, even as we're here. But maybe a sandbar there that nobody knew about.

That, by the way, could be more of a problem than a help, because if we are in shipping lanes, we have to pay for the removal of that ship, which would cost more than the price of the ship. We do have, fortunately, praise the Lord, insurance for that particular happening, and salvage insurance institutions are already functioning, and all kinds of things are happening. But we are trying to get further news from exactly what's happening.

But in any case, our treasure is not there on that ship. We have very clear scriptures about being ready to experience the spoiling of our goods. I remember in one of the first wars in my adult period between Israel and the Arabs, that John Furwerda, living in Jerusalem, which was part of Jordan at that time, I think he lost everything he had.

And unless you've been through that, it's hard to understand what that's about. I think he did eventually get some back by visiting the other way later on. Some of us in this room went through the Bombay Fire, which was a quarter of a million dollar, highly destructive fire.

They say one of the worst things that could ever happen on a ship is fire. We had a ship go up in the Rotterdam dockyard next to us, and many of the men were burned alive with their heads out the porthole. So God has spared us from such things, but we seemingly, as far as we can see, have lost the Lord's ship.

Let's just pick it up from verse 5. "...who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. In this ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be. Ye are in

heaviness through manifold trials.

At the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perish, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Just two of many passages of Scripture about being tested, about being tried. I'm sure you probably realize that God has been preparing many of us for this kind of thing.

If this were the only trial we were facing in O.M. right now, we would have very easy sailing. But a movement of this size is wrestling with many, many testings, many, many trials, because we are committed to every individual in this work. And we have individuals, we have the children of individuals who are in times of difficulty and trial.

Again and again we have spoken of spiritual warfare in this very room. But sometimes the Lord uses events like this to somehow shake us out of our immaturity and our naiveness. I'm not claiming that any of you are that.

I certainly am a bit of that. And to face life as it really is. It's so interesting that yesterday I was fellowshiping with a lady who lived next door to my parents who had their own baby daughter, young daughter, burned to death in their house before their very eyes.

And I was sharing with her a book that I got from another close friend who just lost a very dear loved one at a young age. And so I brought that book over to her and somehow I picked up two highly damaged copies. Let's just pray now as Peter talks perhaps to Dale, perhaps to someone else.

Let's just have silent prayer and you can listen as you pray. It's not a private conversation. We do especially uphold now the parents.

It would be people especially phoning. We're trying to phone them. Lord, I don't know how far we've gotten in this so far.

We just pray for wisdom for different people. We pray also for this press statement we're trying to put together. We don't even have all the facts.

Commit to you, Lord, the board meeting tomorrow. Believe that you're going to give wisdom to these board members. We again uphold Dale, Roton, Mike Pointer as they fly tomorrow toward Argentina.

We're believing you to really overrule and work that out according to your purposes. God, we just unite together right now for the ship. Lord, if there's any way in your purposes that ship can be saved, parts of it to be used, to be repaired or salvaged, we don't understand all the whole thing of salvage is so complicated, but we trust you to work this out.

Lord, we would worship you at this time for what you have done. We pray especially for Captain Jonathan Stewart and for Chief Engineer David Thomas. We uphold them.

We just believe that you're going to work according to your purposes. We cry out to you now for these different things that have to fall into place in terms of moving the people up Argentina, up the coast. Give wisdom about the program as we sense that the program should not be canceled, but go forward on shore

and enable us to just really carry out that.

We trust you. We look to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

A little update on that phone call. A lot of Christian magazines are calling Quinta already in this country wanting a statement which we are working on. Keep in mind the United States is five hours, six, seven, eight hours behind us.

Don Hammond just called from California. He's willing to go down on a pastoral visit. He's been very involved with Lagos.

He's eight hours behind us. We have even a decision whether we should get, because he can get a visa. The offices are still open.

It's too late for visas over here. I was just sharing how I found these two very defective copies of the book that perhaps ministered to me more than any other book as a young Christian when I was so confused about the problem of pain and suffering and why God allows so many bizarre things. It was Eugenia Price's book, No Easy Answer.

I hate to throw things away, and I grabbed these two very defective copies. When I went over to visit these people next door who had lost their child in that fire, and they feel it very much at Christmas time, I was sure she must have read that book because it's quite well known in the States, and she hadn't. So I said, well, look, this one's defective, but most of it's here.

Read it, and if you think it's good, then you can get the whole book. The amazing thing is that through the whole Urbana Convention, I was chauffeured to the various meetings by volunteer people, somewhat elderly people, who had just lost their son in a small plane crash, a dedicated Christian. He had lived in John Matthew's house after John Matthew joined OM.

That's the house that I had lived in. I'd never met these people before. And then they ended up taking me back to Chicago, and, of course, every day they would share, really, and they would show me things, including a postcard written to John Matthew who had never posted because they didn't know where he had gone to, and just shared the trauma of losing this son that they were so close to.

They may seem like small things, but I sense the Holy Spirit preparing me for this shock wave of what we're facing right now. We know the only way to face it is in faith. It doesn't mean we can't weep.

It doesn't mean we'll have all the answers to our questions, and it doesn't mean we won't work everything we can to do what needs to be done. But during a testing of our faith, a trial of faith, we have to stand on God's promises, and I hope you will do that, and I hope you will be committed not just to pray about this, but to allow this to expand your horizons, praying for both of the ships of YWAM, praying more for Dulas, praying for all the people in missionary aviation. How seldom they're prayed for.

Many have died in missionary aviation. Praying more in concerning the vehicles, which still, within OM, have caused us more death. The ship hasn't even gotten near it.

And that can happen right here. Nothing hit me as much in this town as the death of George Foster's son, at least as far as road accidents, as he laid in that hospital so long like a vegetable. And so many thought he would be healed, and then he died.

And we don't need to elaborate. We've all faced that struggle. Let's just get a couple of long-armed people up here to hold this map up, and if Peter could take out the names, if you could give the names.

I will just point out, because some of you may not know where this has happened, it is in one of the most dangerous waterways in the world. I've done some reading about this waterway, but it's especially dangerous in the winter. At present, it's in the summer, and that could be all the difference.

There's enormous storms and winds in this area. If this had happened in the winter, I'm not sure we would allow Lagos to go through there in the winter. Thank you very much.

It's right down here at the very, very bottom of South America. There's an area here I'm pointing to called Tierra de Fuego, Earth of Fire, Earth of Fire, and below that is a little city, I'm pointing to it there, but it's hard to pronounce, called Ushuaia, U-S-H-U-A-I-A. Anybody from Argentina can pronounce that place? Ushuaia.

Thank you. Starting from there to Puerto Madryn. So it's that little strip of water, below that is more land, but if you were close to this map, right where my pen is, there's a canal, a channel, what's the name of that channel? It's written here.

I really need my glasses for that. It's called the Beagle Channel. Beagle Channel.

Is it on the Pacific then? No, no, no, it's in between. This is a channel of water that takes you from basically this southern ocean over to this ocean. You're crossing the dividing line.

You're not going all the way south, but you're cutting through there. They were just in that port. We don't know how far they are out from the port.

We know they hit seemingly a rock. We've heard rock, but we know from past experiences in OM what initially we hear, later on it was something else. There are other things, I can assure you, in the water that ships can hit, but as far as we know it's a rock.

They were rescued by the Chilean Navy. Everyone is safe. They kept some men on the ship for a while, but as things got worse, everyone is evacuated.

I think we need to make sure no one is killed. We don't yet have the whole picture. Someone may have been hurt in the Chilean naval vessels or we may discover there was someone on the ship that we didn't know was on the ship.

These are all things we're wrestling with. I think we can let you come down now, but that at least will help you understand where this accident took place. When I was talking to my close friend at Moody Radio, who I'll be going on the air live with at 9.30, he asked whether we ever had a major accident before with the ships.

In fact, we have never had anything that most people would classify as major. We did have an accident with a ferry, Lagos and a ferry in Istanbul. One man jumped in the water and was fished out.

The ferry was damaged. Very small damage to our ship, but there's nothing that anyone would call major. We did have a man killed when he was trying to board the Dulos in Latin America.

He tied his rope onto something that people told him not to tie onto. That thing came loose and unfortunately hit him right directly in the head and he was killed. We've had many, many small things.

Some of those small things weren't so small and we've certainly at times just again and again experienced the mercy of God. You may not be aware that we just had another generator on the Lagos explode. Basically, that means it was finished.

Mike Pointer is in New York right now trying to find a second-hand generator for that particular crisis. He and Dale will be rendezvousing in New York and heading down toward southern. Remember, this is very southern.

Argentina is a quite long country at this time. I think we should now just spend a little more time in prayer, especially remembering Captain Jonathan Stewart who will feel the enormous weight of this because he was the captain and we don't even have the details but we just know Jonathan and we want to uphold him. We want to uphold Dave Thomas, the longest-serving member of the ship.

The ministry of anyone who stayed on board. Montford Schaller, by the way, is also going to Argentina who was the ship director for a couple of years. He knows Spanish.

We want to uphold the staff in Argentina. Can you imagine? This probably will be very widely covered in the media in Argentina. Very strange if it wasn't.

That, of course, may be picked up by international media. We live in the day of the satellite. There may be someone watching this that actually knows more than I do, at least in South America.

We want to just really bathe all of this in prayer. We want to remember people by name, people that you know who are on the ship. I called Captain Dallas Parker who has been captain of Lagos.

He already knew because he has a parent here in Norfolk of someone who is on the ship. We need a lot of wisdom. Who is handling the phoning of the parents here in Great Britain? It's already complete.

Do you know the number of British people on the ship? It's probably one of the larger delegations. Let's pray that God will use this to stir people for more prayer. There's nothing that has disappointed me more in 1987, and I don't say this because of the ship, nothing has disappointed me more than the overall lack of prayer among God's people.

I was just talking to a pastor two days ago, outstanding British pastor. He's gone to America, taken a fairly big church. Fourteen people come to the prayer meeting.

This is a good church. This is a live church. They pray five minutes.

Don't misunderstand. I am not blaming this on people who don't pray. That is not the point.

But we know Satan as the roaring lion seeketh whom he may devour. We know that God uses prayer. We know, of course, there were more than enough people praying for Lagos.

Other missionaries had as much prayer as our ship, and many other projects. I don't think we can say, well, this is a lack of prayer. We always like a nice, easy answer.

Lack of prayer. Prayer went down in 1987, therefore the ship went down. No.

Not if you've got a brain. You can't engage in that. You can speculate if you'd like, because many, many, many great ministries have far less prayer than this ship.

It's one of the most prayed for ministries in the entire world. You can just go port to port gathering prayer partners. But at the same time, the message and the possibility of God using this to challenge people to more prayer is still something that I can't take away from my mind.

This pastor decided to change a prayer meeting and have a full hour of power, presented it to his church. 14 came out. The same 14.

But anyway, he's trying to be an optimist, and I certainly got a burden to pray for him. So let's pray. The Lord will use this.

If in any way we have been at fault on any level, we are not going to try to cover that up. Usually such things happen, man is somewhere involved, right? Captains of ships know that when they take on that enormous responsibility. So we're not going to engage in any kind of cover-up.

Knowingly, things sometimes get confused when people can hardly seemingly get through to us on the phone from the southern tip of Argentina. So let's pray. Let's pray as one body.

Some of you have ministered on the ship. How many here have been on the Lagos? I wonder if you would just stand up if you've actually been on the Lagos, either visiting or ministering, working. Do we have many? We have quite a few.

Thank you. Maybe you, some of you could especially lead us in prayer. If you are like me and get emotional, someone else will pick up the prayer and run with it.

Let us pray together. In God's providence, Peter Maiden and I were together this afternoon about the time this information came, or shortly after it. I thought it would be good if he could, being with us this evening, come and just perhaps share a few thoughts the Lord has put on his heart.

I don't know if you remember what Dale said, but before this news came, the Lord gave Dale Roton a scripture from Jeremiah about crying out in the midst of disaster or something. It was quite unusual. Lamentations 3.22. Was that the one? Lamentations 3.22. And so the Holy Spirit used that to prepare them in Mosbach.

Peter Maiden. Dale actually said that he was ministering at the January conference this morning on that verse, Lamentations 3.22, which speaks about the great faithfulness of God in the midst of disaster. So he felt quite prepared for the event when he heard it.

My first reaction when I heard this news was to sense my own smallness. I don't know how you react to such things, but I came down to Bromley today with a list of meetings that I was going to get involved in and a list of meetings that I was going to get involved in tomorrow. And on the way down on the train, I'd been reading the EBE budget, that's the Logos budget for 1988, and going through it as I'm responsible on the finance committee for the EBE budget.

And all of that, half an hour later, was just totally changed. And you just sense again that scripture which says we can plan and we can purpose, but it's the Lord's purposes that prevail. And we see just how fundamental and central to OM this meeting is.

When week by week we come and we seek God, it's His work, He's the sovereign ruler, and you know you're not less at work when you're at this prayer meeting than when you're behind your desk. You really are involved in the real work when you're before the throne of the sovereign. So that's how I felt, I felt my own smallness and God's greatness when I heard this particular news.

Just a few prayer requests. I think those in Mossbach especially need wisdom because of certain decisions which have to be taken and are being taken even as we pray. Decisions with regard to salvage, it does seem that that is taken care of.

The Lloyds of London, with whom we're insured, have taken care of that. But it's still a difficult thing. Dale had a phone call a couple of hours ago from a salvage operator who wanted to get involved and asked for an immediate \$100,000 from Dale in order to get involved.

And there's all kinds of things like that at a time like this and we just need wisdom, Dale particularly and others in Mossbach to make the right decisions. And then we have to understand our insurance position. We've never really taken insurance very seriously I don't think.

Thankfully John Chappell on our board has taken it very seriously and we need to find out exactly to what degree we are insured. It does look as though we are insured as I think George said. If it's lying in a shipping lane it does look as though we are insured for it to be removed.

Whether the hull of the ship is insured we're not really certain. Gerry looked at some papers earlier this afternoon which seem to suggest that we're insured up to the amount of about £50,000. But there's a great lack of clarity right now as to what our actual insurance position is.

We've called an EBE board meeting for tomorrow. We'd appreciate your prayers for that. The board showed its great commitment by every board member agreeing at such short notice to be present tomorrow afternoon.

So we'd appreciate your prayers for that board meeting at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon when obviously they, the legal owners of the ship will have to make some decisions about the present and about the future. I suppose the thing most on my heart is 140 people who in about three days time will arrive in Buenos Aires. They're going to be transported from where they are now.

I believe they're on some small island at present. They're going to be transported to the mainland by ferry and then it seems the Chilean, I think, army or navy are going to help to get them to Buenos Aires. It does seem as though the Chilean authorities have been extremely helpful from what we've been told so far.

So that's something also to thank God for. But you can imagine about 140 people arriving. Earlier today they were quite convinced of what they would be doing for the rest of this year.

Some of them for two years, some of them for a long term. And now that's all completely changed. And we're going to need great wisdom in counselling these people when they arrive to get across or over the initial shock and also their future ministry.

To what degree can we continue the program in Latin America without a ship? To what degree can we continue it with land teams? How many people will be prepared to remain in ministry in a land situation? We need to know exactly who should go down there to help in these decisions and in counselling individuals. And then as that phone call just showed the whole issue of communication at this time is a

very crucial issue. Already a number of Christian magazines have been on to the Quinta asking for a statement from us.

And we don't really have sufficient information yet to make a sensible statement. We're hoping that a telex is coming from Mossbach. But we need to make some statement very soon.

As you've heard, George will be involved in this radio interview at 9.30 and I think we need particular prayer for that. That the information we give might be accurate and consistent. And we need to make a press release at the very latest, early tomorrow morning here and in other parts of the world.

As well as the people on board Dolores, Jack mentioned in prayer that there are 20 young leaders who have been recruited over the past 12 months from Latin America who were to be joining the ship in Argentina it was, wasn't it, Jack? To spend a year with the ship. So they've given up their jobs, many of them, to get alongside the ship going with it from port to port in a leadership training program. The pastor from California is probably right now on his way to the Logos with his family to spend three months on board.

So there's all kinds of implications like that which we're facing. And we, of course, need to pray about it. I'll leave it there, George.

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